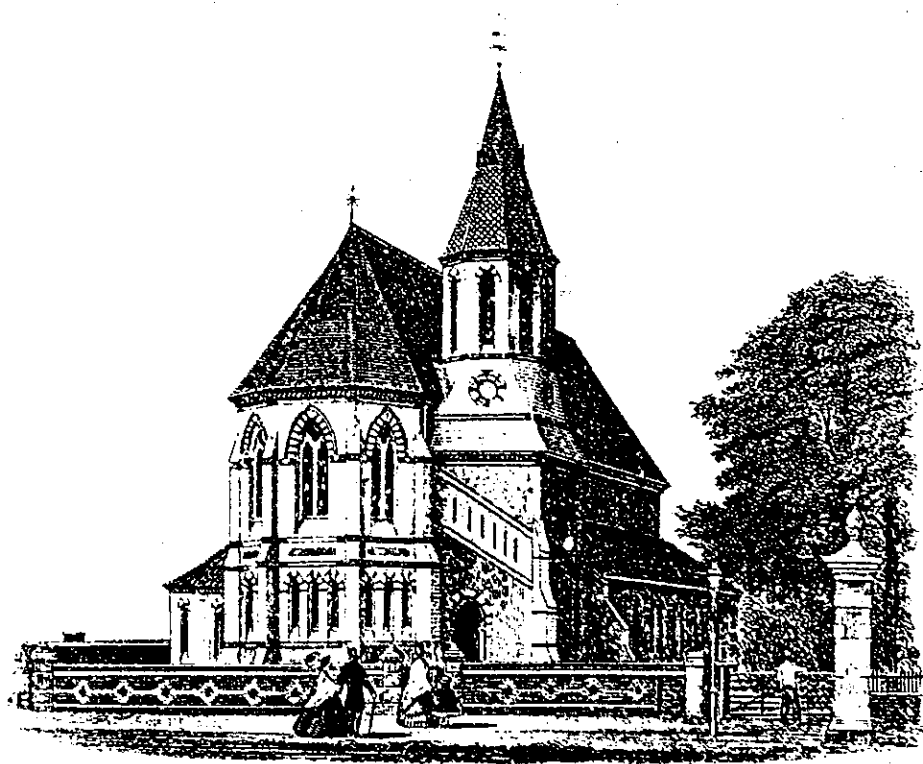


METHODISM IN HOLT

A Short History



Elizabeth J. Bellamy

FOREWORD

by the Rev. Richard G. Jones. M.A., B.D. Chairman of the East Anglia District and President-Elect of the Methodist Conference.

We all know how easy it is to complain about modern life, that everything keeps changing too fast for comfort. We sometimes feel that we live in a perpetual whirlwind. Especially when we feel most "whirled" we look to the Church as an institution that doesn't change. It stays, we imagine, rock solid and permanent. Ah, but does it?

In some ways the Church does stay constant, utterly reliable, as old as the hills and as consistent as the rising of the sun. It is everlastingly committed to the witness to God given us in the Bible, to the liberating good news that God comes to us in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, in truth and grace, to the sharing of the new life given us by the Spirit. It will always be showing forth that news through water, through bread and wine. Those things will never change.

But everything else will always be changing. Buildings, organisations, hymns, meetings, language, dress, forms of service - all will go on changing until the completion of time. It is this which makes church history fascinating, for it is a long pageantry of changes spread down through the centuries and back to Jesus himself. The pageantry is also shot through and through with the antics of us sinners. If you harbour the illusion that within the Church people have always been near-perfect, take a good look at what actually when on! It is a story of glory and shame, of grandeur and sin, of grace and disgrace.

In that spirit, please enjoy this excellent history of Methodism in Holt, written by someone deeply in love with the whole subject. It is a pageantry of perpetual change, of course. There is a fair bit, too, of disgrace. But there is also, running like a silver thread through it all, that clear note of grace, of God sustaining his people and leading them forward.

And then, pray for the future. Pray that we will keep making all the right changes, inspired by the right visions and a passionate desire that the modern world (and especially the modern Holt) should know the liberating freedom which is in Jesus. May we be equipped and directed so as to serve Him fittingly in the twenty first century.

March 8th, 1988

Illustrations drawn by John Pocock, Rhena Skinner, Margaret Pocock.

Nobody now knows how Methodism came to Holt, nor precisely when. In June, 1757, a certificate was issued for Protestant Dissenters to worship in a house belonging to Thomas Mendham, but these were specifically named as of the denomination of Independents, so they were not Methodists.

John Wesley paid his first visit to Norfolk in 1754 with his brother Charles who founded a Methodist Society in Norwich. There is no record of either of the Wesleys ever coming to Holt or to this part of Norfolk. The nearest John Wesley ever came was to Fakenham, Wells and then Walsingham in October 1781, and maybe Methodism did not reach Holt until 1783.

Before that, in 1780 and again in 1783, certificates were granted for two different places to be set apart for the religious worship of Protestant Dissenters. That in 1780, issued on 12th July, was for "a certain Barn belonging to the publick House called the Feathers... and now in the occupation of John Shepherd". There is no evidence as to whether this was for a Methodist society or not.

However, there is definite evidence for 1783. On 3rd of July Thomas Gunton of Briston requested the Bishop of Norwich to license "that part of an House or a Lanetoe in the tenure of Thomas Spicer situated in the parish of Holt" for Dissenters to worship in. On the following Sunday, July 6th, "a mob raised at Holt on acct. of a Methodist Meeting in the Town", wrote Mary Hardy of Letheringsett in her diary. This forebear of the Cozens-Hardy family had a great interest in religious observances and took her family not only to the parish church but also to any service in the neighbourhood with a good "Gospel preacher". It was her son William who was to be the founder of the first purpose-built Methodist Church in Holt.

So by July 1783 there was a Methodist society in Holt, but of how many members, how it began and who were its preachers, we know nothing. When William Hardy died in 1842, his memorial stone paid tribute to "the zeal with which he supported the cause of Wesleyan Methodism amidst the obloquy, the reproach, and the persecution, which attended its introduction into this neighbourhood". The early Methodists must have had a rough time in Holt. The trouble must have continued too for in August 1783 Mary Hardy noted that the Methodists took some rioters into custody, but with what results we do not know.

On February 4th 1793, "the dwelling house of John Mason of Holt... Tailor..." was licensed as a place for Dissenters to worship. Were these Methodists? Was the leanto at Thomas Spicer's too small? We do not know.

Once into the nineteenth century the picture becomes more precise. In 1813, William Hardy built the first Methodist building in Holt, in Albert Street, until recently known as the Chancery Buildings. In October, 1813, the Rev. Josiah Henry Walker, superintendent minister of the Walsingham Circuit gave notice to the Bishop of Norwich that a licence would be needed for this Albert Street building. In November, William Hardy, brewer, of Letheringsett, applied for the licence and worship in the building was then legal. It seems as though the Albert Street Chapel was built mostly at the expense of William Hardy, and probably cost about £900.

