

Englesea Extra

No. 83: January 2026

Price: justice

Strange Times

Happy New Year to you all! I hope you have managed to find some rest and peace over the Christmas period.

Before Christmas, our son and daughter-in-law booked a weekend away for Rob's 60th birthday in what was [a Primitive Methodist Chapel](#), originally built in 1880. It was a stunning setting, high up in Teesdale, County Durham. Without wanting to sound like a salesperson for Airbnb, it was beautifully converted – although what the Prims would say about the chandelier in the bathroom, I'm not quite sure.

We headed off for a walk to High Force nearby, and passed, not 200 yards away, another Methodist Chapel, Forest (Wesleyan) Methodist Church, which only ceased worship in October 2019. As we walked along the valley, there were chapels at every turn! So I've done a bit of research....

Transcribed from the Christian Messenger in 1916 by Geoff Dickinson, there is [an article on MyPrims here](#) about Methodism in Teesdale:

'The native dalesman constitutes a fine specimen of character; although somewhat brusque in his deportment, he nevertheless possesses strong religious sentiments and is given to hospitality. Among the religious forces which have assisted in developing the sturdy character of the dalesman, Primitive Methodism must be given a foremost place. The evangelical preaching and the bright, lively singing of the Primitive Methodist Missionaries found a ready and hearty reception in Teesdale'



It goes on:

'The Circuit has had its fluctuations. There have been seasons of great revival when the spirit of God has swept through the dale.... There have also been seasons of reaction—times of industrial depression that have led to constant migrations, which have depleted church membership..... The Sunday School, in spite of severe losses sustained by the War and constant emigrations of families to the contiguous munition centres, is maintaining its ground.'



Forest Primitive Methodist chapel, Teesdale

As for [the Wesleyan chapel, down the lane](#) – which doubtless continued as a place of worship longer than Ebenezer because it wasn't up a dead end – that was built in 1867 - *'apart from the actual mason work and the furnishings, all the work, such as digging the foundations, quarrying and leading the stone, was done voluntarily.'*

There is little doubt in my mind of the influence of Methodism in this rural, agricultural and mining area. They, like us, faced upheavals and societal change. While buildings may close, let us not let the light of God's love for us and for the world be extinguished.

Every blessing

Ruth



Forest Wesleyan Methodist chapel

Pause for thought:

Never, never be afraid to do what's right, especially if the well-being of a person or animal is at stake. Society's punishments are small compared to the wounds we inflict on our soul when we look the other way.

from Martin Luther King Jr., civil-rights leader (15 Jan 1929-1968)

Rev David Leese



Some of you may have already heard the sad news that Rev David Leese, long time friend, volunteer and enthusiastic supporter of the Chapel and Museum, died suddenly at the beginning of December.

David, together with his wife Sue, travelled each month from Ashbourne to serve cake, speak to visitors, weed the graveyard, do whatever needed to be done. But what David loved most was to share his enthusiasm and passion for the Primitive Methodists. He had Primitive Methodism in his blood, coming from a PM lineage which could be traced back to written records of his family spending time with Hugh Bourne. David will be missed enormously. We grieve with Sue and their family at his loss, but also give thanks to his commitment and dedication to his faith in Christ. A Thanksgiving celebration will be held at All Saints' Church, Brailsford DE6 3AA at 1pm on Saturday 31st January 2026. The family request strictly NO black and family flowers only. Donations to Brailsford Methodist Church and Englesea Brook Museum of Primitive Methodism. Enquiries to W Jones and son, funeral directors 01335 360319.

How we mark David's legacy here at Englesea Brook is a conversation Sue and I will have in time. In the meantime, our thoughts and prayers continue to surround Sue and their family.

News from the Book Emporium

The Alsager Book Emporium on Hassall Road recently had a visit from Sarah Russell MP, who stayed to chat to volunteers and customers. She showed great interest in the support the Emporium gives to the Englesea Brook Primitive Methodist Museum and the huge range of books available at the Emporium, especially a rare “Breeches Bible”, or Geneva Bible as it is known. This translation is one of the most historically significant translations of the Bible in the English language, preceding the King James Version by 51 years.



There were also lots of other interesting books and stories to share - especially this one about the sinking of the Titanic by Rev. Malcolm Lorrimer.

The Sinking of the Titanic.

“I’m always amazed at the customers we get at the Emporium, many from afar who are visiting friends or having seen our contact details on the internet. One such person was John from Bristol who was visiting a friend. He heard about us and bought a book about the Titanic. I asked him about the book and he told me a remarkable story.

