



THE ORIGINAL CHAPEL AT LOW FELL.

(By courtesy of the Trustees of the Wesley Memorial Church, Low Fell).

“THE KINGSWOOD OF THE NORTH.”

On the 8th of March, 1743, Wesley visited for the first time a place which was to receive in all more than thirty visits. The modern Low Fell is a largely populated suburb of Gateshead ; in Wesley's day Gateshead Fell was a wild uncultivated waste, principally inhabited by colliers.

Wesley's words are :

“In the afternoon I preached on a smooth part of the Fell (or Common) near Chowden. I found we were got into the very Kingswood of the North. Twenty or thirty children ran round us, as soon as we came, staring as in amaze. They could not properly be said to be either clothed or naked. One of the largest (a girl about fifteen) had a piece of a ragged, dirty blanket some way hung about her, and a kind of cap on her head, of the same cloth and colour. My heart was exceedingly enlarged towards them ; and they looked as if they would have swallowed me up ; especially while I was applying these words, ‘Be it known unto you men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins.’”

Wesley's northern journey in February, 1745, was one of the roughest in the matter of weather conditions that even that intrepid traveller ever experienced. Travelling on hard frozen snow, often having to lead the horses, the little party made slow progress.

“It was past eight before we got to Gateshead Fell, which appeared a great pathless waste of white. The snow filling up and covering all the roads, we were at a loss how to proceed, when an honest man of Newcastle overtook and guided us safe into the town.”

Wesley's record of his visit, June 6, 1759, is interesting :

“I preached at Gateshead Fell to a numerous congregation. In earnestness the colliers of Gateshead utterly shame the colliers of Kingswood, scarcely thirty of whom think it worth while to hear the word of God on a week-day, not even when I preach ; and here the house will scarce contain the week-day congregation of a local preacher.”

A few days later he “endeavoured to compose the little differences which had much hurt the poor people at Gateshead Fell.” And a few days later still to the largest congregation which had ever been seen there.

Wesley's visits to Tyneside generally included preaching at

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the Fell. When he was eighty-five years of age he expounded there the joy that is in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. "Though the sun was very hot, and the wind very cold, the people regarded neither one nor the other. They seemed only to attend to the voice of God, and the breathing of His Spirit."

In 1918, when I was Superintendent of the Circuit, I conducted the funeral of Miss Georgina Gardner, of Low Fell. I was informed that her great-grandfather, John Gardner, is said to have been Wesley's first convert in the place. He tried to break up the meeting, but the message of the preacher subdued him.

The last Tyneside journey of the great evangelist took place less than a year before his death, and Gateshead Fell was visited under the following circumstances.

"Sunday, 6th June 1790. I was invited to preach in Lamesley Church, on the side of Gateshead Fell; but some hours later the minister changed his mind. So I preached in our own preaching-house, which contained the greater part of the congregation tolerably well, among whom were Sir Henry Liddell and his Lady, with a great number of his servants. The chapel was hot as a stove; but neither high nor low seemed to regard it; for God was there."

Sir Henry Liddell's seat was Ravensworth Castle. He survived Wesley by a few months only. His elder son was created Baron Ravensworth in 1821, and a grandson was the famous Dean of Christ Church, Oxford. Ravensworth Castle has been very much in the public eye of late years as the venue of the great Northern Tattoo. Lamesley Church may be seen from the train, on the left as north-bound travellers approach Low Fell Station.

There is a well-authenticated tradition that on one occasion Wesley arrived at the Fell without his Canonicals, and would not preach until a female member of the society, having hastily mounted a horse, brought the required black gown from the Orphan House in Newcastle. The explanation of what may seem to us, at first glance, an unreasonable scruple, is probably explained by fear on the part of the preacher that if he had officiated unrobed a report would have gone abroad that he had left the Church.

The work took root, and on May 3rd, 1753, Wesley speaks of preaching at Gateshead Fell to many more than the house would contain. This "house" Tyerman says, was the second Chapel built for the Methodists in the neighbourhood of Newcastle. It was the first in the county of Durham. In 1755, John

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added to the society and congregation which had rendered an enlargement necessary. Mr. Fallaw points out that this chapel was built sixty two years before there was one in Gateshead itself, and says it was the nineteenth in England.

Adjoining the Chapel was a house in which two rooms known as Wesley's Rooms, were set apart for the use of the preachers. On one of the window panes the following words were written :

"Thy kingdom come to every heart. So prays Peter Jaco, December 12th, 1770." "And may Jaco's prayer be answered. T. H . . . y, December 16th, 1770."

"Amen, saith my soul. S. Bardsley, Lord's Day, Dec. 10th, 1770.

Peter Jaco and Thomas Hanby were then stationed with three other preachers in the Newcastle Circuit, which included Gateshead. On another pane is written :

"God is love. J. Wesley, 1771."

The Wesley pane was privately owned for many years. It is now framed and hangs on the wall near the stairs leading to the rostrum in the modern Chapel.

Writing in the *Methodist Recorder*, May 2, 1901, the late Mr. George Parkinson of Sherburn, Co. Durham, said : "I well remember the tree under which Wesley preached when the congregation could not be accommodated in the Chapel. It stood on the rising ground, a few yards from the Chapel door. From its fall Mr. Stoddart [a veteran local preacher whose obituary Mr. Parkinson was writing] had a very narrow escape, as he one night entered the Chapel, just as the tree was blown down in a fierce storm. A large stone lay under the tree, on which Wesley stood, and on which Dr. Coke also stood and preached.