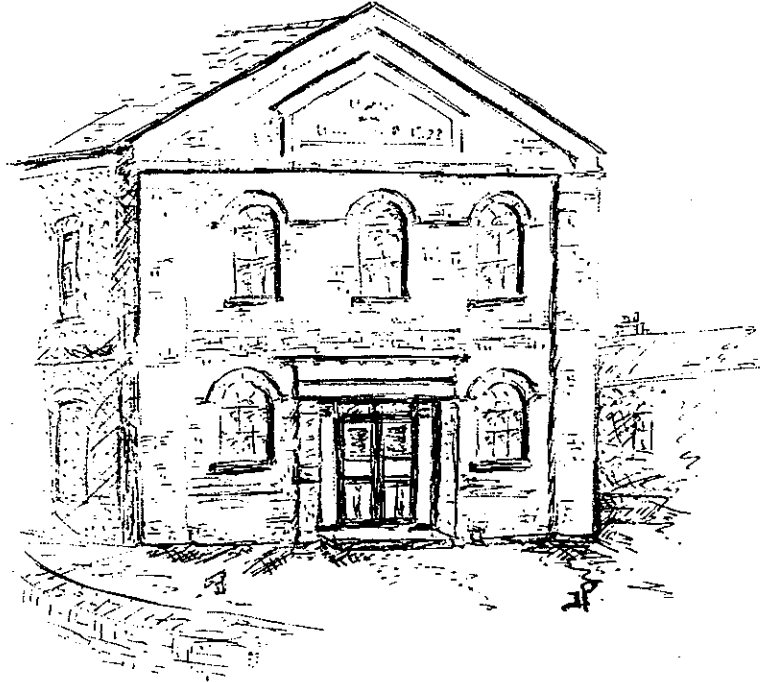
The Wesleyan Methodists worshipped in the Albert Street Chapel for 24 years. We know little of what the inside looked like, except that it had a gallery and pews. It is a high four-square building, with a tiled roof, brick and rough flint walls, opening straight onto the street. It was part of the Walsingham Wesleyan Methodist Circuit from 1813-1814 and then it became the head church of the Holt Wesleyan Circuit with two ministers, the superintendent minister presumably living in Holt.



The Chancery Buildings 1813

By 1837 the Albert Street Chapel was too small and the much bigger and grander New Street Chapel was begun. When this opened in 1838 the Albert Street mortgage debt of about £150 was carried forward to it, along with all the furnishings, galleries and pews, leaving Albert Street an empty shell. In this state the Albert Street Chapel was valued at £200. The mortgage was in the hands of William Hardy. From 1838 to 1850 the ex-chapel was occasionally used for services, but was used on weekdays, rent free, by the Committee of the British Schools - something else dear to William Hardy's heart. On the 14th June 1850, the Albert Street ex-chapel was sold by auction for £200 to a Mr George Turner. Its only other link to Holt Methodism was that it was used for a time by the Wesleyan Reformers for services after they were ejected by the Wesleyans, following the annual Conference of 1849.

Meanwhile the Wesleyans had gone further into William Hardy's debt in building New Street Chapel. The foundation stone was laid on October 11th 1837 on land conveyed to the Trustees by William Hardy. It opened on May 30th 1838 with a debt in the form of a mortgage held by William Hardy of £500. This was the difference between the cost of erection and the amount of subscriptions and donations received.



New Street Chapel 1838

The following year, in 1839, they found additional galleries were needed and another £100 was borrowed from the mortgagee, William Hardy. The same year in June, he gave the land for the burial ground to the trustees. Three years later he died, aged 72. A memorial was erected to his memory in the New Street Chapel, later moved to the Norwich Road Church, which reads:

SACRED
TO THE MEMORY OF
WILLIAM HARDY, ESQ. RE
(ONE OF THE MAGISTRATES OF THIS COUNTY)
WHO DIED SUDDENLY 22ND JUNE 1842,
AGED 72 YEARS

THIS TABLET IS ERECTED BY VARIOUS FRIENDS OF THE
WESLEYAN DENOMINATION,
AS A SPONTANEOUS TRIBUTE OF RESPECT TO HIS MEMORY,
AND AN ENDURING RECORD OF THE ZEAL
WITH WHICH HE SUPPORTED THE CAUSE OF
WESLEYAN METHODISM,
AMIDST THE OBLOQUY, THE REPROACH, AND THE
PERSECUTION, WHICH ATTENDED ITS INTRODUCTION
INTO THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD.
MAINLY THROUGH HIS INSTRUMENTALITY THE FIRST
WESLEYAN CHAPEL
WAS ERECTED IN THIS TOWN IN 1813,
AND HE BECAME A LIBERAL CONTRIBUTOR TO THE
FUNDS FOR THE ERECTION OF THIS
PLACE OF WORSHIP:
AND AT A PERIOD WHEN FEW OF THE HUMBLER CLASSES
COULD READ, AND STILL FEWER WERE TAUGHT TO THINK,
HE ESTABLISHED AND MAINTAINED FOR MANY YEARS,
THE SUNDAY SCHOOL CONNECTED WITH THIS SOCIETY.

"When the ear heard him, then it blessed him,
And when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him."

William Hardy's heir was his nephew William Hardy Cozens-Hardy, and he too was a lifelong benefactor of Methodism in Holt, but a far more controversial one. In 1842, as heir, he took over the mortgage of both the Chancery Buildings ex-chapel in Albert Street and the New Street Wesleyan Chapel. He was a keen supporter of Methodism and an advocate for more lay leadership within the church's structures. He was not only mortgagee of the chapels in Holt but also a trustee of the New Street property.

In 1849 at the annual Wesleyan Methodism Conference the leaders of a pressure group which had advocated more lay leadership in anonymously published fly sheets, were expelled. Three ministers, Everett, Dunn and Griffith, although they refused to answer questions about the authorship of the fly sheets, were expelled as the ringleaders. William Hardy Cozens-Hardy wrote of this in his introduction to Proceedings in Chancery in 1852:

Considering that these Gentlemen had been expelled in violation both of the laws of Methodism, and of the New Testament, and that the Conference had exercised towards them a tyranny unprecedented in Methodism, and unexampled in any Protestant Church, I sympathized with them as victims of priestly despotism, and attended, with Mr Colman, several public meetings, for the purpose of expressing my views on this subject;...

In the early part of the year 1850, it was currently reported in the public Papers, and generally believed, that the President had given rise to the expression, - "The Chapels are ours - the debts are yours," - expressions which I deemed calculated unnecessarily to alarm the Trustees and Mortgagees of Wesleyan Chapels. I therefore, with a view to explain to trustees and mortgagees their legal rights, published a Letter in the Wesleyan Times, of the 4th of February, 1850, showing that the rights of the mortgagees are paramount to those of trustees, and that, unless the Trustees, or the Conference, pay the money, the mortgagees can obtain legal possession of the Chapels irrespective of the Conference. And, in order to protect themselves against the despotic doings of Conference, I recommended Trustees to mortgage the Chapels, instead of giving Promissory Notes. This letter gave great offence to the Conference...

