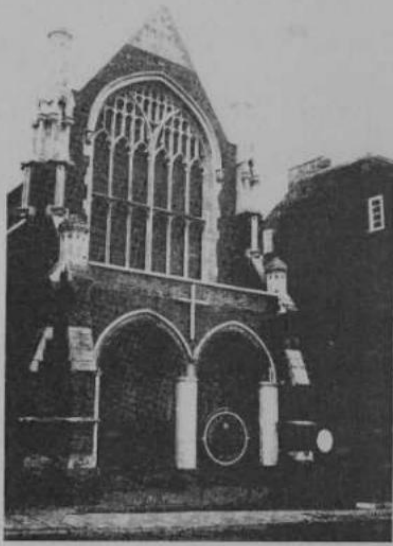


1882 to 1992



Lichfield Methodist Church



£2.50

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Lichfield Methodist Church
1892 - 1992
CENTENARY
HISTORY



MR. THOMAS BERRY, ARCHT.
BIRMINGHAM

MR. WILLIAM BROWN,
TAMWORTH

**CENTENARY
HISTORY**

Lichfield Methodist Church

Farnworth Street

1892 - 1992



J. H. D. G.

Acknowledgements

The Church Council offer their thanks to Mrs Lilian Sammons for her research and documentation, to the late Dr H.G. Sammons for his encouragement and support of the project, and to all who have contributed with reports, photographs, documents and reminiscences. Our thanks are also offered to Michael Butler for his energy and enthusiasm in tracing sources of information, and to Revd Peter Mortlock for providing access to the Church archives.

The Church Council also acknowledges the further historical research and editorial contribution of Joyce and Ken Cavalot, and preparation of text and illustrations for the printers.

We hope an authentic picture has been provided of the enterprise and dedication of earlier times. While, in so brief a history, characters may be singled out, the commitment and support of those who have sought anonymity is not overlooked.

Editors' acknowledgements:

to Daisy Winder, for permission to quote from "Daisy's Lichfield";

to the Editors of the Victoria History of the County of Stafford, Vol XIV — Lichfield, for items relating to the history of Methodism in this area.

Front Cover: Design taken from 1891 Programme for Foundation-Stone Ceremony

Back Cover: Church in 1992; Tamworth House on the right
(photo K.J. Cavalot)

NEW WESLEYAN CHURCH,
TAMWORTH STREET, LICHFIELD.

THE BUILDING COMMITTEE HAVE PLEASURE IN ANNOUNCING THAT

The Foundation Stones

— of the stone will be laid on —
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12TH, 1891,
AT 9-00 O'CLOCK BY
His Worship The Mayor of Lichfield,
(R. HATNER, Esq.)
REGINALD STANLEY, Esq., Nuneaton;
J. FRISBY, Esq., Leicester, and Messrs North, Worsring, and Taylor.

IT IS ALSO PROPOSED TO HOLD A
Public Tea in the Guildhall
AT 5-0 O'CLOCK, TICKETS SIXPENCE EACH,
TO BE FOLLOWED BY A MEETING WHICH WILL BE ADDRESSSED BY THE
Revs. FREDERICK GRAHAM, JOHN BOND of London, T. CHAPMAN
of Stafford, G. HOBBS, T. ORTON, G. H. C. FISH, and others.

THE CHAIR WILL BE TAKEN AT 5-15 P.M.

♦ **COLLECTIONS** ♦
Will be made at the afternoon Ceremony and Public Meeting in behalf of the Building Fund.

6P At least £700 are still required to complete the scheme.
Signed on behalf of the Committee,
T. ORTON, Superintendent Minister
G. H. C. FISH, Assistant Minister
J. H. WEAVER, Secretary.

THE GROWTH OF METHODISM IN LICHFIELD

Although John Wesley passed through or near Lichfield in 1755, 1756 and 1777, he did not preach here; it is known, however, that he was involved in controversy with the Bishop of Lichfield over matters of doctrine. Dr Johnson also had contact with Wesley; Boswell records that he said (in 1778) "John Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure".

A warehouse occupied by Joshua Kidger at Gallows Wharf (opposite the London Road Garage) on the Wyrley and Essington Canal was used for services after its registration in 1811. Joshua Kidger also registered in 1813 a Wesleyan chapel in Lombard Street. A story is told of how either Joshua's ostler or his brother John Kidger found a purse of money, which after enquiries and still unclaimed became the first donation towards the building of the Lombard Street chapel. It is reported as having been opened in 1814 by Dr Adam Clark, and it is of interest that in early days choir and congregation sang to the accompaniment of a string band.

Another Wesleyan chapel is recorded as established in Wade Street c. 1815, still in use in 1837.

By the early 1820s the Lombard Street chapel had a Sunday School, while ministers from neighbouring circuits served the congregation into the 1840s. On Census Sunday in 1851 attendances were 22 in the morning, with 51 Sunday School children, and 41 in the evening. In winter months the congregation was said to number up to 130. The chapel was part of the Burton-on-Trent Circuit up to 1886.

In 1826 a chapel was registered for worship by the Methodist New Connexion in a barn in Sandford Street formerly used by Congregationalists. This movement, originating in 1797, was a split from the main body of Methodism. It is reported that in 1825 differences at Lombard Street had led to some of its members joining the Sandford Street congregation. A chapel was built in 1833 in Queen Street, and was sold in 1859 when the congregation disbanded. A Primitive Methodist missionary preached at Greenhill on Whit Monday in 1820, which led to a schoolroom in St Mary's parish being registered for worship in 1831. The chapel in George Lane was



The land in front of the chapel was used as a burial-ground in early Victorian times

opened in the years 1847/8. On Census Sunday 1851 attendances were 23 in the afternoon and 57 in the evening; normally there was a morning service with 60 attending and 51 Sunday School children.

THE NEW WESLEYAN CHURCH

In 1886 the Tamworth and Lichfield Circuit had been formed, comprising the Tamworth, Alrewas, Hopwas, and Lichfield Churches. On September 25th 1888 a proposal to build a new chapel reads:

It was proposed by Mr W. J. North, and seconded by Mr F. Wilson, that the Circuit Stewards and Secretary of the Tamworth and Lichfield Circuit, with the Society Stewards of Lichfield, form a committee to secure a suitable site for a new Chapel in Lichfield.

