

UNION STREET
METHODIST CHURCH
HETTON-LE-HOLE

1858 — 1958

Centenary
Souvenir Handbook

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FOREWORD

It is indeed a privilege to be associated with our Hetton Union Street Methodist Church in its Centenary Celebrations, and in the sending out of this handbook.

Acknowledgement is made elsewhere to friends from near and far, who have assisted in providing matter for the handbook. We have been very fortunate and happy also in having Miss M. Cook as the editor of the handbook. This work has involved the expenditure of much time and thought, and deserves our high appreciation and warm thanks.

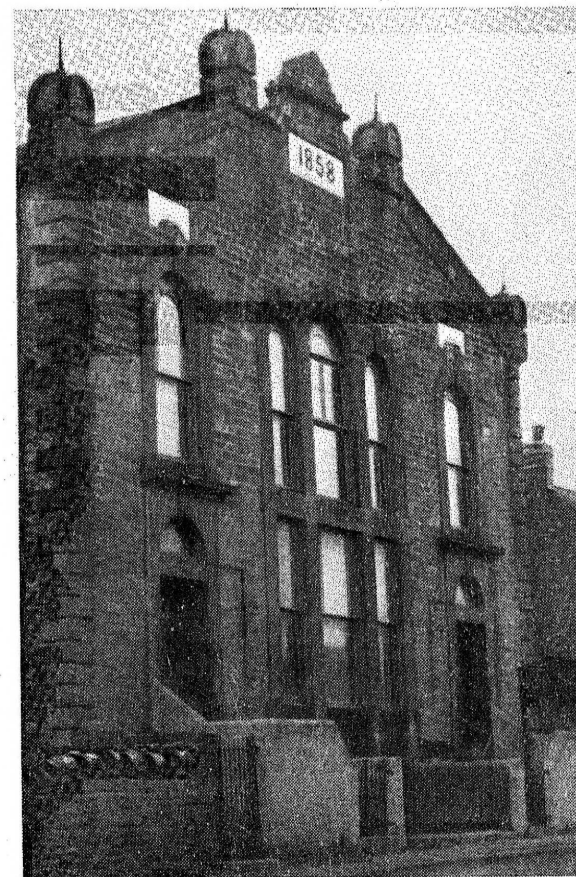
Here, we have a record of the Church's varied fortunes and activities during more than a hundred years of its history. It will bear scrutiny. It stands and speaks for itself. None will read its pages unmoved.

It is impossible that this could be a full and complete record of all that has transpired or of all who have served during the years. Names have been included to add interest, but many men and women have served whose names, due to incomplete or missing records, could not be given.

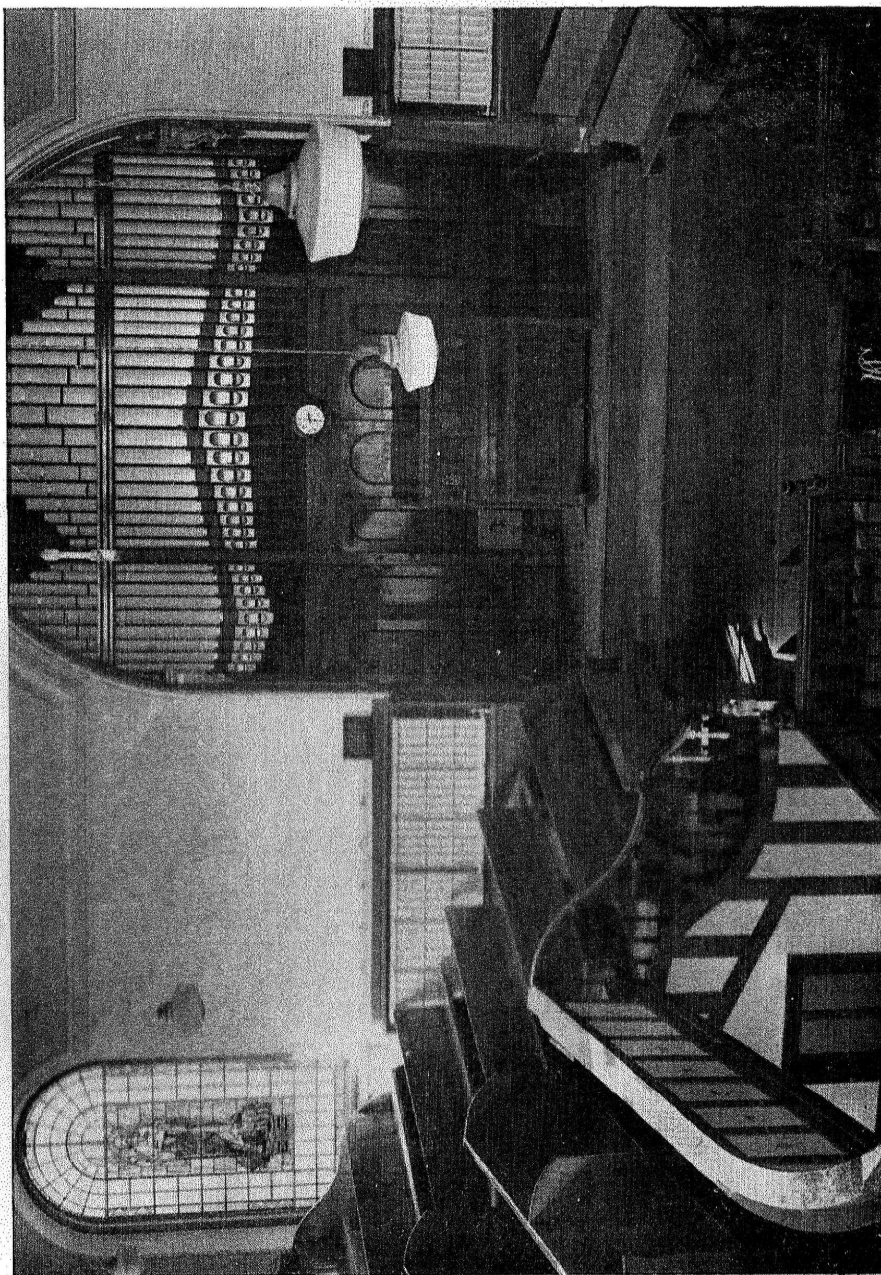
We salute the pioneers ! They gave of the strength of their bodies, minds and hearts, and often out of very slender resources. We salute the memory too, whether named or unnamed, of those who have served more recently, shouldering responsibility and carrying the good work forward. We thank God also for our present Church members and friends, whose unstinted efforts give us a Church, beautified in appearance by Centenary re-decorations and installation of stained glass windows.

Our Union Street Church came into being to help meet the religious need of the increasing numbers of people coming to live in Hetton. Who can tell the number of lives made new and homes made happy through its ministry during the years ? The religious need of young and old in Hetton is still as great to-day as a hundred and more years ago. May we in faith and love, through prayer and service seek to meet this need to-day by bringing people to God through sincere belief in Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

FREDERICK DAVIES } Circuit
NORMAN BERRYMAN } Ministers.



“ THE BIG CHAPEL ”



THE INTERIOR OF THE CHAPEL

BEFORE 1858

The growth and development of Hetton as we know it today began with the winning of coal which, after much controversy, was finally proved to exist under the magnesian limestone on which Hetton stands and of which most of its old buildings, including Union Street Chapel, are constructed. Between the growth of the mining industry in the area and the growth of the Methodist Church there are close analogies.

Work on Hetton Lyons Colliery began during 1819 and it was opened 10th December, 1821. Ten years before this date, the population of Hetton, a rural farming community, was 264 and there is believed to have been no house within a mile of the spot where the colliery was sunk. Ten years later, in 1831, the population had increased to 5,887.

From the beginning of this rapid expansion, Primitive Methodism was strongly to the fore. Indeed, 1822, the year which saw the opening of the railway line from Hetton Colliery to the staiths at Sunderland, also witnessed the first Primitive Methodist Meeting in Sunderland.

Primitive Methodism arose there, not as a secession from the older forms of Methodism, but as the result of a great wave of evangelism spreading from Staffordshire and Cheshire, where "Camp Meeting Methodism" had begun in 1807, through Nottingham, Hull and South Shields. Sunderland was missioned directly from South Shields and the travelling preachers responsible for this work also included the surrounding towns and villages on their rounds.

The first travelling preacher to visit the gathering population of Hetton is believed to have been John Branfoot, the "No. 1 Preacher" of the South Shields Station. He was closely followed by the brothers, John and Thomas Nelson, who were responsible for the consolidation of the work at Sunderland.

Early in 1823, the first Primitive Methodist Society in Hetton was formed by J. Cook, T. Dakers, G. Prudhoe and others.

Later in the same year, Nathaniel West, an Irishman and ex-soldier, was stationed at Sunderland and preached at Hetton. Years later he was to become chaplain to the Federal Forces of the United States of America.

The preaching of these men was done in the open air and they were all keen and successful evangelists. Writing of his visits to the collieries, West records, "Some of the most abandoned characters have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Indeed, the Lord and the poor colliers are doing wonderfully. On some occasions (for want of time to wash themselves), they are constrained to come "black" to the preaching, or else miss the sermon." He goes on to describe how "large and

silent tears rolling down their black cheeks, and leaving the white streaks behind, conspicuously portrayed what their hearts felt " when they were touched by the message of Salvation.

The little society at Hetton continued to grow as more converts were made and people, already Primitive Methodists, came from many districts to find work in the new mine. Services, as well as Class Meetings and Prayer Meetings were held in the homes (chiefly in the Bog Row and Bleach Green areas) of the members.

On 21st June, 1824, the foundation stone of the first Primitive Methodist Chapel was laid and it was opened on 24th October, 1824. The chapel had a seating capacity of 300 and cost £326. It was the third building from the railway in Barnes Street and thus formed part of the Hetton Square which included some of the first houses built by the Coal Company. It was probably the first place of worship in the village which, of course, at that time was still part of the Houghton Parish.

A distressing tragedy occurred on Saturday afternoon, 26th February, 1831, when John Branfoot was killed outright and John Hewson fatally injured on the waggonway as they were walking towards Hetton to conduct services. They had stepped from one line to the other to avoid a set of waggons and were struck by another set approaching from the opposite direction.

As a direct result of this accident, John Petty and William Lister travelled in the Sunderland Circuit and are remembered for their great work during 1832 when a cholera epidemic and a coal strike ravaged the societies. Hetton is mentioned by Mr. Petty as one of the places where he had a "gracious season".

Other Travelling Preachers (later to be called Ministers) who served the Sunderland Circuit and visited Hetton in those early days included James McPherson, John Lightfoot, C. C. McKechnie, Peter Clarke, J. Spoor, H Yooll and John Hallam.

The influence of the Primitive Methodist Connexion (to become the Primitive Methodist Church in 1902), during the middle years of the nineteenth century, can never be over-estimated by the Durham miners, "a community ignored by statesmen and given up as hopeless by cleric and philanthropist". The ignorance displayed about the area, by people who did not live in it, is almost incredible. Describing a visit he was supposed to have made in 1832, William Cobbett, a famous writer and M.P., wrote of "thousands of men and thousands of horses continually living underground, children born there, and who, sometimes it is said, seldom see the surface at all, though they live to be a considerable age."

True it was, however, that the miners were housed in dismal rows of tiny cottages and worked such long hours that they seldom saw daylight on weekdays. Even then, many of them were keen gardeners, but the most usual recreations included quoits, bowling, rabbit coursing and prize fighting, and gambling and drunkenness were prevalent.

There are many stories of the immediate and lasting transformations of character brought about by conversion to Methodism. Some, of course, "fell from Grace," but that many more did not, owes a great deal to the clearly laid-out rules and the systems of Class Meetings and regular visits by the Leaders. The framed preachers' plan, hung on the wall or behind the door, proclaimed the Methodist home to all who entered.

Primitive Methodism was constructive from the first. Reading and writing were taught in the Sunday Schools (to adults, at Hetton, at weeknight meetings) and "the system of local preaching gave men training in public speaking and in control of an audience. Many a workmen's leader found it easy to step from the pulpit onto the platform. Methodists by their probity of life, and their ability to speak, quickly assumed prominent positions in the Miners' Association." The elevation of character brought about by religious conversion influenced the growth of Trade Unionism; gave rise to Friendly and Temperance Societies and engendered in many strong desires for self-improvement through education.

W. H. Patterson says that "Hetton, from the entrance of the early missionaries was the centre of mighty spiritual exploits. The preaching power of some of the miners was extraordinary." An indication of the solid work and thought which went into their preaching is given by the old Local Preachers' Meeting Minutes. The books to be read were ponderous and the subjects for examination, including Grammar, Theology, the Old and New Testaments and Primitive Methodist History, were many. The men could afford to buy very few books and those they had were circulated among their brethren. Small libraries were built up by the Local Preachers' Society and there was one at the Hetton Sunday School.

Despite much industrial unrest, and even during the Chartist agitation (1840-1848) when many workers transferred their allegiance from churches to political reform, many revivals took place in the Sunderland area and the Primitive Methodist Church largely increased its membership. In 1849 more than 500 members were added to the societies of the Sunderland Circuit and "not a few" of these were "in the colliery villages of Hetton, Easington Lane, Middle Rainton and Murton."