In February, 1850, a charge was preferred against me and Mr Joseph Colman, of Holt, by the Rev Richard Tabraham, (Superintendent of the Walsingham Circuit) of having "violated the discipline of the Connexion, by attending a public meeting in the town of Walsingham, and thereby disturbing the peace of that Circuit". The case was heard before the Trustees and Leaders of the Holt Society, who unanimously acquitted us of the charge.

Not surprisingly, Mr Tabraham did not accept this as an unbiased decision and appealed to the District Meeting. A Minor District Committee was appointed to hear the appeal and, despite Mr Cozens-Hardy pointing out that this Committee had no authority to act under Wesleyan law, they upheld the appeal and expelled both men from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in May 1850.

Mr Cozens-Hardy then set about the business of seeking repayment of the money he had tied up in the mortgages of the Albert Street ex-chapel and the New Street Chapel. His own account of this is as follows.

Having been thus unceremoniously excommunicated from the Christian Church, in utter contravention of the laws of Methodism, and knowing that little or no income would be derived in future from the two Chapels in Holt, I applied to Mr Curties, one of the surviving trustees of the old Chapel, for payment of the £200 due to me on the mortgage. It was useless to apply to Mr Johnson, the other trustee, as he had recently been a Pauper in the Work-house. As the Trustees were not prepared to pay the money, it was deemed advisable to offer the Chapel for sale by auction under a special power contained in the Trust Deed, rather than compel me to resort to legal proceedings to foreclose the mortgage; and this Chapel was accordingly sold to Mr Turner for the sum of £200, and subsequently conveyed to him. It will be borne in mind that this sale took place with the knowledge, and in the presence of the Superintendent Preacher, and that no objection to the sale was made, until the Wesleyan Reformers used the Building for holding separate Services.

It should be observed that this Chapel had not been used for more than ten years as a place of worship, except for occasional service on weekday evenings in winter, and for the Sunday School; the Committee of the British School occupying it free of rent on the week-days.

In September, 1850, I gave notice to the Trustees of the New Chapel, and also to the Rev. W. Worker, the Superintendent, that unless the sum of £600 and interest - the amount due on mortgage of that Chapel - was paid on the 26th October, I should take proceedings to foreclose the mortgage. I was not bound, in this instance, to give any notice at all, either to the Trustees or the Superintendent. This was merely an act of courtesy.

The money was not forthcoming and Mr Worker tried to prove to Mr Cozens-Hardy that as a trustee of the New Street Chapel he would be in a difficult legal position if he foreclosed on the mortgage. As Mr Cozens-Hardy was already convinced that his rights as a mortgagee took precedence over those as a trustee this was all he needed to persuade him to instruct his solicitor to start legal proceedings against the trustees. This he did in the name of Mr Colman. Unfortunately Mr Colman's health was poor, so on November 16th 1850, he assigned his interest as a trustee of the New Street Chapel mortgage term to Mr Josiah Hill.

Legal proceedings began and dragged on with many ramifications and recriminations, prolonged by the Wesleyan Conference's determination to prove at law that a trustee could not foreclose if he was also the mortgagee. The case was finally heard at Westminster Hall on April 16th, 1851, by the Court of Chancery. It lasted for four days. The Vice-Chancellor, Lord Cranworth, gave an unqualified judgement in favour of the defendants, Hill and Cozens-Hardy, and ordered the Wesleyan Conference to pay the mortgage in full plus interest, and all the court costs and legal fees - some £2000. Mr Cozens-Hardy was proved right. His rights as a mortgagee took precedence over his duties as a trustee.

As a result of this case in the Chancery Court the former Albert Street Chapel became known as the Chancery Buildings and those expelled from Wesleyan Methodism started a new Methodist Church in Holt variously known as the Wesleyan Reformers, the Free Methodists and the United Methodists.

A contemporary comment written by Herbert Cozens-Hardy the brother of Caroline Colman, wife of the founder of Colman's factory at Carrow in Norwich, records of this period:

The expulsion of Everett, Dunn and Griffith was followed by the expulsion or secession of a large number of the more liberal members of the Connexion. At Holt we were turned out of the chapel, and for some time we had service in a barn, one end of which was piled with corn. Our daily talk was about religious liberty and freedom of conscience.

Laura E. Stuart, in the same account of Caroline Colman's life, writes of her mother's marriage in 1856:

...the nucleus of the present business, was moved from Stoke to Carrow, Norwich, and it was Carrow House that was my mother's home during the whole of her married life. My father and she were married on September 25th 1856 in the British Schoolroom (now the Board School) at Holt, a room built by my grandfather in 1851, which served the purpose of a school-room on week-days and a chapel on Sundays.

This building, now the garage in New Street, was thus one of several temporary homes for the Methodist denomination which eventually built the present church in Norwich Road.

Mr William Hardy Cozens-Hardy continued his great interest in religious matters as this letter to his son, Herbert, shows. It was dated 27th January, 1860.

Revival meetings are being held in every direction. We have had a succession of services at Holt for about a fortnight every day beginning at 7am, 12 noon and 7.30. The attendance has been extraordinary. Last night in the midst of snow and rain there could not have been less than 200 present, the south wing being full as well as the centre. It is estimated that nearly 100 have been added to the Church, some of whom are from the most abandoned portion of society. This is very satisfactory and encouraging to Mr Heywood who conducts the services with considerable propriety.

This Mr Heywood was the Rev. Edmund Heywood, the Wesleyan Reformers minister in Holt from 1859-60 and the services must have been held in the British School Room. No wonder this group of Methodists were two years later able to build their own large church on Obelisk Plain. By then they must have been strong in numbers and connections, especially with the Cozens-Hardy family. Officially they were in connexion with the Wesleyan Reformers who first stationed a Minister in Holt in 1854. From then until 1926 there was always one or two ministers stationed in the Holt Circuit. The one resident in Holt lived in a manse, which is now divided into two properties, attached to the west side of the Shirehall. This building had been a public house belonging to the Cozens-Hardy brewery. It was rebuilt, probably by William Cozens-Hardy of Chancery Court fame, as a manse for a Free Methodist minister and it was certainly in use as a manse some time before 1896. On May 21st, 1896, Herbert Cozens-Hardy, who inherited it from his father, William Hardy Cozens-Hardy, conveyed it to the trustees of the Free Methodist Church. It remained as the manse until 1926.



The Shirehall Plain Manse

In 1862 William Hardy Cozens-Hardy gave the Free Methodists permission to build a church on part of his land called the Hill House estate at the top of Letheringsett Hill in Obelisk Plain. He then gave the site which was valued at £100. On April 17th, 1862, the trustees advertised in the Norwich paper a sale of shares to help finance the building of the church. The advert cost 6/6d. The total building cost was £2052 10s.6d and it was claimed that all the money was raised in 3 years - by April 1864. In fact interest was being paid on loans until 1879, when in July, the final loan was repaid.

