

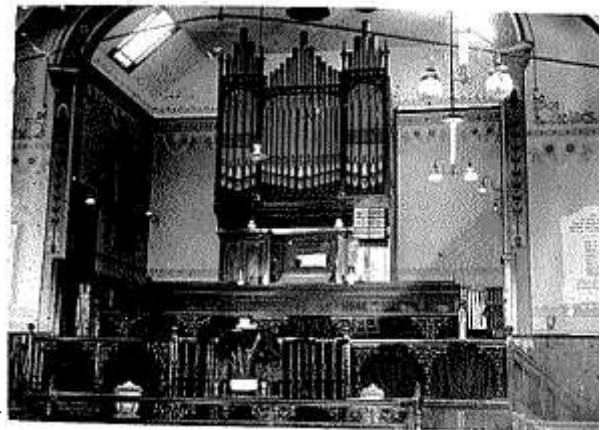
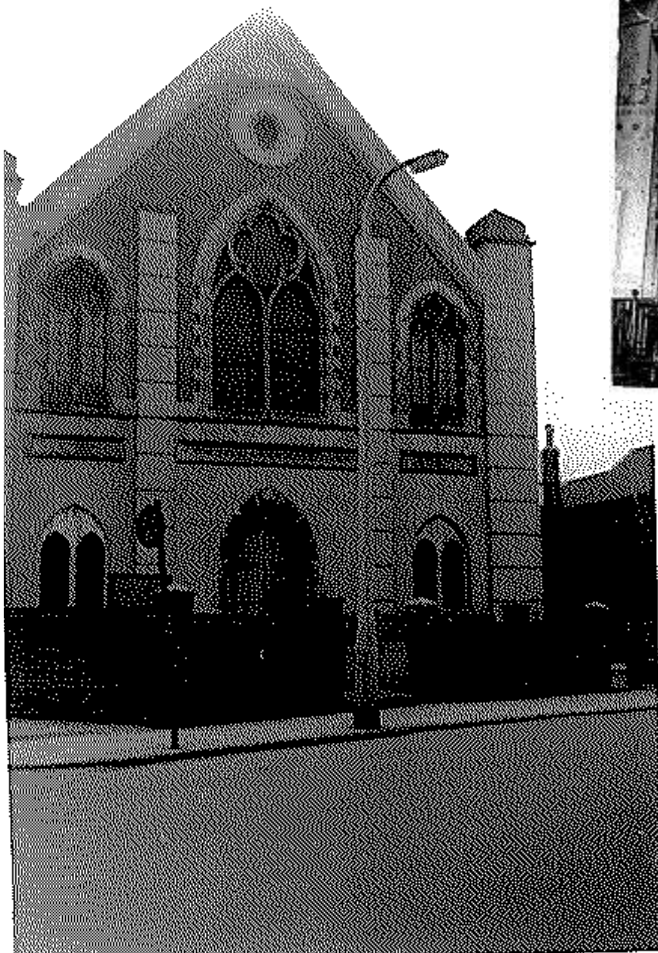
Chapter 17: Methodism

As noted in Chapter 2, grandad was brought up in the Primitive Methodist Church.¹ In May 1919, he noted that he started going to class again although he did not state clearly when or why he had stopped. His family were actively involved too as were grandma's.

Family involvement with chapel

in April 1922, grandad lent his sister Olive and her husband John his motorbike so they could attend the synod in Long Eaton. In October the same year, grandad went to Ripley with John and they visited "Wesley's chapel". This is a dissenters' chapel which [local tradition](#) identifies as the place where John Wesley preached when he visited Ripley. In September 1929, he took his mother to see the recently completed Watchorn Memorial Primitive Methodist Church in Alfreton. In May 1938, grandad noted that they attended the anniversary at chapel with grandma's brother Bert, his wife, Doris, and their son, Peter. Major family events were held at chapel including grandad's mother's funeral, and grandma and grandad's wedding, both in 1930.

The particular chapel they attended was the Bourne Primitive Methodist Church located on Lowmoor Road. The chapel was erected in 1876 and was the first Methodist chapel in Kirkby. It took its name from [Hugh Bourne](#), one of the founders of Primitive Methodism.²



*Left – outside Bourne Chapel
Above – inside Bourne chapel
showing the organ*

¹ It is worth noting that mum and grandad almost exclusively refer to chapel and not church and this matter is discussed once mum's diaries start – see Chapter 38. However, it should be noted that the words on the front of Bourne chapel were "Primitive Methodist Church".

