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A table of contents for the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* can be found here:

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THE LOCAL PREACHERS IN EARLY METHODISM

Among the institutions of early Methodism that of local preachers is the one whose record is the haziest. It is true that, if we identify it with that of Wesley's *lay* preachers, then we can go back to Cennick and Humphreys and Maxfield, and the subsequent way is clear, illuminated as it is by those autobiographies of "Wesley's Veterans", written in simple, unaffected English—at times almost the language of "Grace Abounding"—which have won the admiration of many, even some far removed from Methodism in ecclesiastical allegiance. But, in reality, theirs is the ancestry of the ministry of to-day, not of the local preachers, whose origin is more obscure. For instance, in the 24 volumes of W.H.S. *Proceedings* there is only one reference to local preachers as such, and that is an Irish one.

We all know the so-called "Large Minutes" of John Wesley. Six times he issued these codified instructions. He goes into the utmost detail with regard to the work of the Preachers (and it will be clear from the context that he always means the Travelling Preachers); their reading, their doctrines, their conduct of services, their pastoral visitation, their dress, the conduct generally of their life. He lays down full instructions for the Society Class Leaders—their duties to the Preachers, and to their members. He deals with Trustees, with Stewards, with Connexional Funds, with the Bookroom, and so on. As to the ordinary members he speaks of their class-money, their family worship, the duty of fasting, even how the women should dress. "Give no ticket to any woman that wears a high head, or an enormous bonnet". But, in all these lengthy orders there is nothing about the Local Preachers, how they should be trained, who should appoint them, whether Local Preachers' Meetings should be held, and generally how they should fulfil their duties. There is only the casual reference to them—repeated in each reprint of the "Minutes"—when he owns that some of them have gifts and graces equal to some of the Travelling

Preachers, but his reaction is the rather curt comment—
“Why then do they not travel?”¹

This is surely an amazing thing, as we know what a passion John Wesley had for ordering the lives of other people. And when we turn to the other recognised sources of information, there is little more to gather.

In the *Journals*, besides odd references to individuals who preached, there are only two allusions to Local Preachers as a body. These are rather patronising ones to the London Local Preachers. Twice they assisted him at a Watchnight, and on one of those days—in 1789—he had met twenty or thirty of them at West Street Chapel, as it was “the quarterly day for meeting the local preachers”. Whether this was a London custom only, or was widespread, we are not told—probably the latter.²

Now to turn to the ordinary Minutes—the record of procedure—they are not included in the list of “officers” in 1744, but we are on the track of the local preacher first of all at the Conference of 1747, when in answer to the question: “Who are at present our Assistants?” we are given the names of 22 preachers and also of another 38, “to assist chiefly in one place.”³ It rather looks as if these latter were appointed by Conference in the same way as the former. In fact we know that the first local preacher in Ireland was appointed by the Irish Conference⁴ But when we say “appointed by Conference”, it would be more correct to say “by Mr. Wesley”, for he never admitted the right of the Conference to override his decisions.⁵ So it is quite likely that these preachers “in one place” were men whom Wesley had picked out as suitable, in the course of his journeys.

At the Conference of 1753 we are told that there were present 28 itinerants and 12 local preachers,⁶ while in 1755 the number of preachers then at work was 34 itinerants. 12 “half-itinerants”, and 15 were “our chief local preachers”.⁷

1. Minutes, vol. i, 626, &c.

2. Journals VI, 178; VII, 467.

3. Minutes, 37. References to Minutes are to the 1862 edition.

4. W.H.S. Proceedings, VII, 130.

5. In the well-known case of McNab at Bath in 1779, the superintendent, appointed by Conference, was, in face of his own protests, compelled by Wesley to give up his pulpit to a visiting clergyman—*Journals*, VI, 262.

6. Minutes, 717.

7. *ib.* 710.

This is the first, and last, time we hear of "half-itinerants" who were men like Shent of Leeds who carried on their ordinary business, but who occasionally took, say, three months off to conduct an evangelical tour. But in Shent's case the scheme did not prove a success, as his business suffered and he gave up his preaching tours.⁸ Perhaps the same thing happened in other cases. It is noteworthy, also, that "the chief local preachers" included some who had been itinerants and others who were shortly to become itinerants, so they hardly correspond to the local preachers of to-day. "Local" had not yet become a technical term.