In my boyhood I had this account of Wesley and Coke preaching under that tree from an old man who heard them. He used to describe Wesley as 'a bonny little man, with such a canny nice face' wearing 'knee breeches, black stockings, and buckles on his shoes, wiv his bonny white hair hinging on his black gown, and a clean white thing, like two sark necks, hinging down on his breast.'

The same old man also told of 'another bonny little man, drissed the syem way, an' he stood upon the stone and preached like Wesley tiv a bonny lot of folks."

Mr. Parkinson goes on to say that a large portion of the tree was secured by Mr. Stoddard, who had it made up into fancy

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Nelson, writing to Charles Wesley, tells of increasing numbers boxes and paper-knives, which were sold at a bazaar in aid of the new Chapel. One of these paper-knives is beside me as I write.

On the site of the old Chapel, and on the original foundation, there now stands a well arranged ministers' house, built with the stones (re-dressed) which formed the old structure.

A mahogany table which belonged to Wesley finds a place in the Chapel, and a cupboard which he used is built into the wall of the minister's study. The stone above referred to is built into the wall of the Southern Memorial Hall. This Hall, part of the modern Church property, commemorates the life-long interest, expressed in many acts of practical generosity to the two Gateshead Wesleyan Circuits, of the late Mr. and Mrs. Southern.

The friends at Low Fell have not allowed the memory of the beginnings of the cause to be forgotten. A tablet has recently been erected, with inscription as follows :—

IN MEMORY OF
WILLIAM AND JANE BELL
WHO ERECTED AT LOW FELL
THE FIRST METHODIST CHAPEL
IN DURHAM COUNTY
IN THE YEAR 1754

“They builded better than they knew
The conscious stone to beauty grew”

A.D. 1930

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Mr. Fallaw quotes the following passage written by Thomas Wilson in notes to *Pitman's Pay*, a well-known north-country book.

"It was erected by William Bell. He and his wife Jane made their money here as bakers. They had only one child, who died young. This, it was thought, gave them a religious turn, and brought them in connection with Wesley in the early part of his career, at which time this erection was made. At their death they left it to the Wesleyan Connexion, who have performed service in it to this day. [Written about 1826]. During their lives they entertained gratuitously all the preachers sent hither on duty, both itinerant and local. William Bell died on 1st January, and Jane his wife on 10th February, 1784. An excellent Sunday School, which was established in January 1789, is attached to this chapel, and is one of the earliest of these highly useful institutions.

Above 100 children are taught here by the hard-working industrious men connected with the chapel. Their labours for many years have been unremitting, and productive of immense good to the population of this neighbourhood."

Wesley records that when he visited the Fell on Whit-Sunday, May 30, 1784, he was forced to preach "abroad" by the multitude that flocked together moved by the death of William Bell and his wife, one so soon after the other.

Samuel Barrass, schoolmaster, died at Low Fell in 1830, at the age of 80. He wrote an epitaph on William Bell:—

Here lies the corpse of William Bell,
The great good man of Gateshead Fell,
Zealous in his Master's cause,
A strict observer of His laws ;
He lived by faith, and not by sight,
With full assurance took his flight
Unto that sweet delicious coast
Where hope is in fruition lost.

(This epitaph I found in a book presented by Mr. Reed to the Public Library, dealing with matters and events of the early 19th century. The cutting, pasted in, bears the mark of age, so that I am convinced that it relates to *our* William Bell.—H.F.F.).

The late Rev. M. F. Ryle, who entered the ministry from Low Fell, in a note contributed to our manuscript journal in 1916, stated that the gravestone of this worthy couple could still be identified in Lamesley Churchyard.

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"In memory of Wm. Bell: who departed this life, Jan. 1, 1784: aged 84 years. Also Jane, his wife, who died Feb. 10, 1784: aged 71 years." Mr. Ryle also said that, at least until recent years, some of the Low Fell Methodists, made it a privilege to keep the grave in good appearance and repair.

Modern Gateshead has such a number and variety of Churches and Chapels, that it is difficult to realize that with the exception of St. Mary's, Gateshead, and St. Andrew's, Lamesley, the old Chapel was for a long time the only place of worship within a wide area. The prominent Church of St. John on Sheriff Hill was consecrated in 1825.

Services were held in the old Chapel for 150 years. The memorial stones of a new building were laid in 1881. The consummation of Methodist Union has necessitated a distinctive name for this Church, and in remembrance of the association of John Wesley with Low Fell, the appropriate designation "Wesley Memorial Methodist Church" has been adopted.

Mr. Fallaw has a copy of the *Life of John Dungett* who was born at Gateshead, May 1, 1780. His father was Richard Dungett, who kept what was then the principal inn in the town. His mother was the daughter of Mr. John Dale, of Gateshead Fell, who was one of the earliest leaders appointed to that office by Wesley in the North of England, and for many years met his class in his own house. When John Dungett was a child he was often permitted to remain in the room during the meeting. He well remembered his grandfather's method of conducting the class. After singing and prayer he would take his seat, and call the members one after another, who came and stood before him while he inquired how their souls prospered and conversed with them about their experience of the grace of God.

The Gateshead Methodists in the earliest days of the movement worshipped at the Orphan House, which was more accessible than the Chapel at the Fell, and there John Dungett repeatedly saw and heard Wesley.

It is not always remembered as well as it should be that in the earliest days of Methodism Charles Wesley was an intrepid and successful pioneer. He did a great work in preaching the Gospel in the Tyneside area. Mr. Ryle collected from Thomas Jackson's *Journal and Poetry of the Rev. Charles Wesley*, the following references to the Fell.

1743, Sunday, June 5. My soul was revived by the poor people at Chowden.

