



Bawtry Heritage Group

Preserving our Past for the Future

Registered Charity No. 1188945

Bawtry's Unmissable Landmark



WESLEYAN CHURCH, BAWTRY

M P Maguire 10/11/ 2025
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Cover Image taken from Bawtry Empire Fete and Sale of Works pamphlet 1920. Donated by Vin Brerrer.



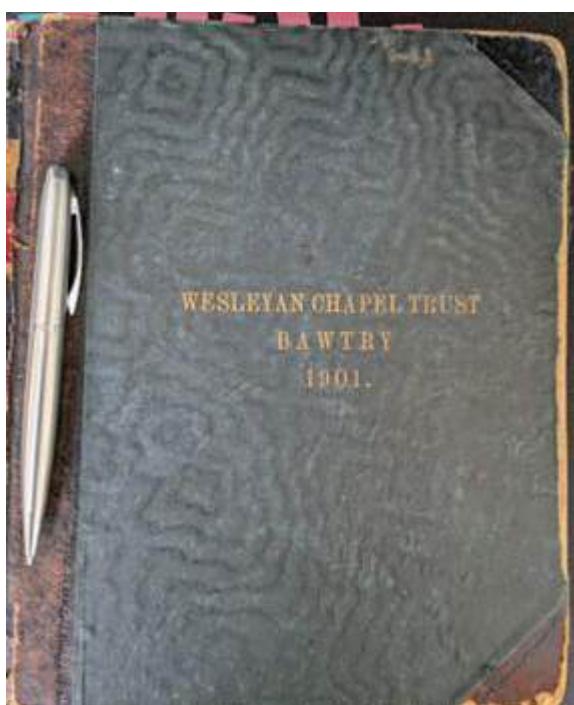
In quieter times. Bawtry High Street, date unknown.

2025

This paper is motivated by the opening of a Wesleyan Chapel in Bawtry 122 years ago. The focus is primarily about the building itself and how it came to be constructed in such a significant location, making it an icon of our small town's heritage.

Now is a critical time to present this story. With church attendance at an all-time low the future is uncertain for Methodism in Bawtry, a situation that would place the iconic church in jeopardy. This environment challenges us to preserve an understanding of what we have, and illuminate its worth in a manner that influences the decisions yet to be made about the building's future, should its core purpose become no longer viable.

The main source on which this story relies is a committee minute book that began life 124 years ago. It captures the words and actions of a small group of Wesleyan brothers in pursuit of their goal to build a new chapel. As the story emerges and invites one to explore it beyond the superficial, it soon becomes clear that the endeavours of a small local committee require much more than their own energy to be successful. Luck, fate, fortunate timing and the goodwill of others not of their religious persuasion were important factors in completing the project. Whether any of the individuals involved considered that the end result would have a wider impact beyond the building being a place of worship will always remain unknown. The existence of this paper is testimony to the fact that 124 years later others did.



The minute book.

The facts presented in this paper are true to the source material. However, any reader should bear in mind that to try and tell a captivating tale some interpretation of the records is required. The definitive answers to the questions that emerge about potential crisis points, emotions, motivations and personal perspectives disappeared long ago. The interpretations regarding this human background and expressed within this paper are owned by the author; arrived at after detailed research and careful thought. Readers are of course free to interpret the context behind the facts differently. The story however always ends with a chapel being built.

Chapel or church? This paper uses both terms when referring to the new building. The dictionary difference seems to centre on size more than anything else, leaving the choice a subjective one and at the behest of the narrator.

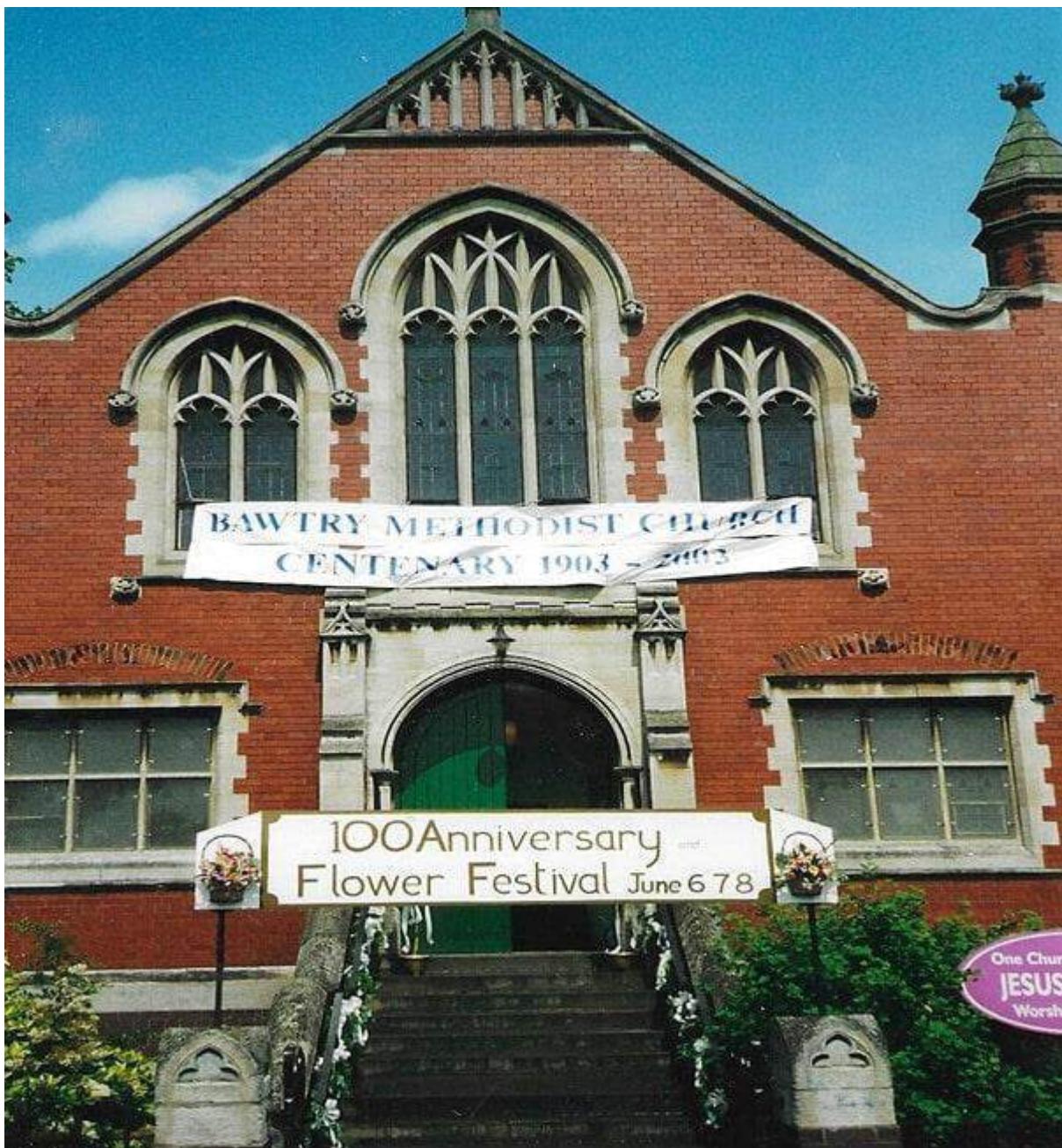
1993

Celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of any surviving achievement is valid for that reason alone; even more so if the time span is allied to a legacy, something worth preserving.