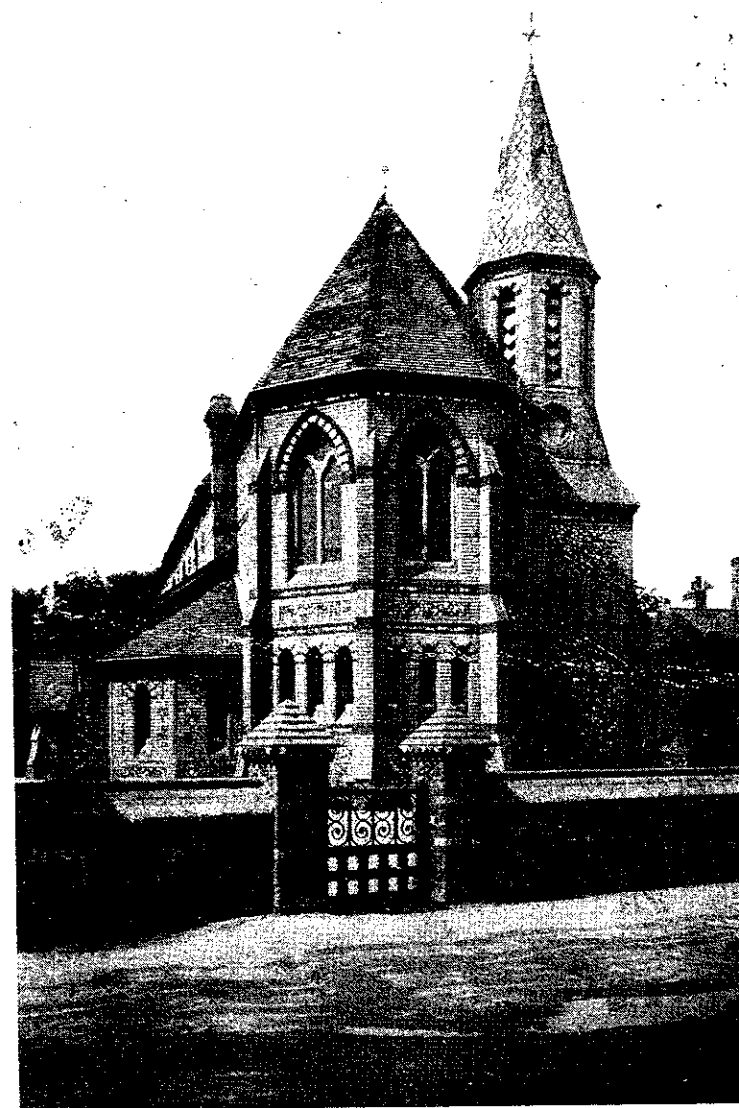
1862 + 3.

An Account of the Sums of money
Contributed towards the Erection of the
Methodist Free Church, Holt together
with the Sums raised and Collections
made in the said Church for the Support
of the Ministry, Sunday School,
Missionary and other purposes
connected therewith.

1862 Gift of Site by W. H. Cozens Hardy	
Inquire Valued at	100 0 0
Income Foundation Stone Laying	12 18 5
1863 Opening Services	
Afternoon by the Rev. Mr. Marmaduke	
Trillio from 2 Cornhillians III. 18	
Afternoon by the Reverend J. A.	
Wheaton from John XII. 21	128 4 0
	241 2 5

Extract from Norwich Road Church Accounts 1862-3

The design of this church is totally unique and somewhat grandiose when compared with the more traditionally styled Wesleyan Chapel in New Street. The architect, Thomas Jeckyll, was instructed by William Hardy Cozens-Hardy and one can only guess at who was instrumental in designing a building on so generous a scale. It is said to represent the early career of Thomas Jeckyll, a Norfolk architect, and to be one of the most significant examples of the taste for contrasted building materials which so delighted the mid-Victorians. It certainly makes a visual impact on the town today, but that must be nothing compared to the impact when it was newly built. It is not known whether the tower was designed for anything more than visual effect. It has never housed anything more useful than pigeons. The church was opened on Good Friday, April 3rd 1863.



PRINTED AT ARTHUR PRESTON'S J. "RELIANCE" WORKS, HOLT.
METHODIST FREE CHURCH, HOLT.

A 1904 postcard

The Methodist Free Church, Holt,

WILL BE OPENED FOR DIVINE SERVICE

On Good Friday, April 3rd, 1863,

THE REV. MARMADUKE MILLER,

OF DARLINGTON,

Will preach at 11 a.m. and at 6.30 p.m.

AND

THE REV. THOMAS A. WHEELER,

OF NORWICH,

At Three o'clock in the Afternoon.

ON SUNDAY, APRIL 5,

THE REV. RICHARD CHEW,

OF NORWICH,

Will preach at 10.30 a.m. and at 6.30 p.m.

ON TUESDAY, APRIL 7,

THE REV. WILLIAM BROCK, D.D.,

OF BLOOMSBURY,

Will preach at half-past Seven in the Evening.

ON SUNDAY, APRIL 12,

THE REV. WILLIAM TRITTON,

OF YARMOUTH,

Will preach at 10.30 a.m. and at 6.30 p.m.

Collections will be made at each Service in behalf of the Building Fund.

A LECTURE

WILL BE DELIVERED IN THE BRITISH SCHOOL ROOMS

On Wednesday, April 8th,

BY THE REV. WILLIAM BROCK, D.D.,

Subject:—*In Hour with our Great Grandfathers.*

The Chair will be taken at 7.30 p.m.

Tickets of Admission to the Centre, 1s.; to the South Wing, 6d.; to the North Wing, 3d., to be had of Mr. R. J. Playford.

The Proceeds will be given to the Building Fund.

N.B.—A Public Tea will be provided for Country Friends on Good Friday, at the British School Rooms, Tickets 6d. each, to be had of Mr. Turner.

Handbill for the opening services April 3rd, 1863

The Wesleyan Methodists in the New Street Chapel and the Free Methodists in the Norwich Road Church were not the only Methodists in Holt. It is not clear when the first Primitive Methodist Society was formed in the town, but by 1872 it was strong enough to buy land for a chapel. On 21st June, 1872, a piece of land with a cottage on it was purchased from Mr J. Dye by the Primitive Methodist Trustees for £145. This was in Albert Street. The chapel was built during the summer and opened with two sets of ceremonies on September 29th and October 6th, 1872, by the ministers of the Aylsham Primitive Circuit, Revs W.H. Meadows and J.T. Horne, assisted by Rev. R. Betts. Donations mounted to £97.12.9d. and the Trustees had to borrow the difference to pay the total cost, including land purchase, of £309.12.9d. This building is the one that today gives its name to Chapel Yard off Albert Street, and still stands proclaiming its origins to the observant eye.