² Although it seems from Edith Searson's book (let) "I Remember" that this name was given some time after 1917 when Edith and her family moved to Kirkby and joined the church.

Grandad noted in his diary that the chapel opened on 2 February 1924. This is not when the chapel first opened which was in 1876 but refers to when it reopened following restoration work.³ Mum's photographs of the chapel are annotated to say mum attended this chapel until it merged with the church in Diamond Avenue⁴ in around 1959 or 1960.⁵



Group shot at side/back of chapel. Not sure of date or who people are. The surround is labelled in pencil, Mrs Smith, so presumably this belonged to grandad's sister, Olive. The building at the back is the Sunday School extension of 1907 – the centenary of founding of Primitive Methodism in 1807 (hence the plaque)

Grandma especially had strong and extensive involvement in the chapel Sunday School, becoming its superintendent in December 1938. Grandad particularly noted attending various special events, focused on those associated with Sunday School, such as anniversaries and the Whitsuntide procession(s). Within Methodism, chapels have often had a strong emphasis on celebrating the [anniversaries](#) of when the chapel opened or when the Sunday School started.⁶ Bourne chapel was no exception. While they did celebrate the chapel's anniversary, there was particular focus on the main Sunday School Anniversary, held over two Sundays in May. These often had a special speaker and grandad often referred to them as "sermons". In addition, there was a separate anniversary for the

³ There is an excellent photo of the chapel's re-opening in 1924 on p15 of the book "Kirkby & District from Old Photographs" by Frank Ashley, Sylvia Sinfield and Gerald Lee.

⁴ According to Edith Searson, in her book(let) "I Remember", this was named after Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897.

⁵ This merger is covered in considerable detail in later chapters – see Chapter 69.

⁶ There is a detailed description of Sunday School Anniversaries at the Hill Methodist in Mark Ashfield's book "Horses, Herbs and a Cockatoo" (pp21-25). Similarly, Edith Searson, in her book(let) "I Remember", describes these as the "greatest [event] in the church calendar" (pp37-40).

Primary Sunday School in June each year.⁷ Grandma also sometimes attended anniversaries at other chapels⁸, e.g. in Kirkby Park⁹, Old Kirkby¹⁰, Mansfield (Victoria Street)¹¹, Nottingham Road¹² and [Ollerton](#).¹³ One of the key functions of the Sunday School Anniversary was to raise funds and grandad was interested in the amount raised. For example, in 1927, he noted that the main anniversary raised £53 2 2d with the primary anniversary raising a further £16. Among mum's papers were two Sunday School anniversary programmes, one from Kilburne¹⁴ in 1872 and another, from Bourne in 1931. The latter programme includes the annual accounts for the Sunday School which showed that the two anniversaries combined raised a total of £58 2s 11½d out of a total annual income of £62 4s 7½d.



Above – Kirkby Park chapel – the photo is reproduced with permission from [Barrie Smith's](#) book "A Brief Record of the Ashfield Circuit (22/13) 1959-2010"

Right – Primitive Methodist chapel on Victoria Street in Mansfield, also known as Centenary Hall



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⁷ From 1931, Edith Searson led Bourne's Primary Sunday School and she describes it in some detail in her book(let) "*I Remember*" (p45). She also described the Primary Sunday School Anniversary in some detail and referred to it as a great occasion (p49).

⁸ According to Edith Searson, in her book(let) "*I Remember*" (p44), this was a common practice, particularly among young people.

⁹ This was [originally a Primitive Methodist chapel](#) and that it operated from 1905 to the 1970s. Initially, I could not find any photos of the chapel although I did find a drawing in Gerald Lee's book "*Kirkby-in-Ashfield: Yesterday Remembered*" (p105) and a [picture](#) of their Sunday School banner on the My Primitive Methodists website (see Chapter 79). I did then find a photo in Barry Smith's book "*A Brief Record of the Ashfield Circuit (22/13) 1959-2010*". It seems that locally the chapel may have been referred to as "*The Park*" and that (at least initially) the chapel may have met in a tin structure on Vernon Road (see "*Kirkby-in-Ashfield: Yesterday Remembered*" from p104). The chapel is mentioned in Edith Searson's book(let) "*I Remember*" as she and her husband attended there from 1959 until 1975 when The Park amalgamated with [The Hill Methodist Church](#). She says (pp62-63), "*the year before Bourne closed, when it was known closure would be taking place, Ben and I were asked by The Park Church to go and assist them, when the time of closure came... We went as requested in 1959.*" Before then, they had helped out at "*The Park*" over a number of years including selling produce at the Harvest Sale and attending the Sunday School Anniversary (p41).