Methodism had become rooted in the Bawtry community with the establishment of a Wesleyan Chapel in 1805. At one point during the nineteenth century there were three Methodist chapels in the town. The Wesleyan building was on the eastern end of an original street from the old Norman town, now designated as Church Walk. The street was not named in reference to the chapel but more in recognition that at its eastern exit it entered Low Road, now Church Street, directly opposite Bawtry's Anglican Church dedicated to St Nicholas; a church dating back to the 12th century CE when it would have been Roman Catholic. By the way, it was neither of these establishments that merited the earlier reference to a centenary and 1993 is not the year of the celebration being referred to. St Nicholas had seen many centenaries and the old Wesleyan Chapel had fallen just shy of that milestone. In 2003 it was another Wesleyan Church built in 1903, to replace the old Church Walk chapel, that was the focus of centenary celebrations. This structure had helped sustain an expanding Methodist community's need for a suitable place of worship, as it moved forward into a new century.



1805 Chapel, Church Walk 2025



2003 centenary celebration. Donated by Vin Brerrer.

The year 1993 is relevant for the purpose of this narrative because of a quote in the opening paragraphs of the new church's official programme marking its 90th year celebration. The author of that booklet nostalgically recalled the words captured in an earlier 20th century guide designed for travelling ministers visiting Methodist places of worship across Yorkshire. For Bawtry he reported that the guide simply said, "You can't miss it". How true a statement, not only for when it was first constructed, but also through all the years thereafter. Situated at the northern end of Bawtry's High Street, at the head of a 300 metre stretch, that is the Great North Road heading south out of Yorkshire into Nottinghamshire; this building was in a prime location. The new chapel with its striking frontage presents visitors entering Bawtry from the south with an impressive, and according to the

guide an unmissable, introduction to the county and town, not forgetting its expansive view of the entire town centre from its elevated entrance.



Taken from the elevated entrance June 2025.

However, this unmissable Bawtry landmark paradoxically could be missed, only because its longevity may result in a familiarity that blinds us to its heritage value as a key component of Bawtry's precious townscape. This building along with the town's broad open marketplace and some of the buildings bordering that, are central features providing the town with an ambience that is attractive, historic and memorable. A landmark such as this Methodist Church is surely worthy of the most careful consideration when modern pressures demand change to our urban landscape to meet the needs of future generations. Without conscious and continuous recognition of its worth, its very existence becomes vulnerable and when it has gone it is forever.



High Street view 2025

How did this building come to grace the town's landscape in such a prime location? Is it only precious to those who worship within its walls? Are modern Bawtry residents alive to this architectural treasure within their midst?

June 1901

In 1901 the Wesleyan Chapel on Church Walk was coming to the end of its usefulness, a fact that had been recognised almost a decade earlier. For those requiring a place of worship allied to this branch of the Methodist faith something new was required. The old building was too small and unstable for a growing congregation. Bawtry had been home to other Methodist chapels, one which had been used by those who worshipped under the doctrine called the "Primitive Methodists" on Station Road and one situated on Church Street, a place of worship dating back to 1825 and used by the "Independent Methodists". At the turn of century Methodism was not a unified faith although the Wesleyan branch was by far the largest.

On June 21st 1901 the following men, all "brothers" in the Wesleyan doctrine, met in the village of Tickhill. Their purpose was to begin planning the building of a new Wesleyan place of worship in nearby Bawtry.

Marshall Wagstaff - Auctioneer
Henry Herbert - Draper
John Henry Eyre - Hairdresser
Fredrick George Robinson - Bootmaker
William George Ward - Draper
Herbert John Willows - Grocer
William Ainsley - Grocer
George Robert Hempsall - Platelayer
Ralph Andrew Carr - Draper
William Holmes - Coachman
John Brocklesby - Grocer

These men, all residents of Bawtry, with the exception of brother Brocklesby who came from Conisborough, were to be guided in this endeavour by the Superintendent Minister, the impressively named, Benjamin Carvooso Spencer. Benjamin was not from Bawtry, or for that matter Yorkshire. His time in the county had been relatively brief when the challenge to lead the building of a new chapel in Bawtry became his responsibility. At this time he was living at 33 Balby Road, Doncaster, with his wife Amy. He was in the chair at this inaugural meeting.



Benjamin and his wife Amy. Courtesy of Nick Spencer.



Benjamin in his younger days at Redruth. Courtesy of Nick Spencer.

Benjamin hailed from the southwest. Born into a Methodist family in 1853, his father Joseph was a Wesleyan minister in the Bath and Bristol area.



Photo of Joseph Spencer. Courtesy of Nick Spencer.

In 1863 Benjamin was a pupil at the Kingswood School founded by John Wesley in 1748.¹ After he completed his studies in 1873 he found himself back at this

¹ Prior to this he had also been a pupil at Woodhouse Grove, Kingwood's sister school in the north.

establishment, which by this time was based in Bristol, as a junior master. In 1875 he went to train as a minister following in the footsteps of his father. From 1877 he ventured far and wide as a presbyter. He was based in Hull and Chelmsford in his first two years, followed by Deptford, Redhill and other southern circuits before venturing to the northwest and ministering in Blackburn. A further 3 years in the southeast and southwest covering Brighton and then Redruth prepared him for another trip north to Mansfield in 1898. He had been on the Doncaster circuit just one year when the Bawtry project came his way. As a Superintendent Minister he was responsible for overseeing not just this venture but other important matters relating to the circuit. The role of Superintendent Minister did not excuse one from the daily duties of a presbyter but presented additional challenges of leadership and guidance. We might suggest that the building of a new chapel from scratch was by no-means a small leadership challenge.

The record shows that all meetings held by this group of trustees had a number of things in common. Those present were all male and addressed each other as "brother". Meetings began and ended with a prayer, not surprisingly given the institution being represented.

Interestingly, this meeting on 21st June 1901 is not recorded as having commenced with a prayer. Perhaps this was just an oversight by the note taker or perhaps the gravity of the task to be undertaken led to the group launching straight to business; we will never know.