Albert Street Primitive Methodist Chapel and Cottage

1872-3 Brought on	156 9 7	William H. Meadows	
Spouting Lamps	3 1 5	John Thos Horne	Ministers
New Clock	3 0 0		
Rates	" 5 0 2		
Sand Tax	" 3 6	Trustees	
Gas Bill	" 8 9	William Moore	
Bakers Brick & Co	" 6 0	Joseph Brumby	
Insurance	" 11 0	George Jacobs	
Books & Camp Notes	" 7 2 2	Isaac Jeary	
Revering Chapel	" 2 6		
Purchase of Property	145 0 0	William Lawrence	Letting out
	£309 8 0	John Rex	
Balance in hand	49	Charles Tubby	Worship
	309 12 9	James Hume	
		William Killings	Edgipia
Examined and found correct and signed by order of the Quarterly Meeting at Preston, March 17 th 1873			
W. H. Meadows President			
John Thos Horne Secretary			

Extract from the Primitive Methodist Trust Accounts 1872-3

1873 Brought on	97 2 9	1872-3 Expenditure	£ 1 0
Spouting Lamps	" 10 "	Mr J. Stoney (Contract)	74 14 0
Renewed on Note	212 0 0	Mr R. G. G. G. G.	26 11 6
	£309 12 9	Mr Robert Brick Mill	14 5 0
		Mr G. G. G. G.	3 15 0
		Mr Hardy's Quine	9 3 0
		Mr Jacobs	1 8 0
		Mr Garrett (Carting)	6 18 0
		Mr Rex's	3 14 4
		do	9 4 4
		Mr Weston's Notes	1 18 9
		Mr Kaudall's Gas	3 2 0
		Mr Joynes (Conveyance)	2 17 0
		John Brumby's	1 9 8
		R. Cook's Linn	1 11 0
		Labor (Shutt & H)	1 16 0
		Subscription Stone	15 0
		R. Potts' Expenses	10 0
		Mr Playford's Bill	9 0
		Interest Paid to Oct 4/73	1 10 0
			156 9 7
Examined and found correct and signed by order of the Quarterly Meeting at Preston, March 17 th 1873			
W. H. Meadows President			
John Thos Horne Secretary			

The Primitive Methodists must always have been the smallest of the three Methodist societies in Holt. The Trust accounts show that their income was small compared with that of the Free Methodists. Pew rents, collections at services and camp meetings, teas at the annual Good Friday specials, class monies and rent from the cottage next door formed the main income. Their biggest expenditure was interest on loans and paying back the loans bit by bit. They never succeeded in clearing all the loans. The chapel was lit by gas and heated by coal and coke. Singing was accompanied by a harmonium and a clock was considered an essential item when the chapel was built. The life of the chapel revolved round regular services on Sundays and weeknights, a Sunday School, a Ladies Sewing Meeting and a choir which practiced on Monday evenings. There must have been a time when the chapel seemed too small for in the mid-1890s money was raised for building a new chapel and school room, but nothing came of this.

The Wesleyan Methodists may have suffered from the loss of Cozens-Hardy support after 1850, but Conference paid off their mortgage and by 1893 they had sufficiently recovered to put in hand a major restoration of the New Street chapel. Unfortunately no Minute Books have survived so little is known about the life of the Wesleyans in Holt.

It is otherwise with the Free Methodists. Many account books and Minute books are extant. In 1896 a site for a school hall behind the church building was conveyed to the trustees by the Cozens-Hardys, though it was not built upon for many years. The accounts show that seat rents formed the backbone of the Church income. In 1863, when the church opened, 294 seats were available for rent in 56 pews, varying between 4 and 6 seats per pew. The rents also varied between 2/- a seat in a front pew to 6d in the back pews. In 1863 £66.16.0d was received in seat rents. This was an all time high as income from seat rents gradually reduced over the years until by 1892 it had dropped to £31.17.0d. with an increasing number of seats vacant. Does this represent a falling attendance at services?

Other records for the Methodist Free Church show that income derived not only from seat rents, but also from collections at services, from a weeknight lecture, from missionary meetings, from special collections for the organ fund, from Sunday School Anniversary collections and teas, from burial fees, from rents paid by an essay class, from subscriptions for specific building improvements and from collections at Love Feasts. Expenditure items add to our knowledge of the life of the church in the 19th century. The organ had to be tuned and the choir kept purchasing sheet music. Repairs to the building, especially the high exposed roof, were an ongoing necessity. The church was lit by gas and heated by a coke or coal burning furnace, whilst the two vestries had open grates for fires. There was an annual bazaar and donations were given to various neighbouring chapels like Cley and Bodham as well as to the Missionary Society. In 1883 the trustees paid a beer allowance of 11/2d to workmen. There was a need to buy hymnbooks at regular intervals, and to pay the circuit assessment of £20 a quarter.

Methodist Free Church,

HOLT.

BURIAL FEES.

SEATHOLDERS—ADULTS 5s.

NON-SEATHOLDERS—DITTO .. 10s.

Children under Ten—Half-price.

SEXTON'S FEES, 7s. 6d. New Grave

„ 5s. Second Interment.

Any person purchasing a grave may have a second or third burial in it at half-price.

MINISTER'S FEE, 2s. 6d.

Fees for Gravestones,

SEATHOLDERS 10s.

NON-SEATHOLDERS 15s.

From its opening in 1863 until 1874 the trustees paid for various alterations to the church. In 1864 a lightning conductor was put in for £5. In 1866 £15.12.5d was subscribed for altering and ornamenting the side roofs and £12.19.5d for placing a cornice and carved work above the side walls. In 1867 a Mr Whiting was paid £8.16.9d for altering the platform (presumably the pulpit area). In 1870 it cost 5/- to repair the tiles. In 1874 the platform was altered again at a cost of £16.9.6d which Mr Cozens-Hardy paid.

The three Methodist Churches continued side by side in the town to the end of the 19th century and on into the 20th. There is no real evidence of any contact between them nor of any antipathy either. Each related to a circuit of its own denomination and through it to its own annual Conference and Connexional structures. Each

was served by ministers of its own. At the turn of the century Holt was still a circuit in its own right of the Wesleyan Conference with one minister, presumably resident in the town. The Primitive Methodists were in the Holt and Sheringham Circuit, with two ministers, one living in Holt. The Free Methodists were part of the Holt Free Methodist Circuit with one Minister. Each church had its own choir, Sunday School, meetings, fund raising events and anniversaries as well as the services, class meetings and annual specials.

With the 20th Century changes became apparent. In 1902 the Wesleyans became part of the Norwich Mission Circuit with probably the junior of that circuit's 5 or 6 ministers as its minister. It is most likely that this implies a general weakening of the Holt Circuit so that it needed the support of a bigger area to be viable. In 1905 the Primitive Methodists changed the name of their circuit to Sheringham and Holt (from Holt and Sheringham) reflecting that Sheringham had overtaken Holt in size and importance in the church as well as the town. In 1907 the Free Methodists became part of the United Methodist Church, one of the first of several Methodist denominational unions in England. The Norwich Road Church now became the United Methodist Church and part of that Connexion and conference. It continued to have one minister stationed in Holt until 1926. In that year the Holt United Methodist Circuit joined that of Sheringham to become the Sheringham and Holt United Methodist Circuit, with only one Minister who lived in Sheringham. The manse in Holt thus became redundant.

In November 1926 this manse on Shirehall Plain was sold to a Mr Robert D. Wilcox, who later moved to Loughborough. It was sold by auction for £460. Of that £15.12.6d was paid to Mr Leggatt for his expenses, and the residue was invested with the Trustees of the United Methodist Church Purposes Fund, the income to be used for the Sheringham and Holt Methodist Circuit at the discretion of the quarterly Meeting of that circuit.