An advertisement regarding the sale of a house and land in Tamworth Street, reads:

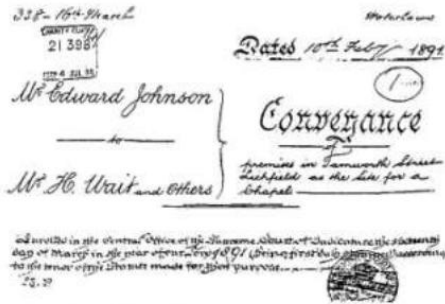
To be sold by auction by Messrs Winter and Sons at the George Hotel, Lichfield, on 30th September 1890 at 5 o'clock in the afternoon to the minute:

A freehold dwelling House and Shop, having a frontage of about 39 feet to and being 32 Tamworth Street, Lichfield, with a yard to the rear extending to Backeater Lane...

This property was sold by the Trustees of Catherine Burrows Simpson to Edward Johnson of The Turks Head, Lichfield, for £250. On 10th February 1891 the house and land were resold for £350 to the Revd Thomas Orton, the Superintendent Minister of the Tamworth and Lichfield Circuit, and the following 15 Trustees:

Henry Wait	Timber Merchant
Francis Martin Wait	Cabinet Maker
John Wait	Cabinet Maker
Edwin Roberts	Chemist
William John North	Mercer
John Henry Wearing	Glass and China Merchant
Edwin Brown	Coffee-House Manager
Walter Peplow	Grocer's Assistant
all of the City of Lichfield	
Samuel Holloway	of the Knowle, Farmer
Samuel Shullebotham Bamford	of Alrewas, Farmer
Arthur Riley	of Syerscote Manor, Farmer
Francis Wilson	of Hopwas, Grocer and Baker
Henry Joseph Sadler	of Tamworth, Merchant's Clerk
Samuel Bonsor	of Tamworth, Accountant
Samuel Thompson	of Tamworth, Ironfounder

Historically, the most interesting extract from the "Indenture" or Deed is the following form of words: "...Whereas by an Indenture dated the third day of July One thousand eight hundred and thirty two and made or expressed to be made between John Sutcliffe and fourteen others of the first part The Reverend George Marsden of the second part and James Brown of the third part and enrolled in Her Majesty's High Court of Chancery on the twenty fifth day of July One thousand eight hundred and thirty two a parcel of Ground and Chapel or place of Religious Worship with the appurtenances situate at Skivint in the parish of Halfton and the



Supreme Court enrolment details from the 1891 Indenture

County of York were settled for the use of the people called Methodists in the Connexion established by the late Reverend John Wesley and such last mentioned Indenture is known as The Model Deed for Wesleyan Methodist Chapels."

At this period, the Nonconformist chapels in Lichfield were: Primitive Methodist in George Lane; Congregationalist in Wade Street; and the Wesleyan Chapel in Lombard Street. Lichfield was then apparently a quiet market city of about 8,000, surrounded by farmland, with a thriving mining industry nearby around Cannock Chase; trade directories reveal a vast number of small family businesses of a light engineering and service nature. Transport was by horse and cart or carriage, and street lighting by gas-lamp; working hours were long and there was much poverty; a farmhand earned less than £1 per week and a miner about £1.10s.0d. The opening of the first Friary School for Girls in Market Street and the new King Edward VI School in St John Street occurred in 1892.

The House and shop on the site having been demolished, the new church, accommodating a congregation of 300, was built in Victorian Gothic Ornamental style to the design of Thomas Guest of

Birmingham; the builder was E. Williams, of Tamworth. The foundation-stones were laid by the Mayor of Lichfield, Mr S. Haynes, Mr R. Stanley of Nuneaton, Mr J. Frisby of Leicester, and Messrs W.J. North, J.H. Wearing and W. Taylor, of Lichfield. Mr Joseph Frisby, who had a shop in Market Street, Lichfield, had built up a large footwear business of 60 shops throughout the Midlands. He held many offices at the Humberstone Road Wesleyan Church, Leicester, and supported the Church here with a substantial donation to the Building Fund. Mr Reginald Stanley, a stalwart of the Methodist Church at Nuncaton, was the owner of brickworks at Stockingford — his uncle, Revd Jacob Stanley had been President of the Wesleyan Conference; no doubt the bricks were supplied and donated by Mr Stanley. The stone-laying ceremony on August 12th 1891 was followed by a public tea in the Guildhall (tickets 6d each!) and a meeting addressed by the Vicar of St Chad's, the Circuit Superintendent, the Lichfield minister, Revd G.M.C. Fish, and others.

Earlier in 1891 a Grand Bazaar had been held in St James' Hall in Bore Street for 5 days, involving the four churches in the Circuit. £500 was raised towards the final Building Fund of £2541, which included adaptation of the Lombard Street chapel as a Sunday School.

The church was opened on April 20th 1892 by the President of Conference, Revd Dr Thomas Bowman Stephenson, Principal of the National Children's Home and Orphanage; the text for his sermon was "Ye are the temple of the living God" (II Corinthians, ch 6: v 16). While there was a very large congregation for this inaugural service and for two further special services, the church had only 40 committed members. Many will remember the original polished granite columns on the façade, similar to those now in the Church; decorative iron railings and sliding gates had been added to the original façade design. The slightly askew aspect of the rear west wall resulted from the refusal of a staunch Anglican to sell the Trustees a small piece of his land at the rear of Tamworth House. Windows had been installed behind the altar, and a font and stand had been donated — in memory of Martin Wait, a Trustee, who had died in December 1888. Later in the 1890s a plain window on the west side was replaced by the "Good Samaritan" window, in memory of



The Church in the 1890s with Trustees and Officers (photo Horace G. Pike)

Samuel Holloway, a Trustee, while in 1901 a window with the theme "Suffer little children..." had been inserted in the west side in memory of Mary Wait.

The Lichfield Mercury of April 29th 1892 carried the following: "On Sunday morning last the Mayor, Councillor J. Fowler, and members of the Corporation attended the service at the New Wesleyan Church, this being the first occasion on which the Mayor of this city has attended in state a Non-conformist place of worship. The Mayor met the members of the Corporation at the Guild Hall and they walked in procession to the church..."

THE CIRCUIT AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

At this period there were 7 churches in the Tamworth Circuit: Lichfield, Alrewas, Little Hay, Hopwas, Syerscote, Shenstone and Tamworth. The two ministers — Revd T. Orton (Superintendent) and Revd Fish — were responsible also for the chaplaincy of Whittington Barracks. They must have walked, cycled or travelled on horseback; they were paid £40 and £20 respectively quarterly (in

instalments dependent on the Circuit's financial state!). The Circuit regularly had an "adverse balance", and the churches were invited to contribute above their assessment. On two Sundays in the year there was a special collection for a "Horse-Hire Fund" — preachers who had an appointment 5 miles or more from home were entitled to hire a horse! Membership in the 1890s throughout the Circuit was about 250.