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Sunday, June 12. I preached . . . at seven to the poor people in Chowden.

1756. Sunday, December 28. I hastened through the snow to Gateshead, and preached out to many, who promised fair for making hardy soldiers of Christ.

It was after preaching to Tyneside colliers that Charles Wesley composed the hymn, "Ye neighbours and friends of Jesus draw near," numbered 329 in the latest edition of the Methodist Hymnbook. Note the word "of." This is a reversion to the original, and takes the place of the tamer, though more readily comprehensible, word "to," used in the previous edition.

I am sure it will be recognized that the publication of these notes, in the gathering of which I am greatly indebted to Mr. Fallaw, is appropriate in view of the assembly of the Conference of 1936 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Chowden is a name now confined to the place where the Low Fell tram terminus is situated.

The main highway northwards from Birtley did not run in Wesley's time through Tean Colliery and Low Fell, but through Wrekenton and down Sheriff Hill.

The present Ravensworth Castle was built in 1808.

F. F. BRETHERTON.

THE ORPHAN HOUSE, NEWCASTLE.

A CONTEMPORARY DESCRIPTION.

It stands without Pilgrim Street Gate in the Edinburgh Road, on a piece of ground about 40 yards deep from the street, and about 18½ wide, with houses on either side. It is on the highest ground in Newcastle, therefore overlooks the whole town. Against the street is a brick wall about four yards high with iron spikes on the top. Just in the middle is a large door, within which is first a space of ground about 13 yards deep, and then is the house. Behind the house is a garden about the same bigness of the square before the house.

The house is 17 yards long and 14 deep and 44 feet high. Forward are no windows save at the top floor, where are five broad sashes. To enter the house are two large doors at equal distance from the ends and from each other, within side is a handsome staircase between the doors, geometrically built. Opposite the stairs is a handsome pulpit with stairs on either side, and room for two persons on either side above, to sit in a kind of

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little gallery. Under the pulpit is a door into the garden. This room or chapel is the whole length and breadth of the house only on either end is a partition about $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet high which takes in one fourth at each end wherein the members of the society sit, the men on one end, the women on the other, the middle, which is about one half, is for strangers. This room is 20 feet high with only one Lummer (?) tree and two supporters, the walls here are 24 inches thick, the floor boarded, the top ciled. No windows save on the garden side, where are five very large about the middle between the top and bottom, one of them is in the pulpit.

The first floor is, first a large floor, one third of the length of the house or more and goes from the street side to the garden, and has three windows into the garden, large. On either side of this hall are four rooms with each a large window, the two next the garden have windows into the garden, which makes five in this floor answer the five in the Chapel. The other six have each a window at the ends of the house. About the middle, between the rooms on either side, is a passage and a large closet and a staircase. All these rooms have angle fireplaces. The walls here are 20 inches thick, but the partitions are only slight deal posts set at about 18 inches distance and filled up with bricks set on edge.

The second floor has a passage from end to end, i.e., from one staircase to the other, with a window at each end. On either side the passage are five rooms equally divided, five towards the street and five towards the garden with a window in each of them. Here are also angle fireplaces in each room except the four corner rooms, where they are square. The walls here are 16 inches thick, but the partitions as below. This floor at the East corners is nine feet high, but over the passage it is higher, and at the north end yet higher, it having been designed to cover it all with lead, but finding that too dear they have raised a slight double roof of timber from end to end and have built a little room about the middle of the back roof, with a window looking into the garden, and a chimney in it. To this is a little staircase from the middle of the passage below. Opposite this little room is a little door which goes out between the roofs; here a gutter of lead two feet broad goes from end to end, and then one like it all round except where the little room is, which brings all the water to the corners of the south-east end, where it is let through the wall (which is about four feet high and 10 inches thick all round the house) by lead spouts into wooden pipes, and so carried down the outside of the house.

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The house is built all with bricks, but the top all round is coped with stone. The roofs are covered with boards, not longways but upright like, and is to be done over with paint and sand, which is said to be cheaper and stronger than tiles.

It costs about £600 building. All the timber is deal. The ground on which it stands and the square before it cost £30, t'is freehold.

It is said that if this roof had been covered with boards, flat like lead and well painted, it would have done well without raising the roof as they have done. It is said that the refuse of coperas, made into paint or mixed with mortar or the like, makes points to bricks or stone as hard as stone itself, or in paint makes it as lasting as lead.

This article is a copy (spelling &c. modernised) of an entry in the diary of Richard Viney. In a series of articles in a *Proceedings* some years ago the late Rev. M. Riggall gave copious extracts from this very interesting document, and enriched them with a mass of his own careful annotations. Viney was a very painstaking penman, and managed to get all this information on one page of which a photograph is given in *Proceedings*, xiv, p. 25.

He also tells us on the same page that he rose at half-past five, and went to the meeting from five to six, wrote a little, breakfasted with Mr. Westley [sic] at home over tea. Then read in the Pennsylvania Conference etc. in their bookroom (which was ordered for me to be in) till two o'clock, when I dined on milk (they not dining before on Wednesdays) after dinner folded and stitched some extracts of Law's Serious Call just published by Mr. Westley. At six supped with Mr. Westley on Sammon [sic]. At seven was at the meeting, and at nine to bed.

F.F.B.

WESLEY AND NEWCASTLE CHURCHES

Journal. Sunday, 10th March, 1745. "We had a useful sermon at All Saints in the morning, and another at our own Church in the afternoon. I was much refreshed by both, and united in love both to the two preachers and to the clergy in general."

The present All Saints' Church, with its striking tower, is a comparatively modern structure, having been consecrated November 17, 1789. It was erected on the site of the old church which had become insecure. The old church, built previous to 1286, is called in Brand's History All Hallows.