¹⁰ I have struggled to find details of this chapel. The first issue is that it is not clear where he is referring to in terms of "*Old Kirkby*". Grandad does use this term in his diaries, e.g. in relation to different Whit Walks and he seems to distinguish between Old Kirkby on the one hand and East Kirkby on the other. I am presuming that he is referring to the western part of what is now Kirkby in Ashfield and might alternately be referred to as Kirkby Cross. Gerald Lee makes a similar distinction in his book "*Kirkby-in-Ashfield: Yesterday Remembered*". There was a Wesleyan chapel in that area, on Chapel Street (that is [now a Snooker Hall](#)). Grandad referred to attending the Old Kirkby Wesleyan Sunday School Anniversary in June 1929 and this may be where he went. However, he also referred to grandma taking the Primary Anniversary at Old Kirkby Prims in August 1926. I am not entirely sure where this was. Mark Ashfield's book "*Horses, Herbs and a Cockatoo*" includes material about the Wesleyan origins of the snooker hall (p5) and also explains in detail the Sunday School Anniversaries held at [The Hill Methodist](#) (pp21-25). In explaining the Whit Walks, he notes that The Hill Methodist Church was originally Wesleyan. From that description, it might be implied that Old Kirkby and Kirkby Park Primitive Methodists were the same place.

¹¹ This chapel was referred to as [Centenary Hall](#). It opened in 1910 and closed at the start of the 1950s. The building still stands and is used by the Salvation Army.

¹² There were two Methodist churches on Nottingham Road in Mansfield. Grandad was referring specifically to the Primitive Methodist Chapel known as [Bethel](#). This is [still operational](#). There was another Methodist Church (presumably Wesleyan?) on Nottingham Road. This was built in 1913 and is a [listed building](#). There is a great photo of it on the [Geograph website](#). As of 2019, it was unoccupied but with planning consent to convert to a bar and restaurant.

¹³ I assume this is referring to [Ollerton Ebenezer Primitive Methodist Chapel](#) in Station Road. It opened in 1869 and probably closed in the 1950s. It is now a private house called "*The Chapel*". There was also a [Primitive Methodist Chapel in New Ollerton](#) and this was on Sherwood Street. It opened in 1928 and closed in 1975 and was used as a factory shop by Courtaulds. Currently, it operates as [Lifespring church and centre](#). There is an operational [Methodist Church in \(New\) Ollerton](#) on Forest Road. I don't know much about its origins but the building looks relatively modern.

¹⁴ This was for the Wesleyan Sabbath School Anniversary held at the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Kilburne (now spelled [Kilburn](#) and also previously spelled as Kilbourne). Grandad's maternal grandparents originated from there. According to the [Places of Worship Database](#), the church was founded in 1891 and is [still open](#). However, the date of founding may refer to the current building as that date is also visible on the church. [National Archive records](#) seem to start in 1887.



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*Above – Bethel (Primitive) Methodist Chapel in Nottingham Road, Mansfield
Left – Former Methodist Church on Nottingham Road in Mansfield
Below – a later example of a Sunday School Anniversary (circa 1950s) – mum is shown by arrow*





SUNDAY SCHOOL ACCOUNT for 1931.