The business discussed was captured succinctly and in keeping with the Methodist principle of avoiding unnecessary waste. The Wesleyan Chapel Trust was formally established with brothers Herbert and Ward taking on the roles of secretary and assistant secretary respectively. The Trust was to be the formal committee taking responsibility for all matters relating to the building of a new chapel in Bawtry. During this meeting a number of members pledged money for the new chapel's foundation stone-laying with brothers Carr and Herbert pledging the formidable total of £25 each.² Other promises ranged between £5 and £10.

However, it was Superintendent Minister Spencer that delivered the most important contribution of the meeting presenting the Deed of Conveyance for the land on which the new chapel was to be built. Remarkably this land, in a prime position, was being gifted to them by the current land owner the 1st Marquess of Crewe, Robert Offley Ashburton Crewe-Milnes, whose family owned Bawtry Hall. Without this land there would be no new chapel.

² The online calculator indicates this sum as having the spending potential of around £390.00 in 2025.

The need for a new place of worship had become important some years previously as the old chapel and Sunday school facilities on Church Walk became increasingly unsuitable. In fact the land gifted came into the possession of our would-be builders much earlier than 1901.

1894

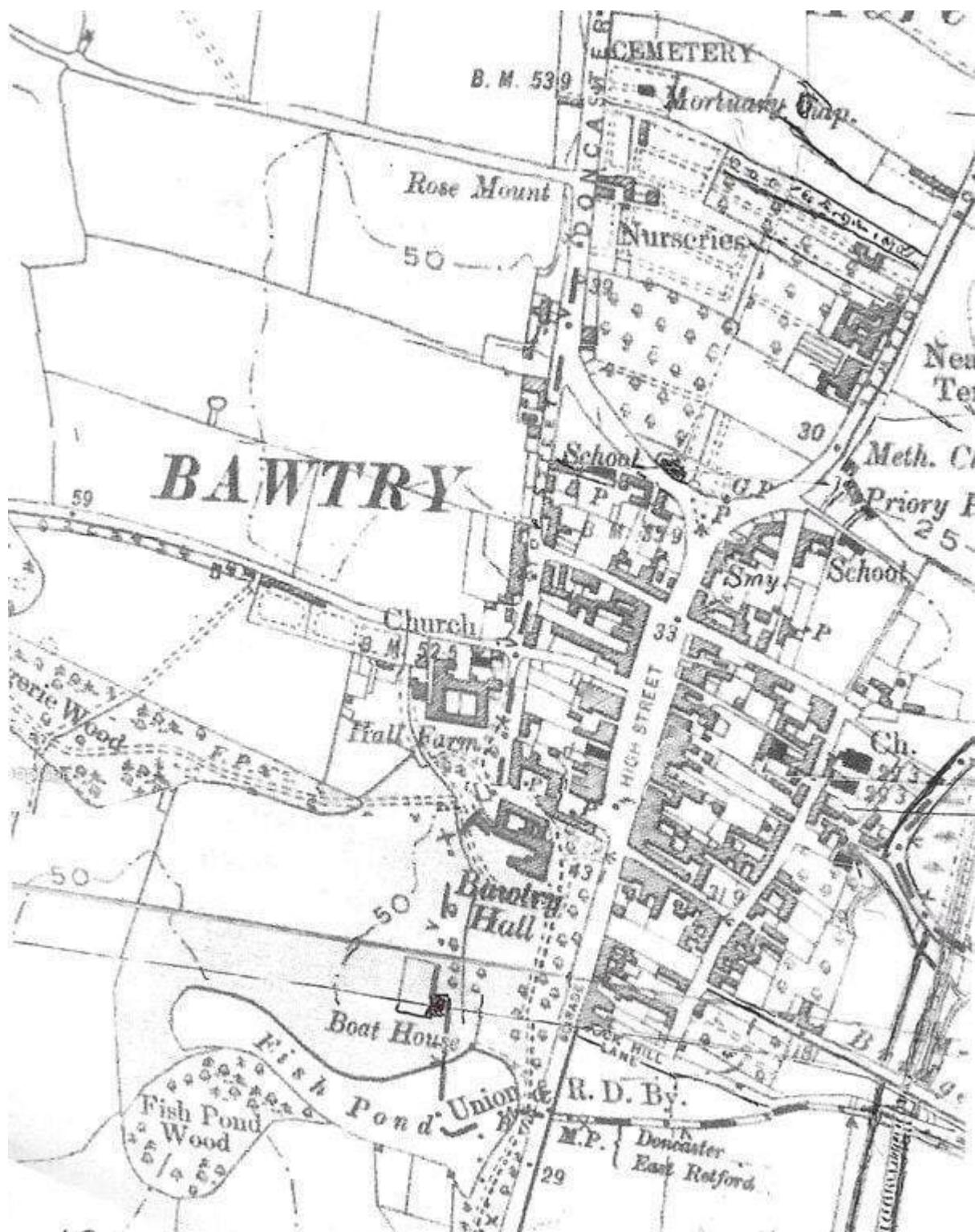
Six years before the end of the 19th century, on Wednesday 24th of July 1894, a bazaar was held to begin the process of acquiring sufficient funds to build the new Wesleyan chapel in Bawtry. The event was opened by the prospective Doncaster candidate for the Liberal Party at the next election, Mr Joseph Walton. His speech was interesting and extensively reported in the Sheffield and Rotherham Independent the following day. The report leaves the impression that Mr Walton did not mention anything whatsoever about the purpose of the bazaar. Instead he stated that the securing of a suitable site for a chapel did not seem to be a problem in Bawtry as it was in other parts of the country, hinting that the land required had already been secured. He said nothing of the challenges facing the town's Methodist community in delivering a suitable building; the primary one being the raising of funds to make it happen. Mr Walton's speech centred entirely on the travails being encountered by all "nonconformist" faiths in securing any true national respect and freedom. The newspaper report does suggest that there was much support for Mr Walton's view that a more egalitarian approach towards worship and associated rituals was long overdue nationwide, receiving a number of loud shouts of "hear hear" from the crowd and "shame" when he referred to some very hostile language that had been used recently in the House Of Lords by a peer who had described nonconformists as "thieves".

It seems that the desire to build a new Wesleyan Chapel in Bawtry was emerging at a time of much hot political debate on the progress and willingness to integrate nonconformist faiths across the nation. According to Mr Walton, Bawtry was perhaps not as entrenched in religious intolerance as other parts of the nation.

Having identified over some time that the current chapel in Bawtry was unfit for purpose; it was around this period and in advance of the reported bazaar that existing members of the chapel's congregation took proactive action. A news report published as late as 1903 indicated that the support for such action within the Wesleyan community had not been unanimous.

