

7. Crowtrees Methodist Chapel

The history of the Methodist Church from the time of John and Charles Wesley, the sons of the Anglican vicar of Epworth in Lincolnshire, to the Ecumenical Movement of the 20th century can be found in notes written by Revd Tony Buglass on the Calderdale Methodist Circuit website.

John Wesley, born 1703, was ordained as Anglican deacon in 1725 and priest in 1728 in Christ Church Cathedral, University of Oxford. He is estimated to have travelled 250,000 miles, mainly on horseback, in 50 years to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in an attempt to re-invigorate the Church. He coined the famous phrase "I look upon all the world as my Parish."

John visited Heptonstall, high above Hebden Bridge in the Calder valley, on the 21st May 1747 when the Darney Society, founded by a Scottish freelance evangelist William Darney was offered to the Methodist movement. Thus, Heptonstall Methodist Church was born. The present octagonal Chapel at Heptonstall, built in 1764, is believed to be the oldest Methodist chapel in continuous use, though services are sometimes shared with the Anglican Church.¹

It is also interesting to note that John Wesley preached at Mount Zion Methodist Church, Ogden, Halifax in 1774 and 1790. This was not in the present Mount Zion building dating from 1815, but in the original building from 1773.

Crowtrees Methodist Chapel was formed by the Elland Methodist Circuit, in May 1859 when a group, an offshoot of Southgate Church Elland, moved from Elland to Rastrick. Two years previous to this in 1857, the Wesleyan Methodist Association and the Wesleyan Reformers had, by common consent, formed themselves into one denomination. The name of the denomination was known as the United Methodist Free Churches, and from which subsequently the Rastrick Church derived its name. The new Methodist Society held their first service in a small, rented room at a cottage chapel in New Hey Road, Rastrick. The property, described as a 'low decker', was owned by Robert Sayles and the rent was £3 10s. The opening service was held on June 19th, 1859 and the minister was Sammy Hoyle, a 'most eccentric preacher' who hailed from Sowerby. The collection amounted to £3 2s 0d.

A meeting on the 5th February 1862 established a Sunday School, which meet for the first time on the 10th November 1862 in another cottage rented or £4 from Mr Sayles.

Eventually, in June 1864, the cottage became too small for their expanding congregation, and they moved to new premises in Crowtrees Lane near Delph Hill at Oaks Green. The premises were formerly used by John Schofield (Manufacturer) and at the time of the move occupied by Mr. Hiram Hill. The lower part of the building was converted into a schoolroom and vestry, whilst the upper part was used as a Chapel. The opening service was held on the 4th August 1864.

¹ Heptonstall Parish website www.heptonstall.org

Over the next 13 years, described as 'a most happy and blessed period of the church's history' the congregation increased such that the Church Meeting decided to launch out upon a scheme of enterprise in acquiring larger and more suitable premises in which to carry on their work, and so place the movement on a more permanent basis.'

In April 1875 the decision was made to consider building a new church and in May 1876 a site was acquired in Crowtrees Lane. Later in 1876 a corner stone was laid by Ald. Robert Thornton.

The Crowtrees Methodist Chapel, built to the design of R.F. Rogerson, Architect, of Brighouse on the site in Crowtrees Lane was opened on Monday September the 3rd 1877, as a United Methodist Free Church. The estimated cost of the building work was £3,000. On the 18th October 1877 the chapel was registered for public worship and on the 19th August 1878 it was registered for the solemnisation of marriage.

In 1880 the church was redecorated and an organ was purchased from Conacher & Co. of Huddersfield at a cost of £500. The organ was installed in October 1880 and was ready to be played in February 1881.

In December 1894 severe gales wrecked Upper Edge Baptist Church. The use of Crowtrees Chapel was granted to the Deacons of the Baptist Chapel. A foretaste of things to come!

In 1907 Crowtrees became a United Methodist Church.

Golden Jubilee celebrations were held on the 9th and 10th October 1909 with a Chapel Anniversary and a re-opening after repainting and decorating. A procession was made around the village with the singing of hymns in New Road, Slade Lane, Delf Hill, Tofts Grove and Crowtrees Lane. An organ recital was given at 3pm followed by a tea at 5 pm. Later in the evening at 7pm a Great Jubilee meeting was held with a number of speakers.

In 1910 a gift of Communion Service and plate was made by Ald. and Mrs. W Smith, founder members of Crowtrees, and who were the first Mayor and Mayoress of Brighouse.