In 1752 it was laid down that if a preacher was "unable to preach twice a day" he could "only be a local preacher";⁹ while at the 1753 Conference, when there was a difficulty in providing for preacher's wives, it was decided that if an itinerant married a wife without means of her own he should return to his temporal business and "so commence a local preacher".¹⁰ So evidently he had not been one before entering the ranks of the travelling preachers.

We hear in 1758 of five or six of the preachers "serving in one place"¹¹; and in 1767 that "many stewards and local preachers" were present at the Conference¹²—this would probably be as visitors. But, except for one reference in 1788, to which we shall return later, we hear nothing officially of local preachers or "preachers in one place" for the remaining twenty-four years of Wesley's life—just when we should have expected development to be taking place.

From other sources we can gather scraps of information. One of the earliest local preachers who never itinerated must have been William Holme of Sykehouse, near Goole, who was preaching in 1743¹³—Wesley visited him in 1745.¹⁴ And to this early period belong the soldiers who were preachers—both from the ranks and among the officers. John Haime became an itinerant, but Sampson Staniforth appears to be the only non-travelling preacher who figures in "Wesley's Veterans." He settled in Rotherhithe as a baker. Strange to say, although not an itinerant he was one of those ordained (to Wesley's annoyance) by the Greek Bishop, Erasmus, in

8. Smith's Hist. of Wes. Meth. I, 288.

9. Minutes 715. 10. Minutes 719. 11. Simon's Wesley, IV, 48.

12. Simon, IV, 207. 13. Simon, III, 242. 14. Journals III, 164.

1764, though he does not seem to have exercised sacerdotal functions,¹⁵ Captain Webb and Captain Scott both used to preach in Methodist pulpits in full uniform; the former helped to found Methodism in New York.

The earliest Quarterly Preachers' Plan of which we have a record is that of Leeds in 1777, in which almost the whole Circuit (48 places) is divided into two parts, one having preaching one Sunday, the other half the next Sunday. The times of services are not stated. Town Chapels in Leeds itself are not included, nor are the appointments of the travelling preachers, except for four services at one place, and one at another.¹⁶ Evidently, if the itinerants visited the country societies it would be in the week-time.

It is not possible to say when the earliest Local Preachers' Meetings were held. The memory of them had faded as early as 1828, for we find Dr. Jabez Bunting (an authority if there ever was one) writing to Dr. Beecham in that year.

It will be well to ascertain from Mr. James Wood, or some other aged preacher, whether Methodism, as Mr. Wesley left it, knew nothing of Local Preachers Meetings. The rule quoted by you* may be the first statute in our code on the subject of such meetings, and yet, in point of fact, they might be previously held and so, from usage, be part of our ancient common law.¹⁷

(* that of the Conference of 1796. D.C.)

But the Local Preacher of to-day has a double ancestry, and we will now turn to another source of information. Here we come to a humbler class of men, but men who supplied a need in the Methodist Societies of their day.

The earliest reference to them seems to be by Charles Wesley. In his Cornish journey of 1746 he met men known as Exhorters who had done most valuable work when many of the travelling preachers had been impressed for the Navy. They did not preach, in the usual sense of the term, but held meetings for prayer and addressed the members of the Societies. Charles met four of them at Gwennap and says:

I talked closely with each and find no reason to doubt their having been used by God so far.

but with his usual caution goes on

I advised and charged them not to stretch themselves beyond their line, by speaking out of the Society, or fancying themselves

15. Wesley's Veterans, I, 97.

16. Smith, op. cit., I, 728.

17. Life of Jabez Bunting by T.P. Bunting, II, 256.

PROCEEDINGS

public teachers. If they keep within their bounds, as they promise, they may be useful in the Church : and I would to God that all the Lord's people were Prophets like these.¹⁸

At Zunnor he met a young exhorter, and advised him to practise the Gospel before he preached it.¹⁹ But at St. Just a "covetous, proud exhorter" had split the Society, though there had been raised up, to stand in the gap, another Exhorter, a solid humble Christian, who kept the trembling sheep together".²⁰

John Wesley met these Cornish exhorters in 1747, and, in his *Journal*, gives a graphic account of the incisive way in which he dealt with them.