The erection of the modern Tyne Bridge involved the destruction of a lot of squalid property, and has brought the building much more into view. It stands at the foot of Pilgrim Street, overlooking the Sandhill.

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The late Rev. J. Conder Natrass writing in *Proceedings* (xii, 66), quotes Dr. Bruce as saying, "Time out of mind, it has been divided into four different chapelries, St. Nicholas, All Saints, St. Andrew's and St. John's."

The Orphan House would be in the parochial chapelry of St. Andrew's, and it is this church, therefore, which Wesley calls "our own church."

In the churchyard attached thereto is a tombstone giving the following particulars, which were published in *Proceedings* (xii, 22).

The tomb of William Smith Esq
of High Friar Street
in this town
who departed this life 30th May 1824
Aged 80 years
and of Jane Smith his Wife
Who died 17th January 1820
Aged 83 years
Here also lie buried
Mary Stamp their daughter
Who departed this life 11 November 1794
Aged 25 years
And Mr. Thomas Prior Flanders
Who died September 1813
Aged 33 years
and his daughter Jane Vazeille
Who died 2nd January 1814
Aged 4 Months
the above named Jane Smith
was the daughter of
Antony and Mary Vazeille
the latter when a widow
Married the Reverend John Wesley
Founder of Methodism
& was buried in Camberwell
Churchyard on October 12th 1781.

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The romantic, and complicated, story of Grace Murray has often been told. It was in the ancient Church of St. Andrew that her marriage to John Bennet took place.

The entry in the register is very bare. It reads simply :

Weddings in October, 1749.

3. John Bennet and Grace Murray.

There is no description of the parties, and no names of witnesses. But it is known that Charles Wesley and George Whitefield were present. It has been stated that they signed the register, but an examination of the document does not bear that out. Bennet has left it on record that the officiating minister was the Rev. Mr. Bruister, Curate.

JOHN WESLEY'S VISIT TO MR. HAMPSON'S CHURCH, SUNDERLAND.

Charles Wesley was apparently the first Methodist to preach in Sunderland, his first visit taking place in June, 1743. John Wesley, who visited the town frequently throughout his ministry, paid his first visit a few weeks later. His visit in 1788 was his thirty-first. He says :—

Sunday, June 1. "I willingly accepted of Mr. Hampson's invitation, and preached in his Church, morning and afternoon. I suppose it was hardly ever so filled before. And the power of God was present to heal. It was doubted whether all could hear. In order to try, Joseph Bradford stood in the farthest corner ; and he could hear every word. I preached in our Chapel at six ; but abundance of people could not get in. I was sorry I did not preach abroad, while so many were athirst for the word."

Joseph Bradford, one of the travelling preachers, was Wesley's faithful helper and companion during the last years of his life. He was President of the Conference in 1795.

The clergyman referred to was the Rev. John Hampson, an ex-Methodist Preacher. When Wesley executed his famous Deed of Declaration in 1784 constituting the legal Conference of one hundred preachers, some of those whose names were not included were greatly offended. Amongst these were a father and son both bearing the name John Hampson. They and a few others carried

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their objections to the point of actually withdrawing from the work, though they both accepted appointments at the Conference of 1784. The older Hampson, who had rendered notable service to Methodism for a long period, left his Circuit before the end of the year, and settled at Southborough, near Tunbridge Wells, where he officiated as minister in the Dissenting Meeting, and was also Master of a Charity School. He died in 1795.

Wr. Wallington (*Proceedings*, x, 157) thinks the initials "J.H." in the appointment to Dublin, in 1776, represents John Hampson, junior, who was admitted on trial that year. In 1777, "J.H.," presumably the son, is at Cork, and John Hampson, the father, at Dublin.

No Irish stations appear in the Minutes for 1778, but Mr. Crookshank states that John Hampson, senior, was at Cork, and his son at Lisburn.

In 1779, J.H., senior, and J.H., junior, designated thus, with initials only, are appointed to Athlone.

Mr. Crookshank tells a long story of the persecution the Methodists had to endure at this period, and narrates how a magistrate rushed into the house where Mr. J. Hampson, junior, lodged and seized him by the throat. "At that instant three young men ran to the rescue of the itinerant; but as the justice persisted in his hostile proceedings, they were obliged to settle the affair in his own way, in consequence of which he remained for some time subsequently under the doctor's care."

In 1780, John Hampson, junior, was appointed to Aberdeen; in 1781, to Macclesfield; in 1782, to Derby; in 1783, to Nottingham; and in 1784, to Sunderland.

In January, 1785, he wrote a long letter to Wesley, headed Chester-le-Street, then in the Sunderland Circuit, in the course of which he expressed his intention not to travel any longer.—(*Proceedings*, ii, 21).

Moore, in his *Life of Wesley*, says Hampson listened to a proposal from some pious gentleman, who had formed an association for introducing religious young men into the ministry in the Church of England; and having received the rudiments of a classical education in Mr. Wesley's School at Kingswood, he was sent by them to Oxford.

• From a letter written in April, 1785, by Mr. Robert Hutton (*Proceedings* xi, 18), we learn that the young preacher made an excellent impression during the few months of his ministry in Sunderland. Mr. Hutton says: "We have had several hindrances this year; our preachers not uniting as they ought to have done.

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I cannot help regretting the loss of young Hampson, who has left us. He was an excellent preacher, and wherever he went he was approved of. When it was his turn at Sunderland, our preaching house would not contain the congregation. I never knew a preacher in my life so much applauded, and in the general, by the great people of our town. And had he staid with us, to use the phrase made us of by some of the people that attended, half the town would have been Methodists. If he had been tenderly dealt with, I make no doubt he would have continued."