The local press reported that during the early 1890's moves to advance the closure of the chapel on Church Walk were resisted by the then Superintending Minister Rev. Williams. It suggested that despite Williams' stance and before the fundraising bazaar, a senior chapel trustee, Marshal Wagstaff, with the backing of other trustees, had "waited upon Lord Crewe", Robert Offley Ashburton Crewe-Milnes. The delegation asked him to give them a site and they got lucky, reports the newspaper; "his Lordship presenting them a most eligible piece of land" wrote the correspondent. There is no indication of how Rev. Williams felt about this. Perhaps his displeasure is the reason the land lay empty and devoid of activity for a further 7 years?

Equally it remains a mystery as to the reason for Lord Crewe's generosity. Whilst he was an Anglican his liberal politics did place him on the less hostile wing of the debates over how much the nation's religious environment should be more inclusive. Perhaps it was nothing more than what he may have considered to be a small gesture seeking to promote more tolerance? Perhaps fellow Liberal Joseph Walton had some insight here and therefore steered the content and tone of his curtain raising speech for the bazaar, referencing Bawtry as a place of tolerance. Looking back into the Milnes family history one might not have been too surprised if Robert had been a little less amenable to those of a Methodist persuasion, given events that played out and impacted his father back in 1846.



Map of Bawtry pre 1903, no Wesleyan church at the north end of the High street.

1846 - 1862

In 1846 Robert's father Richard Monkton- Milnes ran for re-election as the MP for Pontefract, he successfully retained his seat. However there is an indication that

he was less than happy with some of the opposition he faced from the elements of the Anglican clergy and the Methodists during the campaign. Writing to a friend C J MacCarthy in August 1847 about this election tussle he wrote,

"My dear Friend — I ought to have written before, but personal events came so thick on me that I have had hardly time or inclination for a quiet talk over the seas with anyone. After a most trying contest I am again M.P. The Clergy and the Methodists entered into a holy league against me, and spared neither truth nor money to turn me out for what the fools call my Popery. All they have done has been to put me to a great deal of expense and annoyance, and themselves to much more".

Richard Monkton Milnes was a socially progressive politician and during his time as the Conservative MP for Pontefract he was known for the interest he took in civil liberty, women's suffrage and social reforms related to factories and education. He was also an advocate of religious tolerance. Given the references associated with his son's era one might think these views would have endeared him to the so-called nonconformist faiths. But Richard had a leaning towards Catholicism, he supported the education of Catholic priests. Hansard records him supporting funding for Maynooth College, an establishment delivering such training during a parliamentary debate on 28th April 1845. Although he viewed his position as entirely in line with conservative values, such a stance may well have fuelled the negative reactions he experienced. There is a hint in another letter to MacCarthy as early as December 1837 that he was not naive to the negative impact of what he called his "theory of the conservatism of popery". In that correspondence he informed MacCarthy of his deliberately cautious participation in a small party hosted by Sir Robert Peel writing, "I tried my theory.....as far as I dared".

The reaction of the established church and the Methodists in 1846 appear to have caught him by surprise and had clearly irritated him.

Richard Monkton-Milnes was a member of parliament between 1837 and 1863 and his links with Bawtry were through the family ownership, by marriage, of Bawtry Hall and associated estates. The year before his departure from parliament he sold a parcel of land to the Primitive Methodists, who were seeking a place of worship in Bawtry. Had he forgiven the Methodists for being part of what he had called in 1847 the "holy league" against him, had time healed the wounds? It is impossible to know. It is highly likely that this pragmatic man who seems to have been driven by liberal motives found it easy to move on. Although an earlier Bawtry Heritage Group paper capturing the moment of the sale noted that the acquisition came "after repeated attempts".³

³ Ninety Years of Drama in Bawtry; the history of Methodism in Bawtry and its connection with the Phoenix Theatre and the Bawtry Amateur Dramatic Society. BHG website paper.

Tolerance and liberal values being at the heart of Richard's politics, might we suggest his approach to life allowed him to be a man who rarely, if ever, harboured a destructive grudge? He may have made the Primitive Methodists work hard for their deal in Bawtry; but it seems that what Richard considered to be an unpleasantness from the past should not stop progress. With a different attitude he may well have embarked on a different course.

Thirty years later his son Robert similarly displayed a generous stance, gifting land to Bawtry's Wesleyans. There is no indication that Robert held any negative views regarding the experience of his father back in 1846. Having been born in 1858, over a decade after the election events, he may well have been completely unaware of the episode.

For whatever the reasons, these events from the past did not scupper the ambitions of Bawtry's Wesleyans in the 1890's. Without this 'let sleeping dogs lie' approach from Richard and latterly Robert, Bawtry may not have the Methodist place of worship that it has today. Perhaps we should applaud father and son for their selflessness and their part in providing this legacy.

September 1901

This time the meeting was in Bawtry on Thursday the 19th; it started with a prayer.

If the meeting in June was all about the announcement of the venture, and cementing the management structure to progress it, this meeting was very much the starting pistol; the race to build was on.

The main issue at this meeting was cost and although it was recorded that a discussion took place, no detail is provided, save that it would cost an estimated £1500 to erect the building.

The committee banked at Becketts, a bank established in 1774 with a head office in Leeds. Bawtry had a local branch in the Market Place between the old Town Hall and Post Office. The meeting recorded that at the time their account was £360.00 in credit; some considerably way short of the estimated cost for construction.



Becketts Bank Bawtry.

A breakdown of the plan to make up the shortfall makes for confusing reading, being a mixture of fundraising estimations and notional values. What must have been a little daunting was that when all of this was calculated it came to £1160.00, still considerably short of the initial estimate. The entry recorded as "Gift of Site" seems to suggest this came with hard cash. There is no explanation as to how a gift of land could be interpreted this way or that it was accompanied by an additional promise of funds. £1160.00 might have been an overestimated figure.

Cash in Bank (Beckett)	360 - 0 - 0
Sale of old Chapel & Schools	150 - 0 - 0
Bazaar	150 . 00
Stone laying	250 . 0 . 0
Bricks & leading (per m mapt off)	50 . 0 - 0
Collecting Books &c	50 . 0 - 0
Opening Service	100 . 0 - 0
Gift of Site	50 . 0 - 0
	<hr/>
	1160 . 0 - 0

Funding plan from the meeting September 19th 1901.

Even with the pledges made for the foundation stone laying promised at the meeting in June, the total of all fundraising estimates were still £274.00 short

The following amounts were promised for the stonelaying of the New Wesleyan Chapel	
Bro J Brookesby	5 - 0 - 0
Bro M Wagstaff	10 - 0 - 0
Bro R A Barr	25 - 0 - 0
Bro H H Herbert	25 - 0 - 0
Bro H H Willows	10 - 0 - 0
Bro G G Robinson	10 - 0 - 0
Bro H H Eyre	6 - 0 - 0

Stone-laying pledges from the meeting June 21st 1901

The plan for meeting the estimated cost was important as it was required by the District Synod for its quarterly meeting.