I now diligently enquired what exhorters there were in each society ; whether they had gifts meet for the work ; whether their lives were eminently holy ; and whether there appeared any fruit of their labour. I found, upon the whole—(1) That there were no less than eighteen exhorters in the county. (2) That three of these had no gifts at all for the work, neither natural nor supernatural. (3) That a fourth had neither gifts nor grace ; but was a dull, empty, self conceited man. (4) That a fifth had considerable gifts, but had evidently made shipwreck of the grace of God. These therefore I determined immediately to set aside, and advise our societies not to hear them. (5) That J. B., A. L., and J.W. had gifts and grace, and had been much blessed in the work. Lastly that the rest might be helpful when there was no preacher in their own or the neighbouring societies, provided they would take no steps without the advice of those who had more experience than themselves.²¹

We also hear of Exhorters in Yorkshire in 1749, when there were several at the first Quarterly Meeting that we know of—that held at Todmorden.²²

There are other occasional references to Exhorters in the *Journal*, and frequent references in "Wesley's Veterans", but little that is authoritative until the Conference of 1770, when Assistants were instructed to hand to their successors, when leaving, a list of Exhorters in the Circuit.²³ And, to this day, they remain on some Circuit Plans as a subordinate class of Local Preachers.

We now come to consider a very important question. How was it that John Wesley has practically nothing to say about Local Preachers during that last quarter of a century

18. C.W.'s *Journal*, I, 419. 19. *ibid*, I, 420. 20. *ibid*, I, 422.
21. *Journals*, III, 307. 22. *Simon*, III, 156. 23. *Minutes*, 94.

of his life, when he is building up the Methodist polity, so as to leave it stable after his death?

Well, there are some of Wesley's actions the reasons for which are hard to determine. While in the realm of action he could be firm almost to stubbornness (for example, his insistence on Five o'clock in the morning preaching, and segregation of the sexes in his services), yet in the realm of thought he was in many ways easily influenced, changeable, and often inconsistent. A man of action who is called on to decide questions of the day, each on its merits, frequently has not the time to think of consistency. But, on the whole, perhaps the conclusion must be reached that he did not quite like the institution of local preachers. And, probably there were two reasons for this.

First of all, we must realise the almost military character of the organisation of Methodism. Wesley himself was supreme. The preachers were not selected by the people, but were his own personal appointment. They in turn appointed the Leaders and Stewards, and closely supervised their work, especially through the Quarterly Visitation of Classes. "While I live" he said, "the people shall have no share in choosing either their Stewards or Leaders."²⁴

Now the local preachers might be chosen by the preachers. The Conference of 1752 asks the question: "Should any set up for a Preacher in any place without the approbation of an Assistant?" and the answer is: "By no means. That has already been attended with ill consequences".²⁵ But how could their work be properly overlooked? It would be a rare thing, as it is to-day, for the Assistants to hear the Local Preachers deliver their sermons,

And there was no telling what impression of Methodism might be made on the outsider by men who had not had sufficient training. Their personal testimony was in its right place in the Class-meeting, but Wesley does not seem to recommend that in the pulpit. There is little of it in his own sermons.

In 1783 he said to a friend that "The Methodists must attend to their doctrine, their experience, their practice, and

24. Letters, VIII, 196.

25. Minutes, 715.

their discipline. If they attend to . . . the experimental part of religion only they will make the people enthusiasts".²⁶ "Enthusiasm" is of course a derogatory term—he defines it in his Dictionary as "Religious madness or fancied inspiration."