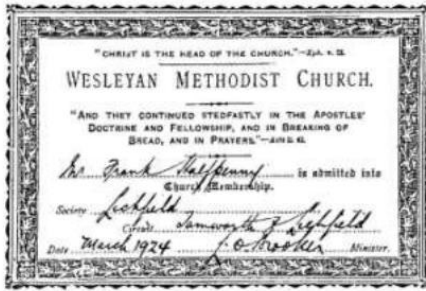
In 1918 Lichfield had 58 members and the whole Circuit of 5 churches, including the Barracks, only 193. The frequent movement of ministers between circuits put added strain on funds, requiring special efforts. There was also a "Worn-Out Ministers' Fund" (later — Aged Ministers' Fund). After serving in the ministry and without home or furniture a retired minister was entirely dependent on this Charity; old-age pensions introduced in 1908 were almost worthless in such circumstances. In 1919 the Superintendent's stipend was increased to £180 per annum and Revd Horner's to £120 to encourage him to stay for a third year. A request for a further stipend increase met with a stony refusal from the Circuit, which was in debt by 1920 to the tune of over £200.

TAMWORTH HOUSE ACQUIRED

The original building on the site adjacent to the church goes back to the 17th century. The earliest extant Indenture, or Deed, is dated June 3rd 1706, in the 5th year of Queen Anne's reign. It records the conveyance of the property by "John Lambe the younger... coachmaker... to Michaell Lambe... tailor... for the sume of Fortie Pounds", and according to custom names Thomas Fowke alias Cartmaile, pinmaker, as having previous tenure. In the next 100 years or so structural changes were made, and the present "listed" building can be said to date from the first quarter of the 19th century.

Tamworth House was bought on February 16th 1920 for £760 by the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion, the Trustees being: Henry Wait, William North, John Wait, Arthur Riley, Henry Sadler, John Wearing, Walter Peplow, Samuel Shufflebotham Bamford, John Thorpe, and Samuel Thompson. It is likely that this transaction was linked with the sale of the Lombard Street Chapel to the Lichfield Afternoon Women's Institute in 1921. The Sunday School, meeting regularly in the Chapel up to that time, moved to the Church until completion of the new Schoolroom. The building fund was started





Church Member's Card 1924

in 1923, and with the launch of the project, the architect was Mr Leeson of Shenstone, and the builder Mr Smith of Stowe Street (later Tippers' premises). The foundation-stones were laid in the garden of Tamworth House. Sunday School scholars sold paper "bricks" for 2d each, to be rewarded with a real brick carrying their initials for every 240 paper ones sold. The bricks were laid in the new wall, but unfortunately, with subsequent alterations, all have disappeared; Phyllis Payne well remembers her named brick. The building, thought to have cost £1,500, was opened in 1924; about 60 children attended classes, morning and afternoon, on that first Sunday.

In the early 20s Mr A.B. Abbott introduced the Band of Hope, which met weekly, with children 10 to 14, to promote total abstinence. Older members of the church will remember the minister at that time — Revd Brooker, from 1921 to 1924.

His preaching drew many into the church, to the extent of chairs in the aisles — a man with charisma who with his wife worked ceaselessly to extend the scope of the church. What may prove to be

a record number of Local Preachers — six — were trained and accredited during Revd Stirzaker's ministry; of these two went on to enter the Church — Lawrence Dunn and Frank Payne. A window installed opposite the organ and pulpit in memory of Mr W.J. North was dedicated in July 1926; a founder Trustee, he had been Circuit Steward and Sunday School Superintendent.

In 1928 a resolution was sent from the Quarterly Meeting to the Government via the M.P. deploring the social and moral effects of betting facilities. Another resolution was sent in 1932 to the President of the World Disarmament Conference urging international limitation of armaments. As a result of Methodist Union in 1932, the Tamworth Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, Aldergate Circuit, and Glascote Circuit united to become the Tamworth and Lichfield Methodist Circuit; celebration of this Union occurred on September 27th 1933. In 1934 the small Primitive Methodist Chapel in George Lane was sold for £150 to the Salvation Army, the members joining the Tamworth Street congregation.

Frank Halfpenny was a pillar of the Church in the 30s and 40s. He was a man of principle and carried his Christian beliefs into his social and business life; he became a Local Preacher, Councillor, Magistrate, and Sheriff of Lichfield. His wife, Mary, of the Tayler family — well-known Methodists — shared his religious, social and political commitments, and was Sunday School Superintendent during the 1930s.

In 1941 a British Restaurant known as the Civic Café was set up in the Schoolroom; by closure in 1945 400,000 meals had been served. Because of black-out difficulties church evening services had to be transferred into Tamworth House, and the large room on its first floor came into use for various meetings. The railings and gates disappeared from the frontage in aid of the war effort.

Jubilee celebrations, in April 1942, included special services in the church and events throughout the period.

A SEPARATION

From 1943-1945 a feeling grew within the Circuit that Lichfield and Tamworth should become quite independent circuits. Arguments were bandied about regarding the economic nature of each area, the problem of Whittington Barracks, the accusation of an Anglican

influence on Lichfield Methodism, etc. In spite of pleas to continue jointly, the very consideration of differences led inevitably to separation. On March 7th 1946 a resolution went to the Circuit Quarterly Meeting that Lichfield, Alrewas, Shenstone and the Barracks should become a separate Circuit. The new Circuit was inaugurated in the Lichfield Church on September 18th 1946; speakers were: the Dean of Lichfield, the new minister (Revd Rodney McNeal), and Revd Partridge — Chairman of the Birmingham (Methodist) District. The new independence of the Lichfield Circuit was not blessed with a visible growth in the life and influence of the Church; on the contrary, congregations declined, and succeeding ministries tried a variety of weekday activities to gain members and increase fellowship within the Church.

Permission was sought in November 1947 to build a new Manse. Although at this time there was a government ban on private building, a licence was eventually granted and a site found on St Michael Road. The former Manse in Trent Valley Road was sold to help finance the cost. The Manse was declared open on November 6th 1948 by the Vice-President of Conference. By 1954 a garage was provided, paid for by special fund-raising.


During the ministry of Revd Norbury Clarkson a Girls' League (later "Girls' Fellowship") was formed by his wife, meeting in the Manse. The church in 1953 invited members and friends to a TV viewing of the Coronation, followed by a bumper Coronation Tea in the schoolroom for residents of Tamworth Street. The Civic Service that year was held in the church, Councillor and Mrs Long — Mayor and Mayoress — being Methodists. Membership in 1953 was around 120, while the Sunday offerings averaged £7.10s.0d. In need of funds for redecoration and extra heating in choir stalls, the church organised a Spring Fair which brought in £150.