At the Sunday School Anniversary in 1850, "the chapel was densely crowded at each service long before the specified time, and numbers tried in vain to gain admission." Mr. G. Lowdon, the Sunday School Superintendent at that time was responsible for a report to the Primitive Methodist Magazine for that year in which we read, "Our school is in a prosperous state. During the last two years the number of scholars has increased from 150 to 254. We have 25 teachers who attend every sabbath, all members of our society, and several of our senior scholars are members also. Our collections were £4. 2s. od., a

larger sum than we ever realized before. It gives us great pleasure to say that we receive great encouragement from our employers in our endeavour to promote the welfare of the rising generation, and that they generously contribute £3 annually to the support of the school."

As the attendance at the old chapel continued to increase, it became too small and the building of a new chapel became a necessity.

George Lowdon had come to Hetton in 1847 and immediately associated himself with the Primitive Methodist Society for which he was a staunch and loyal worker until his death. Visiting Hartlepool, he was impressed by the chapel erected there in 1851 and fostered the desire for a similar one at Hetton. He was treasurer for the Trustees who undertook the responsibility for providing the new chapel.

Before making their final decisions, the Trustees conferred first with Mr. Wales, the colliery viewer (manager). He told them that as Hetton would one day become the centre of a large mining community, they had better build a big chapel. So it was that work started in earnest on the "BIG CHAPEL".

THE BUILDING OF THE BIG CHAPEL

The "chapel and schoolhouse" in Union Street were erected before the final conveyance of the land to the Trustees. Previous negotiations had settled the price of the site as £66. 8s. od. and the indenture was completed 8th March, 1858. This was between the Chapel Trustees and Mary Dorothea Pemberton, the widow of John Pemberton of Sherburn Hall. The description of the land was:

"Length, North to South 78 feet.

Breadth, East to West 54 feet.

bounded South by Union Street, North by Barnes Street, West by the land of the said Mrs. Pemberton, lately sold to Ralph Charlton the younger, and partly by a dwelling house belonging to Francis Love and East by land belonging to Mrs. Pemberton". The terms were those of the Primitive Methodist Deed Poll of 5th February, 1830.

The story of the building of the Big Chapel is a testimony of the faith and determination of those early members of our society. The first task was the levelling off of the uneven ground. This work was begun in 1856. To build the foundations and Sunday School, the hillside was dug out to the level of Barnes Street and many men of the village, although they had no connection with the society, helped to complete this tremendous feat. A retaining wall was built to support the road in front of the chapel. A bottle containing the names of the Trustees is believed to be in the foundations.

The full realization of the ambitions of those pioneers owes much to the progressive attitude and generosity of the Hetton Coal Company who gave encouragement to the miners to develop their social, educational and religious aspirations by helping to supply and maintain

schools, reading rooms and places of worship. Their gifts to the enterprise were the building materials, stone, sand and lime. They also lent a horse and cart at week-ends to help carry these materials.

The larger, darker stones in the building are actually old stone sleepers from the railway and still show the holes in which the "chairs" (clamps) which carried the lines, were held. The quarrying of the limestone was done by the men of the chapel and loaded into railway waggons at the quarry. To carry the stones from the waggons to the site, they built a special light railway on which they could push small tubs. To save time and to take advantage of the daylight, many of the men went straight from the pit, still wearing their work clothes, their faces black with coal dust, to work on the buildings. Their wives helped by carrying them meals which they ate as they worked. The builders were Messrs. John and Robert Taylor.

As the building neared completion, and the roof was under construction, anxiety was felt by the workers, that the continuous spell of fine weather which had eased this arduous labour would be broken. As if in answer to their prayers, the rain kept off until the roof was completed.

The original building contained no gallery or organ loft, had a plaster ceiling and there were no windows in the east and west walls. All the pews had doors. Steep steps led directly from the road to the doors and the entrance to the Sunday School was from Union Street by a small gate and steps to the lower level.

It was indeed a great day when the Big Chapel was finally opened on Saturday, 22nd May, 1858. Weeks of preparation and baking by the women of the chapel provided the tea of which 1,100 people partook.

The ceremonies warranted this considerable paragraph in the *Durham Chronicle* published Friday, 4th June, 1858:

"CHAPEL OPENING AT HETTON-LE-HOLE

On Saturday week, the Primitive Methodists commenced the opening ceremonies of their beautiful new chapel by a tea meeting held in the large schoolroom. After tea, the chair was taken by Alderman Bramwell of Durham and the assembly was addressed by the Rev. J. Lightfoot and Mr. Fawcett of Sunderland, Mr. Coke of Spennymoor, Revs. J. Wilson and J. A. Bastow of Durham, and Rev. J. Petty of Hull.

On Sunday, excellent sermons were preached morning and evening by Rev. J. Petty and in the afternoon by J. Bramwell, Esq. On the afternoon and evening, the congregation was so large that Messrs. Bramwell and Wilson also preached in the schoolroom. On Monday week, a second tea meeting was held, after which a sermon was preached by Rev. C. C. McKechnie of Crook. On Saturday last, another public meeting was held in the schoolroom. The chair was taken by J. Halcro, Esq., of Sunderland, when addresses were delivered

by Revs. J. Lightfoot, E. Hall and W. Sanderson of Hull and other gentlemen. On Sunday last, excellent discourses were delivered in the morning and evening by Rev. W. Sanderson, and in the afternoon by Rev. J. A. Bastow.

The chapel is a beautiful stone structure and does great credit to the architect, Mr. Greener of Sunderland. It will seat more than 800 people and has an ample schoolroom on the ground floor." (This provided accommodation for 600 scholars). "The cost of the building will be about £1,040, towards which the ladies' bazaar, concerts, donations, tea-meetings and other contrivances of a people who have a mind to work, have realised the sum of £407. 2s. 6½d.

The opening services also realised the sum of £120. 15s. 9d., making a total of £527. 18s. 3½d. When the old chapel is disposed of, the trustees will have a light burden. The thanks of the trustees are due to Nicholas Wood, Esq., for his generous aid in a variety of ways, especially for free stone and other materials in the building."

The reporter's comment that the burden of the trustees would be light when the old building was disposed of, proved unfounded as it was sold for only £65. For many years it was in use as two dwelling houses but is no longer standing.

Soon alterations and extensions were planned. Over the years re-decoration was necessary and entailed the borrowing of considerable sums of money. It was only comparatively recently that the chapel debt was finally cleared.

IMPROVEMENTS, EXTENSIONS AND ALTERATIONS

Although, when completed, Union Street Chapel was one of the largest in the district, one important defect soon became apparent. This was the difficulty the preachers experienced in making themselves heard. We are told that various devices, such as sounding boards, were tried in attempting to remedy this but it was not until 1865, when the gallery was erected, that the acoustics were improved and the chapel became one of the easiest in which to speak and also in which to sing. The seating capacity was increased to over 1,000.

A delightful story is told of the difficulty found by the men who were struggling in vain to lever the massive beam, which supports the gallery, into the chapel through the upper central window from Union Street. Credit for their eventual success goes to Mr. John Lowdon who walked from the street up the beam (a somewhat hazardous enterprise) and rubbed soft soap liberally on the window sill and round the beam. The men were then able to slide it in more easily.

When the chapel was re-opened, special services were arranged for the first two Sundays and a "Tea Party" was held.

On 21st July, 1868, the Trustees acquired the strip of land, 78 feet x 8 feet, to the east of the chapel. This was most valuable in providing easier access to that side of the building. It was purchased

for the nominal sum of 10/- from Thomas C. Thompson and another who were the executors for the late Mary D. Pemberton.

In 1874, the extension to the north side of the chapel was built. The plans for this extension were signed by Thomas Southrow, Architect of South Shields and dated 7th February, 1874. Before the alterations were made, a flight of uncovered stone steps led from near the present entrance in Barnes Street, eastwards along the north wall and turned into the only vestry, the present East Vestry. The pulpit was against the north wall of the chapel, under a large central window and the gallery extended right to the wall, there being no choir seats upstairs.

The extension into Barnes Street provided, on the ground floor, the kitchen; on the middle floor, the North Vestry (or Preacher's Vestry) and on the top floor a place for the orchestra. There was a window in the west wall of the extension to light the "Orchestra Gallery" and in the same wall, a door led into the kitchen. The pulpit was brought forward and the choir seats were behind it and in front of the orchestra. The old stone steps were removed from the back of the building to lead from the schoolroom directly into the chapel. Large windows were put in the east and west walls.

The cost of these alterations was approximately £600, one third of which was raised by the members before sanction was given for the work to begin.

In 1887, the wall and steps in front of the chapel were altered, the main improvement being that a turning was made in each flight of steps leading to the doors, making them much less steep.

On 2nd June, 1888, the Trustees of Union Street were given permission at the Circuit Quarterly Meeting to "lay out £150 in beautifying and renovating their chapel". There are no available details of what was done in that year but it seems certain that this was when the undated plans for a new rostrum and communion rail were put into effect. The platform was probably extended and the choir seats put at each side.

Only ten years later, in 1898, further major work was undertaken in both the chapel and the schoolroom. Although the details of the re-opening celebrations are preserved, (pasted on the back of the mirror in the Preacher's Vestry) again there is no record of what was done. Older members remember a large recess, with loose forms, in the position of the West Vestry. It would be about this time that the walls each with one door, were built up to the edge of the gallery on either side, creating the West Vestry on one side and the landing and small room (now used as a switch house) at the top of the steps on the other.

The re-opening was 17th June, 1899, by Robert Cameron, M.P. There was a tea and Mr. Cameron lectured in the evening on "The true ideal of life and how to reach it". He also preached at both services on the Sunday and there were special services the following Sunday, conducted by Rev. R. de Winton.

Between 1907 and 1908 over £200 was spent. The plaster ceiling appeared unsafe and was removed and replaced by the present wooden one. In actual fact, great difficulty was experienced in tearing off the plaster. To support the new ceiling, two large beams, running from north to south, were put in. As before, during the erection of the gallery, a team of strong men had to be enlisted to get the beams through the windows. Having got the beams inside, it was found that they had been cut too short and, because of this, supporting haunches had to be built into the wall at the back of the gallery. More support was needed, but it was feared that the older pillars supporting the gallery sides would not carry the extra strain of solid pillars above them. The problem was solved by using iron pipes as pillars in the gallery.

The chapel was then cleaned and decorated, the work being completed for the Jubilee Celebrations.

During 1914 there was some movement of the east wall and the buttresses on the outside were built to counteract this. Cleaning was again necessary and it was decided to paint the pews, removing the doors first. The old pew doors were sold the following year for 15/-.

Again many repairs and decorations were carried out in 1923, including a lot of work in the schoolroom. Two years later, the chapel was painted and the organ renovated. This work necessitated a loan of £450 from the Chapel Aid Association. The re-opening ceremony was performed 26th September, 1925, by Mr. and Mrs. R. Bryers, members of very long standing, then living at Sunderland. The provisions for the tea were the gift of Mrs. L. J. Place.

In preparation for the visit of the Synod in 1932, the chapel was very thoroughly renovated and redecorated. New lights were fitted. The Women's Homely Hour, wishing to donate something of a permanent nature, gave a set of pulpit chairs and carpeting to replace the felting given ten years earlier by Mr. A. Mennear. Outstanding efforts by all sections of the Church and many private donations resulted in all the work being carried out without adding to the capital debt. The re-opening was performed by Mrs. Gutscher Johnson of Sunderland. The year was the 50th anniversary of her girlhood mission at Hetton.

The last time the chapel was decorated was in 1946 when the re-opening ceremony was performed 14th December by Mr. L. J. Place, then of Blackpool, a well-respected former member and devoted worker for our Church.

In 1951, the choir were responsible for carpeting the front of the choir and the pulpit. The back rail of the pulpit was removed so that the choir could enter their seats from the vestries.

Heating. It is apparent that some form of central heating was included in the original building and the boiler-house (or stoker's as it was then called) was in its present position from the beginning. New boilers were installed in January, 1919, October, 1927, and again in December, 1956. The choir heaters were installed in 1951 to remedy the draughts

coming from the organ loft. These had caused discomfort over a number of years.

Lighting. It is very possible that gas lighting could have been installed in 1858 but oil lamps may have been used at first. The older members remember how, before 1900, the stewards of the time lighted the open gas jets with a wax taper on a long pole. There was a centre bracket with about 30 jets, two smaller ones of 8 or 10 jets on the walls below the choir and two more for the gallery, placed between the stairs and the choir. The hope of witnessing this operation was a great inducement for the children to get to the evening service early. Later the gas-light system was re-arranged and incandescent mantles used.

Electric lighting was installed in 1908, a special service being conducted 22nd August, by Rev. M. Johnson who performed the "switch-on" ceremony.

Improvements have been made to the lighting system from time to time. The gallery was re-lighted in 1926, new lights were fitted in 1932 for the Synod and the choir installed additional lights in 1951.