Then we must know that, at this period, lay preachers of all sorts were springing up—those wandering evangelists or "hedge-preachers",²⁷ who could demand their licence to preach under the Toleration Act, simply by taking the oaths, without any supervision whatever. Methodism had already suffered enough by being confused with these men. Listen to what Wesley says of such; "Let but a pert, self-sufficient animal, that has neither sense nor grace, bawl something about Christ and His Blood, or justification by Faith, and his silly hearers cry out 'What a fine Gospel sermon.'"²⁸

So no wonder that we have that solitary entry in the Minutes of 1788, to which it was said that reference would be made: "Are there any directions to be given concerning Preachers to whom we are strangers?—Let no person that is not in connexion with us preach in any of our chapels or preaching houses, without a note from Mr. Wesley, or from the Assistant of the Circuit from whence he comes; which note must be renewed yearly."²⁹

It is a striking fact that, in the Deed of Declaration of 1784, there is no provision for local preachers to occupy the pulpits of Methodism. The only ones authorised, besides the itinerants, are ordained ministers of the Church of England.³⁰

But no doubt the question has arisen: We have been repeatedly told that every Sunday five out of seven Methodist pulpits are supplied by local preachers; was it not so in Wesley's day? How could the smaller societies possibly have their Sunday services, unless there were local preachers?

This brings us to what is probably the second reason for Wesley's attitude to local preachers. He never intended the bulk of his Societies to have their own Sunday worship. Over and over again he told them that the Methodist preaching

26. Wakeley, Anecdotes of the Wesleys, p. 265.

27. Whiteley, Wesley's England, p. 358-9.

28. Letters, VI, 326.

29. Minutes, 203,

30. Smith, 1735, paras. 9 & 11

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

service was not worship in the full sense.³¹ It was deficient in many respects and all his members—except the few who were avowed dissenters—should worship regularly at the Parish Church, and treat as additional the Methodist services, which were not to be held in church hours. The travelling preachers themselves must arrange to attend Church service twice a month,³² and must not depreciate the Church or its services in the minds of Methodists.³³ Let us never forget that Methodism, in its essence, was the Society *meeting*, not the Church *worshipping*. The local preacher was to some extent an excrescence. There was the danger of him, or the “preacher in one place” becoming a dissenting minister.

Probably a layman after Wesley’s own heart would be William Carvosso, the great Cornish evangelist (1750-1834). He rarely preached—and then against his better judgment—but worked individually, inviting people to the Class meeting. It was not much use saying that the time of meeting was inconvenient, for every week he led eleven classes.³⁴

As showing that local preachers were not indispensable, the story of Winchester Methodism may be related. Here a young man, Jasper Winscom, had adopted Wesley’s doctrines through reading his books. He tried to get a travelling preacher to come to the city and at length, in 1765, managed to do so through meeting one at Romsey. To a summer-house belonging to Winscom’s mother-in-law the preacher came fortnightly for some months. A class of four was formed with Winscom as leader. As they had no Sunday worship of their own, the dissenters invited them to their chapel, but the Methodists declined, and met for prayer, and to read a sermon, on Sunday evenings—going to the Parish Church in the mornings. Although progress was slow, they had twelve members in two years’ time.³⁵ In Margate, on the other hand Wesley says, in 1785 “We had a small society here, but a local preacher took them to himself”.³⁶

Wesley must have had trouble at various times with local preachers. In 1761 the altercation with that stormy petrel, William Darney, occasioned a letter which says: “If local preachers who differ from us will keep their opinions to themselves, then they may preach in our societies; otherwise they

31. Minutes, 544-5. 32. Minutes, 540-1. 33. Minutes, 666-7
34. Smith, III, 49ff. 35. *ibid.*, I, 368-9. 36. Journals, VII, 128.

PROCEEDINGS

must not.³⁷ He goes further in a letter to Samuel Bradburn in 1781: In any wise you must clip the wings of the local preachers who do not punctually observe your directions. Either mend them or end them".³⁸ In the same month he tells Duncan Wright to "Clip the wings of the local preachers, stewards and leaders, changing them as need requires".³⁹

And we can see a continuance of this attitude on the part of the Conferences after his death. In 1793, local preachers were told to attend class regularly,⁴⁰ and in 1796 the question was asked: "What can be done to bring certain local preachers more fully to observe our discipline?"—evoking the reply:

1. Let no one be permitted to preach who will not meet in class, and who is not regularly planned by the Superintendent of the Circuit where he resides.

2. Let no Local Preacher be allowed to preach in any other Circuit, without producing a recommendation from the Superintendent of the Circuit where he lives; or suffer any invitation to be admitted as a plea, whether from men in office or not, without the previous knowledge and the full consent of the Superintendent of the place where any one may ask him to preach.