Efforts were made to bring in new members; Revd Avery introduced an "At Home" scheme providing a monthly entertainment.

New patterns were adopted for worship, including:

1. Ten minutes organ introit.
2. Sunday School children allocated front two pews.
3. Church doors closed at start of service.
4. No-one to enter during prayer.
5. Lord's Prayer to be sung.
6. Monthly social half-hour after evening service.

CITY & COUNTY OF LICHFIELD



Mayor's Sunday, May 31st, 1953

CIVIC SERVICE

HELD IN THE
METHODIST CHURCH, LICHFIELD
at 11-0 a.m.

Mayor:
COUNCILLOR F. W. C. LONG.

Service Conducted by the Mayor's Chaplain,
REV. EDWARD AVERY.

Preacher:
REV. NORMAN G. DUNNING, M.A., LL.D.

Organist:
L. STEWELL, Esq., F.R.S.A., F.R.C.O., F.M.S.M.

Printed by Messrs. [unreadable]

In 1958 the Leaders' Meeting carried a minute deploring the declining membership and offerings, and suggesting canvassing locally offering invitation to newcomers; choir-members were urged to attend regularly giving support to the congregation. By 1959, when Revd George West arrived, the financial crisis had grown. Although other churches in the Circuit could cope, Lichfield was behind with its assessment. Tamworth House, property which should more than pay its way, required expenditure, as did improvements

to the church. A Garden Party, fore-runner of many since, provided temporary respite along with a Spring Fair to fund a new heating system. The difficulties of running a small circuit effectively led to thoughts of amalgamation with a nearby circuit (other than Tamworth!). Hopes were dashed by the Chairman of the District, Revd W. Russell Shearer, who said that probably other Circuits would not be anxious to amalgamate, as Lichfield had nothing of financial value to offer!

An advance in the corporate life of the church came from an Eisteddfod initiated in 1961 by Mr Constable of Alrewas, fostering friendly rivalry between the churches in music, poetry and other arts and skills. The Eisteddfod Chair is now awarded annually in recognition of achievement in the field of youth work by a church or person. At this time Revd George Osborn Gregory, composer of the hymn "Spread the Table of the Lord...", came to Lichfield, a great stalwart of over 80 who often took morning service. During Revd R. Turner's ministry a church newsletter, with both devotional and humorous reflections on church life, was edited by Joyce Buckley; it continued in that form until 1986. This was not the first such publication, for in Revd G. Howells' ministry in 1928 a formal Church magazine, the Messenger, had appeared quarterly, free; it ran for some years, though later costing 1d.

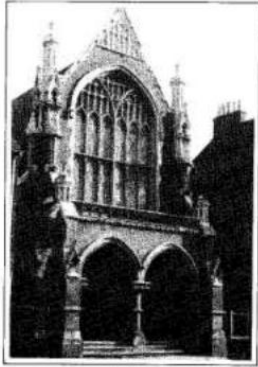
THE NEW EXTENSION

In the late 60s with the growing Sunday School, the need arose for greater accommodation. At a special meeting of leaders, members and friends, called by the Revd Turner to discuss the problem, a building project emerged, with whole-hearted support, estimated to require at least £5,000 over 5 years. A little over £1,000 was available from various sources, and the Rank Trust offered £2,500 if the church could raise £3,500 within two years. Massive efforts followed — sponsored walks, treasure hunts, bazaars, coffee mornings — with great success, for with all conditions fulfilled building started in August 1971. 3 extra rooms, 2 toilets, and stairs were completed early in 1972; the opening ceremony took place in April, with a devotional service and a joyous procession around the extension. A commemorative tablet is located in the entry corridor. The Sunday School continued to grow, with a Toy Service introduced in December

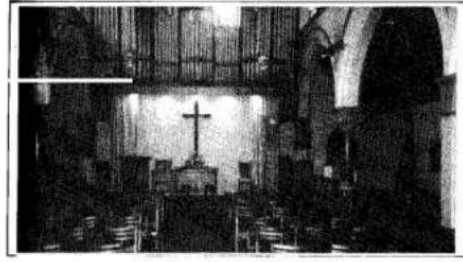
providing gifts for less-fortunate families; while a carol choir visited the house-bound at Christmas. The enlarged premises gave room for a crèche, managed by senior girls. Extra furniture and equipment were purchased for the Primary and Junior Departments.

Membership stood at 158 in 1972, when Revd Jim Hutchens began his ministry; in Lichfield, he said, Methodism was weaker than in other places — the proportion of Methodists in the population was 1 in 150 whereas elsewhere it was 1 in 75. Mr Hutchens felt that we should be in a position to encourage new members with a comprehensive list of activities and church organisations. A Good Neighbour Scheme was started, with the whole of Lichfield covered by "good neighbours" who would introduce newcomers to the various churches, and offer help and advice. Another innovation was a new pattern of baptismal service; infants received into the church would have sponsors from the membership to maintain contact with the child and family.

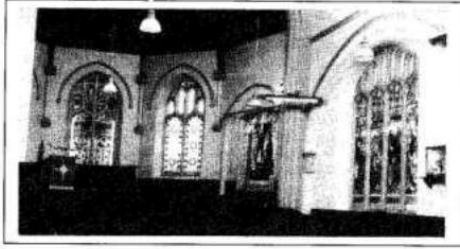
Church life was restructured in 1973, particularly with the formation of Family and Neighbourhood Committees. These introduced arrangements to transport people to and from church, and adopted a monthly early-morning communion service and coffee after evening service on the first Sunday in the month. House Fellowship groups were begun, and "shoppers' coffee" on Friday and Saturday mornings for charitable appeals. The committees were anxious to bring present and new members together, with morning service brought forward to 10.30, and coffee afterwards, promoting fellowship. Church notices were now being printed. Membership was increasing, and extensions to the church and repairs to the organ led to fund-raising projects. The Tuesday Club refurbished the old Schoolroom with the co-operation of Women's Fellowship and Men's Circle. A Service Group of young people was formed under the guidance of John Kibble, assisting at services and doing a range of chores. In 1975 Frank Senior resigned after 14 years as Sunday School Superintendent — succeeded by Howard Thompson. Gifts of a cross, chalice and patten were made in memory of Mrs Bradbury by her son, a silversmith. An anonymous loan, interest free, for the re-purchase of the lease of Tamworth House, enabled increased rents to be applied — to the financial advantage of the Church.



Church, 1981



Church Interior, 1991 (photo K.J.C.)