By 1929 there is evidence that the ministers of the three Methodist denominations were beginning to draw their churches together. They were the invited guest speakers at each others special events. In 1930 they went a step further and joined for a major summer fund raising fete at Letheringsett in the grounds of Glavenside by kind permission of the Cozens-Hardy family. They held joint planning meetings at the Primitive Methodist Chapel and aimed to raise £100. It had been suggested the previous year by Mr Cozens-Hardy when the United Methodists discovered that the Primitive Methodists had already booked Glavenside for their fete, but the Uniteds had refused to join the Primitives thinking a combined fete would not bring in enough money. By 1930 they had changed their minds.

By 1932 the only resident minister in Holt was the Wesleyan minister. The other two denominations were served by the Sheringham ministers.

In 1932, following the pattern set by the three Methodist Conferences, Holt agreed to unite its Methodist churches. Representatives of the three denominations recommended to the leaders meeting of each that worship be centralised at the United Methodist church in Norwich Road, that the Wesleyan New Street building become the Sunday School and weeknight venue, that the Wesley Guild become united and hold meetings in each church and that a quarterly united service with Holy Communion be held in each church. This was agreed by all three churches in February, 1932.

Nationally the Uniting Conference of the Wesleyan, United and Primitive Methodist Churches took place on September 20th, 1932, in London. Several Holt Methodists were present. Locally the Union Celebrations were on October 2nd and 3rd. The programme was:

Sunday October 2nd

10.45am United Worship in Albert Road Methodist Church
Preacher: Rev. H.T. Barraclough

2.30pm Young Peoples Service in Cley Road Methodist Church
Speaker: Rev. W. Vickers Sibson

6.30pm United Service in Norwich Road Methodist Church
Conducted by Rev. L. Darby

Monday October 3rd

3.00pm United Womens Gathering in Cley Road Methodist Church
Speakers: Rev. J. Bullock
Rev. E. Marshall

4.30pm Union Public Tea

7.30pm Thanksgiving Service
Chairman: Mr C. Winn
Supported by Rev. H.T. Barraclough
Speakers: Rev. A. Wilson
Rev. W. Vickers Sibson

Sacrament at the close
Conducted by Rev. H.T. Barraclough

On the back of this programme was written:

The Union of the Wesleyan, Primitive and United Methodist Churches took place at the Royal Albert Hall, London, on Tuesday, September 20th. Several Methodists from our Circuit were present when the actual Deed of Union was signed.

The terms "Wesleyan", "Primitive" and "United" have now disappeared and the new body will simply be called "The Methodist Church".

We are holding local celebrations as shown in this Programme. Help to make these services a very memorable and inspiring time. All Methodists in Holt and District are urged to join with us on this GREAT OCCASION.

At Union the Holt Methodists became part of the Cromer and North Walsham Circuit with the Rev. Sidney Darby as resident minister. This was altered in 1934 and Holt became part of the Cromer, Sheringham and Holt Circuit, an arrangement that lasted until 1974, with the exception of 3 years in the Aylsham Circuit from 1965-68. Since 1974 Holt has been in the Fakenham and Wells Circuit.

It cannot have been easy for the three denominations to unite in spirit and to grow together in fellowship. The members of each would have grown up with slightly different habits and styles of worship and different ways of doing things. Some of these tensions are apparent in the Minutes of the Leaders Meeting. For example, paying the quarterly assessment. Each Church had paid it to a different Circuit. In March 1933 these circuit structures were still not united. So the Methodists in Holt paid £30 a quarter: £6 to the ex-Primitive Circuit, £9.10.0d to the ex-United Circuit, and £14.10.0d to the ex-Wesleyan Circuit. Perhaps the proportions of the total reflect the relative sizes of the churches immediately prior to Union.

At the same Leaders meeting there was a discussion as to whether the organist should continue to be paid as had been the ex-United custom. It was referred to a future meeting because this meant altering an inherited practice.

The Leaders Meeting of September, 1933, debated the constitution of the Leaders Meeting and decided...

the Resident Minister in Holt should be the presiding official at all meetings. The members of the Committee to have an equal voice and vote in all matters coming before the meeting. In the event of a disagreement between members of one uniting church and another the members of each Church could call in the minister of their particular denomination to help them in dealing with the matter under discussion

As the three Methodist churches learnt to worship together and work together and sort out differences and areas of mistrust and resentment that must have been inevitable, the question of what to do with all the buildings had to be resolved. The ex-Primitive properties were the first to be sold.

In September 1932 a survey and plan of the ex-Primitive chapel and cottage in Albert Street had been done at a cost of £2.12.6d. The cottage was sold in December 1932 for £165 to a Mildred Mary Chapman of Costessy, Norwich, with a right of way to the outside W.C. for Methodists between the chapel and the cottage. £68 of the proceeds were used to pay off the debt to the Chapel Aid Association which had been outstanding since 1872.

By 1934 it had become apparent that the ex-Primitive chapel itself was no longer needed by the Methodists. First a solicitor had to make a search to find the trustees, dead or alive! This accounted for 7/- in the solicitor's bill for handling the sale. the property was sold for £150 to the Parish Council and became the town's Fire Station. The Trust for the ex-Primitive properties was wound up in February, 1935, and the balance devoted to the reduction of debt in the circuit; though £50 was given to the Norwich Road Church towards the £59 it cost to have electric light installed.

The ex-Wesleyan church in New Street (or Cley Road as it was sometimes called) was still needed, though it proved expensive to maintain. It was used as ancillary premises to the Norwich Road church. Sunday worship was held at Norwich Road, Sunday School and mid-week activities at New Street. It was also referred to as the Lecture Hall and the Norwich Road treasurer paid for a concert licence in December 1932. In 1938 a Centenary Fund was begun, but it was hardly the most propitious moment in British history to launch a Fund and it seems to have raised little more than £37 before being allowed to lapse.

In the years leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War the Holt Methodists became sufficiently one to look outwards again. In September, 1934, the Leaders agreed to purchase 100 of the new Methodist Hymnbooks at 2/3d each, indicative of the size of the regular congregation. This was the new hymnbook of the newly united Methodist Church, first published in 1933. The following month, October 1934, the Leaders agreed to start a monthly popular service with a social hour afterwards in the New Street premises, and further agreed to canvas the town about it. By December, 1934, Holt's circuit assessment had reached £100 per annum.

Outreach continued in 1935. During August open-air services were held on Tuesday evenings, but no indication as to where. Then in January and February 1936, the Leaders were busy preparing for a visit from no less a person than Gipsy Smith. Should they hire a marquee? No. Too expensive. Should they relay the sound to New Street for the overflow? Would Norwich Road Church be big enough? There were to be two meetings, at 3pm and 7.15pm with a tea at 5pm costing 9d a head. For a report of what did happen we are dependent on the Eastern Daily Press for Wednesday, April 22nd, 1936:

GIPSY SMITH AT HOLT

A campaign held at the Methodist Church, Holt, on Sunday and Monday attracted exceptionally large congregations. On Sunday the Rev. C.H. Hulbert (London), father of the Rev. C. D. Hulbert, was the preacher. On Monday the presence of Gipsy Smith, the 75-year old evangelist, attracted Methodists from all parts of Norfolk, and although 700 were squeezed into the Norwich Road Church, others were unable to get in. The afternoon service, which Gipsy Smith himself conducted, was timed to begin at 3.30, but by one o'clock the Church was full. Tea was afterwards served in the New Street Lecture Hall, where nearly 400 were accommodated in two sittings.