3. Let no Local Preacher keep lovefeasts without the appointment of the Superintendent nor in any way interfere with his business, as mentioned in the "Large Minutes".⁴¹

At the same Conference, Local Preachers' Meetings are, for the first time, officially mentioned. The Superintendent is to hold these regularly, and to obtain their approval to the admission of new local preachers.⁴²

Probably these disciplinary rules met with some criticism, for next year the Conference explained that they did not intend any disrespect towards the general body of Local Preachers, their worthy brethren; in fact the most respectable of the Local Preachers approved of the rules and desired them to be strengthened as much as possible. The Conference further explained that the design of the rules they had made was to prevent any, under the character of Local Preachers, from burdening the people, either by collecting money or by living on them.⁴³

Taking all these facts into consideration, it looks as if we must date the palmy days of local preaching not from the life-

37. Letters, IV, 161.

38. *ibid.* VII, 88.

39. *Ibid.* VII, 94.

40. Minutes, 289.

41. Minutes, 361.

42. Minutes, 366.

43. Minutes, 392.

time of Wesley, but from early in the next century. It is then that we meet perhaps the greatest of them all—William Dawson of Barnbow, the Yorkshire farmer (1773-1841). A natural orator, an evangelist, a missionary advocate, he achieved for Methodist local preachers a greatly-enhanced status.⁴⁴

Along with this increased appreciation of local preachers, however, there came a certain confusion of thought, a tendency to view the regular ministry as simply a preaching order. In many Circuits, indeed, the names of the ministers were read over along with the local preachers, as if they were subject to the same discipline, but this practice was stopped by Jabez Bunting, who emphasised the pastoral nature of the ministry as well as its prophetic side.⁴⁵

As a matter of fact, although, in Wesley's lifetime, the ministers were known simply as "travelling preachers" (divided into Assistants and Helpers) yet, from the beginning, they exercised other functions. They were the legislators, as they alone composed the Conference; they were the pastors, as they alone conducted the quarterly visitation of the classes; they were the administrators, as they appointed the Stewards and Leaders, and they were disciplinarians as they alone had the power of admission to, and expulsion from, the Societies. These functions they exercised as the delegates of Wesley himself. There would appear to be just one instance in which they could delegate their pastoral authority to the Local Preachers. In 1858 the Conference ordered a close examination of the Bands by the Assistants, but if they were straitened for time Local Preachers might take their place.⁴⁶

DUNCAN COOMER.

EARLY METHODISM IN ARTHINGTON

Arthington is a pretty village on the River Wharfe in the Otley Circuit. As it was my native place I well remember the old people and their stories of Methodist life, moreover I have in my possession the Journal of my grandfather, John Myers,

44. New Hist. of Meth. I. 398.
46. Minutes, 713.

45. Smith, III, 40.

PROCEEDINGS

which he kept at intervals. He was a well-known character and at one time was, I believe, a Church Warden at Adel Church and a Class Leader at Arthington at the same time. He was married twice and his second wife, my grandmother, (née France) belonged to a Huguenot family, blanket makers. There were five sons and one daughter by the second marriage and these were all confirmed at Adel, and all became staunch members of the Wesleyan Society.

James became a popular local preacher, Joseph the Schoolmaster at Arthington, and Charles went out to Newfoundland as a Missionary.

After a wild youth John Myers was converted, slowly but soundly, and religion became the one thing of his life.

The first effort at evangelising Arthington was made by Baptists, but they soon retired. Then followed the Primitive Methodists and John Myers writes: "I should have become a Ranter if they had stayed."

He joined the Society at Pool and I have his Class Ticket for December 1830. Next year the Wesleyans came to Arthington, meeting in the house of John Myers, Creskeld Grange, in the afternoon and at Matthew Knapper's at night; the latter was the first Class Leader. Soon after 1833 he left the village and the ministers, Revs. Joshua Fearnside (grandfather of the late Mr. J. C. Fearnside Atkinson LL.B.) and Mark Dawes, both urged J.M. to succeed him as Leader but they left the Circuit without receiving his consent. However, the new Superintendent took it for granted that he was Leader, and so he continued until his death in 1876. The only record he makes is "I believe I was one of the unfittest for the office that ever started, but I believe it was of God, who does not see as man sees." The Class in those early days was held at Mrs. Barbara Ingham's (the grandmother of my wife).