Interior, 1981 (photo Mrs O. Simmons)



Exterior after 1982 alterations

METHODIST COMMITMENT TO SOCIETY

In March 1977 the Church gave valuable support to the Council of Churches' promotion of a refuge for women abused by their husbands/partners — in both funds and the provision of furniture for Clinton House. Another venture of a similar nature arose at this time from an approach by St Chad's Health Centre to Revd Jim Hutchensto help provide a pastoral counselling service. Birmingham University organised a training course, and a major response came from Church members. The Lichfield Counselling Service was installed in the old choir vestry, aided by financial contribution from the Council of Churches. Both these organisations have continued with the full support of the Church.

On April 16th 1977, the managing trusteeship of the Church passed to the Church Council under the provisions of the Methodist Church Act 1976.

That same year the deteriorating condition of the organ led to the setting up of a committee of six, including Mr Thompson, organ-builder. Their brief was to consider a rebuild or the purchase of a new organ; the organ fund had recently been boosted by a Tuesday Club donation of £170, and stood at £600. By chance, a United Reformed Church in Erdington was closing, and their organ was offered to our Church. The only cost would be that of dismantling, removal, renewing parts, and installation, including the provision of a new organ platform. The committee demonstrated the value of teamwork: Ron Booth arranged transport; Roger Authors, committee chairman, stored and catalogued parts; Mike Thompson began work in the church, assisted by Derek Silverwood and Ron Whitehouse, and John Hewitt carried out the electrical work. Fund-raising events saw to it that the total cost of £2714.69 was covered, and the newly-installed organ was dedicated in May 1978.

Sister Rita Shears, the first full-time Deaconess appointed to the Circuit, came in 1978. Soon after Revd John Davies arrived in 1980, she took responsibility for the running of the Circuit when he became critically ill. Outstanding in the memory of Sister Rita's ministry was the weekday Prayer-meeting held in a packed church, with Methodists, clergy and friends from all churches to pray for John Davies' recovery. As Sister Rita was not permitted to administer the sacraments, a special Church Council meeting requested and

obtained dispensation from Methodist Conference for Rita to administer bread and wine for one year.

A CHANGE OF DIRECTION

In 1980 plans were already afoot to enlarge the church and make it more versatile; John Davies had suggested "Turning the church round", with the sanctuary at the Tamworth Street end and consequent other re-arrangements. There would be a new entrance between Tamworth House and the church, and alterations to the schoolroom, a second kitchen and more toilets. With the illness of John Davies, the Chairman of the District — Revd Chris Hughes Smith — later President of Conference, took over Chairmanship of the Committee with responsibility for the improvements. Architect Mr Cornfield of Hall Green, Birmingham, confirmed that the building scheme was possible at an estimated cost of about £65,000. The main contractors would be E.H. Waters and Sons, of Davidson House, Lichfield.

Work began on March 1st 1982 along with the mammoth task of fund-raising. The Property Committee wrote appeal letters and in due course produced progress reports. The Rank Trust helped by donating £16,500 and the Methodist Property Division £3,500. Other donations were received from the Conduit Lands and Swinfen Braun Trusts. The Church Council decided that chairs, having the advantage of mobility, would be more convenient than pews; they were provided by an anonymous donor, and the old pews were sold for £450. The unpacking of the chairs caused much amusement; they were already exceedingly mobile, having arrived via Akrevas from the Prison Service on the Isle of Wight! Would they also provide a captive audience? The total cost of the improvements amounted to £73,000, including the cost of repositioning the Mary Wait window. A concourse and sliding doors for entry to the church completed the extensions. The façade of the church had received attention: the front porch was blocked off and the capitals on the three columns, which were eroding and dangerous, were removed and the columns totally encased; finials and other architectural embellishments were also removed. A Service of Dedication and Thanksgiving followed on October 9th 1982. The preacher was Revd Hutchen, and the opening ceremony was performed by Mrs

Mary Halfpenny, along with other civic officials. The re-orientation of the Church was not without some side-effects. A particular loss, which older members remark on, was that of the sunlight streaming through the "Good Samaritan" window. For decades also there had been a stalwart choir, but with no choir-stalls provided as a counterpart to the original ones, this led to its demise, and an incalculable loss to regular Services and special occasions.

It was a great shock to discover, in 1984, extensive dry rot in the church floor. Repairs required removal of carpets and plywood to reveal the infected joists and other timber. For the Gift Day held to defray the cost of £1,500, the Church notice ran: "Dry Rot Sale — Come and Bring your Friends...!"

The Circuit showed their appreciation of Sister Rita by 'deviously' organising a surprise party on her 60th birthday. She left to retire in Dorset, and said of her six years in Lichfield "I have never been happier anywhere". When John Davies left in 1984, Revd Peter Mortlock came to Lichfield with Margaret and their 3 sons. The city was growing rapidly, with a huge housing estate being built at Boley Park. The membership of the church was now 313. Eddie Sykes, a student in Birmingham, who replaced Sister Rita, was especially interested in the missionary field. He left to become a youth-worker in Nassau, in the Bahamas, and was later accepted for the Methodist Ministry. Sister Ruth Baudains followed him in 1986; a house was provided for her through loans, gifts, covenants, and fund-raising efforts. Three years later the Diaconal Order directed her to the Helmsley Circuit in N. Yorkshire; she has been inducted Vice-President of the Order for 1991-92. The church had extra help from Glenda Sidling as Circuit Lay Worker; she left following acceptance into the Order. Help also arrived in the form of Supernumeraries retiring to Lichfield — Revd Dr Wakefield, formerly Principal of Queen's College, Birmingham, Revd Alan Barber, and Revd Kathleen Share. Every organisation in the church was now flourishing and more activities taking place.

By 1987 membership had risen to 348. £1,800 had been spent on amplification equipment. The Manse had been extended at a cost of £11,000, enabling Revd Mortlock to set aside a room as a study, and Mrs Sue Watterson was appointed his part-time secretary. Mr Bev Harris, a member of the Church Council, thought it possible to

encourage the expertise of members for the benefit of others. The project was taken up by Michael Butler, (two years later appointed Circuit Lay Worker); a questionnaire was circulated to any connected with the church asking for commitments of time and talent. A Circuit Computer was purchased and the results of the questionnaire recorded for later easy retrieval. The Methodist Homes for the Aged approached the Circuit to prospect Lichfield as a suitable area to inaugurate a scheme for support to the housebound. This "Live at Home Scheme" had the full support of Social Services and other city agencies. At the inaugural meeting 86 attended and 36 volunteered their help. An office with telephone was opened at the church and Mrs Marilyn Shears was appointed Co-ordinator.