The evening service in the Methodist Church was relayed by loud speakers to overflow meetings in the Church School and Mr Gant's meadow. The ministers taking part were the Revs. W.H.Heap, C.H.Hulbert, Messrs Gent (Sheringham), Middlewood (Cromer), and Day (Norwich). Mr E. Newstead was at the organ, and Miss V. Culley accompanied the vocal solo by Gipsy Smith.

The Church School and the meadow were next door to the church, on the south side.

With the start of war a new note sounded in Leaders Meetings. On December 13th, 1939, the cost of blacking out the church was discussed and it was noted that the organist had left to join His Majesty's Forces. On September 23rd, 1940, it was agreed to leave the Vestry open and provide a fire in it for the use of the troops in the town. On August 13th, 1941, it was decided to sing the National Anthem after each morning service.

But war brought new needs for buildings. From June 1940 the War Department rented the New Street building for £60pa from the Trustees. This continued until 1947, when it was returned to Methodist usage. By then there were plans to build a school hall behind the Norwich Road church and New Street was only used occasionally for social work and social functions.

On August 3rd, 1950, the New Street ex-chapel was sold to the St. John's Ambulance Brigade for £1750. A right of way was reserved across the forecourt to the burial ground which was not included in the sale and is still Methodist property. It has been rented for a nominal rent to the Town Council since 1985 for them to make into a memorial garden.

In 1951 a school hall was built on the land behind the Norwich Road church and partly paid for with the money from the sale of the New Street building. At about this time the church had a membership of 85, a Guild of 25 and a Sunday School of about 60 scholars and 8 teachers divided into the Primary and Upper Departments. There was a weekly Sisterhood, a choir, Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, and a Christian Endeavour. More hymn books had to be ordered because there were no longer enough. There was a shortage of organists. A weekly Bible Study group began. Prayer meetings were held at 7.30pm on Saturdays. An envelope scheme was begun to encourage regular giving. By November 1951 there were 20 people in it. The quarterly assessment kept rising because ministers' stipends had gone up.

In 1952 the new School Hall debt was cleared owing to a legacy from the late Mr Basil Cozens-Hardy, the last of that family to worship in a Holt Methodist Church. The minister began a Youth Club, and it met on Thursday evenings. A group of boys were asked to pump the organ for services, on a rota basis. In 1953 an evangelistic campaign was planned for July. It was successful with a number of converts made. The church was busy every night of the week. Monday had become Youth Club night, Tuesday was business meetings and specials, Wednesday was Guild, Thursday was choir practice and Fridays Fellowship meeting.

By 1954 the Sunday School was 100 strong, but short of teachers. Finances were also short and only £35 of the quarterly assessment was paid, about £10 short.

By 1955 the Leaders were wanting to restart the choir - what happened to it? And the hymnbooks needed replacing as many had become dilapidated. In December many of the senior Sunday School scholars had been to Norwich to a great evangelistic campaign and been converted. The Leaders gave thanks to God. The minister's wife was trying to restart the choir. Mr Doughty, the Sunday School superintendent, reported 90 scholars on the roll. There were about 40 in the Youth Fellowship.

The hymnbooks were not the only things to be in need of repair. The Organ was too. In June, 1929, a scheme had been costed to move the organ either forward in the gallery for £8.10.0d or downstairs on a new platform for £10.10.0d. Presumably the second course was chosen, for that is where the organ is now. In 1954 an electric blower was added for £30 following a donation of £33.8.6d. Eight years later, in 1962, the organ had to have a major renovation and that cost £98.10.0d. Several items relating to new heaters for the church indicate an increasing awareness of the coldness of the building. But it was not until 1967 that a renovation fund began.

In July 1959, the Rev. J.W. Sawyer, superintendent minister of the circuit, had written to the Methodist Property Department in Manchester about the future of the church:

...the erection by Mr Cozens-Hardy's grandfather (William Hardy Cozens-Hardy) of the almost cathedral-like chapel now in use. Its proper maintenance (ie lighting, heating, cleaning, repair and decoration, etc.) is quite beyond the capacity of the small handful of people who worship there nowadays. Whether in a small town of this size, led by a series of short-staying probationer ministers, we should, unendowed, endeavour to preserve this monument of divided Methodism...is certainly a matter for reflection in the not far distant future.

Neither the church nor the circuit gave up, however, despite the fact of rising costs and dwindling congregations. In 1965 a new manse was bought in Holt, all ministers since Union having lived in lodgings or rented accommodation.

After a brief sojourn in the Aylsham Circuit from 1965-68, Holt returned to the Cromer, Sheringham and Holt Circuit and the following year commissioned architects to draw up a scheme to reduce the height and area of the inside of the church to make it more suitable for modern needs. Mr Basil Cozens-Hardy objected strongly to any alteration. Whether for that reason, or because of the cost, nothing was done.

In 1972 Norfolk County Council bought 14 square yards in the south-east corner of the burial ground for a road improvement scheme in Norwich Road. They demolished the original decorative wall and paid for it to be replaced by an ordinary whole flint wall. This cost £297.25.

It was not until 1983 that a scheme to improve the inside of the church and make it suitable for present worshipping needs was finally agreed and put in hand. An internal wall was built across the width of the church near the back to make the church smaller and to provide a kitchen, lounge and toilets in what was the rear of the church. A suspended ceiling hung just above the arches kept the proportions right and made it possible to heat the church adequately. The choir gallery was boarded off. This, along with many small painting and soft furnishing improvements, made the interior as it is now. It cost £17,947.08 and all the money was raised by February 1985.

In 1983, the same year that the church was altered inside, the graveyard was also improved. The grave stones were moved and put neatly against the boundary walls and the grounds weeded and maintained. More recent external improvements in October 1987 have been the lowering of the front boundary wall to create a welcoming open aspect and enable car parking on site.

The most recent of a long line of building improvements is the one agreed in 1988. The 1951 school hall had reached the end of its life as a building and it was agreed to replace it with a new hall of brick to be added as an extension to the rear of the church. This will enable the church to develop its own work and serve the town better. It is expected that this will cost about £28,000.

This booklet is sold to raise money towards this building fund.