The chapel was opened for public worship by Dr. Hannah of Didsbury College and was, I believe, a converted barn, a comfortable building with a stove in the centre. Here I worshipped until I left home.

A revival broke out, and when Rev. Wm. Levell, (Superintendent of the Otley Circuit, 1841-3), met the Class for Tickets there were 50 names on the books. There were two

services on Sunday, a flourishing Sunday School and two class meetings.

Somewhere in those years Mr. Thomas Farmer, the general Treasurer of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, of Gunnersbury House, London, came to reside at Arthington Hall, as a country residence. The whole family entered cordially into fellowship as true Methodists, meeting in my grandfather's class. Miss Farmer was my father's Sunday School teacher.

There is a brief record in his Journal of a visit from Rev. Wm. Arthur on August 11th, 1855. On hearing of Mr. Arthur's arrival, the zealous Class Leader forthwith asked for a service. Mr. Arthur said he had to return to London in the morning otherwise he would have been delighted to preach. This did not daunt the leader who said: "If I can fill the chapel at 6 o'clock in the morning will you preach"—and so it was, my grandfather got the village bell and went round the village and the chapel was full and the sermon was long remembered, the text being 2 Corinthians 9.8.

Then came a great change on the coming of Mr. Wm. Sheepshanks to Arthington Hall, a large land-owner and merchant. He built and endowed a beautiful village Church and also provided an organist and leading singers from Leeds, holding services on Sunday morning and afternoon.

His son, Rev. Thomas Sheepshanks, shared the services with a Vicar and it is a wonder that Methodism survived. The chapel belonged to the new landlord and became the Church Sunday School. One Sunday the teachers and scholars were Methodists and the next they belonged to the Church of England. However in the same building there was a Methodist service on Sunday evenings and the congregation kept up.

A Sunday afternoon Class Meeting was held in my grandfather's parlour and the members took their children, and that is where I received a true knowledge of Christ. My father, George Myers, succeeded as the leader, and James Myers had the week night class.

In 1897 a beautiful new chapel with Sunday School and chapel-keeper's house was opened by Rev. Walford Green, President of the Conference, with Dr. Randles as preacher on the Sunday. Free of debt on freehold land (the gift of

PROCEEDINGS

Mr. W. Sheepshanks, J.P., grandson of Mr. W. Sheepshanks referred to above) there is a fine property ready for an increased population when land is sold for building purposes.

ARTHUR MYERS.

The Rev. Arthur Myers died on 17th June, 1945. Entering the Wesleyan Ministry in 1893 he served faithfully throughout a long life. For many years he was a member of the W.H.S. These notes on Arthington present interesting sidelights on Wesleyan Methodism in its middle period. F.F.B.

W.H.S. ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the W.H.S. was held in the Church Parlour, Bridgeway Hall, Nottingham, on July 21st, the President of the Society presiding over a large gathering. Before the meeting tea was provided through the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Ibberson. Those present included the President of the Conference, Dr. A. W. Harrison, (who was congratulated upon the high position he had been called upon to occupy); Dr. Howard, (the Ex-President of the Conference), and the Rev. R. H. Gallagher, B.A. (President Elect of the Irish Conference). The Rev. F. F. Bretherton was congratulated on attaining the jubilee of his ordination.

The memory of members who had died during the year was honoured; sympathy was expressed with Mr. Duncan Coomer in the recent loss of his wife, and with the Irish Branch in the loss of their valued Treasurer and Curator, the Rev. R. Wesley Olver.

The accounts presented by Mr. Herbert Ibberson, certified by Mr. Duncan Coomer, revealed a sound financial position.

The membership, including Libraries and kindred Societies, was reported as 487, being a nett increase on the year of fifty three.

It was reported that such contact as present conditions permit was being maintained with Methodist Historical Societies in U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand.

The officers of the Society, as printed upon the cover of the *Proceedings*, were thanked and reappointed.

Various aspects and possibilities of the work were discussed, and it was felt that the steady progress of the Society during the war period promised well for the future.