There is a hint of there being a recognition of the inadequacy of this first financial plan and an urgency to address the cost of the project more realistically. Brother Willows proposed that a meeting be called for the 8th of October for "all in any way interested in the new chapel scheme, Rev'd B Carvooso Spencer to preside". His proposition was backed unanimously.

Before this meeting closed with a prayer it was agreed that the trees from the site should be removed. Messer's Morrison and Thickett were granted permission to undertake this. No cost for labour is mentioned.

October 1901 - 19th February 1902

Talk about money is strangely absent from the record of the meeting for the 8th October, despite the supported proposal by brother Willows at the previous gathering. The main focus was on building design and the only discussion about costs was that the price for preliminary drawings should not be allowed to exceed £5.00. Two potential architects were to be considered, Mr Kelly from Wakefield and Mr Goodacre from Mansfield. There was clearly a doubt about Kelly's skills as a chapel architect as he alone was the only one to be subjected to scrutiny regarding his experience in the design of chapels.

The February meetings in the new year presented a sense of there being an absence of an overall perspective on the project and the key components that would successfully deliver it. The minute book shows the meeting notes on the 7th February were followed by a meeting on the 5th of March, at the end of which,

another record for a meeting which took place on 19th of February seems to have been hurriedly inserted as an afterthought.

These meetings were important, notwithstanding the omission of any discussion on costs, for two significant reasons. Firstly, the selection of an architect for the building was made. Secondly, the challenges the project faced in preparing the ground for building to commence began to emerge.

To unravel this we need to remind ourselves of the meeting in October 1901 when there was an eagerness to get the design of the chapel completed and in the hands of someone deemed sufficiently qualified. As indicated two possible candidates for the contract were to be explored, Kelly and Goodacre. On the 7th of February 1902, five months later the minutes indicate that Kelly had submitted drawings but there is no mention of Goodacre or any reason for why he had not made a submission. Additionally, the Kelly mentioned is not from Wakefield but from Pontefract. It could be one and the same, who knows?

Drawings were also submitted from much further afield via Gordon and Gunton, architects from Finsbury House, central London. These came with what was described as impeccable credentials, the most important perhaps being their well renowned and high status in the Wesleyan Methodist movement. Henry Thomas Gordon and Josiah Gunton, both listed in the Directory of British Architects 1834-1900, specialised in classical architecture and were noted for designs of non-conformist chapels, in particular those of the Wesleyan doctrine. Josiah was a Wesleyan circuit steward in Clapton and from 1899 a member of the London First District Synod. Josiah and his son William would, in furtherance of the partnership after Henry Gordon's death, go on to design the Memorial Chapel at Kingswood School in 1922. These were the architects who were favoured.

The confusion around Kelly and his location might be because he and his partner were never really in the running. There seems to have been no Wakefield connection for Kelly but a well renowned partnership Kelly and Birchall did operate out of Pontefract during this period and they were known amongst other things for their designs of religious buildings, more commonly Anglican and Roman Catholic.

The discussion about the merits of the two submissions on 7th February 1902 is recorded in the most sparing manner, with the words, "after being examined and fully discussed", before the record shows Gordon and Gunton being proposed and seconded.

Rather more detail was recorded in capturing the acceptance that the frontage depicting a single door and three windows from the selected architects drawings were accepted.⁴

Before the February 7th meeting closed there was clearly a sense of urgency to ensure the site was prepared to allow building to commence. A small group led by brother Wagstaff was tasked to meet, as soon as possible, with the architects, the same Wagstaff was granted permission to acquire “the bricks”; no cost is referred to here leaving us to ponder whether this acquisition was a donation? It was decided that the official foundation stone-laying was to take place in the last week in July 1902. The only hints at a discussion regarding a financial plan was the congratulatory note to Willows and Herbert for the concert given to raise funds and the postponement of a fund raising bazaar until July 1903. Hidden amongst these topics is a note proposed and seconded that Mr Burgess (solicitor) be left to deal with compensation claims relevant to garden holders whose land was no longer theirs, this issue being obviously related to the proposal that the site be fenced off once the garden notice deadline had expired. Given what appears to be a hasty meeting of some committee members called on the 19th February only 12 days later is an indication that Mr Burgess had worked quickly but could not resolve the matters at hand without further committee input.

The meeting on the 19th of February was exclusively called to address the issue of land valuation. The notes are not explicit but present enough to deduce that the work required was about grasping the issue of compensation for those affected by the change of ownership of the land, the former tenants of Lord Crewe. Its new owners needed to ensure they were fully aware of the market value of the land before making commitments to pay any compensation. The minutes of a full committee meeting recorded 14 days later on 5th March stated that only one claim was to be met. It was that of a Mr Morrison who was claiming for the loss of his fruit trees and his wooden shed; another cost not captured in the original estimates. It is not stated if this Mr Morrison is the same person who it had been previously agreed should share the contract of clearing all trees from the site.

March 1902

Mr Gunton, the architect, attended the meeting on the 5th and presented more detailed plans. The key points captured were that the school beneath the chapel would be 11 feet high, and the entrance steps leading into the chapel would consist

⁴ The current building has 5 windows at the front, three above the door and two either side. The depiction of the chapel front in the May 1920 Empire Fete brochure, as presented by the architects on the front cover of this paper, clearly shows what the committee seems to have agreed to in February 1902. Two lower windows can just be seen. The photograph on page 1 of this paper which is pre 1920 shows the chapel front with 5 windows. Note, the ornate design of the windows and the entrance depicted in the architect's illustration, it is much more elaborate than today or in early 20th century photographs.

of not more than 8 steps. Access to the school would be via a double slope, the gated entrances to each being situated either side of the main steps. The illustration on the cover of this paper clearly shows these access points from the road level.⁵ Gunton's plan also portrayed the arrangement of the chapel seats with a rostrum in the centre and choir stalls behind.



The school area June 2025 looking south.

The school was to be arranged with moveable partitions allowing for enlargement or the shrinking of the space as necessary, with a raised platform at the north end.

The minutes also recorded that provision of suitable ventilation and heating for the building was not discussed but "left in Mr Gunton's hands".

It was agreed during this meeting that Mr Morrison would be paid the sum of £4.10s in compensation, obviously the result of brother Wagstaff's land valuation review.

⁵ Today there is only access to the lower level from the front of the church on the eastern side.

The meeting held on Thursday the 20th began with the proposal "that the principal inhabitants of Bawtry be waited upon" for the purposes of "soliciting subscriptions".



Inside the Chapel (Church) 2025. Note, the organ shown was not in place until 1913.

April - May 1902

The record shows all to be relatively quiet. The meeting on April 3rd tasked a small group with moving "Marrison's shed"⁶ from the site and arranging for the site to be fenced off as previously agreed.