Clocks. For many years there was a clock in the central panel of the gallery (directly opposite the preacher). An eight-day clock, costing £3, replaced an earlier one in 1925. It had been broken for some time when the electric clock was placed above the organ in 1946.

The Organ. Only four years after the completion of the major extension, the pipe organ was installed in 1878.

It seems probable that from the start, the new orchestra gallery had been intended to function as the organ loft it soon became, the only necessary alteration being the bricking-in of the window. Certainly, a story has been told for many years, that at one of the first chapel meetings after the alterations, one of the accredited "wits" of the time asked why a "big hole" had been left in the wall behind the choir. He was not dampened by the indignant reply that, like everybody else, he ought to know it was the place for the organ, but retorted, "Well, why don't we put one in?"

Why, indeed? The Trustees were still burdened by a debt of £400 and could not undertake the further responsibility of buying an organ. However, the determination to instal an organ was great in many hearts. An Organ Committee was formed in 1875, the treasurer being Thomas Lowdon and the secretary, Robert Strachan. To these men goes the credit for the great achievement.

The total cost of the organ, £335, was paid off during 1878 by only two separate cheques. In the preceding three years, £85 had been raised by means of concerts and many individual donations. The balance was furnished wholly by substantial loans from Thomas Lowdon, Robert Strachan and Mrs. Ann Lowdon (George Lowdon's widow).

The organ was officially opened, Wednesday, 13th February, 1878, and a concert given, the organist being Mr. Collinson and the singers, Miss Atkinson and Messrs. Whitehead, Grice and Leatham. The proceeds of the concert were devoted to the organ fund and the task of raising the money for the repayment of the debt began in full force. The Ladies' Sewing Society gave considerable donations; Christmas bazaars, teas and concerts were arranged; and Mr. George Smith gave a magic lantern show. Undoubtedly, however, the bulk of the money was raised by the concerts, including those on Good Friday, given by Mr. R. Strachan and the choir. In May, 1884, all the loans had been repaid with interest and the organ was formally handed over to the Trustees, free from debt.

The organ was considered "one of the best in its day" and was built by P. Conacher and Co. of Huddersfield. It has served the church well.

Over the years, the maintenance of the organ has been a special concern of the choir. Whenever work on it was considered necessary, they made it their responsibility to create an Organ Fund to meet the costs entailed.

It was cleaned and repaired in 1909, and during 1925 extensive renovations were carried out while the chapel was closed six weeks for painting. It was generally overhauled and tracker action and an electric blower and starter were installed. The work was carried out by F. O. Ward of Middlesbrough and cost £150. Gone were the days when it was necessary to appoint an official organ blower who was paid 30/- per annum to lever the bellows behind the panelling of the organ. No more visitors to the chapel were to be mildly surprised as a section of that panelling opened, just before the sermon, to emit an elderly gentleman who solemnly took the seat left for him in the choir. No more small boys could look forward to being asked to "blow" so that they could indulge in mischievous pranks at the expense of the sopranos. Men who are remembered as having served as organ blowers are L. Bryers, Joseph Burgess, William Galley and, the last, Thomas Dobson.

The organ was again overhauled and cleaned in 1937 and the last time it was renovated was in 1948 when pneumatic action was introduced. The work on both these occasions was done by H. J. Nelson of Durham. It was re-opened by Mrs. Roxby.

The Sunday School Rooms. Alterations and decorations of the main schoolroom have been numerous. The bulk of the work done has often been by the men and friends of the church. The subsequent "scrubbings-out", however, were usually the tasks of the ladies.

The original room contained six pillars, extra ones being necessary to support the gallery and ceiling in the chapel.

Electric lighting was installed in 1914, being officially switched on by Mr. R. Briggs.

The first platform was on the north wall but was removed to the west wall many years ago, possibly when the kitchen extension was built. In 1921, the Football Club raised £50 and extended it, making footlights, for one of their concerts. It was further extended and dressing rooms made by the choir in 1932. The timber for this was given by Mr. W. Strachan. The window at the back of the platform, a hindrance during all stage productions, was bricked-in during 1947. The present switch-board and footlights were installed in 1953.

In 1936, the partition from the glass kitchen (we do not know when this was built) to the platform was put up and the platform end enclosed. This was to make the schoolroom "cosier" as was the placing of the heating pipes near the ceiling in 1937.

The old stone steps leading to the chapel, in constant use since 1858, were much worn by 1943 when they were re-levelled.

23rd September, 1870, is the date of the conveyance to the Trustees of a piece of land in Barnes Street which was purchased from Mr. Thomas Lamb for £30. An Infants' School was erected on this ground in 1872. This room is still used by the Primary Department of our Sunday School and for many other purposes. It is usually referred to as the Endeavour Room.

It was at first L-shaped but in 1922 a wall with a door was built to make two separate rooms. The smaller one acted as a cloakroom but in 1946 the communicating door was sealed off and a new entrance to the Endeavour Room made from the passage. The smaller room became the Nursery Department of the Sunday School.

The Institute. In 1927 the Trustees agreed to be responsible for the "furnishing and equipping of a social club". The conveyance to them of Nos. 10 and 12, Railway Street, which were converted into an Institute, is dated 25th April, 1929. They acquired the property from the "personal representative of Robert Young, deceased" at a cost of £200.

In 1955, owing to the condition of the building, the Institute, or Youth Centre, as it had come to be called, was demolished. It had provided, over the years a most useful place of recreation for the young people connected with the church.

The value of the church buildings was just over £1,000 when they were erected. In March, 1887, the value of the property was given as £2,400, as the organ and fittings, as well as the chapel were insured. Today the property is insured for £7,000.

The work of maintaining and beautifying the building continues in this Centenary Year. Special efforts and schemes of giving were started two years ago so that the chapel could be decorated and painted, inside and out, without accumulating any debts. Stained glass windows have been put on either side of the organ by the past and present members of the Sunday School.

LEGACIES bequeathed to the church have included :

- 1910 from the late R. Clough, £4.
- 1936 from the late Mrs. Whitfield, £30.
- 1936 and 1944, £29. 7s. 0d. and £53. 13s. 10d. respectively, from the estate of the late Mrs. Gatcher Johnson in memory of her great mission in 1882.
- 1958 £100 anonymously.

INDIVIDUAL GIFTS for the use of the church have included :

- The first music stands for the use of the orchestra and Bible boxes for the use of the Sunday School were made and given by Messrs. James and Robert Young.
- 1914 Communion set given by Mrs. F. Firth.
 - 1917 Chair presented to the P.M. Junior Sunday School by Miss Freda Piper.
 - 1923 Brass vases dedicated to the memory of her son, Thomas N. Murray by Mrs. Murray.
 - 1926 Communion furniture dedicated to the memory of his wife, Jenny, by William Strachan.
 - Linen for communion table cloth given by Mrs. L. J. Place and embroidered by Miss Eva Barrass.
 - 1929 Baptismal font dedicated to the memory of their mother, Tamara Murray, by her daughters, Mary and Linda.
 - 1932 Pulpit Bible presented by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Parker.
 - 1943 Bible for the use of the Christian Endeavour given by Mrs. L. Day, in memory of her husband, Fl/Sgt. W. Day, lost on active service with Coastal Command.
 - 1943 Communion set dedicated to the memory of Mr. and Mrs. R. Briggs, by members of the family.
 - 1944 Lectern, Bible and hymn book dedicated to the memory of Fl/Lt. E. Alderson, B.Sc., who lost his life in an air accident, by the family.
 - 1944 Six collection plates, given by Mrs. Douglass (Dorothy Gibbon) in memory of George Blackburn, a former Sunday School scholar tragically killed by falling in Eppleton Quarry in 1932 and as a thanksgiving for the saving at sea of P/O S. Blackburn.
 - 1946 Electric clock dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Hannah Alderson by her husband and family.
 - 1948 Communion set dedicated to the memory of Richard Parker by his sister, Mrs. M. J. Walton.
 - 1950 Lobby tables dedicated to the memory of James Galley by members of the family.
 - 1953 Chromium-plated vase given by Mr. and Mrs. A. Pretty as a thanksgiving on the celebration of their silver wedding.
 - 1954 Baptismal font given by Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Mills as a thanksgiving on the celebration of their ruby wedding.

THE TRUSTEES

The erection of the chapel and the maintenance of the fabric in good repair was, and is, the responsibility of the Board of Trustees who may be held answerable in law for any debts incurred on behalf of the building. In the early days, during times that were difficult for everybody in this area, some of these men actually lent money free of interest and without guarantee to sustain their beloved chapel.

These are the people who have served as Trustees at Union Street.

The Trustees of 1858. George Lowdon of Hetton Colliery, overman, Charles Milner of Hetton-le-Hole, butcher, Robert Taylor, the younger, of Hetton Colliery, engineman, Abraham William Errington of Hetton, weighman, Matthew Raisbeck of same place, pitman, John Parkinson, of Seaton Colliery, pitman, Henry Wilson of Hetton, pitman, Cuthbert Ferry of Hetton, pitman, Joseph Birtley, of Hetton Colliery, weighman, Robert Wilkinson of Hetton, pitman, James Dakers the elder, of Hetton Colliery, overman and George Clough of Hetton, pitman.

Trustees Elected 22nd August, 1888. William Gardiner, Thomas Barrass, John Hall, Matthew Yelder, James Strachan, Jabez Kay, John Storey, Thomas Lowdon, Robert Strachan, John Beecroft, William Hedley, John Thomas Potts, Joseph Burgess, William Laverick.

Trustees Elected 6th March, 1909. Robert Mills, Alfred John Mennear, John Rennie, Cuthbert Roxby, William Galley, Ralph Galley, Joseph Pearson, Robert Bryers, Thomas Mills, William Richardson Heckles, Robert Wardle, Charles Henry Place and Lance John Place.

Trustees Elected 29th November, 1919. Thomas Dixon, Richard Parker, James Galley, John Spence, James Kernohan, Thomas Heckles, George Barrass and William Strachan.

Trustees Elected 1st September, 1928. John Groundry Waggitt, John Gilbert Shanklin, Robert Reuben Cook, Mark Lee, Jabez Spence, John Bestford, Ernest John Mennear, James Steel Mills, Jesse Brown and Robert William Pinchen.

Trustees Elected 11th June, 1946. Alfred Bainbridge, John Rennie, Laura Robson (Mrs. Coxon), James Logan Murray, Nicholas Ferguson, John Summerbell, George Maddison Irvin, Thomas Soulsby, Robert Charlton, William Laverick Brown, Ernest Ritchie, Isabella Pratt Soulsby and Jennie Spencer.

Present Trustees. Mr. L. J. Place, resigned from the Trust Board in 1946. The present Trustees are W. Strachan, J. G. Shanklin, E. J. Mennear, R. R. Cook and those elected in 1946 with the exception of Mrs. Spencer who died in 1953.

LONG-SERVING OFFICIALS. The church is indebted to several men who served as Trust officials for many years.

Who the early secretaries were is not known but J. Beecroft served for more than 20 years, resigning in 1911. A. J. Mennear served for 10 years and was thanked for his "unstinted labour, ready devotion, and sound judgement" during that time. G. Barrass served for almost 10 years and E. J. Mennear for over 16 years.

George Lowdon was the first treasurer, holding the office from 1858 until his death in 1873. R. Wardle held the position for many years and G. Rennie and C. H. Place for shorter periods. W. Strachan was a most able treasurer for 25 years.

THE NEW MODEL DEED was adopted by the Board of Trustees 16th May, 1944.

UNION STREET'S PLACE IN THE CIRCUIT.

For many years, Union Street P.M. Society remained a part of the great Sunderland Circuit, the missionary zeal and power of which were renowned for half a century. Many laymen of sterling worth laboured there and were strengthened by the travelling preachers who worked with them. These were usually younger men, several of whom were later distinguished by becoming Presidents of the Conference. Among those so honoured were J. Petty (1860), J. McPherson (1872), and H. Yooll (1907).

At the Quarterly Meeting of December, 1863, the Hetton Circuit, which included Houghton-le-Spring and Chester-le-Street, was formed. There were 19 places of worship and 877 members in the new circuit and its formation was obviously a necessity unwelcome to all concerned.

Patterson tells us that Rev. M. A. Drummond became superintendent of the new circuit against his own inclination. He had entered the ministry from the Sunderland Circuit and had deeply appreciated the honour of being invited to minister to his native circuit. The motion to separate was passed unanimously in dead silence and Mr. Drummond told that "many a tear was shed both by the county and town members of the meeting at that last united quarter day for them. The parting was most pathetic, the farewells tender and many."

The first Quarterly Meeting of the new station was held at Union Street, 12th March, 1864. There had been a decrease in membership of 34 during the first quarter. This was explained by "the labouring classes of the neighbourhood having been in an unsettled state—20 removed and 7 emigrated." Over the years there is evidence of considerable movement from the area. The old system of the yearly binding of the miners was one of the main causes of the unsettlement of the communities in those early days and this was reflected by fluctuating membership.