INCOME		£	s.	d.
Balance in Hand, 1st January, 1931	..	0	16	2
Prize Distribution	..	2	14	4
Collection, Sunday School	..	4	18	2
Sunday School Anniversary	..	44	10	64
Primary Anniversary	..	33	15	7
Handy	..	6	12	11
		£82	4	71
EXPENDITURE		£	s.	d.
Anniversary Nuptial Sheets	..	2	10	0
Sunday School Requisites	..	7	14	0
Prize	..	32	8	0
Book	..	10	0	0
Whitwalks Treat	..	5	2	8
Miscellaneous, Sunday School Anniversary	..	2	10	4
Miscellaneous, Primary Anniversary	..	2	17	8
Books and Posters	..	8	16	8
To Treat Primary Anniversary	..	4	10	0
Primary Hall Cards, Raffles, Demonstration	..	4	10	8
Prizes, Scripture Examinations	..	2	0	0
Stationery	..	1	2	0
Balance, 31st December, 1931	..	2	8	94
		£82	4	71

Signed, 31st December, 1931.
JOHN H. C. ROGERS, Minister.
16

Programmes for Sunday School Anniversaries "sermons" from Kilburne in 1872 and East Kirkby in 1932

I am not sure exactly when the Whit walks started in Kirkby but it seems they were [common in many UK towns and cities](#) from the end of the 18th century. In June 1919, grandad noted that he attended two such walks. The first was in Old Kirkby on Monday the 9th while the second, in East Kirkby, was the next day, Tuesday the 10th.¹⁵ Over the years, it is clear that these remained a highlight of the year for both grandad and the chapel.¹⁶



Selection of photos from Kirkby Whit Walks. Most are circa 1950s/1960s but the top left is earlier I think, circa 1939.
Top right shows procession coming from Crocus Street into Diamond Avenue
Above left shows grandma with the procession
Above right shows mum, Carole and Lynne with the procession

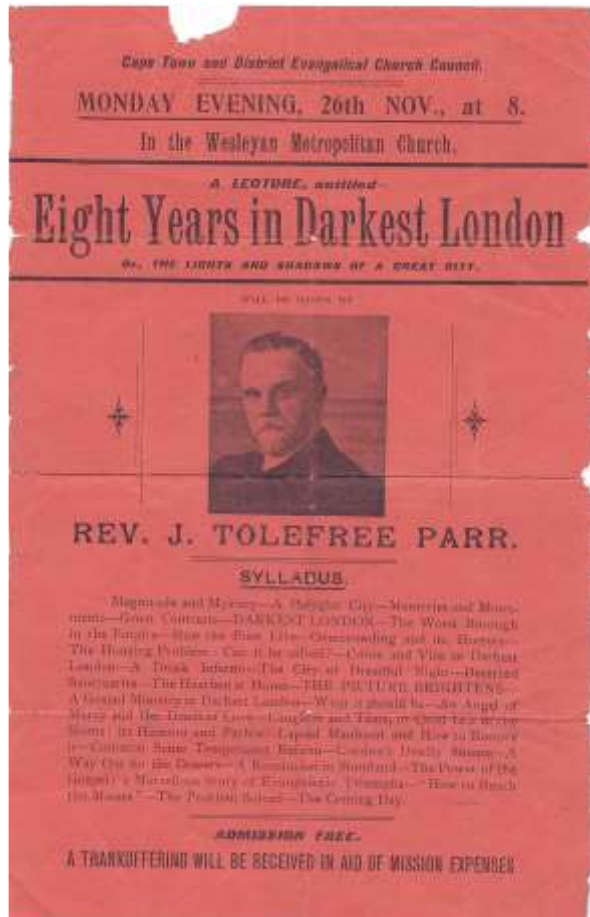
¹⁵ In later years, the East Kirkby procession took place on Whit Monday morning. In his book "Kirkby-in-Ashfield Yesterday Remembered", Gerald Lee notes (Chapter 17, p86) that "there were two distinct Whitsuntide Walks, one down at the east end of the town in the morning and ours [in Old Kirkby] in the afternoon". In his book "Horse, Herbs and a Cockatoo", Mark Ashfield (pp32-38) devotes a chapter to describing the Old Kirkby Whit Walks. There are photographs of the walks in the book "Kirkby & District from Old Photographs" by Frank Ashley, Sylvia Sinfield and Gerald Lee (pp96-100).

¹⁶ They are also noted as a "great event" in Edith Seanson's book(let) "I Remember" (p37)

Grandad also noted other highlights of the Primitive Methodist calendar including Harvest Festival, Temperance Sunday, mission and missionary services, Christmas services and watchnight services on New Year's Eve. There were also services and activities put on by different groups within the chapel and grandad referred to these as "efforts", such as the "choir effort" or the "married ladies' effort", which grandma was involved in. Grandma also attended quarterly church meetings which grandad referred to as "[quarter days](#)". At the end of August 1932, grandad noted that grandma went to the last Primitive Methodist quarter day but quarter days continued after the Methodist Union of that year.