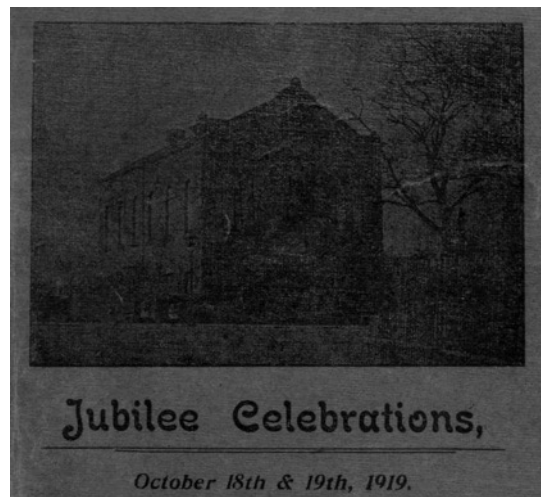


Crowtrees Chapel in Crowtrees Lane from the south prior to 1923



Crowtrees Lane with the Chapel (before the road was widened in 1923 for the tramway)

Diamond Jubilee Celebrations were held. in October 1919 with special services.



For the Jubilee document see below. (and Appendix S)

This document contains much information on the history of the United Methodist Church Crowtrees Lane, Rastrick, including Marriages between 1890 and 1919, Baptisms from 1862 to 1919 and Deaths from 1909 to 1919 including a list of members and Scholars who served in the Great War.

In 1926 the church was wired for electricity at a cost of £75 15s 6d (2 years before St Matthew's received similar treatment). The church was renovated inside and outside costing £95.

In 1933 the first application was made to leave the Elland Circuit as from October 1934. Following serious damage to the roof by gales, closure threatened in 1949, but the church remained active, whilst experiencing serious financial difficulties. It would seem that strong gales causing structural damage to buildings were a problem not only in the 21st century but also in the 1890s and the 1940s!



Crowtrees Chapel pre 1939 with cast iron railings intact

(courtesy Facebook Memories of Brighouse - Eddy G Hudson 31 July 2017)

From Memories of Brighouse (Facebook) :

'This picture was taken before the war when the railings were cut down for munitions. Do you have a date Eddy G Hudson?' - Stan Holroyd

'Never forget that beautiful organ in there. To me as (a) little kid it looked and sounded magnificent. I can remember the organist then Philip Ackroyd.' - Roger Thompson

'Don't remember him...maybe too young. Mr Hallam played for a while and Kenneth Marshall .' - Jeanette Press

'And Derek Wilson.' - Stan Holroyd

There were many organisations within the church. For example: the Women's Own Group which had originally been formed in 1913, the Christian Endeavour Group and the Band of Hope. The Legion of Service was a war-time activity for the younger members of the church. ²

² Chris Helme Heritage Newseum Issue 2 Autumn 2018 'Memories of Crowtrees Chapel'



Happy Times - In the grounds of Crowtrees Methodist Church with a VE Day May 8, 1945 celebration *By kind permission of Chris Helme* ³

After the Second World War, society was changing with congregations in many churches were beginning to dwindle. The rising costs of maintaining such large buildings became a financial burden that few could sustain. It was in 1949 that these problems hit Crowtrees and was the first serious threat to the church being closed.⁴

In 1952 Huddersfield Corporation trolley buses ran past the Chapel from the Ritz cinema, Brighouse to Longwood, Huddersfield.



Crowtrees Lane with Crowtrees Chapel on the left in 1952

³ Chris Helme Heritage Newseum Issue 2 Autumn 2018 'Memories of Crowtrees Chapel'

⁴ Chris Helme Heritage Newseum Issue 2 Autumn 2018 'Memories of Crowtrees Chapel'

In 1957 the Brighthouse Circuit agreed to accept Crowtrees as from September 1957.
'The Elland Circuit readily agrees to our release.'



In April 1958 there was a visitation of all houses in Field Lane Estate, Rastrick by Crowtrees Church and St Matthews Church under the joint leadership of the Revd. G.J.R. Jenkins and the Revd. H. Birch (Vicar).



Garden Party in the grounds of Crowtrees Methodist Church during the mid 1950s ⁵
By kind permission of Chris Helme

⁵ Chris Helme Heritage Newseum Issue 2 Autumn 2018 'Memories of Crowtrees Chapel'