Those first Quarterly Meetings often lasted all day. The Local Preachers' Meeting usually began at 10 a.m. and the Full Board Meeting followed. That they continued late into the evening is shown by the fact that the minister was permitted to leave one meeting (the motion to that effect being duly passed and recorded) in order to conduct a service elsewhere. A considerable amount of business was still to be discussed.

The conscientious thoroughness of the old leaders is reflected in the number of resolutions passed. The usual figure was between 70 and 80 resolutions and quite often the meetings were adjourned. Of them Patterson writes, "The leaders were all men of God. Revival power and glory rewarded their fidelity and zeal after they had accepted their new responsibilities as had been their experience before."

Nearly all the Quarterly Meetings were held at Hetton, and of local interest is the resolution passed 13th June, 1868, "That this Quarter Day make a present of a teapot to those four women who have made the Quarter Day dinners and teas and that Bro. Rosecamp make the presentation". Who the other ladies were is not known but one of those teapots, given to her grandmother, Mrs. G. Lowdon, is still in the possession of Mrs. S. Grant.

In 1871, the Chester-le-Street Circuit separated and 30th May, 1891, Houghton-le-Spring became a separate circuit.

Before this date, the superintendent of the Hetton Circuit had resided at Houghton and it therefore became necessary to provide a Circuit House at Hetton. In August, 1891, the Union Street Trustees provided £10 for a deposit for the site between Hetton Railway Station and the Rectory. The total cost was £60. 6s. 0d. The appointed Circuit House Trustees were all Hetton men, namely, Matthew Yelder, John Hall, William Gardiner and John T. Potts. Many efforts took place to raise funds for the Circuit House, a notable one by Mr. R. Strachan and the choir at Union Street. The foundation stone was laid 15th July, 1893, and the completed house was called Clowes Villa, in honour of William Clowes, one of the founders of Primitive Methodism.

In 1891, the Hetton Primitive Methodist Circuit became more-or-less what it remained until amalgamation. Union of Primitive, Wesleyan and United Methodism took place in 1932, but although a committee was appointed here in December of that year to "explore avenues of amalgamation as early as possible," considerable difficulty was experienced in completing the arrangements. In November 1938, a committee prepared a list of resolutions for the amalgamation of the local ex-Primitive and ex-Wesleyan Methodist Circuits but it was not until 1944 that our present United Circuit was formed.

The following is a list of Ministers who have served the Hetton Circuit:

SUPERINTENDENT MINISTERS

1864 — 1867	M. A. Drummond.
1867 — 1870	P. Clarke.
1870 — 1873	J. A. Bastow.
1873 — 1877	A. Dodds.
1877 — 1881	J. Boulton.
1881 — 1883	C. G. Tetley.
1883 — 1887	B. Wild.

1887 — 1891	J. Philipson.
1891 — 1896	G. F. Johnson.
1896 — 1903	W. R. de Winton.
1903 — 1910	M. Johnson.
1910 — 1914	W. Barton.
1914 — 1921	F. Firth, B.A.
1921 — 1926	W. Brown.
1926 — 1933	J. W. Morrow.
1933 — 1938	J. Clennell.
1938 — 1942	E. B. Storr.
1942 — 1947	D. W. Spedding.
1947 — 1950	W. W. Parsons.
1950 — 1954	G. Mills.
1954 — 1955	V. W. Wheeler.
1955 — 1956	W. Teare.
1956 —	F. Davies.

JUNIOR MINISTERS

1864 — 1865	J. Foggon.
1865 — 1867	C. Goodall.
1867 — 1869	F. Purvis.
1869 — 1870	T. Parsons.
1870 — 1871	G. Whitehead.
1871 — 1872	W. Clemitson.
1872 — 1873	J. Nicholls.
1873 — 1877	J. Alderson.
1877 — 1880	W. Cuthbert.
1880 — 1883	T. Elliott.
1883 — 1887	J. Richardson.
1887 — 1890	R. Walton.
1890 — 1891	G. F. Johnson.
1891 — 1902	No second minister.
1902 — 1904	F. W. Ollis.
1904 — 1906	B. W. J. Redhead.
1906 — 1909	J. S. Wilkinson.
1909 — 1913	J. Pinchen.
1913 — 1918	J. F. Loveday.
1918 — 1921	G. Featonby.
1921 — 1926	W. Armstrong.
1926 — 1929	W. Atkinson.
1929 — 1934	J. L. Barmby.
1934 — 1940	J. Crawford.
1940 — 1944	No second minister.
1944 — 1947	J. H. Cash
1947 — 1953	T. S. J. Walsh.
1953 — 1957	W. Teare.
1957 —	N. Berryman.

THIRD MINISTERS

From its inception, the Hetton Circuit supported three ministers. After 1869 there does not seem to have been a third minister until 1877, when another was called out. Most of the third ministers were very young men who had, in some cases, not completed their examinations. During 1865, the young man gave up his training, and J. Simpson, a local preacher, served as a minister until a new man was received. A deputation from the Quarterly Meeting to his employers, obtained his release from his ordinary work, and he was paid 25/- per week. Later John Parker served in a similar way.

After 1880, the financial state of the Circuit was very poor and repeated appeals were made to the Conference for relief from supporting a third minister. Eventually this request was granted but, for a number of years, payments had to be made to other circuits experiencing similar difficulties, or a third minister was supported for part of the year.

Some of the third ministers were :

1864	W. Taylor.
1864 — 1865	R. Sculpholm.
1865	J. Simpson.
1865 — 1866	J. Featherstone.
1866 — 1869	W. Kitson.
1875 — 1876	J. Parker.
1877 — 1881	C. Longstaff.
1881	Mr. Gillender.
1883	R. Walton.

The Circuit has been saddened on three occasions by the tragic deaths of serving ministers :

Rev. W. R. de Winton was killed in his bed by a chimney stack falling through the roof during a severe gale, 27th February, 1903. He had been at Hetton for almost seven years, "a term of devoted service unsurpassed in the annals of the Circuit". Of commanding appearance, he was loved and respected throughout the district by members of the Church and non-members alike. Many notable people attended his funeral and all the public houses in Hetton were closed and shuttered as the cortege passed. His magnificent memorial in Hetton Cemetery was raised by public subscription.

Rev. D. W. Spedding died at the early age of 46, 23rd February, 1947. During the five years he had been amongst us he had worked strenuously for and with the young people of the Church. Many people attended his funeral but many more were prevented from doing so by the road conditions after one of the heaviest snow storms of recent years.

Rev. V. W. Wheeler had been with us for only a year when he died in August, 1955. During that time he had done excellent work among the young people and made many friends.

LOCAL PREACHERS

The successful functioning of the Circuit has always depended upon the dedicated services of the local preachers.

The first man from Hetton to be "put on the plan" was Henry Wilson who had preached for about 50 years when he died in 1887. The second was George Clough. Both were in service before the Union Street Chapel was built.

Other Union Street men who were fully accredited local preachers included Jabez Kay (over 40 years), Thomas Barrass, John Plummer (removed to Bishop Auckland, 1885), William Laverick, Jabez Kay, junior (died only a year after reaching the "full plan"), Richard White, Robert Bryers, Matthew Yelder (came from Ryton in 1883; removed to Seaham many years later), William Hedley, Alfred J. Menneer (over 50 years service when he died in 1941), John Gardener, Robert Mills, Joseph Roxby, John Barrass, J. Steel, Thomas Waggitt (died 1899 at the early age of 26), James Galley, Sidney Soulsby and Thomas Soulsby (left Hetton 1937). Miss Mary Hall was a member at Union Street for a period of her service.

At present we have Thomas P. Steel (since 1949) and, on trial, George Bunker.

Rev. Joseph Roxby entered the wider ministry of our Church from the Union Street Society.

Rev. Thomas Soulsby, although he had left the district before being ordained was an active member of our society from childhood. **CIRCUIT STEWARDS** from Union Street have included George Lowdon, the first steward of the Hetton Circuit. Thomas Barrass acted as junior Circuit Steward during the 1880s and in the earlier years of this century the same office was held for many years by Alfred J. Menneer. More recently R. R. Cook has been in office for a number of years and one of the present Circuit Stewards is Thomas Soulsby.

SOME MEMORABLE EVENTS

CAMP MEETINGS

The Camp Meeting was the very essence of early Primitive Methodism. It was the insistence on the importance of open-air preaching which led to the break-away of the first Primitive Methodist leaders from the Wesleyan Church.

Splendid, vigorously evangelical Camp Meetings were held in and near Sunderland and at the first Quarterly Meeting of the new Hetton Station, it was resolved "that there be a central and general Camp Meeting between Hetton-le-Hole and Houghton-le-Spring in Mr.

Winter's field if it can be obtained, on July 17th (1865). That the whole circuit give up preaching services that day, the people to bring their provisions and stay on the ground."

The union Camp Meetings held between Hetton and Houghton were regular events and were the scene of many conversions and great spiritual manifestations. They achieved more than local fame and were specially mentioned by W. H. Patterson in his *History of Northern Primitive Methodism*.

Several years later, regular Camp Meetings were being held in company with the Hetton Downs Society. These appear to have continued until the outbreak of the First World War.

Probably the last one to be arranged at Hetton was when the Union Street, Hetton Downs and Moorsley Societies held a United Camp Meeting on 8th June, 1924. The day began with a Prayer Meeting at 9.45 a.m.

Although Camp Meetings have gone, in more recent years, several useful Open Air Services have been held in Hetton Park, led by Rev. D. W. Spedding and later, by Rev. W. W. Parsons.

A unique opportunity for Open Air Demonstration exists for all Methodists in the county, in the Durham Methodist Big Meeting, an annual event which began in 1947. This has been actively supported by many of our members since its inception. In such gatherings the spirit of the Camp Meeting lives on.

HOUGHTON FEAST

Houghton Feast, celebrated every year on the Sunday before October 10th, marks the dedication of St. Michael's Church (the Parish Church of the Hetton area until quite late in the nineteenth century). Bernard Gilpin, the most famed of Houghton's rectors, had an ox roasted each year to give to the poor and people from miles around travelled to Houghton for the great "feast" it verily was.

During the nineteenth century, much of the religious significance of the festival had been lost. Houghton Feast Monday and Tuesday were public holidays in all the surrounding villages and collieries, and the fair and horse-racing attracted gamblers. Many made the days an excuse for excessive drunkenness.

These were the things against which the Primitive Methodists had declared open war and for many years, counter-attractions were organized by many of the local Societies.

As early as 1872, the "tea parties" held at Union Street at Houghton Feast were referred to as "usual events". These teas, held on both days, were noted throughout the district as "grand affairs". The preparations began days before the tea, altogether as many as sixty stones of flour often being baked. The baking was done by the ladies of the Church, sometimes helped by friends noted as being "good hands" in preparing particular delicacies. In fact, many of the women

jealously guarded their favourite recipes and preferred to spend hours mixing everything themselves rather than divulge the secrets. All the cooking was done in the open ovens in the centre of Hetton Square, but later, of course, in the round black ovens in their own homes.

Backwards and forwards went the young men, carrying the tea urns, while the younger women bustled about serving all who came.

To the Monday tea, after weeks of excited anticipation, came the Sunday School. This was the great day at last. With a pot tied in a handkerchief, and a penny to pay for his tea, many an older member vividly recalls assembling with the other children in Market Street and, with banners unfurled, singing as they marched along, parading the streets to the schoolroom and there consuming quantities of boiled ham, cakes and pastries.

Firm in their minds too, is the Houghton Feast Rhyme, religiously drilled into them by fine old men like Mr. J. Burgess and Mr. W. Galley, the Primary School Superintendents :

" Houghton Feast's a bad place,
It's not the place for me,
I'll put on my Sunday clothes,
And go to the Chapel Tea."

To John Hall, a trustee and Sunday School teacher, goes the credit for its composition.

The evenings were filled with musical concerts and when we are told the teas " went on " for two days, we can appreciate the truth of this.

As conditions changed, the parade by the Sunday School was discontinued and the popularity of the teas waned. From about 1912 to 1932, the choir arranged Houghton Feast Concerts which consisted of oratorio solos and choruses. Also given were several cantatas such as " Saviour of Men ", " Daughter of Moab " and " Mount of Olives ".