Rev. Spencer was requested to invite Mr Perks MP to lay a foundation stone.

The meeting on May 12th approved an advertisement to be placed in the Doncaster Gazette and the Retford and Gainsborough Times requesting the submission of tenders to build the new chapel. What is interesting is that the Methodist Times on the 15th of May published that a new chapel was to be built at Bawtry at a cost of £1680.⁷ On the 15th and 19th of May the Sheffield Daily Telegraph reported that a submission to the Wesleyan Methodist Synod, Sheffield District, had been considered at a recent meeting the estimated cost was quoted the same as the Methodist Times; however, the Sheffield publication additionally stated that the new chapel would accommodate 370 persons.⁸ This timeline can only suggest that the submission to build the new chapel was presented to the Synod based on the estimation of £1500 which was arrived at the meeting held on the 19th of September 1901 and before any official tenders for the cost to build were presented.

June 19th - 7th July 1902

What is best described as a flurry of committee meetings took place in a period of 18 days all triggered by the submissions of bids to build the new chapel. Financing the project had appeared to be on the backburner up to this point; it is fair to say that it was now very much centre stage. The meeting of the 19th of June 1902 recorded that a detailed discussion took place and that tenders were "higher than expected". The record of meetings up to this point could never have been described as effusive therefore the brevity here is perhaps not surprising. That said it is hard not to imagine the sharp intakes of breath and groans that accompanied Reverend Spencer's reveal of the contents contained within the three tender envelopes for building the new chapel. The range was between £2250.00 and £3000.00, this was before the prices for heating were added, these ranged from between £139.15s.0d and £79. These bids were between 100% and 66% greater than the estimated £1500 made three days short of a year earlier and the estimate reported as presented to the district synod a month previously. Perhaps it is not surprising that the record shows a proposal to negotiate a reduction of the lowest bid presented to £1900 was "carried unanimously".

⁶ We suspect this to be the Morrison mentioned earlier. The minutes appear to mix Morrison and Marrison over this particular issue multiple times?

⁷ Not £1500.

⁸ Online searches for the tender advertisement proved negative.

When the amended tender was reviewed and discussed on the 30th of June it was concluded that this new proposal “made such a difference to the general appearance of the building and that if it was at all practicable the original plans be adhered to”. A small group led by brother Wagstaff were delegated to meet with Sprakes and Son to negotiate a reduction in their original tender.

Sprakes and Son had built the Primitive Methodist Chapel at Bentley, South Yorkshire in 1899, so had a recent track record in building Methodist places of worship. The result of the delegation to Sprakes’ resulted, in the first instance, a reduction of £250. However, this came at the loss of heating, gallery seating, wooden stairs instead of stone, Conisbrough bricks instead of London and other artistic finishes being removed from the plan. The record shows an entry on the deduction list for £27 labelled as a “donation”, we have to assume that this is a contribution of goodwill by the builders as there is no explanation given. However, it would appear that the total reduction to £2000 was short lived as the delegation had to commission the construction of a wooden fence around the back and on both sides of the site to a height of 4' 6" at a cost of £25. This had been an uncotted action back in February which it would seem had slipped through the net.

The new tender of £2025 when considered at a meeting on the 7th of July unsurprisingly prompted a “long thorough discussion”, after all this amount was still over 30% higher than the estimate and submission to the synod and well above the target set for a reduction which had been £1900. The discussion concluded that this revised tender should be accepted and the architects be made aware. There was a keen urgency to sign the contract “as early as possible”.

At the commencement of the meeting on the 7th the superintendent read out a letter from the Manchester Chapel Committee which gave permission for the work to go ahead. It is hinted in the record that the committee was aware that the original scheme was having to be modified; however, there was no indication that any caveats, or additional controls were to be put in place due to increasing cost.

Given the shortfall of £525 between the newly revised cost and the original estimate this meeting did consider a plan for bridging that gap.

In general Methodists treated the acquisition of financial support through loans with caution, it was however not unheard of when it came to the construction of chapels and a proposal to utilise such a route for the sum of £150 was accepted as part of the new plan. The plan also included £150 in donations for the stone-laying, £100 from holding a bazaar, and £100 in donations after the stone-laying ceremony. These routes for income had been in the original plan laid out on pages 16-17 of this paper. It is not clear in the record that the committee had identified that these new sums were additional to the expectations already expressed.

Also included in this new plan was a sum of £100 to be secured via a bid to the 20th Century Fund.

1898

On 26th July, 1898, the following news item appeared in the Birmingham Daily Argus:

"The Wesleyan Conference was crowded yesterday when Mr R W Perks, M P proposed to inaugurate the scheme for collecting a million guineas from a million adherents of that body to celebrate the opening of the Twentieth Century. British Methodism said Mr Perks MP had today no fewer than 2,000,000 adherents and the wealth of the country represented a sum of £200 per head – men, women and children.

He would like to see £200,000 devoted to educational purposes, some to fight the cause of Methodist children in the country parishes where the population was largely Nonconformist but where the schools were in the hands of bigoted clergymen; a Central Hall in London which might be bought at a cost of £250,000 to seat 3,000 people and have attached to it all the offices and rooms needed by the Methodist departments. Dr Stephenson's home might receive £50,000 to help the effort now being made to prevent a single Methodist child from being brought up in a pauper school. The raising of the money he thought could be done by inscribing every Wesleyan's name on a "Church Roll" and those who could afford to give more than a guinea could subscribe the surplus at the rate of a guinea in the name of any poor person on the roll.

Rev W L Watkinson, ex President of the Conference, seconded the proposal to raise the million guineas. The Conference at once passed it and referred it to a Committee to decide the methods of procedure".

The fund became known as "The Twentieth Century Fund" or "Million Guinea Fund."

The first meeting of the fund officers took place on 1st August 1898. The meeting agreed the following,

1. That registers be forwarded to all circuits to manage donation records
2. Donation sheets be prepared and sent for individual chapels, Sunday schools, and family use.
3. Boxes were to be sent to help manage weekly and monthly and collective donations. Included with these would be collection books for record keeping.

On the 24th and 25th of October a General Committee meeting was held attracting 160 ministers and laymen. This meeting established what was known as the "HISTORIC ROLL" which was to be open on the 1st January 1899 and closed on the 1st January 1901. This was to be the definitive record capturing the activity of the fund. This meeting also agreed on the specific needs to which funds collected could be allocated along with the proposed maximum for each.