Mr. Hampson took his Bachelor's degree at Oxford, proceeding later to that of Master of Arts. His first clerical appointment, so far as we know, was that of Curate and Lecturer at St. John's Chapel, Sunderland. A very interesting history of this place of worship, which was erected in 1764, has been published by Mr. Vernon Ritson. In 1875 the Chapelry of St. John was separated from the Parish of Sunderland, and it became a separate Ecclesiastical Parish.

Mr. Hampson became the Rector of Sunderland in 1795, on the resignation of the Rev. John Farrer, and retained that position until his death. He was interred in the Churchyard, and his tomb is still in good preservation. The inscription reads :—

Here Lye the Mortal Remains of the Revd. John Hampson, M.A., Twenty Four Years Rector of this Parish.

He died December 7th, 1819, aged 66 years.

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.

They rest from their Labour, and their works do follow them.

Be ye also ready.

Also Jane Hampson, Widow of the above, who died 5th April, 1844, aged 84 years.

Turning again to the reference in Wesley's *Journal*, it is not surprising to find that it was at one time thought that the Parish Church of the Holy Trinity, where Hampson was Rector for so long, was meant. But the facts which I discovered on the spot point conclusively to St. John's, near the Docks, on the edge of the old Town Moor.

In St. John's are some handsome brass pillars forming an extension of the altar screen. One of them bears the inscription—Erected by William H. Stokoe to the Glory of God and to commemorate the fact that John Wesley preached from the pulpit of this Church in the hearing of the donor's grandfather and great-grandfather, (John Bell). Dedicated May 20th, 1914.

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The Vicar, the Rev. Mr. Jackson, very kindly showed the present writer the old Collection journal preserved in the Church containing an entry :—

June 1, 1788. Collected by Mr. Wesley, Sermon, £12 16 1.
(The accounts are made up towards the end of that month and are signed John Hampson, Curate and Lecturer).

In another record is an entry :—June 1788, By Cash collected on account of Charity Sermon preached (sic) by the Rev. Mr. Wesley. Mr. Ritson says that the old journal records a Charity Sermon with collection each year. In 1782, Mr. Hall, then Incumbent, was the preacher, and the collection amounted to £28 17 0. It never reaches anything like this figure again however, about £12 to £15 being the average, and even so great a preacher as the Rev. Mr. Romaine, from London, only raised £14 12 8 by his sermon in 1784.

The proceeds of this annual charity sermon were applied to the maintenance of the Charity School, and in later entries it appears as "For the Boys."

Mr. Ritson mentions Wesley's collection, as above, and goes on to say, "Perhaps I could hardly finish this short sketch of the early history of St. John's Church more pleasingly than by leaving it here with the greatest, or at all events the most famous, figure that ever filled its pulpit, standing there in our mind's eye before its crowded congregations."

An interesting sidelight on this memorable service is given in the *Life of James Mort*, one of the preachers who helped the formation of the Methodist New Connexion in 1797. He was a careless youth, who had shaken off his early good impressions, when he heard Wesley preach in Sunderland. "When he saw the venerable man, moving down the aisle, with tremulous step, leaning on the arm of Mr. Hampson, the Clergyman, his heart melted, and in order to conceal his tears, he sat down and covered his face."

The first extended *Life of Wesley* to see the light was published in Sunderland.

The first of the three little brown volumes which lie before me contains the following title page :—

Memoirs of the late Rev. John Wesley, A.M., with a review of his Life and Writings, and a History of Methodism, from its commencement in 1729, to the present time, by John Hampson, A.B. Vol. I, Sunderland, printed for the author, by James Graham; and sold by J. Johnson, St. Paul's Churchyard, London. MDCCXCI.

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These volumes have often been characterised by Methodist writers, and it would be aside from our purpose to describe them at length.

By the kindness of Mr. Wallington, the following extracts, not hitherto published, are given from a letter of Michael Longridge contained in the large collection of manuscripts at the Methodist Publishing House.

Mr. Longridge, whose position in Sunderland Methodism was very influential, wrote a few days after Wesley's death to Rev. Joseph Benson: "There is a work in the press here by J. Hampson, Junr., which he has been employed in some time and means I understand to publish with all expedition which he publishes as the life of Mr. Wesley. It will be three duodecimo volumes, the price I have not learnt, the 1 volume is printed though not made public. I have not seen his manuscript though some of our friends have. As far as I can learn they will on the whole place Mr. Wesley's character in a favourable light,—yet I suspect there are some parts in which both he and some living characters will be treated with some freedom. The doctrines and proceedings of the Methodists will I believe be stated and animadverted upon. Should this work be...so favourable in behalf of Mr. Wesley and the cause I am fully persuaded it will be extremely defective, there may be great marks of learning but little spirituality, very little to explain and enforce the religion Mr. Wesley has spent his life to inculcate."

The Rev. John Hugh Beech in his *Outer Life of a Methodist Preacher*, speaks of Hampson's *Memoirs of Wesley* and says:—"His life of that modern apostle is not too eulogistic, yet it is interesting to observe how few flaws he can find in the diamond." Mr. Beech tells a funny little story to the effect that one day when Mr. Hampson was going to Church he gave a cur that stood in the way a blow with his stick. When he had read the prayers and was beginning to preach, this identical dog sauntered down the middle aisle, the door being open on account of the heat, and recognising his recent enemy, howled at him with a vigour which stopped the discourse until the intruder was expelled.