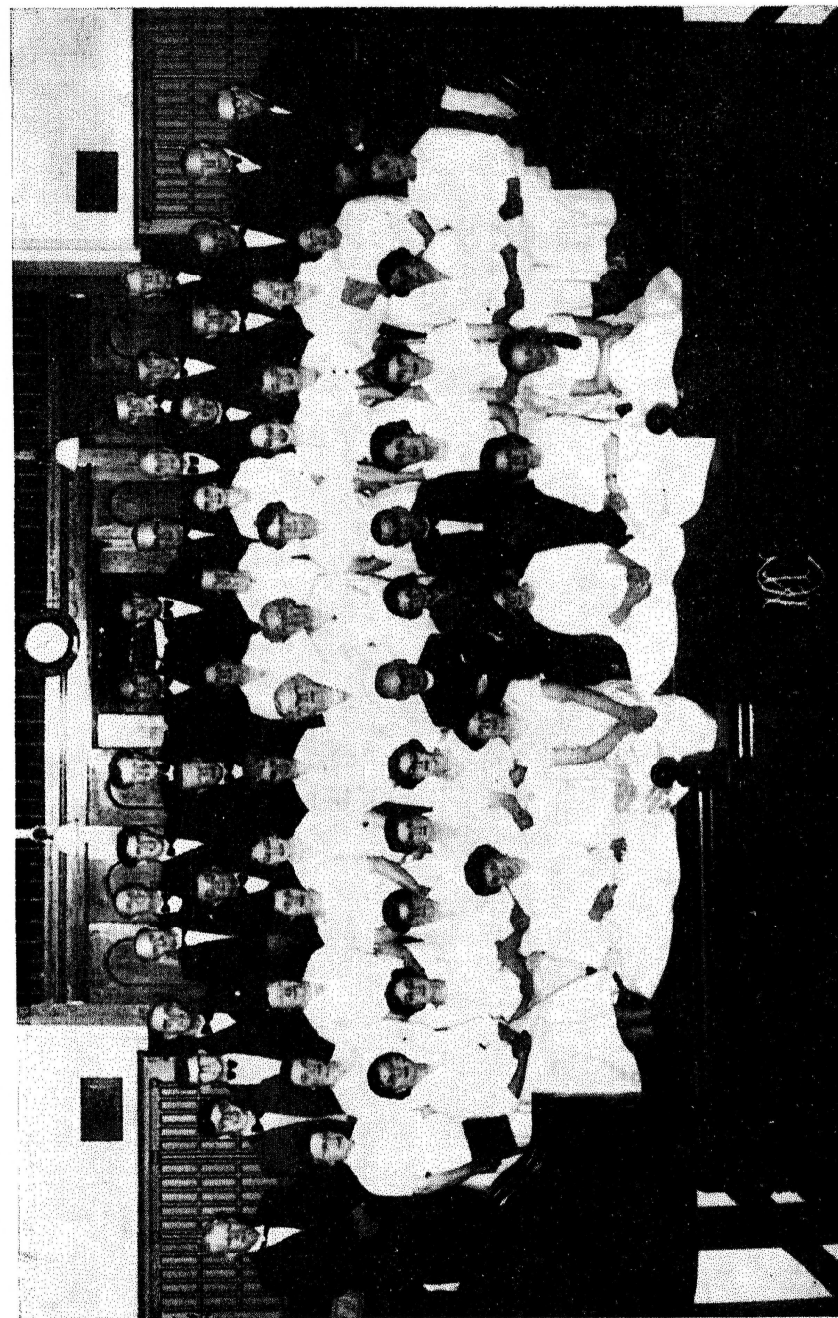
In 1930, a Houghton Feast Tea and Carnival were organized and the following year, a " knife and fork supper ", but the interest could not be created to continue them as annual events. Since then Houghton Feast has not been marked by any special effort at Union Street.

In fact, Houghton Feast Monday is no longer a public holiday, as it was given up when the miners were granted annual holidays. In recent years too, the religious significance of the Feast at Houghton has been restored.

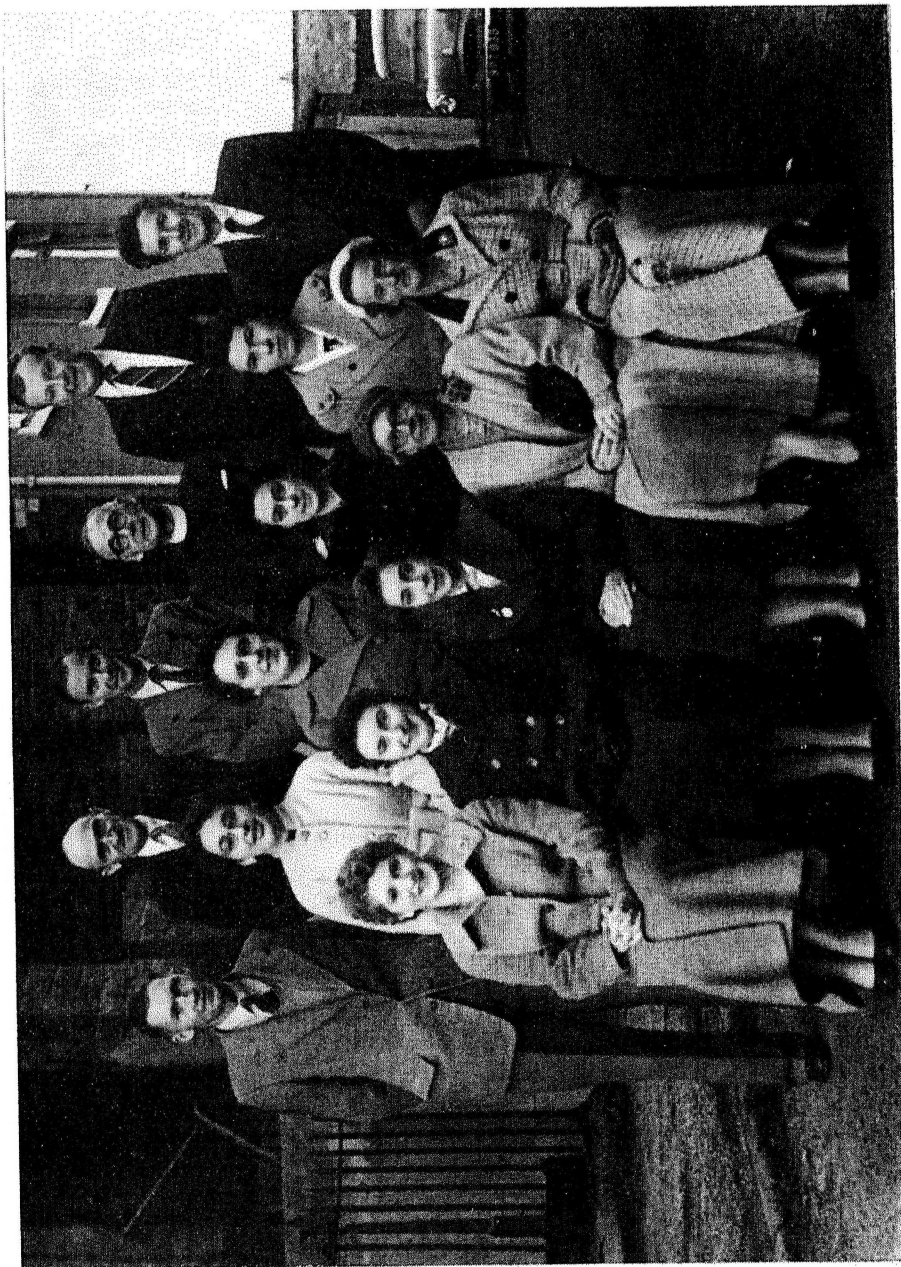
CHRISTMAS " SPECIALS "

The services, for which noted preachers were specially invited and the teas, arranged by the Trustees at Christmas, also date back to the earliest days of the chapel.

To raise money for the Trust funds, a tea, similar to that held at



THE CHOIR



A GROUP OF SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Houghton Feast, was arranged on the Saturday nearest Christmas. Each Class Leader was responsible for a table and persuaded the ladies to bake for him. A small charge was made for admission and an evening concert given.

In 1907, the Christmas Effort was greater than usual, to help raise money for the major work done in the chapel that year. A bazaar with numerous items of attraction, including, with the more familiar stalls and competitions, a scripture competition, an electric battery and "Ping Pong", was held in addition to the tea. It was such a success that it was repeated in the following years. In 1909, in response to an appeal, there were a great number of individual donations as well as the bazaar and tea. These donations were headed for many years by considerable sums from the Lambton, Hetton and Joicey Colliery Company (founded 1911) as well as personal gifts from Sir Lindsay Wood who had been a director of the earlier Hetton Coal Company.

The bazaars were discontinued during the 1914-18 war but many people continued their Christmas donations. One or two members maintained this Christmas giving for many years.

During the early 1920s, Children's Operettas were repeated at Christmas and donations from the various sections of the church assumed importance.

In 1926, the year of the strike, the donations were very few and there was no tea. "The Messiah" was sung, and the collection amounted to less than £1. After that year the Trust Christmas effort was not held, but, of course, similar work was, and is still, undertaken by the sections of the Church.

Several years later some moving Nativity plays were produced by various sections of the Church. A very beautiful one was performed by the Ladies' Choir led by Mrs. W. Strachan.

For many years we will remember New Year's Eve, 1949. This fell on a Saturday and a "Turkey Supper" was arranged. The turkeys and the "trimmings" were all gifts from the sections of the Church, individual members and generous friends. Many invitations were sent out and no charge was made for admission. Within 55 minutes 235 people had partaken of a substantial meal. There was orchestral entertainment and a social evening. Everything was cleared away before the company went upstairs for the outstanding Watch Night Service with which we welcomed in 1950.

GOOD FRIDAY CONCERTS

One of the proudest traditions of Union Street is the series of oratorios, given annually on Good Friday for 90 years. Organized by the Trustees, the success of these concerts has always been the result of loyal and diligent work by the choir. They are described more fully in the section describing the Choir's history.

THE LICENCE FOR THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES

Although the Trustees had been requested to obtain this in March, 1865, it was not until December, 1874, that they did so, the Circuit Quarterly Meeting providing part of the cost.

MISS MCKINNEY'S MISSION, 1873-1878

Permission was given for the "Hetton people to engage Miss McKinney to take part in a Public Meeting" to be held there during October, 1873. Her name was put on the plan in June, 1874, and removed when she left the district at the end of 1878.

Patterson records that when "Miss McKinney laboured at Hetton Chapel, there was an exceptionally great manifestation of power and it touched Easington Lane, Houghton and surrounding places, over 300 persons professing conversion. Jabez Kay, George Clough and Thomas Barrass were then prominent in the work."

MRS. MCKENZIE is also mentioned as having led several successful missions in the years immediately following.

She was the lady who later became Mrs. Gutch Johnson. Writing to the secretary of the Trust in 1932, Mrs. Gutch Johnson recalled her "wonderful mission" of 1882 when Mr. Tom Holland's father, "dear Mussel Bob, as he was then called", was converted in our schoolroom and became an ardent member of the Salvation Army.

EFFORTS IN HETTON HALL GROUNDS

A concert, on Whit Monday, 1882, was given in the grounds of Hetton Hall by the United Circuit Choirs, conducted by Mr. R. Strachan. "The Pioneers of Primitive Methodism" was sung. Refreshments were provided and the gates were open from 1.30 to 8.0 p.m. The proceeds were used to reduce the Circuit debt.

In 1888, there was again a united gathering of Circuit Choirs there. It is amusing to note that although the singers were admitted free they had to pay for their tea. The effort on this occasion was in aid of the Circuit House Fund.

THE POLYTECHNIC EXHIBITION

This was opened on November 18th, 1898, and remained open in the schoolroom for about three weeks. The object of the Exhibition was to raise funds for the renovation of the chapel. The amount actually raised is not known, but it was an unqualified success, and is well recalled by those who took part, even as children.

The men of the Church canvassed the whole district, going from door to door to collect the novelties and articles of interest which made up the Exhibition. Quite often the householders would think they had nothing of that nature, but the men always "had a good look round" and asked directly for any curios, antiques, old china or pictures of interest they saw. They were hardly ever refused the loan of the articles.

Great care had to be taken of all things borrowed and the collectors were made personally responsible for their conveyance to and from the Exhibition. Insurances against fire and loss were taken out and the exhibits were guarded night and day by the men who attended for four-hour shifts.

There was a Ladies' Sewing Stall and every night there were concerts and entertainments.

The "Waxworks or Living Picture Show" must have been very impressive. Favourite pictures of the day were portrayed by grown-ups and children. It was staged as a side-show in the Primary Schoolroom at intervals during the evenings and threepence was charged for admission. The popularity of the "Waxworks" is proved by the fact that in the following years, Miss Strachan and her helpers were asked several times to prepare a similar entertainment.

Also a novelty in those days must have been the electric light which was supplied for the occasion by Messrs. Ritchie and Garmonsway.

The organizers of the event were J. Beecroft, W. Gardener and A. J. Mennear, Secretaries, R. Wardle, Treasurer and a committee of twenty eight men.

During 1926, 13th-27th February, another Polytechnic Exhibition, based on the earlier one, was held. This too, proved to be a very successful and popular event. The secretary was Edward Beecroft, the treasurer, Jesse Brown and A. J. Mennear assisted with the organization.

SPECIAL PREACHERS

Before 1932, it was usual to invite ministers from other circuits to occupy our pulpit three or four times during the year. Often they were ministers who had previously served the Hetton Circuit, or men who had former connections with our society.

Several returned many times and are remembered for their gifted and inspiring addresses. It is impossible to list them all, but amongst them were: Rev. Samuel Horton, Mr. Robert Cameron, Rev. G. F. Johnson, Rev. J. P. Mossop, Rev. W. Booth, John Wilson, M.P., Rev. J. Leuty, Rev. W. H. Hartley, Rev. J. Toyn, Rev. J. Roxby, Rev. M. A. Drummond, Rev. S. Palmer, Rev. T. Sykes, Rev. W. L. Wardle, Enos Bacon (the Yorkshire Nightingale), Rev. A. Thompson, Rev. G. Feaver, Rev. J. Rutherford, Rev. T. G. Gardiner, Rev. W. Barton, Rev. E. Dover, Miss Frazer, and Mr. J. Strachan.

