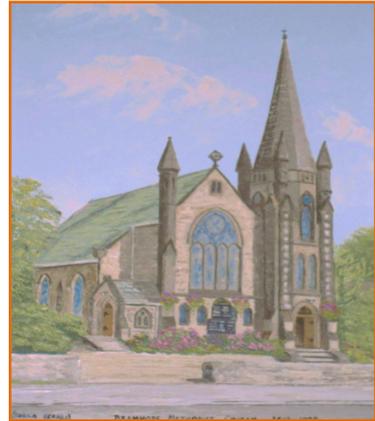


Methodism in Bramhope

Notes by Anne Wilkes 2011

Methodism is always associated with Charles and John Wesley, but it was the Rev. William Grimshaw, later number three in the Methodist hierarchy, who brought Methodism to this area. The first official mention of Otley as a Society is the Keighley Circuit Account Book for 1755. By 1762-63 the Keighley Circuit included several societies in this area besides Otley. Later however in 1777 Otley, Bramhope, Weeton and Pannal are listed in the Leeds Preaching Plan. Apart from Otley's purpose built chapel - Nelson Street Chapel of 1771, all the work was done in the open air, cottages or barns.

John Wesley visited the area on a number of occasions, and regularly visited the Ritchie family who lived in Otley. In 1790 Otley became head of a circuit and in 1794 Bramhope became part of that circuit.



Although records are sparse it is recorded that the society had thirteen members out of a total of five hundred. Its leader at that time was Michael Barrand. The meeting place was in a room in Barrand's cottage in Eastgate. When this room became too small the meeting was transferred into his barn behind what is now known as the Old Vicarage on Church Hill.

In 1837 permission was sought to build a church in Bramhope and a site was bought from Miss Walker for £12. The efforts of the members succeeded in establishing a chapel which opened in 1838. The building served the community well, and after the new chapel was built, the old one was used as a Youth Centre and later as a store, and in 1928 was converted into the house called St Ronan's.

By 1870 a number of wealthy families such as the Fawcetts, Burnleys and Pickards had moved into the village from the city of Leeds. Their desire for a more fashionable style of architecture, led to the building of the present larger chapel.

A site was acquired in 1880, the membership by then being in the region of sixty. The architect for the build was Mr J W Morley FRIBA of Bradford, and the foundation stone for this, the present church building, was laid on 19 June 1895 by Mrs S Fawcett of Old Bramhope. The opening of the new church took place on 29 September 1896. Mr J Burnley J.P. presented a golden key to Mrs Fawcett, who unlocked the door of the church. The service of dedication was conducted by the President of Conference, the Rev. Dr. Marshall Randles.

The Church was nicknamed 'Cathedral of the Dales' due to its cruciform shape, stained glass windows, chancel and spire, visible from Huby and Cookridge.

The foundation stone of the original Chapel is incorporated into the east wall of the present building.

The interior of the church consists of nave, transept, organ recess and chancel. There is an open timber roof of pitch pine and the pews and other woodwork in the body of the chapel are also of pitch pine.

Some pews still retain fixtures for the standards of the oil lamps which were used before the installation of electricity in 1925. The choir stalls are of polished oak, handsomely carved, complementary to the organ case. The organ was built by Messrs. Abbott and Smith of Leeds. It has a total of 19 stops and 814 pipes. An electric blower was added in 1937.

Within the communion rail, with its brass supports, are a Communion Table made of oak and two Glastonbury chairs with intricate carvings at either side. At the front of the church stands the pulpit and font, both of Caen stone and marble with brass décor. The font has a cover of oak.

Acknowledgements

Two Centuries of Methodism in Bramhope

Methodism in the Otley Circuit 1744-1974

A History of the Township of Bramhope by W F Seals

Bramhope Methodist Church Centenary 1896-1996 © Bramhope Methodist Church

Stained Glass Masters: Heaton Butler & Bayne, a documentary film by Karl Krogstad

Robert Bayne of Ascot, Berkshire, great grandson of Robert Turnill Bayne

The painting of the church above is by the late Mrs Sheila Hersey.