Grandad also noted particular speakers at chapel. One of his favourites appears to have been the elocutionist Harrison Slater¹⁷ who came to the chapel multiple times over this period. Other speakers he noted included [Rev John Bradbury](#)¹⁸, Rev Pickett¹⁹, Rev Allen Lea²⁰, Mr Finn, Mr Holmes, G Cresswell²¹ and Mr Holes. He also noted, in July 1930, that grandma's uncle Sam(uel) Cirket had been the speaker. In October 1930, [Tolfree Parr](#), a recognised leader within the Primitive Methodists, was due to speak at Bourne chapel. He had been President of the Primitive Methodist Conference in 1917 and had authored a number of books. He was travelling to Kirkby and had just boarded his train in Clapham, Surrey when he collapsed and died. Grandad noted, "*Tolfrey Parr who was coming to Prims for Sunday died on the way*".²²

Grandma and grandad also attended special events within the Primitive Methodists including, for example, Synod in Mansfield in May 1925. They were also part of particular Christian groups within the church including, for example, [Christian Endeavour](#) or CE and [Band of Hope](#) or BoH. Indeed, according to a newspaper article, at the time they got married, grandma had been Christian Endeavour Secretary for ten years and was, at that time, its Vice-President.²³



Flyer for lecture given by Tolfree Parr in South Africa circa 1906

¹⁷ See Chapter 38.

¹⁸ See

¹⁹ Who gave a lecture the next day on [John Wycliffe](#).

²⁰ In August 1932, grandad went to hear Rev Allen Lea from South Africa preach. Rev Allen Lea was at one time General Secretary of the South African Methodist Church and he was [critical of independent movements](#) within African churches as he considered they were "wounding the very people who have done most to help them – the missionaries".

²¹ He was a frequent speaker at chapel from the 1930s to the 1950s including at anniversaries in 1932, 1946, 1953 and 1954. In 1953, mum rated him v v good, a rare accolade! He was also the speaker at the civic service for W Arnold as chairman of Kirkby Urban and District Council which was held in August 1959. Grandad noted that the church was full to capacity and that this was Rev Howells' final service.

²² Edith Searson noted, "*the Rev J Tolfree Parr, an ex-President of the conference, was making his second visit to Bourne. Coming from London on the train he took ill and died at Leicester. I particularly remember this incident because Ben [Edith's husband] was the steward at Bourne, and understandably he was very upset. He set about trying to get a 'supply' (it was Saturday) which he succeeded in doing*".

²³ Edith Searson also referred to Christian Endeavour meetings in her book(let) "*I Remember*" (pp33-34). She noted that the Christian Endeavour National Convention was held in Nottingham at the Albert Hall in 1927 and they were asked to give a tableau on the Christmas Story. She referred to it again (pp44-45) as her husband, Ben, went as a delegate from Bourne to the World Jubilee Convention in London in 1931. It also seems that there were local Christian Endeavour groups. For example, there was an advert for the local group at the Baptist Tabernacle in the 1969 Kirkby Directory.

These Meetings are held fortnightly on a Wednesday, at 7-15 p.m., and are open to all.

We specially appeal to Young People to join our Fellowship.



Primitive Methodist
Young People's Society
of Christian Endeavour,
EAST KIRKBY.

SYLLABUS.

JANUARY — JUNE 1930.