- £300,000 to assist in the purchase of sites and the erection of Wesleyan Methodist Chapels, Sunday Schools or Mission Halls in the United Kingdom and for Soldiers' and Sailors' Homes.
- £200,000 for educational work in educational institutions associated with the Wesleyan Methodist Church and for furthering the mental improvement and training of local preachers.
- £100,000 for Foreign Missionary work.
- £100,000 for Home Missionary work including Temperance work.
- £250,000 for the purchase of a suitable site in London and for building a monumental Connexional Building.
- £50,000 for developing the work of the Children's Home to save all children of Methodist and Nonconformist parentage from Workhouse Schools and also provide for orphan children of Methodist Soldiers and Sailors.
- Grants would also be made to the Irish Wesleyan Methodist Conference and to Foreign Districts and these would be not less than the amounts raised locally in those districts

Clearly Bawtry's project aligns with bullet one on the list above.

The HISTORIC ROLL was to include the names of all donors and collectors whether members of the Methodist Church, teachers, or scholars in Sunday and Day Schools, communicants, seat holders [people who paid pew rents to reserve their seats] or other worshipers, adherents and friends of Methodism at home and abroad.

One of the following requirements had to be met to qualify for a place on the Historic Roll:

[1] All persons who gave or collected one guinea or more.

[2] All persons on whose behalf or in memory of whom one guinea or more had been contributed.

[3] All persons who after bona fide efforts during the period up to 1st January 1901 cannot in the judgement of the Circuit Committee be reasonably expected to comply with the above conditions.

[4] In no case would the amounts given or collected be recorded in the Historic Roll.

Bawtry's decision to make a bid via the fund did not materialise until the Fund had passed its due date for closure. However, Bawtry's good fortune was served by the fund's operation period being extended, having failed to achieve its target. It was finally closed to donors on 30th June 1904 and officially wound up in 1909.

Reviewing the contribution details contained within the Historic Roll fails to reveal what, if anything, the Bawtry Wesleyan community contributed to the national total, or whether it contributed to the fund in the years before it decided to make an application. 815 circuits across the country contributed to the fund, of which 13 failed to return their donation pages. It does not appear that Bawtry's circuit was one of those given the entry on Volume 38 of the Roll. Volumes 37 and 38 provide details of all the contributions made to the fund from the Sheffield District. Volume 38 is the document relevant to Bawtry. As part of the Sheffield District, Bawtry was in the Doncaster, Oxford Place circuit. For unknown reasons the entries for Doncaster do not contain entries for the individual chapels, only the number of donors and the totals collected. The table that follows is page one of Volume 38.

VOLUME 38 SHEFFIELD DISTRICT		Donors	£	s	d
ROtherham Circuit					
Talbot Lane	377				
Masborough	173				
Northfield	29				
Scholes	12				
Maltby	3				
Thorpe Hesley	11				
Eastwood	162				
Parkgate	163				
Kimberworth	51				
Wickersley	41				
Treeton	95				
Swallow Nest	67				
Canklow	49				
Whiston	37				
Fence	29				
Aughton	18				
Catcliffe	6	1323	2113	13	0
Wath upon Dearne Circuit					
Wentworth	41				
Elsecar	32				
Hoyland Common	35				
Hemingfield	14				
Wombwell Main	15				
Hoyland	72				
Wath upon Dearne	470				
Rawmarsh	156				
Hoober	21				
Haugh	29				
Greasborough	23				
Kilnhurst	28	936	1082	12	3
Doncaster Priory Place Circuit					
	836	836	1857	6	6
Doncaster Oxford Place Circuit					
	880	880	1064	18	0

7th July - 11th September 1902

The subject of foundation stone-laying concluded the meeting of the 7th of July. There was no report on the invitation that went to Perks MP earlier in the month, but there were clearly issues with securing a commitment from Lord Crewe. Other potential stone-layers were suggested such as Lady Scarborough, Mr Holland MP (Rotherham) and Mr Winter the Mayor of the same town. Other church dignitaries were to be considered as speakers on the day.

The meeting held on the 31st July 1902 amended the planned bid to the 20th Century Fund. It was proposed that an application for a loan to the fund of £500 at 3% interest should be made, the proposal was carried. The other main focus was on the stone-laying ceremony, in particular securing those willing to donate for the privilege. It would seem that Lord Crewe remained elusive and it was agreed that his invitation should be sent via a registered letter. The committee agreed that a minimum of £5 should be set for the privilege of laying a foundation stone and for those wishing to contribute through the purchasing of bricks the minimum was set at 6 shillings.

The meeting of 28th August 1902 was the last at which Rev. Spencer was to take the chair. There was no mention of his departure recorded. The only items of note being the securing of a commitment from Lady Scarborough to lay a stone and that the stone-laying ceremony was to be held on the 25th September 1902 being agreed.⁹

Rev Oswald Welch, a minister since 1874 found himself in the chair at the meeting of the 11th September 1902, on the eve of the stone-laying ceremony. The meeting was dominated by last minute preparations for the event, no other business was undertaken.

25th September 1902

The Sheffield Daily Telegraph reported on the ceremony the day after it took place on the 26th September 1902 and the following were listed as donors on the day.

Name	Donation Amount
Rev. Oswald Welch (Society Stone)	£140.6s.9d.
Mrs Wagstaff	£90.2s
C N Nicholson	£5
Mr W Lacey	£25

⁹ Not July as previously announced.

Mr J Kidson	£20
Mr E Davies	£25
Mrs Willows	£10.10s
Mr J Gunton (architect)	£20
Mr and Mrs Sprakes (builder)	£32.10s
Mr R Watson	£5.5s
Mr Stocks	£5
Mr Brocklesby	£7.4s.6d
Mr J Pearson	£5
Mr T Croft	£10
Mr R A Carr	£25
Mr H J Willows	£10.10s
Mr Wagstaff	£40
Mr J Stringer	£5
Mr H Herbert	£25
Mr F G Robinson	£25

With contributions received prior to the event the total sum received from the ceremony was reported as £527. The original pledges back in June 1901 at the launch of the project committee stood at £91 and the need to set a more substantial target prompted by the reality of the builder's final tender in June 1902 resulted in an additional target of £150 being set. One might surmise that the committee would have been very pleased at the end of this successful day. The Sheffield Independent also reporting on the 26th stated that an additional £100 had been raised at a refreshment event in the Town Hall and a music event held in the old chapel.

Both newspapers reported on the speech given by Rev. H T Smart of the Sheffield District, in particular about how he spoke of change as Methodism entered a new century. He foresaw new ways of worshipping and new attitudes emerging that would probably challenge the old. However, he closed by emphasising that the gospel would always be the same .

The two newspapers contradict each other on some important facts. The Telegraph does not mention Rev. B C Spencer and places the new Superintendent Minister

Oswald "Welsh" (not Welch)?¹⁰ laying the Society stone. The Independent does mention Rev. Spencer; not only does their correspondent have him laying the Society stone but reports on his recent move to Chesterfield. The piece also recognises his leadership contribution to the project stating, a little prematurely, that he was, "instrumental in carrying the project to success". For the record the Independent states that Mr Wagstaff laid the Sunday school stone and not his wife as reported in the Telegraph. I guess the opportunity to unravel some of these confusions has long passed; but what remains loud and clear from reading the live accounts was that the committee had reached a huge milestone, all that remained was to build the chapel and open it. And of course meet the cost.