This article is reprinted, very slightly modified, from the *Proceedings*, xiv, 73. It supplements what I have written about Sunderland Methodism in the Newcastle Conference Handbook.

F. F. BRETHERTON

JOHN WESLEY AND THE PRINTERS OF TYNESIDE.

The first edition of the "Rules of Society" was printed in Newcastle. The title-page reads :

The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies, in London, Bristol, King's-Wood, and Newcastle upon Tyne. Printed by John Gooding on the Side. [Price one Penny.] 1743.

This is signed by John Wesley only. The second edition, published in Bristol shortly afterwards, is signed also by Charles Wesley, as is the case with all the numerous later editions.

In the early days of the Georges there was a considerable amount of literary enterprise on Tyneside. John Gooding, "Burnt-house entry, on the Side, Newcastle," kept his press in active motion. In 1744 he was printing *The Newcastle Journal* for Isaac Thompson, and in 1746 he was engaged in printing the first number of the *Newcastle General Magazine*.

Gooding's name appears on a number of Wesley's publications about this time, and some items published elsewhere were reprinted by him.

On the title-page of many of these publications, in addition to the name of John Gooding, the printer, appears the name of R. Akenhead, on Tyne Bridge, Newcastle, as one of the booksellers from whom copies may be purchased.

Robert Akenhead was a well-known bookseller on Tyne Bridge, having for his sign the Bible and Crown.

The old bridge was carried away by the great flood of 1771. The Rev. Andrew Wood, Rector of Gateshead at the time, gives a list of the shops on the Gateshead portion of the bridge, their rentals and supposed value. Robert Akenhead is mentioned as the proprietor of a shop on the west side of the bridge said to be worth £13 a year, the supposed value being £180.

Mr. Bridgen thought that Akenhead was probably the bookseller who advised Wesley to read, abridge and re-publish Baxter's *Aphorisms on Justification*, as "a powerful antidote against the spreading poison of antimonianism," from which he feared some of the Methodists were in danger. Whether this be so or not (and the idea does not seem to have occurred to Mr. Green when he dealt with this subject), the "extract" was printed by Gooding in 1745, and sold by Akenhead.

Another Tyneside firm employed by Wesley was that of J. White and T. Saint, who printed in 1768 the first edition of his sermon on "The Good Steward."

These notes are collected, in view of the Conference, from an article by Rev. T. E. Bridgen in *Proceedings* xiv, 181. Cf. also Green: *Wesley Bibliography*.

JOHN WESLEY'S FIRST VISIT TO GATESHEAD.

Gateshead is a place of considerable antiquity, probably older than Newcastle. It occupies the rising ground on the south side of the Tyne, opposite Newcastle, and the highest point is 513 feet above sea-level.

The earliest notice relates to a Monastery which existed in 653 A.D., of which Uttan was abbot. It is believed that a church occupied a site near St. Mary's.

Antiquaries and historians do not agree as to the origin of the name but the Ven. Bede (673-735) called it *Capræ Caput*, as did also Symeon of Durham (12th Century), who says that the murder of Walcher (1080) happened *ad Capræ Caput*, which he afterwards calls Gateshead. The place was invested with the rights of a borough by Bishop Pudsey in 1164, and governed by a bailiff. The Reform Bill of 1832 made it a parliamentary borough and in 1835 it was incorporated. The arms of the borough bears a Goat's Head among the Clouds, with the motto, "Caput inter Nubila Condit." An old chair in the vestry of the Parish Church, dated 1666, has a goat's head carved upon it.

John Wesley first preached at Gateshead on Sept. 22, 1745 at eight o'clock in the morning. The population at that time was about 7,000. Wesley preached "in a broad part of the street near the Popish Chapel, on the wisdom of God in the governing of the world." This chapel was within the grounds of Gateshead House, immediately to the north of Trinity Church (originally dedicated to St. Edmund the Confessor). The Church, erected in 1245, was in a ruinous condition at the time of Wesley's visit, and was not restored until 1837. In 1903 the whole of the north wall was removed and the old church became the south aisle of the new building. The west front of the old part has a deeply recessed central doorway, the mouldings of which are very rich.

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Over the doorway is an upper arcade, the alternate spaces of which are pierced by lancet lights. The lower arcades flanking the doorway, are trefoil-headed while the higher ones are simply pointed.

"A broad part of the street" is easily understood by the older residents. Its aspect has been quite altered during the last 60 years. Many of the houses, especially on the west side, were set back on "quays." The town authorities consented to the removal of these quays, and the buildings were brought forward. Behind the one-story shops many of the older buildings may still be seen, showing the former street line.

Wesley had passed through Gateshead on several occasions. During his first visit to Newcastle in 1742 he lodged in an inn at the Gateshead end of Tyne Bridge. This bridge, on which were houses and shops, was swept away by a great flood in 1771.

All the through traffic in Wesley's time was by way of the steep and narrow street called Bottle Bank [Botl, A.S. for village = the Bank or hill of the village], as Church Street, an easier gradient, was not formed until 1790.

The Gateshead Methodists appear to have worshipped for a time at Newcastle. In 1812 they used Methuen's long room, connected with an inn at the lower end of the town. Three years afterwards, within a stone's throw of the spot on which Wesley stood, they built a chapel, with accommodation for 700, at a cost of £1,600, which they occupied until 1861, when High West Street Chapel was erected.

Mid-way between the two chapels lived Mr. John Vickers. Dr. Punshon married one of his daughters here, and after her death was united to her sister, the marriage taking place in Canada. The late Judge Waddy was born in Gateshead.

These particulars are reproduced, in view of the Conference, from an article by Mr. Fallaw published in *Proceedings*, xii, 5.