Queen Elizabeth came to Lichfield Cathedral in 1988 to distribute Maundy Money. Two of our oldest members received the specially minted sets — Ralph Baker, who had for years served on many committees, and Phyllis Payne, who had faithfully served the church and Sunday School. The Mortlocks' youngest son Timothy was chosen with other children from Lichfield schools to attend the Queen.

A PROPOSAL, ENGAGEMENT AND WEDDING

In October 1988 Mr Mortlock reported to the Church Council a suggestion that the Lichfield Circuit and Tamworth Circuit should once again be united to their mutual benefit. Lichfield wanted to expand into a multi-station Circuit and there was a very positive response from the Tamworth churches. A proposal was accepted that the two Circuits should be joined and called "The Tamworth and Lichfield Circuit". After about 42 years of separation the two Circuits were again united, with Peter Mortlock as the new Superintendent. The "Engagement" of the two Circuits took place at the annual Camp Weekend on Kings Bromley Showground. In a service in the marquee members of the fifteen churches of the Circuit marked their commitment by fixing crosses on a map of the area, a memorable occasion witnessed by over 400. The "Wedding" was arranged for Monday September 4th 1989, at a special service held at Tamworth Central Church. New ministers were welcomed to the Circuit — Revd Terry Wall, from New Zealand, and a probationer minister, Revd Mary Teed. The allocation of responsibilities were as follows:

Revd Peter Mortlock, Superintendent: Lichfield
 Revd Terry Wall: Tamworth: Central and St Andrews
 Fazeley, Mile Oak
 Revd Alex Leckey: Amington, Dordon, Glascote,
 Grendon, Wilnecote
 Revd Mary Teed: Alrewas, Hopwas, Shenstone
 Revd Keith Jukes: Stoneydelph
 (Anglican, recognised as a Methodist Minister)
 Michael Butler: Lichfield (Pastoral)(Circuit Lay Worker)

In the late 80s the Church Magazine "Foghorn" had been in the hands of a group of volunteers. At Christmas 1989, the first issue of the present magazine "Connect" appeared.

CHURCH ORGANISATIONS — PAST AND PRESENT

The Sunday School

The school still used the old chapel in Lombard Street long after the new Church had been built — until 1921, when the old chapel was sold. It had long been a practice to go in a crocodile from the School, which started at 10.30, to the Church at 11.00 for the first part of the service, before being dismissed.

In those post-war days the area was largely working-class, the average wage being about £2.0.0. Times were hard with strikes and the depression, but large families were the fashion, which explains the large attendance at both ex-Primitive Methodist and Wesleyan Sunday Schools. Mothers believed in a good up-bringing for their children, as is referred to in "Daisy's Lichfield" (the reminiscences of Daisy Winder):

"Now Sunday was always a lovely day. Mother believed in bringing us up right, and we would go to Sunday School and chapel in the morning, Sunday School in the afternoon, and chapel with Mam at night — all of us, even the latest baby. That meant that we could wear our best clothes (still second-hand). ... There was great rivalry amongst the girls as we passed each other going to church or chapel. Faces would be pulled, and tongues put out, and rude words said (we weren't always angels, even on Sundays)."

At the Sunday School children were encouraged to attend regularly, a book prize being awarded annually. Every scholar had a star-card, which was taken home to assure parents of attendance. The cards

were stamped and a star given; in the 1920s Mr Owen, a foreman at Bamfords in Market Street (then a tinsmiths, now the JCB firm) used to see to the cards. Along with a record of good-behaviour, 70 to 80 stars gained a 9d book and 95 a first prize worth 1s 6d. Hymn-books then cost 6d (limp cover), or 10d; and Bibles one shilling each.



Sunday School Anniversary, 1917 (photo A.W. Mills)

Most chapels had different Sundays for Anniversaries, but people used to visit each others'; prestige was at stake — which put everyone on their mettle. For Anniversary a massive staging, normally stored between the Church and Tamworth House, had to be erected extending across the Church behind the pulpit.

There was a great deal of excitement on Sunday School Anniversaries. To quote again from Daisy's Lichfield:

"The Chapel people were very good to our family, giving us clothes and food, and sometimes a voucher to buy something new for the Sunday School Anniversary. This was the big occasion for us. We could have new or made-over dresses, and new ribbons for our hair — even new shoes. We would look as good as anyone else on that platform, singing away with

all our hearts and voices. One of our favourite people on that day was Mr North, who lived in a big house the other end of town (the post end). He was a real true Christian, and on Anniversary Sunday he would bring a large basket of roses made up into buttonholes, and every child would have one before going on the stage."

There was another side to the coin, though, as Phyllis Payne remembers; practices ran for several Sundays on warm summer days, and if you were not musically inclined interest lagged and fidgeting increased — especially in the days of Sunday School Superintendents who were sticklers for perfection. Mr Massey, one of these, was just such a perfectionist in his business — he was the shoemaker at Frisby's in Market Street; people used to comment on the beautifully crafted boots he wore.

Another "red-letter day" in the life of the Sunday School was the TREAT on a Saturday in high summer. In Mr North's day the school was taken to the garden of his home, Lyncroft Villa, in Stafford Road. The journey was in Hine's removal van and it was best to get in last to get a good view over the rear half-door. The pupils had a jolly good tea; teachers and helpers went out in the morning to prepare bread and 'real' butter, rich fruit cake, and buttered buns. There were large urns of tea, and sometimes ginger-beer in pop-bottles from Simms in Church Street. The food was not given out in paper bags, but handed round in style. The small ones came off worst in the scramble for the sweets which Mr North used to throw. After the fairly orderly behaviour of tea-time, there were games and races to work off energy.

In later days Treats continued with visits to farms with a field suitable for games, like Burton's at Fulfen and Riley's Farm at Huddlesford. At Burton's there was the excitement of "Chasing the pig" and climbing the greasy pole. An arena was arranged with bales of straw and a sucking pig was greased and set loose. If it was captured it was the prize to be taken home — it was NOT regarded as a pet! Arthur Burton would bring out a bag of coppers which he threw around the field for the children to scramble for. Farms were always a source of adventure! With teachers engaged in chores, an orchard would become the scene of 'scrumping'; farm-carts could be investigated. On one occasion an axe left in a tree was dislodged and cut a girl's head, giving new meaning to the expression 'splitting

The Methodist Sunday School

CLASS REGISTER

OF
SCHOLARS' ATTENDANCE
1936

Lichfield Methodist School
7th Class
Miss P. Payne Teacher

"Take heed to thyself and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt see both thyself and them that hear thee."—1 Tim. iv, 16.