Secretary—MR. B. SEARSON,

1 School Street, East Kirkby.

A. Moore, 9 Kingsway, East Kirkby. 8449

DATE.	LEADER.	SPEAKER,	SOLOIST, ETC.
Jan. 1—	Miss Cirket.	... Mrs. Cobb.	... Mrs. Owen.
„ 14—	Mr. Fletcher.	... Mr. Tomlinson.	... Mr. Bestwick & C. Downs.
„ 29—	Rev. J. H. C. Rogers.	... "Messiah" Evening,	by Mr. Randall.
Feb. 12—	Miss Lee.	... Mrs. Owen & Mrs. Searson.	... Miss Cooling.
„ 26—	Mr. Cobb.	... Mr. Barlow.	... Mr. K. Osborne. Mr. Downs.
Mar. 12—	Mrs. Searson.	... Mr. Frogson.	... I. Barlow. Mr. Barlow.
„ 26—	Miss Collier.	... Mrs. Bainton.	... Miss Maudsley.
April 9—	Mr. Barlow.	... Mr. Bostock.	... Rev. J. H. C. Rogers.
„ 23—	Miss Gerrard.	... Mr. Osborne.	... Miss Steggles. Mrs. Wheatley.
May 7—	Miss Pickworth.	... Mrs. Booler.	... The Juniors.
„ 21—	Mr. Gerrard.	... Mr. Thomson.	... Mr. Scothern.
June 4—	Mr. Pickworth.	... Miss Cirkett	... Misses Cooling & Collier.
„ 18—	Miss Gunn.	... Mr. Cobb.	... Miss Case.

Christian Endeavour Syllabus for January to June 1930. Note that grandma (Miss Cirket) was leader on 1 January and the speaker on 4 June.

Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour.

Active Member's Pledge

Relying on the Lord Jesus Christ for Salvation, and trusting in God for strength, I promise Him that I will strive to do whatever He would like to have me do; I will pray to Him and read the Bible every day; I will support my own Church and its services in every way within my power, and throughout my whole life I will endeavour, by His grace, to lead a Christian life.

AS AN ACTIVE MEMBER

I promise to be true to all my duties, to be present at and to take some part, aside from singing, in every meeting unless hindered by some reason which I can conscientiously give to my Lord and Master Jesus Christ. If obliged to be absent from the Monthly Consecration Meeting, I will, if possible, send an excuse for absence to the Society.

Signature

Cissie Parker,

Address

*40 Enfield Bldgs Aske St, Hoston
W.I.*

Date

7, 11, 21,



Above – example of Active Member's Pledge to the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour. This one dates to 1921.

Left – selection of Christian Endeavour badges. Top left and bottom right relate to specific gatherings mentioned by Edith Searson in London in 1931 and in Nottingham in 1927 respectively. The other two badges are more generic Christian Endeavour ones.

Despite this background activity, grandad’s attendance was recorded somewhat sporadically creating the impression that chapel activities were not perhaps his highest priority! For example, in 1921, he did not record any entries related to chapel. This changed markedly in 1925 and may have been related to meeting grandma! From around 1934, his attendance seemed to decline again and became limited to occasional attendances at chapel and noteworthy Sunday School activities. I don’t know if grandad just stopped noting attendances even though he was still going or if this reflected a reduction in his attendance. As a child, I certainly do not recall my grandfather being an active churchgoer although both my mother and grandmother were.

Grandad appeared to particularly relish special musical events held at the chapel, such as the visit of a choir, performance of a cantata or an organ recital. In 1919, he won a book prize for some hymns he had written and sent to the Christian Herald. Grandad’s love of music also took him to other churches and chapels. In October 1923, he specifically went to the opening of the organ at Kirkby Wesleyan chapel.²⁴ He went to performances of “*the Messiah*” and “*Elijah*” in different places.

A great deal of grandma and grandad’s lives revolved around chapel. They did not only attend services on a Sunday but they went to other activities on other days, including recitals²⁵, concerts, socials and bazaars.²⁶ Grandma and grandad attended chapel when they were on holiday. For example, when they were on holiday, in Llandudno in 1927, they went to the Wesleyan Chapel²⁷ and, in 1928, they attended the [Primitive Methodist Chapel in St Anne’s](#).²⁸



Left – St John’s Methodist Church, Llandudno
Above – St David’s Methodist Church, Llandudno

²⁴ Initially, I thought this related to the chapel in Diamond Avenue but it does not. The Hill had a new organ in 1923 and this is described in some detail in J Barrie Smith’s book “*Light on the Hill*” (pp22-24).

²⁵ While I was familiar with the term recital in the musical sense, these recitals seem to have [largely been the spoken word](#) – including, for example, extracts from Dickens or Silas Marner.