Since Mr. Fallaw wrote, the old chapel in the High Street has been demolished, and the site is occupied by one of the establishments of Messrs. Woolworth.

In *Northern Primitive Methodism*, by W. M. Patterson, we read that John Branfoot was the first Primitive Methodist missionary to preach in Gateshead. August 2, 1861, was the date, and the place was in High Street, under some trees, on the very spot where John Wesley once stood. On May 22, 1768, Wesley refers to preaching under the trees at Gateshead.

A reference in another book also links up with this. In the *Recollections of a Minister's Wife*, Mrs. William Hirst records that her mother's family were Wesleyans. "Their name was Hopper, and it was from the house of my uncle, Mr. John Hopper, of Gateshead, that I went as a bride to Houghton-

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le-Spring. In that same house the late Judge Waddy was born when his father was one of the ministers of the Circuit. It was a beautiful place in that day, with a large orchard, and a tree in front under which tradition said John Wesley had preached."

It is on record that Mr John Hopper lived just opposite the foot of Jackson Street, and near the site of the Popish Chapel, which was burned down a few months after Wesley's first visit.

EARLY METHODISM IN WHITCHURCH (SALOP).

CONTINUED.

Wesley's next visit to Whitchurch occurred in 1772. On Friday, March 27, he preached at Nantwich about noon, and after the service started for Whitchurch. Although a highway, the road was so miserable that the horses could scarcely drag the vehicle along. When two or three miles from Whitchurch they failed altogether. The chaise stuck fast, and the united efforts of all concerned failed to extricate it. So Wesley completed the journey on horseback, but arrived too late for the evening service.

William and Ellen Batho, when married were highly respectable, mutually attached and prosperous. But they were living without God in the world, though attenders at Church. Before they had been married many years, the husband was induced to hear a Methodist preacher; and, being impressed by what he heard, he went to the little chapel again. Mr. Batho soon discerned his need of saving grace, and obtained it. To his wife the intelligence was intensely disagreeable. Now they must go separate roads, unless she could bring him to his senses. Ellen Batho at that time had no idea that she would ever become a Methodist. There was quite sufficient religion at Church to suit her taste; indeed, considerably too much. To go to the Clay-pit Street Conventicle, in that horrid back yard was not to be thought of. If her husband had made a fool of himself she was determined that he would not make a fool of her. He remained firm, and she was constrained to see that he was a far kinder husband than before. Her prejudices were overcome, and she was at length induced to go and hear for herself. Light from heaven entered her mind, and she yielded her heart fully to God. Ellen Batho joined the same class as her husband, under the leadership of good Joseph Brown. She became one of the most

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estimable Methodists Whitchurch ever knew. Neither she nor her husband took the prominent position occupied by Mr. Brown who went to and fro as a Local Preacher, in caring for the members of his class. But Mr. and Mrs. Batho could afford to be hospitable and to help the sick. During the last few years of her life Mrs. Batho very visibly ripened for a better world. When early in 1827, suffering severely, she requested her medical attendant to give her his opinion concerning her case, saying, "I am not afraid to know the worst, being assured that when I die I shall go to glory. Death has lost its sting, and nothing you can say will distress me."

Wesley preached again at Whitchurch in 1781 to "a numerous and very serious audience." He gave the Whitchurch friends another sermon on Thursday, May 17.

In 1785, Mrs. Parsons passed away.

Meanwhile the work of God had been extending in the neighbourhood of Whitchurch. As yet no other chapel had been erected in the vicinity. But in the surrounding villages prayer meetings and class meetings were held, and preaching services when a sermon could be obtained. In these days it was needful, for security against aggressors, as well as to comply with the Law, that Preachers and meeting houses should be duly licensed. A copy of one such document reads as follows:—

"To the Right Reverend Father in God William by divine permission Lord Bishop of Chester,

"We whose names are hereunto subscribed, being His Majesty's Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England, have agreed to set apart for the publick worship of Almighty God a dwelling house now in the holding and occupation of Richard Glassey situate at Dods Green in the Township of Newall and Chapelry of Wrenbury (under Aston) in the County and Diocese of Chester.

And desire that the same may be registered, according to an Act of Parliament, made in the first year of the reign of their late Majesty's King William and Queen Mary, intituled An Act for exempting their Majesty's protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the penalties of Certain Laws.—As Witness our hand this 12 day of June in the year of our Lord 1794.

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William Mate, Richard Glassey, John Greatbanks,
Joseph Billington, John Barker, John Glassey,
George Williams, Oliver Sherrite, Joseph Sadler,
John Booth and George Lowe.

2nd July 1794. Registered in the Public Episcopal Registry at Chester according to the Act above mentioned.

Will Nicholls”

At the Conference of 1803 Wrexham was, as previously stated, formed a Circuit Town, and Whitchurch was assigned to it as one of its subordinate places with other societies taken from the Chester Circuit. When in 1803 Whitchurch was separated from Chester there were but thirty-one members. Thomas Roberts (*Leader*), Ann Roberts, William Batho, Ellen Batho, E. Hesketh, W. Shingler, A. Shingler, M. Eaton, D. Smith, W. Heath, M. Heath, W. Youd, G. Youd, T. Brereton, H. Brereton, John Hesketh (*Leader*), J. Parsons, E. Parsons, J. Cotton, M. Duckworth, A. Hesketh, J. Jones, H. Oakley, M. Dean, T. Manley, T. Robinson, W. Cotton, J. Day, T. Fox, E. Fox, S. Tilley. The Leaders at Dodsgreen were J. Greatbank and Joseph Hodkison. At Duckington the Leader was J. Woolridge, and at Bronington J. Roberts. Wrexham itself had twenty eight members, in two classes, led by John Hughes and John Williams. The Preachers appointed in 1803 to the new Circuit were George Lowe, and Edward Linnell. In several respects Mr. Lowe was specially qualified to organise this extension of God's Work. He had just completed a year's service at Chester, and had several years earlier travelled over the same ground. Through God's blessing the new Circuit greatly prospered, and it was soon clear that further division would speedily be desirable.