He had an uncle whose close friend was on the Titanic! That friend John Pitman died in 1961 and was a third officer on the ship. He was given the task of manning one of the life-boats and steering it to safety. He told me his remarkable story and felt that the recent series on the sinking got some facts wrong. Apparently, there is a book coming out about his uncle on the Titanic and maybe it too will find its way to our shelves one day.

John may soon be coming back to Alsager, and if he does, we have agreed to organise an afternoon at Oakhanger Methodist Church (only a mile away) for a talk about the ship and also the story of the Methodist violin player who played hymns as the ship went down. Watch out for further updates.

Other news:

We recently acquired over 500 Sci-Fi books dated from the 1960’s. Most have now been sold, but we still have a large number of Sci-Fi books in stock. Come along and browse, there’s sure to be something to catch your eye.”



Hassall Road Book Emporium, Hassall Road, Alsager. Open Friday and Saturday. 10am-2pm.

Randle’s rummagings

On at least two occasions in the past, I have mentioned that we have been given a Primitive Methodist Class Ticket that we didn’t already have, now it has happened again, with a class ticket for December 1847, also special because the month is usually November, rather than December. There are still lots more gaps to fill! The only ones we are missing since 1885 are November 1894, May 1903 and May 1925.

In 2014 we were given a set of four Household Annuals, for the years 1911, 1915, 1916 and 1918 (proudly labelled ‘Victory Year’), compiled by the family of John E. Phillipson, several members of that family being PM ministers. The volume for 1907 survives with the descendants in New Zealand. The volumes were circulated round the family and each one added a note about something that interested them, or a poem, or anecdote. Each volume also includes about a dozen watercolour sketches and other pictures.

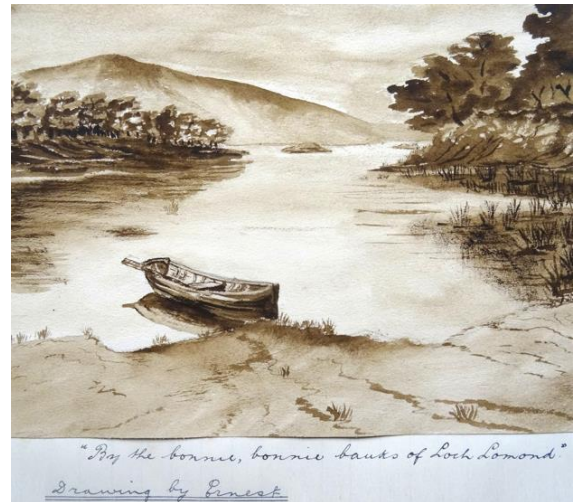
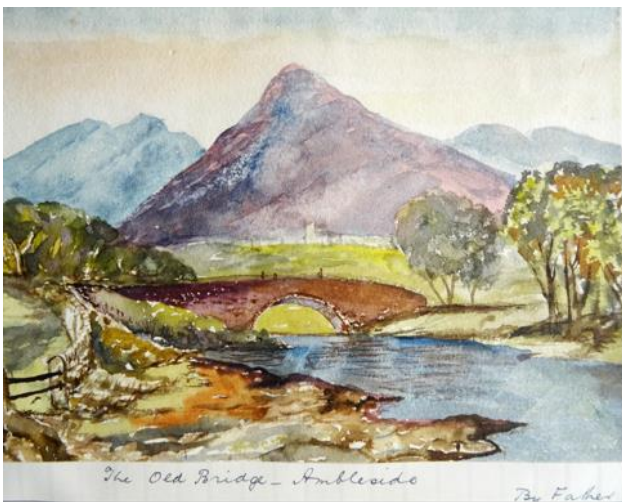
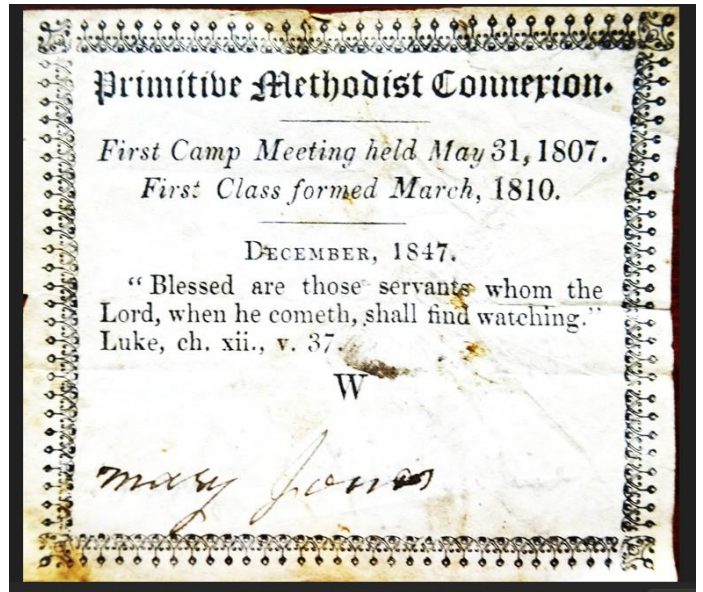
In the volume for 1911 is a poem entitled ‘Six reasons against going shopping with my wife’:

What leisure I have should be spent on the Links,
 For golfing is better than shopping methinks
 I hate to go out with the wife to do shopping,
 Because of her heartless and wearisome stopping
 The shops my wife visits, all men will opine,
 May well suit her tastes, but they do not suit mine

In the purchases made I haven’t a voice,
 But stand like a dummy while she makes her choice
 The work of light porter I don’t like at all,
 It makes a big man look uncommonly small
 And last but not lease I greatly lament,
 To see hard-earned money so readily spent.

Other items in 1911 include

‘Romance of Old Letters’, ‘First Epistle of Baby John’, ‘Lancashire Types’ and ‘Manx Jottings’. A couple of pictures from 1911 are attached, and further details from the Household Annuals will appear in a future issue.



Heritage talks at Englesea Brook

Saturday 17th January at 11am GMT for our first Heritage Talk of 2026. "Methodist Love Feasts" will be presented by long-time friend of Englesea Brook, **John Anderson**.

In 1760 John Wesley defined the love feast in his journal as follows: 'The very design of a love feast is a free and familiar conversation, in which every man, yea, and woman, has liberty to speak whatever may be to the glory of God.' Join us as we explore what love feasts are, how they originated and what is their place in Methodist worship.

This is a free event and everyone is welcome.

<https://zoom.us/j/95926113135...>

Meeting ID: 959 2611 3135 Passcode: 346815

Saturday 21st February at 11am

'What did you do during the War? Westminster College, and the impact of warfare on the training of Methodist teachers' with **Tom Dobson**



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

H1 5037

Dr Tom Dobson is a Social Historian whose current research focuses on links between Methodism and The State. His 2024 PhD ("People, Place and Policy. Westminster College and the Development of Methodist Teacher Training") explored the links between Methodism, public policy, and teacher training. It focused heavily on Westminster College, the Methodist teacher training institution which relocated to Oxford in 1959.

This remains a research area for Tom, along with the use of digital heritage platforms; forming links between Methodist Heritage and everyday Methodist practices; the role of 'Place' within Methodist history; and exploring the wider idea of 'A Methodist Identity'.

Chris' conundrums

Although My Primitive Methodists offers a wonderful collection of photographs of Primitive Methodist buildings and people, we are not entirely sure about all of them. On My Prim's we have a category for unknown chapels which currently has 19 chapels in it – including the following picture from postcard collection of Rev Steven Wild. It was simply labelled “*Primitive Methodist Sunday School possibly Skellgate?*”



This photograph was posted by Jill Barber almost exactly 10 years ago – in 2016. I didn't even know where Skellgate was. Google pointed the way to Ripon but that wasn't a fruitful search.

But just before Christmas, a contribution from Robert Little solved the mystery. Robert said:

“This looks identical to the former Middletown village Primitive Methodist chapel in the former Ossett and Horbury circuit. Middletown also once had a Wesleyan MC which closed possibly 1959. The Middletown former PM closed around 2000. Half a mile from the Middletown PM the village of Overton also had a PM which closed around 1979.”

I searched for Middletown chapel on the best source for Primitive Methodist chapels – My Primitive Methodists of course – and couldn't find it. But then I noticed that Robert seemed to have made a spelling error in his comment, referring to Middlestown chapel. I searched again for Middlestown (with an S) – and found a different picture of the chapel in Steven Wild's postcard. So mystery solved!

Can you help us with any of the longstanding mysteries we would like to solve?

Click on the link to see [the mysteries waiting to be solved here](#).

And here are [some of the unknown chapels that have been identified](#).

Englesea Diary

Heritage talks

January 17th @ 11:00 – 12:00 Methodist love feasts

February 21st @ 11:00 – 12:00 Methodist teacher training in wartime

More details of the Heritage talks on page 6

Book club

January 22nd @ 3:00 – 4:00: The Bobby Girls by Johanna Bell

Copy and publication dates for Englesea Extra 84

The plan is to publish Extra 84 on Wednesday, February 18th. Contributions to Ruth by Friday, February 13th please.

And a final prayer based on Isaiah of Jerusalem (eighth century BC).

Each day and each night, may the wisdom of the Wonderful Counsellor guide us, the strength of the Mighty God defend us, the love of the Everlasting Father enfold us and the blessing of the Prince of Peace rest upon us.

Amen.