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LONDON:
METHODIST PUBLISHING HOUSE,
25-26 City Road, E.C.1.

Register of Attendance, 1936

headache! A boy fell into a stream, and had to be wrapped in tea-cloths for the journey home. Children often had to be searched for and rounded up; even teachers got lost!

Mr J.H. Thorpe succeeded Mr North as Superintendent; he and his family were famous chrysanthemum growers, and some varieties introduced are still in the catalogues. In the later 1920s bequests from Mr North's estate and investments made by Mr Thorpe and Revd Howells added to Sunday School funds; provision was made,

in special cases, for prizes for older scholars to the value of 2s.6d. In 1928 there were 118 children in the school; by 1935 numbers were declining with the spread of the city into new estates. Factors which were also having an effect were the development of radio, increased public transport, and the growing ownership of cars.

When the British Restaurant was installed in the 1940s, the Sunday School then met in the Church, and Bible Class in the vestry; some rooms in Tamworth House were also made available. Economy was made in respect of prizes to provide a fund for children in blitzed Coventry, and for clothing for evacuees and poor children locally.

After the war Treats developed into outings to places like Dudley Zoo, Sutton Park (Pat Collins' Amusement Park was just inside the Town Gate), and Drayton Manor, with the Sunday School children taking their own picnic teas. This has become today's new pattern of an Open Day in Beacon Park.

The Sunday School celebrated important Anniversaries in 1958 and 1959. Former scholars returned to conduct the Services: Revd Francis A. Payne, Superintendent Minister of the Colne Circuit, Lancashire; and Revd Lawrence Dunn, of Becontree Central Hall, Dagenham.

During the 1960s afternoon school was discontinued, and prize-giving abandoned in favour of presentation of a Bible on moving through sections of the school. The children continued, as now, to attend the first part of the morning service, before moving to the schoolroom for their classes.

Wesley Guild

This organisation achieved recognition by Conference in 1895, with a Guild Charter in 1903. The Lombard Street Church is thought to have had a Guild in 1898, but the earliest Minute Book of the Guild goes back to December 1923. The minimum age was 14; members were required to make a promise of commitment to Christ and the Guild ideal. A membership card price 6d was printed with the aims of the Guild—Comradeship, Consecration, Culture, and Christian service. Devotional services or literary evenings alternated with social evenings. The annual outing was to such places as Malvern, Buxton or Worcester. Inter-Guild visits were arranged with Alrewas, Tamworth and Chasetown. In 1926 the Committee founded a



Wesley Guild Card, 1932

Tennis Club and the Sunday School Council a Cricket Club. The Guild continued into the 1930s, after 1932 becoming, first "Young Methodism", and then "Methodist Guild"; it resumed after the war into the 1950s.

Local Preachers

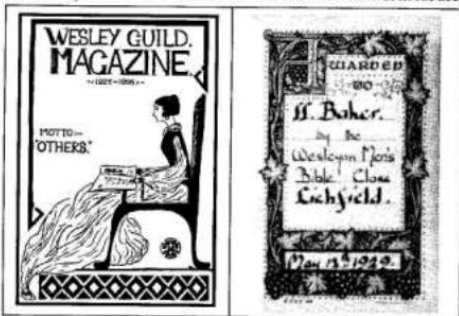
Regular services throughout the Circuit of 7 churches and the 14 churches of the present day could only be maintained with the devotion of the Local Preachers. In the inter-war years the only method of travel was Shanks's Pony and the bicycle, and many will remember winters like that of 1946/7, when the preacher braved the elements to fulfil his calling — though maybe arriving late or not at all. Other hazards experienced with country churches included the failure of the organist to arrive, and a preacher's terrible feeling part way through a sermon that he'd already used it in that chapel!

Women's Meeting (now Women's Fellowship)

It is believed this started in 1923 in the days of the active Mrs Brooker. The minister's wife was President; membership was 2d, which provided tea, the balance going towards the annual outing. Members took on responsibility for catering at most church events and were active in fund-raising. A Christmas or New Year party was regularly organised for old and lonely people. Money was donated to a 'cigarette fund' for wounded soldiers at Whittington Military Hospital, and donations made to local and church causes. Perhaps the most important event in the year was Women's Sunday, on the 4th Sunday in Lent, traditionally Mothering Sunday, or on Palm Sunday. The church was decorated with daffodils, and well-known lady speakers always took the 3 services. The Women's Meeting has continued without a break, the only change being in its title — 'Women's Fellowship'.

Bible Classes

The Young Men's Bible Class goes back to the 1920s, meeting before the Sunday School was built in a first floor room in Tamworth House.



Guild Diary and Project Book, 1927/8 Bible Class Presentation Label, 1929

and using the same room on a weekday for billiards and P.T. Later, under the guidance of Frank Halfpenny, there were 13 members known as "The Roughs", reading and studying the Bible in the choir area behind the pulpit. There was a strong bond in the group carrying over into adulthood, but impetus was lost during the war years.

In the late 20s a Young Women's Bible Class was started for ages 14 - 16 under the leadership of Miss Brown, a teacher at The Friary, who had a great influence on teenagers who would have been lost to the Church, widening the interests of the members with social and recreational activities.

Youth Fellowship

In 1956 a Youth Club was started, presenting a variety of recreational activities, but support eventually declined. In 1958 it resumed as a Youth Fellowship with the devotional element central to the meetings. It meets after Sunday evening service, and has a thriving membership.

Girl Guides and Brownies

The 3rd Lichfield Methodist Brownie Pack was formed in 1957 and the 3rd Lichfield Methodist Guide Unit in 1961; the first Church Parade took place in April 1962. In 1967 there was a Ranger Unit, and the 9th Lichfield Methodist Brownie Pack was formed in 1976. Later, Audrey Sharrod left to become District Commissioner.

Boys' Brigade

The present 1st Lichfield Company goes back to 1977 for its inception in our Church, although its first appearance came at the turn of the century at St Mary's Church, and later at the United Reformed Church, which has loaned the Company Colour and other regalia. It was the first uniformed organisation, a world-wide movement started in 1883, and the inspiration for other groups, including Scouts and Guides. Membership requires attendance at our own church or elsewhere. The band, open also to the Guides, meets for practice on Saturday mornings; for some years it has led the Remembrance Day Parade to the Cathedral. The Brigade has an impressive record of trophies and awards. It has four sections — Anchor, Juniors, Company Section and Seniors. There is a monthly Church Parade along with Guides and Brownies.