Wesleyan Methodist Ministers in Holt 1815-1932

Holt Circuit 1815-1902:-

1815 Moses Dunn, Henry Tuck
1816 Henry Tuck, James Jones, jun.
1817 George Deverell, James Jones, jun.
1818 Marmaduke Revell, Robert Bryant
1819 Marmaduke Revell, Thomas Heywood
1820 Marmaduke Revell, Robert Day
1821 Thomas Padman, Robert Day
1822 Thomas Padman, Benjamin Clayton
1824 William Pearson, jun., John Saunders
1826 James Jones, jun., Edward Abraham, James Peck
1827 James Jones, jun., Edward Abraham
1828 James Jones, jun., John W. Cotton
1829 Ralph Gibson, Joseph Broughton
1830 James Dunbar, Charles Currelly
1831 James Dunbar, John Simon
1833 Thomas Ballingall, William Ritchie
1834 Thomas Ballingall, James Lemmon
1835 Thomas Brown, James Lemmon
1836 Thomas Brown, Francis P. Gladwin
1837 Thomas Cutting, Francis Gladwin
1838 Thomas Cutting, James Clapham
1839 Philip Jameson, James Clapham
1840 Philip Jameson, Thomas Garbutt, jun.
1841 Philip Jameson, James S. Hay
1842 Isaac Phenix, sen., James S. Hay
1843 William Burnett, James Wheeler
1844 William Burnett, Henry Balls
1846 Robert Colman, William R. Peck
1847 Robert Colman, John Eaton
1848 John M. Budden, Edward Fison
1850 William Worker, Robert G. Badcock
1852 Charles Willis
1854 John Danks
1856 Albert H. M'Tier
1859 Francis Teal
1860 William Sellers
1862 George Gibson (a)
1865 John W. Garlick
1866 George G.S. Thomas
1867 William Humphries
1870 Joshua Johnson
1873 Edward Bayliss
1875 Slater Sunderland
1878 Ernest S. Thies
1881 James Duthie
1882 William T. Jones
1885 David Huddleston

1888 Robinson Lang
1889 Charles R. Burroughs
1890 Caleb A. Walker
1893 Albert Wainwright
1896 Alfred G. Burrell
1899 George E. Startup (b)

Norwich Mission Circuit 1902-1924

1902 Edmund S. Harland
1903 W. Arthur Lenton, B.A.
1905 Thomas H. Kirkman
1908 J. Henry Bodgener
1909 George Brown
1912 Ernest D. Green, M.A.
1913 William Ackroyd
1915 Harold C. Page
1916 Douglas E. Field
1919 Frank C. Raynor
1920 Lindsey Moore
1922 John R. Harland

Cromer and North Walsham Circuit 1924-1932

1924 G. Whitfield Luty, B.A., B.D.
1926 C. Norman Shearn
1929 Percy Robinson
1932 Sidney Darby

Primitive Methodist Ministers for Holt 1872-1932

Aylsham Circuit:

1872-73 William H. Meadows, John Thomas Horne
?

1877 James Collinson
1878 George Towler
1879 W. Hammond
1884 William E. Nobbs
1886 George William Hancock

Holt & Sheringham Circuit

1889 Enoch Bocock
1890 Gervase Hall
1892 Thomas Woodall
1897 James H. Rose
1901 John T. Clarke
1904 George Seaman, Henry Chamberlain

Sheringham & Holt Circuit

1905 J.A. Cheeseman, W.B. Tunley
1907 Alfred E. Calvert, Abraham Hill
1908 Alfred E. Calvert, Frederick W. Dodds
1909 Alfred E. Calvert, James W. Trevvett
1910 John Norton
1912 John Norton, Arthur F. Slater

1914 Percy M. Hoyle, Alfred Barrett Gowers
 1916 Percy M. Hoyle
 1918 Luther Kemish
 1921 George Stanyer
 1923 Alfred Sutcliffe
 1927 W. Vickers Sibson

Wesleyan Reformers Ministers for Holt 1854-1907

Holt Circuit

1854 William Boyden
 1856 John C. George
 1858 Joseph Colman, Joseph New
 1859 Edmund Heywood, James Woolner
 1861 John Steele, John Henry Carr
 1862 William Thomas B. White, John Gunson, William O. Lilley
 1863 William Beckett, William O. Lilley, James C. Brewitt
 1865 William Beckett, George Turner, Ezra T. Shaw
 1866 John Wesley Gilchrist, Samuel Lambrick, jun.
 1868 John Hopkins, Thomas Foster, Charles Wesley Hopper
 1869 John Hopkins, Edwin T. Harris, E.O. Perry
 1870 Aquila Keene, Thomas Barnes, E.O. Perry
 1871 Aquila Keene, Thomas Barnes, George Thompson
 1872 Aquila Keene, George Thompson, William Jolley Hopper
 1873 Thomas Aspinall, James Brown, William Jolley Hopper
 1874 Thomas Aspinall, James Brown, William G. Jolly
 1876 James Cleave, Henry Codling, J.R. Coxell
 1877 James Cleave, John Foulger
 1878 James Cleave, Joseph Colman (Sup), Henry Codling
 1879 William H. Beeken, Joseph Colman (Sup) F. Wood
 1880 William H. Beeken, Joseph Colman (Sup)
 1881 John Hammond, Joseph Colman (Sup), John W. Worth
 1882 John W. Worth, Joe Hartley
 1883 John W. Worth, W.H.S. Snow
 1884 John W. Worth
 1885 James P. Burt
 1886 James P. Burt, Isaac Elsom
 1887 Isaac Elsom
 1888 ?
 1889 ?
 1890 William H. James, ? Loades
 1891 ?
 1892 William R. Tungate, George W. Bishop
 1894 ?
 1895 John H. Allchurch
 1896 W. Matthews
 1897 William Lee Roberts, Thomas Webber
 1898 William Lee Roberts
 1900 Samuel T.T. Tomlin
 1903 G.S. Mills
 1904 James Roberts
 1905 Edward Lang

United Methodist Church Ministers 1907-1932

Holt Circuit

1908 William G. Jolly
 1911 Alfred J. Keeley
 1915 George B. Brown
 1918 Charles H. Panter
 1923 Simon Westcott

Sheringham & Holt Circuit

1926 Philip Thurman
 1927 Walter E. Perry
 1928 H. Theodore Capey
 1930 Leonard Glyn James
 1931 James Bullock

Methodist Ministers in Holt 1932-1989

Cromer & North Walsham Circuit

1932 Sidney Darby (ex-WM)

Cromer, Sheringham & Holt Circuit

1934 C. Donald Hulbert (ex-WM)
 1936 Ronald Tointon (ex-WM)
 1938 Wilfred W.M. White
 1940 Geoffrey H. Crosby, B.A.
 1942 Wyndham E. Bold
 1946 Kenneth S. Grewer
 1947 A. Leslie Adams
 1948 Peter S. Robinson
 1949 Bernard P. Marks B.A.
 1952 Alan J. Odell, B.A.
 1955 David H.K. Sherriff, B.D.
 1956 Kenneth Wilkinson
 1958 Jeffrey F. Bloomfield, B.A.
 1960 Cyril Brooksbank
 1963 John Swales

Aylsham Circuit

1965 Derek Wheelhouse

Cromer, Sheringham & Holt Circuit

1968 Norman J. Goreham, B.A.
 1971 William A. Seville
 1973 -

Fakenham & Wells Circuit

1974 Arthur J. Holmes (Sup)
 1977 Edwin J. Softley
 1981 Alan S. Burgess
 1982 Richard G. Jones, M.A. B.D.
 1983 Elizabeth J. Bellamy, B.A. M.Litt.