At the beginning of the century there were some notable missions including those by Master Lonnie Dennis, the Boy Preacher, Rev. J. B. Bayliff, Rev. W. R. Bird, Sister Martha and W. H. Jude. More recently, early in 1956, a successful Caravan Mission conducted by Revs. J. Ducker and D. Shaw resulted in several of our young people dedicating themselves anew to the service of Christ.

THE JUBILEE OF UNION STREET CHAPEL, 1908, was celebrated in May of that year. Mr. A. J. Mennear was secretary and Mr. R. Wardle treasurer of the committee which made the arrangements.

The leading figures at the Jubilee were Rev. Maurice A. Drummond and Rev. John Hallam, both associated with the early growth of the Circuit. "The jubilee services were marked by spiritual fervour and enthusiasm. While listening to the heroism of the saintly men and women of the past, the listeners were moved to 'expect great things from God and to attempt great things for God', in the years to come."

It is our earnest prayer that we shall match their experience during our Centenary Services.

THE JUBILEE OF THE HETTON CIRCUIT, 1913, was combined with the celebration of the Coming-of-Age of the Houghton-le-Spring Circuit.

Saturday, 13th December, was the great day and all the meetings were held at Union Street Chapel. It was preceded by five days of Prayer Meetings at each Church in the two Circuits. The singing at the services was led by the United Circuit Choir conducted by Mr. W. Heckles.

A Public Meeting at 3 p.m. was addressed by Mr. R. R. Barkes, Mr. A. Mennear, Rev. R. Laidler and Rev. J. Ritson (President of the Conference). Prayers were led by Rev. W. Atkinson. There was a Re-union tea and an Old-Time Fellowship Meeting was conducted by Rev. M. A. Drummond at 5.45 p.m. The Great Platform Meeting at 6.45 p.m. was addressed by Mr. T. Hodgson, Coun. W. Gardner, Rev. W. Barton, Rev. T. Robson, Coun. G. Heslop, J.P., and Rev. J. Ritson.

THE VISITS OF TOM HOLLAND

The earliest recorded evangelical visit of Tom Holland to Union Street was in December, 1905, when together with Mr. Willis, he conducted a mission under the auspices of the Psalmody Association. The mission was preceded by a fortnight of special Prayer Meetings arranged by the Class Leaders.

He returned with his family in 1909 and when he came to sing in the Good Friday Concert in 1915, he was again accompanied by his family. Together they gave a Saturday Concert and sang and preached at the Sunday Services.

Again, during 1916, 1918, 1921, 1922, 1931, 1932 and 1933, this talented family returned for week-end visits at which excerpts from oratorios, evangelical songs and spiritual testimony gave upliftment to many.

HARRISON SLATER gave a series of dramatic recitals at Union Street during 1923, 1924, 1925 and 1926. Visits were arranged in

1932 and 1933 in aid of Circuit Funds and also in 1951 for the Circuit Missionary Effort. He is remembered for his vivid portrayals of the characters of Dickens and enthralling versions of famous plays.

CHILDREN'S OPERETTAS

Given by members of the Sunday School, or Junior Christian Endeavour, the Children's Operettas have always been a great delight. Financially successful, they have served also to stimulate parental interest in Sunday School work.

Concerts by the children are mentioned in the financial records at the beginning of the century. The earliest one for which details are available was a "Flower Cantata," entitled "King of the Seasons". The accompanist was Miss Lily Hall and the conductor, Miss Strachan. Many of the children's names are familiar as those of present-day members of the Church.

Children's concerts were also given in 1912 and 1916, arranged by Mr. George Rennie and Mr. Tom Dixon.

Of the actual operettas, the first one seems to have been "Pearl the Fishermiden", organized by Miss Strachan and Mrs. Robson, performed in 1920 and repeated several times in aid of various Church funds. Other early productions were "Redcap in Fairyland" and "Babette".

"Princess Chrysanthemum", given in 1922 by the Misses I. Robson and Doris Pinchen, was also repeated several times.

"Jan of Windmill Land" was performed in 1928 and "The Ruby of Rajahpore" in 1929. The organizers were Mesdames J. Robson, J. W. Morrow and L. J. Place and Messrs. W. Strachan and T. Dixon.

In 1933 and 1934 "Pierrot Princess" and "Princess Chrysanthemum" were produced by Mr. J. Lawns who also conducted a Children's Choir which had great success at Circuit Demonstrations. Miss B. Wick was the accompanist for the choir.

More recently, "The Magic Key" was produced by Mr. W. Liddle in 1947 and "Mayday in Well-a-Day" by Mrs. W. Brown and Mr. J. Steel in 1956.

THE JUBILEE OF THE AFRICAN MISSIONS was celebrated at Union Street by special services during February, 1920. The first Primitive Methodist Mission to Africa landed 21st February, 1870. Rev. Mr. Gill, a returned missionary, was the special preacher at our services.

THE CENTENARY OF PRIMITIVE METHODISM IN THE HETTON CIRCUIT, 1923

In connection with this event a most interesting booklet, containing a brief history of the Circuit and of each Church, was published. Mr. A. J. Mennear, a lovingly remembered figure in our own society, was Junior Circuit Steward at that time and was responsible for much of the organization.

At Union Street, Special Weekends were arranged in November and December by the Sunday School and Christian Endeavour, the Trust Board and the Women's Homely Hour. Special sermons were preached by Rev. J. R. Quine (Lemington-on-Tyne), Rev. J. Roxby (Westgate), Rev. W. Brown, Rev. J. R. Ely (Hetton) and Miss Trotter (Durham).

A Grand Concert was given by the Hetton Choral Union Society, The Women's Homely Hour organized a Saturday Public Tea followed by a Miniature Sale of Work. At a Sunday Evening Concert, they gave selections from "Jubilee Songs".

CIRCUIT DEMONSTRATIONS were held annually from 1922 to 1935 inclusive. These were all held on a Saturday in June, in the grounds of Eppleton Hall by kind permission of Mr. J. F. Bell. Singing and recitation competitions for Sunday School scholars were held in the afternoon and after tea, provided by each Church, there were competitions for Church and Ladies' Choirs. Special speakers were always invited. The success of these splendid days owes much to the devoted work of Mr. A. J. Mennear who was elected Demonstration Secretary each year.

THE SYNODS

Union Street Church has entertained the District Synod on several occasions. It is possible that earlier ones were held here, but the earliest reference found was to one held in 1888.

The 1915 Synod was held at Hetton from 29th April to 3rd May, our own delegates being Rev. J. Loveday and Coun. C. Dickinson (Easington Lane). The Inaugural Address was delivered by Rev. J. Jopling. The Public Meeting Addresses were "Recent developments in Temperance Reform" by Rev. C. Crabtree, "Missions from the Layman's Point of View" by Mr. W. Berriman and "Corsica or Galilee?" by Rev. W. Pickering, B.D., Rev. W. Druffield preached the Synod Sermon and the Sacrament was administered by Revs. H. Pratt, G. R. Bell, A. Ryder and W. D. Cox. There were three Open-Air Processions altogether, pauses being made at various points for short addresses. Our Sunday services were conducted by Rev. J. S. Nightingale and a Young People's Service was held. The speakers at the Great Platform Meeting on the Monday evening were Revs. J. A. West, J. G. Soulsby and T. Sykes.

The last Annual Synod of the Sunderland and Newcastle District of the Primitive Methodist Church, before Union, was held at Hetton, April 29th to May 2nd, 1932. Our own circuit delegates were Mr. R. R. Cook and Mr. E. S. Newton (Easington Lane). Many of our members and friends provided hospitality in their own homes for the visiting delegates.

On the first evening, a reception for the delegates was given in the Masonic Hall by Mr. and Mrs. R. Bell. They were welcomed by Rev. F. Smith, M.A. (Rector of Hetton-le-Hole) and Rev. R. Coburn Kellie (Wesleyan Minister). Luncheons in the Masonic Hall were generously provided by Mr. Thomas Hodgson (Saturday) and Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Sharp (Monday). Public teas were served both days from 4 p.m. in the schoolroom.

The weekend was crammed with inspiring meetings and services. At the Friday Public Meeting, Rev. J. J. Alderson spoke on "The Church and the Film" and Rev. S. Palmer on "The Future of Methodism". On the Saturday evening an Open Air Service at the corner of Market Street and Caroline Street was led by Rev. W. F. Todd and the Synod Sermon was preached by Rev. W. H. Harrison, B.A.

On the Sunday, a Sacramental Service was conducted by Rev. J. Pinchen and the address given by Rev. P. S. Carden. The morning service was conducted by Rev. J. C. Sutcliffe and attended by the official representatives of many local organizations.

In the afternoon, the Ordination Service of Rev. G. A. Lofthouse was held.

The Great Synod Meeting was held on the Monday evening and addressed by Rev. T. H. Barlow, Mr. A. V. Leckenby and Rev. J. P. Hill. Thanks were expressed by Rev. W. Atkinson.

Other meetings and rallies were entertained at Easington Lane and the Hetton Wesleyan Church.

Outstanding among so many memories are the sights of the Church filled to capacity, with people sitting on the steps and even up the pulpit steps, the singing of the Circuit Choir conducted by Mr. W. Strachan and, remembered as the most moving of all by many people, the singing by the Union Street Ladies' Choir conducted by Mrs. W. Strachan.

It was a great spiritual experience for all who were privileged to take part in a "Glorious Weekend".

The Synod of the Sunderland and Durham District of the Methodist Church was held at Union Street in May, 1951. The speaker at the Circuit Rally was Professor H. C. Pawson. Taking part in the Public Meeting of Personal Testimony at which candidates for ordination, Rev. N. Catherall and Rev. W. J. Harris, spoke, were Rev. G. Kirtley Fawell, Rev. Raine Sunter, Rev. P. S. Carden (Synod Chairman), Rev. G. Mills and Rev. J. Crawford (Synod Secretary). On the Sunday afternoon there was a United Sunday School gathering and in the evening a United Service for which Mr. E. A. B. Priddin was chairman. The Grand Youth Rally on the Monday evening was addressed by Rev. C. Hutchinson and Rev. R. Lamb, M.A.

DEBT CLEARANCE

From time to time, and particularly in 1896 and 1925, the Trustees of Union Street Chapel found it necessary to obtain substantial loans from the Chapel Aid Association. They were also indebted on several occasions to private individuals.

During 1919 a successful debt-reduction scheme resulted in many of the outstanding loans being repaid in 1920.

In 1936 a debt-reduction scheme was again launched and £200 was repaid soon afterwards.

Notable contributions came from every section of the Church, an outstanding one from the Women's Homely Hour. Cottage teas were organized by several ladies but the bulk of the money raised was by direct giving. Mrs. Francombe and Mr. G. Liddle gave a handsome donation in memory of their father and mother, the late Mr. and Mrs. T. Liddle.

Again during 1943 and 1944 appeals were made and a considerable sum of money received by individual donations. All sections of the Church made remarkable efforts and the Choir contributed largely. The Church was made free from debt in March 1944, and remains so to this day.

THE SOCIETY

Membership. For many years the number of members at Union Street has shown comparatively little change. The earliest available figure is for 1883 when the membership was 128. Since then there have been slow but steady increases. Several sudden falls in the total can be directly correlated with industrial conditions. The numbers fell appreciably during 1911 and 1926, both "strike years". The highest membership was recorded 1948-1951 when there were 187. The present membership is 176.

Society Organization. Each class, in the old society, met regularly each week, at certain fixed times and usually in one or other of the vestries. Regular attendance at Class Meetings was one of the rules each member was required to observe and "unless their circumstances would not permit, contribute one penny per week and one shilling at the renewal of Tickets". The Class Meeting was of great spiritual value, those stronger in the faith wrestling to support their weaker brethren. Trials and temptations were discussed openly and communal prayer made for power to withstand them. Each Class Leader was required to "make it a point of duty to attend his Class as often as possible and prayerfully study to impart to his members useful spiritual instruction. Collect the Class money weekly, take note of absentees and attend to their visitation."

The first leaders at Union Street were G. Lowdon, W. Gardiner (described as a "model leader" for over 50 years), W. Errington, C. Ferry and J. Kay. Among other leaders have been R. Briggs, John Hall, M. Yelder, W. Laverick, J. Burgess, A. J. Mennear (1896-1941), W. Hedley, J. Armstrong, J. Barrass, J. Beecroft, J. T. Potts, W. Galley, J. Bannister, R. White, R. Parker, J. Rennie, L. J. Place, T. Murray, J. Galley, T. Dixon, J. Shanklin, G. Barrass, J. Bestford and W. Day.

In 1920 a Church Council was formed to assist the leaders. It consisted of two representatives from each section of the society. The present Leaders' Board consists of the Class Leaders, Society representatives and an additional representative for every 30 members.