Shell Group

This is a term used in the Methodist Church for non-uniformed organisations of children between 7 and 13. In 1987 30 young people attended the first meeting, and the group continues at the same strength. Shell's aims are to:

- Seek new experience
- Help Others
- Enjoy the world
- Love God
- Live a full life.

Men's Circle

This was introduced in 1960 during Revd West's ministry. Frank Senior has been Secretary throughout and the President is the resident minister. It meets on alternate Tuesdays, with a short period of devotion, a speaker on general or religious themes, and questions and discussion.

Tuesday Club

A Young Wives Group was formed in 1960, meeting with Mrs West in the Manse. Membership grew, and by 1963 the Church Hall was being used. In early days the majority were C of E but Young Wives fulfilled an ecumenical rôle when many came to or joined the Church and sent children to the Sunday School. With the passage of time and jocular remarks from growing sons and daughters, it was renamed "Tuesday Club", and welcomed single ladies also. Members cherish the fun sparked off by both serious sponsored events and the less formal occasions — uproarious weeks of practice before a show, whether Christmas Party, Old-Time Music-Hall, or home-spun farce, or the excitement of the real thing. Tuesday Club continues with a varied programme of talks, demonstrations and visits, as well as an occasional entertainment, with an element of fund-raising for Church and charitable events.

Lichfield Retirement Fellowship

This began in 1977/8, during the ministry of Revd Jim Hutchens, to promote fellowship amongst the retired, whilst using their potential and skills. Accommodation was generously made available in the schoolroom for meetings fortnightly, and what began with a handful

of people has blossomed into a membership of over 60, a vast majority regularly attending. A varied programme of demonstrations, visiting speakers, outings, social events and parties is provided. Not least are the devotional aspect of each occasion, the free exchange of views, and essentially, membership regardless of denomination or religious commitment.

Camp Weekend

The Lichfield Methodist Camp Weekend was introduced in May 1982 following an invitation by Eddie Leese, during the 1981 Garden Party, to use Fisherwick Hall Farm for any fund-raising activity. The financing of the 1982 extension project added impetus, seized on by a lively organising committee. The variety of activities on that first occasion — Tractor and trailer-rides, Mini-market, Narrow-boat trips, Folk Dance, Barbecue, Bonfire and fireworks, Midnight hike, and Sunday Morning Service in the Barn — set the standard for the series, which has continued so successfully that in 1985 it became the Lichfield Circuit Camp. In 1988 the venue moved to Kings Bromley Showground, and in 1989 the occasion was graced by the "Engagement" stage of the Tamworth/Lichfield Circuit Reunion.

Sunday Worship

Tribute is gladly paid to those who have regularly given time and effort to preparation for services, those who assist in the devotions, and, particularly to the long line of organists whose leadership during services represents a mere fraction of their contribution to the everyday life of the church.

1991... AND BEYOND...

WHAT OF THE CHURCH TODAY?

It is a Thankful Church — thankful to God for His mercy and guidance over the past 100 years. That gratitude is expressed in celebratory events throughout the year September 1991 to September 1992; these include Harvest of the High Street, a Hobbies and Craft Exhibition, Pantomime, Worship and Sunday School Outing 1892 style, and Music for a Summer Evening. Specially-invited preachers will lead worship, and we have been honoured by the visit of the President of Conference, The Revd Ronald Hoar, B.D., when nine new members were welcomed to the Church. The high-point of the year will be the Grand Birthday Party on Saturday April 18th 1992 — 1892 style — with a renewal of friendships from near and far.

It is a Mission Church. Its outreach is seen in: prison visiting — a team of members lead Bible study, conduct worship and share recreation with the young men of Swinfen Hall Young Offenders Institution; the M.H.A. "Live at Home" scheme, providing care for the lonely and housebound elderly; and maintaining contact, through a pastoral group, with our own Church membership, which has now reached 360.

It is a Forward-Looking Church. Early in 1991 all church organisations were invited to comment on ways of making realisation of their aims more effective. The Church Council asked the Property Committee to consider improvements to the buildings. Essential work on the roof, aided by grants, was begun in the autumn of 1991, and improvements to the façade of the Church were completed in October. Plans are afoot to make major alterations to the hall and ancillary rooms — Centenary Year events will help provide finance. We thank all who have worked, supported and prayed within Lichfield Methodist Church in this Centenary Year, and look forward to many years of witness for Christ in the community.

MINISTERS AT TAMWORTH STREET METHODIST CHURCH

1891 Revd G.M.C. Fish
1892 Revd Hulton
1895 Revd Woolliscroft
1896 Revd T. Barr
1898 Revd Boase
1899 Revd Hopper
1901 Revd Waldron
1902 Revd Kewley
1909 Revd C.H. Luckman
1912 Revd P. Ellis
1914 Revd C.H. Hodgson
1916 Revd J. Butler
1917 Revd M. Smith
1918 Revd W. Horner
1921 Revd L.O. Brooker
1924 Revd A. Stirzaker
1928 Revd G. Howells
1930 Revd W. Freeman
1931 Revd H. Holroyd
1936 Revd T. Russell
1938 Revd H. Thompson
1941 Revd R. Corner
1943 Revd K. Atkinson
1945 Revd J. Greaves
1946 Revd R. McNeal
1950 Revd Norbury Clarkson
1953 Revd E. Avery
1957 Revd G. Gibbs
1959 Revd G. West
1965 Revd R. Turner
1972 Revd W.N.J. Hutchens
1980 Revd J. Davies
1984 Revd P. Mortlock

This Indenture

made the tenth
Between Edward
Reverend Thomas

Witnesseth that the said parties of the one part and Henry H
Edwards Master William Roberts James Wilson John North John
Robert Morgan and Walter Howell James Smith all of the City of London
Samuel Joseph Bamford of Wharfedale in the County of York and
Wilson of Wharfedale in the County of York and John Henry Joseph Sadler of
Samuel Thompson of Tamworth in the County of Warwick (hereinafter called the parties)
the nineteenth day of November One thousand eight hundred and ninety and was
1890 duly conveyed unto and to the use of the said Edward Johnson in fee simple
unto for the purpose of erecting a Chapel or place of Religious worship
and for that purpose agreed with the said Edward Johnson for the whole sum
amounting for the sum of Three hundred and fifty pounds and whereas by an Indenture
made or expressed to be made between John Ledwith and fourteen others of the one
part and entitled in Her Majesty's High Court of Chancery on the twenty
of the month of April in the fourth year of the said Majesty Queen Victoria
of the people called Methodists in the Dominion established by the late Reverend
Bishop of Exeter Methodist Chapels IN this Indenture witnesseth that
hundred and fifty pounds by the said parties hereto of the one part on the

An extract from the 1891 Indenture