The meeting was followed by the Annual Lecture, delivered this year by the President of the Conference, a notable event in the history of the Society. Mr. A. M. Poxon of Nottingham, between whom and the President friendship has existed for many years, occupied the chair, and the attendance was very encouraging. The subject was "The separation of Methodism from the Church of England at the end of the eighteenth century". This Lecture, highly appreciated by those who heard it, has been published by the Epworth Press at 2/-, and

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

together with the Fernley-Hartley Lecture by the Rev. J. Brazier Green, M.A., on "John Wesley and William Law" will receive further notice in our next issue.

IRISH NOTES.

The Annual Meeting of the Irish Branch of the W.H.S. was held on 15th June, 1945, at the Donegall Square Church, Belfast. Mr. Francis J. Cole, President of the Irish Branch was in the chair, the Secretary (Mr. Norman Robb) being also in attendance. A letter of greeting from the President of the W.H.S. was presented.

It was decided to hold a gathering, near the memorial, recently renovated, of Gideon Ouseley, the noted Irish evangelist, at Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin, during the 1946 Conference if possible. The Branch is fully alive to the value of meetings of this nature, and the meeting approved a suggestion that something should be done on the 9th August 1947 to commemorate Wesley's first visit to Ireland in 1747. Another date to be borne in mind is that of the first Irish Conference held in Limerick in August 1752.

The Membership of the Branch is now over 100, and the work is being well sustained under enthusiastic leadership. Mr. F. J. Cole and Mr. Norman Robb were reappointed to their respective offices, with the Rev. R. Wesley Olver as Treasurer and Curator. Mr. Olver was at the time seriously ill and on 15th July he passed away. He had spent 39 years in the active work when in 1938 he became a supernumerary. He was distinguished as preacher and pastor. For some years he has served as Treasurer and Curator of the Branch. By his painstaking skill in arranging the many interesting items in the collections housed at the Historical Room he has greatly enhanced their value. A man widely known and loved, he will be greatly missed. For the present Mr. Cole will act as Curator and Mr. Robb as Treasurer.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

843. WESLEY'S FIELD BIBLE. In my article on this subject (*Proceedings* xxiv 13-15) I expressed the hope that I might be able some day to learn exactly what Henry Moore said in his Will about this precious book. I have recently turned up a cutting from the *Methodist Recorder*, 6th September, 1900, containing an extract from a certified copy of the Will, contributed by the Rev. C. H. Kelly. Mr. Kelly's opinion, based upon this extract, is in entire harmony with the conclusions I reached. The question has been asked more than once, says he, "Why is it called Wesley's Field Bible?" Some have said, "Because it is one of the copies printed by Field." Others, "Because it was used by Wesley in his preaching in the fields." Both statements are correct.

"In the Name of God Amen I Henry Moore of Brunswick Place City Road in the County of Middlesex Preacher of God's Holy Word formerly in connexion with the Reverend John Wesley

PROCEEDINGS

deceased Honored with his Friendship of which he has given proofs in his last Will and Testament ordained by him assisted by two other Presbyters of the Church of England appointed also by him a member of the Conference of the People called Methodists and enrolled as such in the High Court of Chancery I bequeath unto the President for the time being of the Methodist Conference the small Bible printed by Field which was presented to me by my honored friend the late Rev. John Wesley in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty eight and which he used in his Field preaching and it is my wish that the said Bible shall be considered as the Property of the Methodist Conference and be delivered up at each Annual Meeting thereof by the President of the former to the President of the succeeding year but in case the said Conference shall decline to accept this my gift Then I give the same to my Executor John Knapp Sutcliffe." *F.F.B.*

844. MRS. WILLIAMS, OF HOLLINWOOD, OLDHAM, who has recently joined the W.H.S., is a grand daughter of the Rev. Ambrose Kirkland, the P. M. Minister whose diary was published recently. (*Proceedings* xxiv, 113-6) She possesses a biographical article on him, with portrait, which was published in the *Primitive Methodist World*, October 1st, 1895. She also relates an interesting tradition concerning her grandfather. His diary records the building of a new Chapel at St. Helens, after overcoming "many obstacles." One of these obstacles was the fact that the street where the Sunday School stood was in a very bad state of repair. Mr. Kirkland himself tried to improve the situation by getting a load of cinders, and spreading them. His personal example led others to like service. In memory of his worth the street is still known as Kirkland Street. *Rev. F. Baker, B.A., B.D.*