The administration of the affairs of the Society is the responsibility of the Society Steward. W. Gardiner was elected to this position in 1883 and served for many years as did J. T. Potts who succeeded him. Other men who have held the office are L. J. Place (1922-32), J. Shanklin, W. Mennear and J. Galley (both for short periods), S. Soulsby (1934-39), W. Day (whose death on active service was a sad loss to all sections of the Society), A. Bainbridge (1940-48) and W. Liddle (1948-51). For many years assistant Society Stewards have also been appointed.

Finance. It is possible that in the very early days regular collections were not taken at the Sunday services as in 1877 Union Street Society were given permission to "adopt the Free Will Offering scheme instead of collections being planned". Certainly all collections, except those granted for special funds went to the Circuit Quarterly Meeting.

The Society funds came from class monies and the acknowledgements of class tickets, whilst the most regular source of income for the Trust was from the pew rents. The seats available for letting are listed in an old pencilled note as "Gallery, 22 at 2/-, 206 at 1/6, Body 178 at 1/- and 385 at 6d." These prices would be for one quarter, as they were collected every quarter by the official rent collector who was paid commission on the amounts he collected. Many people recall how, at the turn of the century it was very difficult to rent a pew. Considering the membership figures of the time, it is obvious that many regular attenders did not become members. Joseph Burgess was the pew rent collector for many years before 1911 when the last one, Jesse Brown, was appointed. The collection of rents was deferred during the 1926 strike and in the following year, 1927, the last collections were made. All seats in the chapel became free and the Trustees made two annual appeals (at the Church Anniversary in March and at the Harvest Festival) for their funds.

There are records of special collections being made for lighting, cleaning and renovations but none for heating which, in churches in other areas, was a major item of expenditure. This was due to the generosity of the Hetton Coal Company and, later, the Lambton, Hetton and Joicey Company in granting generous allowances of free coal to places of worship. Our ministers too, were supplied with free household coal for many years. These concessions, as well as donations from the Company, ceased in 1921, when there was an industrial dispute.

The envelope scheme was introduced in 1924 to encourage systematic giving. The first secretary was Thomas Dixon and the first treasurer, Robert Wardle. In 1932, John Summerbell was elected secretary.

It was always necessary for both the Leaders and the Trustees to organize special money-raising efforts. These very often included a tea or supper and an entertainment. The musical concerts arranged achieved a high standard which continues to be maintained. In more recent years, this work has been largely taken over by the various organizations of the Church which make regular donations to the main funds.

There have always been splendid responses to special appeals by members and valued friends of the Church. Direct giving continues to be the backbone of Church income.

The unification of Society and Trust funds took place in 1932.

Past Activities. A week-night preaching service was held every Monday (transferred to Thursday for a short period) from the foundation of the Society until 1927, the weekly services of the Women's Homely Hour and Christian Endeavour then being considered adequate.

A Band of Hope (Temperance League) was formed in 1883 but ceased to function many years ago.

A Mission Band was formed in March, 1889, and discontinued in 1905. The first leader was Matthew Yelder who was succeeded by Alfred J. Mennear.

An interesting example of the practical forms of organized self-help provided by the early society is given by the Funeral Fund which was in existence before 1864 and continued until December, 1910. Although the weekly contribution was very small, the fund on several occasions was able to furnish loans to the Trustees. One of these was of £1. 1s. 7d. in 1868 to help towards the purchase of a double bass fiddle.

A Poor Relief Fund was suggested in 1887 but no details of its formation are available.

The Men's Fireside was instituted in 1934 by Rev. J. Clennell and continued for a number of years. Speakers and subjects were chosen to stimulate valuable discussions.

Support has been given to various charitable organizations by our society. Regular collections were made for the Newcastle Infirmary and later for the Sunderland Royal Infirmary. Help has been given to orphanages, more recently the National Children's Home having been supported. Contributions have always been given to the collections made after local colliery disasters and during the 1926 strike, the use of the schoolroom was given for the feeding of children and needy Sunday School scholars were helped. In that year too, no reception was held for the new minister.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Now only one of several organizations serving young people within our Church, the Sunday School once provided all their opportunities for work and worship.

The Sunday School was founded with the Church and has always been one of the largest in Hetton. One of our earliest superintendents, Mr. George Lowdon, must have had a remarkable gift of God's grace. He gathered around him a noble band of teachers who were often the mainspring in the life of the Church.

Many are the men and women who have served the Sunday School. The names of the earliest are lost to us but there are many to-day who remember the inspiring times they experienced with Mr. A. Mennear in his Young Men's Class. In the same age is recalled Mr. Tom Dixon, a saintly, sincere soul and how many grandmothers remember Mr. Richard Parker's Young Ladies' Class? The Misses Strachan are also remembered for their teaching. Miss M. Strachan was responsible too, for preparing the children to take part in the Operettas, Concerts and Recitals she produced. Former superintendents have included G. Lowdon, W. Gardiner, J. Burgess, W. Galley, J. T. Potts, J. Beecroft, J. Barrass, L. J. Place, J. Kernohan, J. Galley, J. Bestford and R. R. Cook.

They must have been stirring days when, over one hundred years ago the little chapel was filled to capacity long before the Anniversary Services started, not to hear a preacher of renown, but rather to hear children singing and reciting. The choir too helped in singing the old rhythmic tunes and choruses, accompanied by violins and other instruments. Sixty years ago, the Anniversary was held morning, afternoon and evening so numerous and lengthy were the items to be given and, of course, the prize of a book (what a valued possession in those days!) was a great incentive to any boy or girl.

Less serious was the reward, offered by a well-known superintendent, of "three black bullets" to any child learning the Houghton Feast Rhyme.

The participation of the Sunday School in the Houghton Feast activities has been described earlier. Another familiar annual event was the "Treat" or "Trip". Coal carts, probably loaned free by the Coal Company, were covered with straw and filled to capacity with children and then proceeded to the golden sands of Ryhope Beach! Ryhope must have been a popular resort in those days, for many recollect travelling by train to the same beach to enjoy the sand and sea. These were rare and memorable occasions.

A feature of the Sunday School Service was the recitation of the Golden Text, a reward at the end of the year again stimulating much interest in this idea.

How much remains today of those highlights of the past? The Golden Text has disappeared; so also have the rewards for Anniversaries and Good Attendance. A points system encourages the children to work for the improvement of their class.

Anniversaries are still held. Several years ago Demonstration Services such as "The Building of the Golden Ladder" and "Castles

in the Air" were given and more recently, in 1952 and 1953, the older scholars presented scenes from the Life of Jesus and, in dramatic form, brought to life some of the Parables of Our Lord. It was a colourful sight when the gay frocks and blue suits were covered up and the children dressed in Eastern costume.

Annual "trips" too are arranged but these are now railway excursions. As the sight of the sea was rare for the children years ago, so a train journey to-day is a rare event for children more accustomed to 'buses.

The same earnestness of purpose we know to have been in the minds of our fathers, we are still trying to maintain to-day. Great occasions of recent years have been the Special Services when our young people, after a period of instruction, have entered into the membership of our church. Thus we seek to extend Christ's Kingdom on earth.

The Sunday School to-day, with 150 scholars and 30 teachers continues the work begun well over a century ago. The magnificent response we have had for the Old Scholars' Stained Glass Window is heart-warming. The ties of love to the Sunday School are strong and can now be seen in tangible form.

It is our prayer that, as in the past God raised up men to teach the young, He will continue to call them to the work ahead. There will always be children to teach and guide and we pray there will always be an open door at Union Street Sunday School.

THE CHOIR

Records and old minute books show that not only has the choir always played a large part in the life and work of the Church but has also meant a great deal to its choristers and leaders. There is no story of a wavering allegiance to a cause which at one time floundered and at another time vanished from the picture. Here at Union Street, from its earliest days, the choir has steadily maintained a prominent place in the life of the Church and men and women have given years of devoted service to its interests.

The earliest choirmaster at Union Street, we are told, was Mr. Robert Taylor (grandfather of Mr. W. Strachan). In those days there was no organ and the choristers stood round Mr. Taylor while he played the violin and so they learned their new hymn tunes and anthems.

In 1862, a harmonium was bought to supplement the orchestral music and in 1878, the pipe organ was installed. The story of the installation and maintenance of the organ is a story of determination and hard work by the choir.

Our choirmasters have been :

	Robert Taylor.
— 1885	Robert Strachan.
1887 — 1889	Thomas Lowdon.
1889 — 1898	Robert Strachan.

1899 — 1901	Robert Young.
1901 — 1902	James Strachan.
1902 — 1916	W. R. Heckles.
1917 — 1925	George Rennie.
1926 — 1928	Robert Pinchen.
1929 — 1940	William Strachan.
1941	Robert Charlton.
1942 — 1945	William Strachan.
1946 — 1948	T. A. King.
1949 —	Daniel S. Tone.

and our organists :

1888 — 1898	Miss A. Strachan (Mrs. Blair).
1898 — 1905	John Rennie.
1905 — 1916	Robert Smithson.
1917	Thomas S. Pratt.
1918 — 1924	John Robson.
1926 — 1927	Miss E. Pinchen (Mrs. H. Bainbridge)
1928 — 1930	Mrs. R. Ramshaw.
1931 —	Miss G. Mennear (Mrs. D. Tone).

This record has been pieced together, largely from old Good Friday Concert Programmes.

The present series of Good Friday concerts began in 1868. For the first two years, only excerpts from oratorios were given but since 1870 there is an unbroken record of a full oratorio performance every Good Friday at Union Street. The visiting soloists usually came from Durham Cathedral or Newcastle and were conveyed by "trap" from Fence Houses Station to Hetton. Among the earliest singers recalled are Madame Sheppard, Madame Bellas, Bobbie Hall, Mr. Duncanson and Mr. Nutton.

When the organ was installed, it was necessary to engage a visiting organist to accompany the oratorio. Miss A. Strachan was the first of our own people to play the organ for a Good Friday concert.

The earliest programme that has been found is for the 15th Oratorio. It was "Judas Maccabaeus", given in 1885 with Mr. R. Strachan conducting.

The orchestras in those early days were somewhat larger than those of to-day, over 30 players often being listed. The volume of sound produced must have been awe-inspiring. Many are the men and women who regularly played for us and many too, who did not accept payment for their services.

Familiar leaders of the orchestra were Mr. W. R. K. Straughan who led for over 30 years in all, Mr. R. Hawke, Mr. D. Tone and latterly Mr. N. Gradon and Mr. James Barrass.

Singers too are remembered but perhaps none more than "our own Tom Holland". In his life story he tells how his association with Union Street began. He writes, "I received an invitation (when

8 years old) to join the P.M. Choir. I fell in love with the whole surroundings. The atmosphere delighted me. I was so happy. I used to long for practice nights to come round". Mr. R. Strachan asked him to sing a solo and from that time the desire was born in him to become a good singer. It is interesting to note a later reference to Mr. W. Heckles of whom Tom Holland writes: "He was one of the most helpful friends I have had during the whole of my life time". Tom Holland was later to be a soloist in several Good Friday oratorios (in 1901, 1902 and 1915) and hear Mr. Heckles say, "Well done, Tom!" This connection with the "P.M. Chapel" was no small thing in the lives of the Holland family. Tom Holland's father was converted at a Salvation Army mission in our schoolroom and the invitation to young Tom to join the choir was the starting point of a career which led to his becoming a well-loved and successful singing evangelist.

The Good Friday concerts continued without a break during both world wars. The plaques on the walls of the choir were placed there to perpetuate the memory of two of their members, Pte. Norman Armstrong and Pte. Thomas S. Pratt, who lost their lives in the 1914-1918 War.

The part played by the choir in Houghton Feast weekends for over 30 years has already been told. In 1920, the choir was granted a special weekend in November for which they invited their own preacher. By 1933 they were giving a concert for "Choir Weekend" and these took the place of the Houghton Feast concerts.

The late 20s and early 30s were very busy years for the choir. Not only did they perform in a series of operas including "Phyllida", "Les Cloches de Corneville", and "The Pirates of Penzance" but also had their own Dramatic Society and presented such noteworthy plays as, "The School for Scandal", "Nicholas Nickleby" and "The Cricket on the Hearth". All these productions were under the direction of Mrs. A. Wick (Mrs. W. Strachan) and Mr. W. Strachan.

In July 1943, the choir arranged the first visit to the district of Miss Isobel Baillie and there followed a series of Celebrity Concerts which brought to Hetton some of the finest concert artistes of the day. Largely organized through the enthusiasm of Mr. John Waggitt, helped by Mr. W. Strachan and Mr. G. Irvin, these concerts drew audiences from a wide area. We heard such singers as Norman Allin, Heddle Nash, Kathleen Ferrier, Norman Lumsden, Howell Glynne and Robert Irwin and among the pianists were Ernest Lush, Walter Susskind and Margot Wright. Two concerts outstanding for their "atmosphere" were that given by the principals of the Carl Rosa Opera Company, headed by Kingsley Lark and that given by John Myrrddin and Bruce Dargavel with Glaslyn Jones as pianist and R. W. Williams, Esq., as chairman. All these men had been born in the same small mining village in Wales.