In 1808 Anthony Seckerson was appointed as the Superintendent of the Wrexham Circuit. He was allowed to remain on the Circuit three years. One of the reasons for this permission being, most likely, that he had entered on a building scheme at Whitchurch which it was very desirable he should complete. It had long been undesirable that the services of the Methodist should continue to be held in the little chapel, situated in the back-yard in Clay-pit Street. When first the preachers occupied that chapel they were amazed at the advance which they were making. Since then the Society had become stronger, moreover, Mr. John Parsons was almost fourscore years old. There would be no certainty concerning the little chapel if he were removed by

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death, and it was not likely that the Methodists would speedily find a friend as able and willing to help them. Mr. Batho also was no longer a young man.

A chapel was erected in St. Mary's Street in 1809, a large one, having regard to all the circumstances. It was opened on Sunday, July 8, 1810, by the Rev. T. Coke, LL.D., and the Rev. S. Warren. The times of the services on that day were 10-30, 2-30 and 6-0.

In 1815, Whitchurch was made the head of a circuit, with Humphrey Parsons as the sole Preacher. While he was in Whitchurch John Parsons, Esq., of Wirswall, died at the age of 86, on November 10, 1816.

Various changes in places and in persons occurred while the Circuit was being formed. When all was fully settled (New Year's Day, 1820) the Circuit comprised the following places:—Whitchurch, Market Drayton, Duckington and Barnhill, Noman's Heath, Bronington, Dodsgreen, Aston, Hollin-lane, Norbury, Broughall, Ightfield, Grindley-brook, Cotton, Tilstock and Marchamley. The Local Preachers were Messrs. Harper, Hoskinson, Chesworth, Stokes, Whittingham, Walford, Twiss, Haslam, Powell, Welch, with Mellor and Hanley on trial.

[These notes by the late Rev. Benjamin Smith conclude as follows.]

Perhaps it may be desirable to record a few names of Christ's servants, who lived and laboured in the Whitchurch Circuit, who are now in glory, yet have been removed so recently that their excellencies are still remembered by many. We glorify God in these, and endeavour to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Joseph Walford pressed much loving service into his life's work.

Thomas Lythgoe and Samuel Venables were justly esteemed as Local Preachers, and Leaders, and Circuit Stewards. Each possessed a horse and gig in which they were delighted to take preachers with them to preaching, Missionary Meeting, or other services.

Joseph Savage was best known as the Sunday School Superintendent.

George Jebb, of Market Drayton, was one of the noblest of men. His labours as a Local Preacher were abundant.

Amongst memorable names may be recorded William Smith, Mrs. Beckett, of Norbury, Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Nokes.

In 1871 debts were paid off all the chapels in the circuit and thus the way was cleared for further effort. Since 1810 many country chapels had been erected or enlarged. Aston and Malpas now had capital chapels. Whitchurch had got first-class school premises, but the chapel which John Parsons helped to build remained substantially unchanged. On Thursday, April 24, 1879, the beautiful chapel was opened. The cost, including Land, Boundary Wall, etc., was upwards of £5,000, yet the money was all to be paid immediately after the opening services were concluded. The building of two ministers' houses, equal to any in the Connexion, was to be at once entered on.

Mr. Smith does not seem to be aware of the residence in Whitchurch for a short time of Francis Gilbert of Antigua, round about 1772. See *Proceedings* iii, 117, and xiii, 7. F.F.B.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

755. Rev. John Heaton kindly sends for our inspection two printed papers relating to the last hours of John Pawson and Alexander Mather. They do not add substantially to our information about these brethren, but as a reflection of early Methodist piety they are full of interest. The first is written from Wakefield, April 3, 1806, and signed by J. D. Burton. The last sermon the veteran preached was at Wakefield on the 3rd February, 1806, and a few days after a severe illness commenced and ran its course till its fatal termination on 19th March. The second was written by Robert Spence, the York printer, August 25th, 1800. Mather testified to his friend, "My faith has frequently been assaulted, during my affliction, in an unusual manner, but it has never shrunk in the least degree . . . Mine is a hope of more than forty years; it cannot easily be shaken."
756. The Rev. C. J. Christian, of Heywood, has been awarded the degree of M.A. by the University of Manchester. Like two or three others he has been studying the relations between Methodism and the Social and Political Thought of the first half of the last century. Mr. Christian found considerable material for his thesis in the Hartley-Victoria College Library.

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NEWCASTLE CONFERENCE
JULY. 1936

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A PUBLIC LECTURE

*under the auspices of the Wesley Historical Society
will be given in the*

Shipcote Methodist Church
Gateshead

*On Wednesday, July 15th,
at 7-30 p.m.*

Lecturer :

REV. DR. LESLIE F. CHURCH

Subject :

“The Rank and File of the Early Methodists”

Chairman : H. F. FALLAW, ESQ., J.P.

Annual Meeting of the W.H.S.

This will be held on

Thursday, July 16th, at 2 p.m., in
the Memorials Committee Room at
St. James' Congregational Church, Newcastle.

The Officers of the Society will be pleased to see any of the
members, whether they are members of the Conference or not