845. ORDINATION OF DUNCAN M'ALLUM. I am at present engaged in the task of searching the files of the *Methodist Recorder* at Didsbury College and compiling an index to the historical notices contained therein. In the issue of March 5th, 1869, I have found a letter written by a Robert Dugdale, of Bristol, who stated that he had in his possession the ordination certificate of the Rev. Duncan M'Allum. The text of the certificate may serve as a footnote to the Rev. Frank Baker's article on *Wesley's Ordinations* in *Proceedings*, xxiv. p. 76. The following is a verbal transcript;

"Know all men by these presents, I, John Wesley, M.A., late of Lincoln College, Oxford, did, on the 4th day of August, in the year of our Lord, 1787, (being assisted by other ordained Ministers), set apart for the office of an elder in the Church of God, by the imposition of my hands and prayer, and with a single eye to the Glory of God, Duncan M'Allum, whom I esteem a fit person to administer the Holy Sacraments, and to feed the flock of Christ; and as such I recommend him to all whom it may concern. Given under my hand and seal the 5th day of August, 1787. JOHN WESLEY."

Mr. Dugdale's letter states that the certificate is written on good parchment, twelve inches by eleven, in a lawyer-like hand,

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

with the exception of the well-known signature. The sealing is on red wax. but the impression can only be partially deciphered.

No reference to Duncan M'Allum's certificate is given in Mr. Baker's article. The above transcript will fill the gap. A most interesting sketch of Duncan M'Allum's life and ministry is given in the *City Road Magazine*, 1875, p. 560.

Rev. Wesley F. Swift.

(This is a welcome addition to the recorded ordination certificates. Does any member know where it has got to? It is to be doubted whether Mr. Dugdale's transcription is *absolutely* accurate, as Wesley normally wrote out the dates on these certificates in full; we should probably read "fourth" for 4th, and "fifth" for 5th.

The phraseology of the certificates seems to vary more than one would expect, although those written out on the same occasion seem to have been almost identical, as a comparison of this certificate with that of John Harper, ordained at the same time as Duncan M'Allum, will show. See *Proc.* xv: 34. *F.B.*)

846. CHARLOTTE BRONTE AND FILEY METHODISM. Mr. Clement Shorter (*Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*, p. 471) quotes a letter which Charlotte wrote to her father from Filey, June 2nd, 1852.

On Sunday afternoon I went to a Church which I should like Mr. Nicholls to see . . . there is a little gallery for the singers, and when these personages stood up to sing they all turned their backs upon the congregation and the congregation turned their backs on the pulpit and parson . . . there is a well-meaning but utterly inactive clergyman at Filey, and Methodists flourish.

Was the place referred to as a Church a little Methodist Chapel? If so, is it still in existence? This inquiry may appear to be somewhat aside from the main stream of Methodist history, but a Brontë enthusiast has sent it to me and I should like to be able to answer it. My correspondent is of opinion that Miss Brontë was referring to a Methodist Chapel.

Miss Rose Withers.

847. WESLEY POTTERY. I append a few supplementary words to the article by Rev. G. W. Hicks on a Wesley teapot (*Proceedings* xxiv, 72). The ancient teapot he describes is not very rare though examples must be becoming fewer. The inscription on the left side of the portrait is "John Wesley, M.A., Fellow of" and on the other side, "Lincoln College, Oxford." On the opposite side of the teapot is the inscription "Let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ," surrounded by scroll work. Inset in the scroll work are three small plaques. That on the left apparently depicts St. Peter in distress, with a cock crowing at his side; that on the right is the Good Samaritan ministering to the wounded man at the roadside, while his horse peers over a fence; above is a music book, opened in the elongated shape of the *Melodia Sacra*. Beside the music book is a label "Watts's Hymns." This label has long puzzled me. What have Isaac Watts's hymns to do with a Wesley Teapot?

Rev. R. Lee Cole, M.A., B.D.