The proceeds of these concerts greatly helped in the clearance of the Church debt.

Mr. Strachan always said the choir was healthiest when it was busiest and we have certainly been busy in recent years.

Since 1951, commencing with "Phyllida", the choir members have given a light opera to mark their Anniversary in November, besides maintaining the Good Friday tradition, leading the singing at services and holding such miscellaneous events as Bulb Shows, Jumble Sales and the usual Carol-Singing round. Their choice this year for Good Friday is "Elijah" and their special contribution to the Centenary Celebrations will be a performance of Handel's "Messiah".

The present choir consists of approximately 50 members whose years of service range from one year to over fifty! They are proud, not only of their choir, but also of their Church and most of them are actively associated with other branches of Church work.

One of the most moving experiences we have had as a choir, occurred in October, 1957, when we listened to the broadcast of our recorded programme of hymn-singing. An inspiring occasion of which our forefathers would have been proud.

A splendid record! A wonderful tradition! Can they be maintained in the years to come? The words of Mr. W. Heckles in his last letter to his choir (1916) would not be amiss here. "Your duty is best done when you feel the little part that you play tends to the success of the whole. My humble prayer is that you should take fresh courage and GO ON!"

The Ladies Choir was formed in 1929 under the direction of Mrs. W. Strachan and for many years gave an Easter concert. This choir will be long remembered for its special singing at the 1932 Synod. Later, the ladies were invited to sing at the May Missionary Meetings in Sunderland. After Mrs. Strachan's resignation, the choir continued under the leadership of Mrs. D. Tone, Mrs. J. Tubman and Mrs. R. Johnson.

THE WOMEN'S HOMELY HOUR

Although women have always been prominent in the work of the Church and at times there existed a Ladies' Sewing Meeting and a Women's Friendly Society, it was not until the foundation of the Women's Homely Hour that they had their own weekly services.

The Women's Homely Hour began in 1923, when the Superintendent Minister at that time, Rev. William Brown, was the speaker at the first meeting and gave valuable guidance for future activities.

Since then a weekly meeting has been held every Monday afternoon except for holidays and when united Circuit events have been arranged.

It has ever been the purpose of the Homely Hour to preserve a good, warm atmosphere and to keep the spiritual aspects of life to the fore. The regular weekly meetings are devotional in character and each New Year begins with a celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

These have been occasions of real Christian Communion. Several of our members have been led to accept full Church membership and at present we have some 30 regular members who find in our fellowship both help and inspiration for life. To our speakers and Ministers, past and present, we owe a deep debt of gratitude. We are also indebted to the many women who have accepted office over the years and worked unstintingly for the success of our ventures.

The material needs of the Church have not been ignored and since its foundation, the Women's Homely Hour has been able to give considerable annual assistance to Church funds. Their Annual Effort has always received the generous aid of the Church and congregation and this has been deeply appreciated. In this respect, the Effort of 1937 is outstanding in the memory. In that year the Women were indebted for many gifts and donations from friends outside the Church. Amongst these was a canteen of cutlery from the Queen, our present Queen Mother. This was auctioned at the Bazaar. Again, 1957 has been an exceptional year financially and a worthy contribution towards the Centenary Funds made possible.

The Homely Hour is also concerned with the wider aspects of Church life and work. Regular support is given to the Women's Work Department and to the General Fund of the Methodist Overseas Missions and many members assist the National Children's Home by having League of Light Boxes. The Homely Hour is affiliated with the Methodist Women's Fellowship.

In April 1957, the women of the Circuit gave hospitality to the last Sunderland and Durham District Council of Women's Work Spring Meeting. After this meeting the District was divided. The meetings were held at Union Street Church, to which women came from all parts of the District, filling our Church for both morning and afternoon gatherings. Long shall we remember the morning Communion Service when 700 women shared in the Sacrament.

Now we are looking forward with eager anticipation to the Centenary of our Church, glad and grateful to God for his mercy and continued grace. None are more eager than our older members, some in their seventies and eighties, some among the founder members of our Homely Hour. By their steadfast loyalty and devotion, they stand as an example to our younger members by whom, we trust and hope, the good work will be carried forward into the future.

In this spirit of thanksgiving, faith and hope we proclaim :

" 'Tis Jesus, the first and the last
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home ;
We'll praise Him for all that is past
And trust Him for all that's to come."

THE CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOUR.

The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavourers was appointed at Union Street by the request of the Circuit Quarterly Meeting of December, 1896.

Since then the "Endeavour" has held a regular week-night service in which members have participated. It has always been a most valuable "training ground", leading young people to take an active part in the full life of the Church and preparing them to hold office with ability and assurance.

In 1927, the weekly Fellowship Meeting was discontinued and the members transferred to the Christian Endeavour. Whilst continuing its primary function of encouraging younger people, it now provides our only week-night service.

For many years, the young people led into full Church membership had their own Class Book. Their first leader was Rev. W. R. de Winton. He was followed by Joel Bannister. In later years, the C. E. Class was led by G. Barrass, R. R. Cook and T. Steel.

The Christian Endeavour Rallies were always keenly supported and are still held regularly. Permission for the first in the Circuit was given in May, 1898. The speaker at this first Rally was Professor A. S. Peake, one of the most brilliant sons of Primitive Methodism. The Chapel was filled for the occasion and it is recorded that three hundred people partook of the Rally tea. Professor Peake returned for two other Endeavour Weekends. Amongst other speakers at the early Rallies were Rev. William Younger, Rev. Samuel Horton and Rev. James H. Saxton (all ex-Presidents of the P.M. Conference) and Rev. J. E. Bowran, better known as Ramsey Guthrie. Often the Roll Call would bring responses from as many as 30 societies from places as far distant as Annfield Plain, Blackhall and Seaham. Almost every Saturday Night during the winter was spent by the "Endeavourers" visiting other societies. This usually entailed a long walk unless they hired a wagonette, regarded in those days as the height of luxury.

For many years now, the "Endeavour Trip" has been organized for August Bank Holiday Monday. Various places have been visited and strong are the memories of returning late in the evening, loudly singing the old hymns and choruses. During the last war, the Endeavourers and friends walked to pic-nic by the river at Finchale Abbey. How many remember the day when, energetically, we decided to continue our walk through the fields to Durham, only to find phenomenal 'bus queues there and deciding to walk home?

The visit to a pantomime on New Year's Day is also becoming traditional.

Like the other organizations of the Church, the Christian Endeavour has done some good work in raising money for Church funds. In 1924, the "Endeavour" produced "The Village Wedding." The "wedding" cake was duly cut and the pieces sold to the audience.

responsibility of office in various ways and by their strong and upright characters providing an example for us all, our debt to them can never be overstressed. Families too, for two and three generations, have given their services to our Church.

We are justly proud of the "family atmosphere" at Union Street but are ever anxious to welcome new comers at any of our meetings.

THE WEEK AT UNION STREET

Sunday :	10.30 a.m.	Morning Service.
	2.00 p.m.	Sunday School.
	3.00 p.m.	Boys' Brigade Bible Class.
	5.30 p.m.	Evening Service followed by a Prayer Meeting.
Monday :	2.30 p.m.	Women's Homely Hour.
Tuesday :	7.00 p.m.	Christian Endeavour.
	6.00 p.m.	Junior Christian Endeavour.
	8.00 p.m.	Men's Bible Class.
Wednesday :	7.00 p.m.	Boys' Brigade.
Thursday :	7.30 p.m.	Church Choir Practice.
Friday :	7.00 p.m.	Youth Club.

PRESENT CHURCH OFFICIALS

SOCIETY STEWARD :	Mr. E. Atkinson.
ASSISTANTS :	Mr. J. Steel, Jun.
	Mr. R. R. Cook.
CLASS LEADERS :	Mr. J. Steel, Sen: (since 1916), Mr. A. Ford,
	Mr. T. Soulsby, Mr. T. Steel, Mr. J. Summer-
	bell, Mr. T. Watson, Miss F. Berriman,
	Mrs. A. Coxon, Mrs. M. Gibbon, Mrs. W.
	Liddle, Mrs. R. Mills, Mrs. A. Potts, Mrs. T.
	Soulsby, Miss A. Thompson.
SOCIETY	
REPRESENTATIVES :	Mrs. A. Blackburn, Mr. R. Charlton, Mr. G.
	Hibbert, Mr. R. Mills, Mr. J. Rennie, Mrs. A.
	Robson, Mr. D. Tone.
POOR STEWARDS :	Mrs. G. Hall, Mrs. R. R. Cook, Mrs. J. Rennie.
TRUSTEES BOARD :	
Secretary :	Mr. J. Rennie.
Treasurer :	Mr. R. Charlton.
SUNDAY SCHOOL :	
Superintendent :	Mr. T. Soulsby.
Secretary :	Mr. J. Rennie.
Treasurer :	Miss V. Ford.



THE BOYS' BRIGADE



SOME LEADERS AND TRUSTEES

CHOIR.

Choirmaster : Mr. D. Tone.
Organist : Mrs. D. Tone.
Secretary : Miss A. Thompson.
Treasurer : Mr. W. Simpson.

WOMEN'S HOMELY HOUR :

President : Mrs. F. Davies.
Secretary : Mrs. A. Blackburn.
Treasurer : Mrs. A. Anderson.

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOUR :

President : Rev. F. Davies.
Secretary : Mrs. J. Rennie.
Treasurer : Miss J. Matthews.

JUNIOR ENDEAVOUR :

Leaders : Mrs. F. Davies and Miss F. Berriman.

BOYS' BRIGADE :

Captain : Mr. J. Summerbell.
Lieutenants : Mr. J. L. Murray, Mr. A. Blackburn, Mr. G. Bunker.

YOUTH CLUB.

Leader : Mr. E. Atkinson.
Secretary : Miss M. Dean.
Treasurer : Miss J. Matthews.

SPECIAL CENTENARY EVENTS

THE ILLUMINATED CROSS, made and given by Mr. E. Gardiner and erected free by Mr. S. Bainbridge was switched on, after a short dedicatory service conducted by Rev. F. Davies and Rev. N. Berryman, by Mrs. Barrass, one of our oldest members, after the evening service on Sunday, 19th January.

THE UNVEILING OF THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS AND A RE-UNION OF OLD SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHOLARS will take place 31st May. A service will be held at 3.00 p.m. and there will be a concert at 7.00 p.m.

TRUST SPECIAL SERVICES on Sunday, 1st June. The preacher will be **Rev. J. W. Morrow.**

INAUGURAL SERVICE on Monday, 2nd June. The chairman will be **Rev. J. Crawford** and the speaker **Rev. Leonard Tudor.**

SPECIAL SERVICE on Wednesday, 4th June. The speaker will be **Rev. J. Clennell.**

SUNDAY SERVICES, 8th June. The preacher will be **Rev. J. L. Barmby.**

C.E. SPECIAL SERVICE on Tuesday, 10th June. The preacher will be **Rev. Reuben Bell.**

A **MARRIED COUPLES EVENING** will be held on Saturday, 14th June.
The host and hostess will be **Rev. and Mrs. George Mills**.

SUNDAY SERVICES, 15th June. The preacher will be **Rev. Tom Soulsby**.

THE WOMEN'S HOMELY HOUR RE-UNION will be held on Monday, 16th June.

A **DISPLAY OF FOLK DANCING, NEEDLEWORK, ETC.**, will be presented by the Women's Homely Hour on Wednesday, 18th June.

SPECIAL SERVICES on Thursday, 19th June. The speaker will be **Rev. Donald Soper**.

A **PAGEANT** will be presented by the Women's Homely Hour on Saturday, 21st June.

SUNDAY SERVICES, 22nd June. The preacher will be **Rev. John Cash**.

HANDEL'S Messiah will be performed by the choir on Wednesday, 25th June. The soloists will be :

Ada Alsop	<i>Soprano</i> (Darlington).
Elizabeth Harland	<i>Contralto</i> (Newcastle).
Tom Hall	<i>Tenor</i> (Whitburn).
Norman Tattersall	<i>Bass</i> (London).

SUNDAY SERVICES, 29th June. The preacher will be **Rev. W. W. Parsons**.

THE CENTENARY COMMITTEE.

Chairman : Rev. F. Davies.
Deputy Chairman : Mr. E. J. Mennear.
Joint Secretaries : Mr. T. Soulsby and Mr. J. Rennie.
Treasurer : Mr. R. Charlton.

Mr. W. Strachan, Mr. J. G. Shanklin, Mr. R. R. Cook, Mr. A. Bainbridge, Mrs. A. Coxon, Mr. J. L. Murray, Mr. N. Ferguson, Mr. J. Summerbell, Mr. G. M. Irvin, Mr. W. L. Brown, Mr. E. Ritchie, Mrs. T. Soulsby, Miss A. Thompson, Mr. R. Mills, Mr. J. Steel, Mr. T. Steel, Mrs. A. Robson, Mrs. J. Potts, Mrs. J. Rennie and Mr. E. Atkinson.

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