Crowtrees Methodist Chapel 1875 to 1970, after 1959

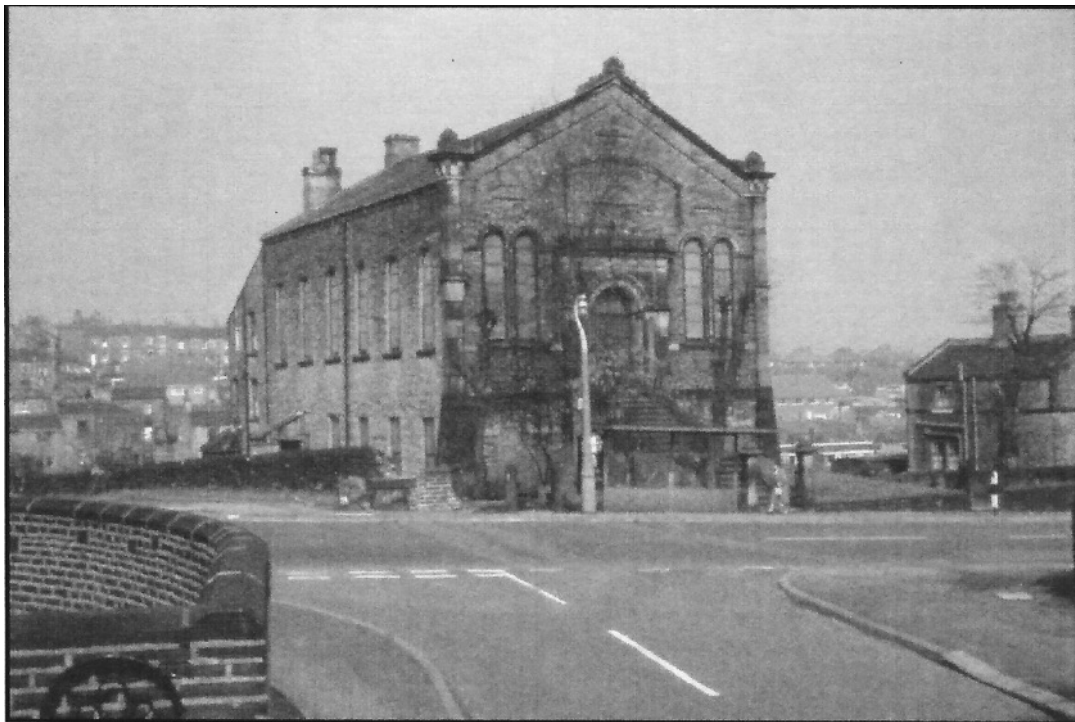
Despite earlier threats of closure, the Centenary of Methodism in Rastrick was happily celebrated in 1959 with a Tea and Reunion on Saturday 12th September followed by Centenary Services on Sunday 13th September at 10.45 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. A booklet about the centenary is available - see below.

The following photograph of unknown date of a group of Crowtrees members on the front steps of the building was kindly supplied by a church member.



During the 1950s and 60s the Church youth club was under the watchful eye of Mr K.M. Kelham; the Girl Guides during that same period were led by Miss E.V. Crossley along with the Brownies, who were looked after in those days by Mrs. Kelham.⁶

In March 1965 the young people of the Brighthouse Circuit - 'The Manse Fellowship', were invited to a presentation by 'Alcoholics Anonymous' in the undercroft at Crowtrees Chapel. However, it could be said that some of the young people were more interested in making new friends than learning about the potential dangers of drinking to excess !



Crowtrees Methodist Church, Crowtrees Lane, Rastrick closed in 1970 and was then demolished having been declared as unsafe. *By kind permission of Chris Helme* ⁷

The last service was held at Crowtrees Chapel on Sunday, 2nd November 1969, when sadly the congregation had to leave after dry rot in the roof structure had been discovered in the previous July, making the building unsafe. The site is now occupied by bungalows next to the shops opposite the former Carr Green School building.

At the kind invitation of the then Vicar of St Matthew's, Canon Ian Knox, the following Sunday, 9th November 1969 the Methodists held their first service at St. Matthew's church, sharing the building with the Church of England, thereby opening another chapter in the history of Crowtrees Methodist and St Matthew's Church, Rastrick.

⁶ Chris Helme Heritage Newseum Issue 2 Autumn 2018 'Memories of Crowtrees Chapel'

⁷ Chris Helme Heritage Newseum Issue 2 Autumn 2018 'Memories of Crowtrees Chapel'

Funds from the sale of the old Crowtrees Chapel and the land it occupied were used by the Trustees of Crowtrees Methodist Church to partly finance the building of the Parish Centre in 1971 (see section 6 above). The trustees were Raymond Mould Kelham, Leslie Womersley, Donald Marshall, Harry Ramsden, Florence Sutcliffe, Emily Hutchinson, Kenneth Marshall, Eva Victoria Crossley, Ronald Horne, Alfred Holroyd, Frank Cooper, Raymond White and Hilton Taylor.

A Book of Remembrance of the founders and benefactors of Crowtrees Methodist Church is mounted in a wall cabinet in the narthex of St Matthew's. It was put in place in 1974 (see Section 2.3 above). See Appendix E1

For more information on the history of Crowtrees Church see the document

[Crowtrees Centenary 1959](#)

on the St. Matthew's website in 'History of St Matthew's' or in Appendix I of this document.

A further scanned document titled

United Methodist Church
CROWTREES LANE,
RASTRICK
1859—1919
Jubilee Celebrations
October 18th & 19th , 1919

See Appendix S. Also available as a pdf document (4MB) from the Website Editor, Richard Kay

(Thanks to [Malcolm Bull's Calderdale Companion](#) for some of this history)