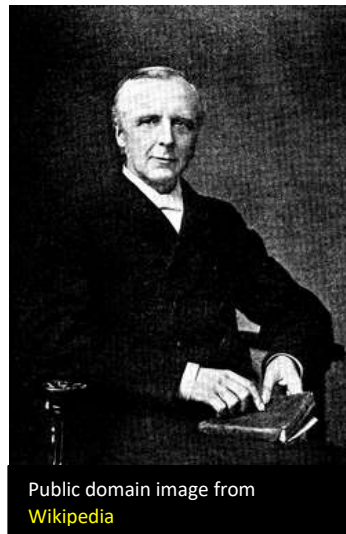
²⁶ Grandad noted chapel bazaars in 1932 and 1934 and going to the Wesleyan bazaar in 1931. There were other bazaars during this period. For example, the [Nottingham Evening Post](#) reported that, on 30 November 1936, the Bourne Methodist Church held a Chrysanthemum Bazaar to clear the debt of £150 incurred for a new heating system. Mentioned in the article were Verlie Deakin, Olive (Mrs J W) Smith and Olive Evans (although her name was misspelled as Evens).

²⁷ There are currently [two English-speaking Methodist churches](#) in Llandudno, St John’s and St David’s. Both were originally Wesleyan with St John’s established in 1866 and [St David’s](#) in 1897 . St John’s includes something of its history on its [website](#). I am not sure which of these chapels grandma and grandad attended but perhaps St John’s seems more likely.

²⁸ The [King’s Road Primitive Methodist Chapel](#) opened in 1911. In 1967, it amalgamated with the Drive Methodist Church and the building closed the following year. The building was demolished and the site was given over to housing.

In her book(let) *"I Remember"*, Edith Searson explained what it was like when she and her family first attended the chapel and what an average Sunday was like. She noted, *"I went each Sunday afterwards. I could almost say I went for the day; morning Sunday School and Service, home for dinner, afternoon Sunday School, then back again for tea, ending with the Evening Service"*.

They also sometimes attended special events in other churches, including the Wesleyans²⁹, the Baptists³⁰ and the Free Church³¹, particularly for Sunday School-related events and also for other special events, such as Harvest Festival or fundraising activities, such as a bazaar. When they visited Elstow in 1928, they went to a *"Bunyan meeting"*. Grandad also noted hearing a number of renowned preachers including [Gipsy Smith](#) in June 1925³² and [Dr F B Meyer](#) at Mansfield Baptist Church in November 1925. He also noted hearing distinguished preachers on *"the wireless"*, such as [Dinsdale Young](#) in January 1928.



Left – [Gipsy Smith](#) Centre – [Dr F B Meyer](#) Right – [Dinsdale Young](#)

Much of their social lives revolved around chapel. Evening trips to chapel were often preceded by tea with a relative or friend, including Annie Holmes, Eva, Auntie Bertha and particularly grandma's parents. Sometimes, they hosted and there might have been *"several"* for tea, particularly ahead of anniversaries or other special occasions. They were friends with, and supported by, several of the ministers at Bourne, including Rev Trevvett and Rev Rogers. Rev Rogers came to Bourne in 1929 and it was he who married grandma and grandad in 1930.

Given this background, it was perhaps therefore unsurprising that mum was immersed in chapel activities from a very early age. Before she was two, grandma took her to the Sunday School Anniversary in May 1936. In 1938, at the age of three, grandad noted that mum walked with grandma on the Whit walks. She was on the platform for the Primary Anniversary in June 1938 and, in October 1938, at the age of four, she took part in a concert at chapel.

²⁹ There were (at least) two Wesleyan chapels in Kirkby – the one in Diamond Avenue that became Trinity (see footnote 24) and one in Old Kirkby (see footnote 10).

³⁰ For more details of Baptist chapels in Kirkby, see Chapter 54.

³¹ This may refer to [Kirkby's United Methodist Free Church](#). There was a United Methodist Chapel in East Kirkby in [1898](#). However, I have been unable to find more details. I wonder if it is what became the Spiritualist Church in 1949.

³² In her book(let) *"I Remember"*, Edith Searson noted walking with Ethel to hear Gipsy Smith at an open-air meeting and this may have been the same occasion as the one noted by grandad.

A very significant event for Methodists occurred on 20 September 1932, at a ceremony at the Royal Albert Hall in London. Three churches – the Wesleyan Methodist, the Primitive Methodist and the United Methodist – [joined together](#) as one church. The ceremony was [attended by the Duke of York](#). Grandad listened to the event on the radio at his shop.