There was no mention of Lord Crewe, Lady Scarborough or Mr Perks MP as being attendees at the stone-laying ceremony or that they made a financial donation.

27th September 1902

Nothing is recorded as happening on this date but one might imagine the relief and satisfaction of those original committee members when thinking about what they had achieved in the last 15 months. Any sense that they could enter a period of relaxation was to be short-lived!

24th October 1902 - 23rd May 1903

There were six recorded meetings during this period. Frenetic rather than frantic best describes the activity as the project moved into the building phase proper. It is difficult to be sure, given the brevity of the committee meeting minutes, whether the actions behind the accepted proposals at each meeting were followed through in a cohesive manner. Between October 1902 and 28th May 1903, a week before the building was to open, there was a blizzard of decisions that by themselves are confusing, contradictory and without apparent regards for crucial matters relating to cost and timetabling. The record leaves one surmising that the building work related to the main structural plan agreed back in 1902 was commenced with a June 1903 deadline, but provides little with regard to its progress. The committee's focus during this time is entirely upon three themes:

1. Who to invite and how to present the opening of the school and chapel.
2. Tweaking the building plan right up to the deadline
3. Limited recognition of financial requirements.

The ranked importance of these three items is as presented with item 1 taking the lion share, with items 2 and 3 presented in vague terms and with no consistent indication that both of these items were interrelated.

¹⁰ Welch rather than Welsh is recorded on the My Methodist website's list of Ministers.

On the 30th January 1903 the list of invitees began in earnest. Rev. Banks the President of the Wesleyan Conference led the way, he was to be asked to speak. A flurry of Wesleyan ministers then followed Reverends Atkinson (the ex-president), C H Kelly, S Chadwick, Dr Davies. The list grew at the meeting held on the 5th February with Mr Collier, from Manchester, and Mr Perks, the MP and founder of the Millennium Fund we presume? He was to be asked to chair the opening ceremony. Misters Greaves of Sheffield, Wyatt of Lincoln also made the list at this point.

In February it was decided that Mrs Jackson of Scawthorpe was to open the school and "entertain" the president. There is no indication that Mrs Jackson was comfortable with this, but Mr Jackson, her husband we presume, made the list at the same time. There is a caveat to the Mrs Jackson record that would indicate that at this point she was unaware an invite was coming as the Mayoress of Doncaster was to be the fall back if Mr Jackson was unable to attend. We would have to conclude that the Mayoress was unaware of being in the role of substitute.

On the 4th April it was decided that the Countess of Crewe would be invited to open the church. All Circuit Ministers and the Reverends, Waugh, Stuart, Linon and B C Spencer were to have positions "on the platform".

For chairing the evening meeting to be held after the opening ceremonies for the school and church four individuals were proposed; J Rook, J R Ferns, J G Greaves and Hugh Wyatt. The record does not show who was favoured.

The timetable for the opening proceedings is more clearly settled and presented within the record. The school facility would be officially opened at 12 noon, followed by a luncheon at 1.15pm. A service would officially open the church at 3pm, with an evening meeting arranged for 4.30pm.

On 24th October 1902 the committee agreed to reinstate heating, and include a water cistern and gallery seating to the building contract; no costs are mentioned at this time. The Sprakes' bid for heating of £125 to include the school and vestry was accepted at the meeting in January; although nothing further is mentioned about the cistern or seats.

In subsequent meetings a sum of £112. 17s. 6d was committed and £25 for Accrington bricks, distinctively red in colour and noted for their strength.¹¹ They were used in the foundations of the Eiffel Tower and later in the foundations of the Empire State Building. Here they were to be used at the front of the building and along both sides.

¹¹ Not Conisbrough.

"Not more than £50" was to be used in extending the school room back to the staircase at the rear. The photographs 1 to 6 below give an indication of the original size of the school room. Evidence of the fourth pair of pillars can still be seen today within the new partition wall which reduced the original space to allow for a modern kitchen and storage room. The rear staircase in today's building is thought to be in its original location given the presence of the gas lighting fixture above a mid-floor landing.



Photograph 1
The main school hall today. 6 pillars with the new rear wall separating a modern kitchen and storage area.



Photographs 2 and 3

The original 7th and 8th pillars still show either side of the new wall.



Photograph 4

Image taken from the new partition wall with the north wall marked by the window



Photographs 5 and 6

Showing the staircase at the rear of the building. The original gaslight fitting is installed on the north wall above the bend in the staircase.

£10 was dedicated to the inclusion of lead lights and cathedral glass along with £15 for the inclusion of a lavatory.

£10 for a sink pump and extra balustrade on the stone steps from the church to the basement.

Surprisingly by the 23rd May meeting it would seem that the removal of Mr Morrison's shed remained unresolved with another £2 being granted for the cost of that operation; a further £3.17s.6d was committed to the building of a wall at the west side of the church.

In total a further £276.17s.6d was added to the cost of the project across these six meetings in what might be best described as a "pick and mix" approach. When one also considers the range of items agreed, but not priced, the potential for a spiralling of project costs was a real danger.

On top of the previously mentioned cistern and gallery seats, there was the inclusion of a brass tablet naming all the stone-layers, but not priced.

This range of meetings across 7 months do address the need for funds but it cannot be said that any of the potential sources are definitively reached in any clearly recorded manner.

The desire for a grant from the 20th Century Fund was now set at £400. However, it was not officially apparent until April 1903 that the committee record showed their awareness that any grant from the fund depended upon sums raised from other sources.

On the 30th January 1903 a new chair replaced Rev. Welch. He was Rev Joseph Whinecup, a minister since 1884. It was agreed at this meeting that the old chapel on Church Walk should be sold at auction with the reserve price set at £150, the auction date was set for June at a later meeting.

In January a major action was delegated to Rev. Whinecup to approach Mr Gregory regarding the prospect of a £1000 loan at 3.5%. Who Mr Gregory was is not mentioned; whether he was a bank manager, independent individual or a Methodist official is never declared. There was a caveat position accompanying this task. Should it be unsuccessful the Chapel Committee was to be approached for the same sum with a 4% interest rate target. This was a sudden and to date unprecedented action for the building committee; a signal maybe that the building costs were going to be much higher than first envisaged and income generation was lagging behind this curve.

By the February meeting held on the 5th Whinecup's task had been amended. He was tasked with approaching the Chapel Committee for a loan of £500 to commence on March 1st and to advertise the need for a further loan of £500 at 3.5% to commence on May 1st. There is no explanation for this change and we are left to assume that the January action had been unsuccessful. Interestingly the outcome of this later task is never revealed in any of the meetings prior to the Church opening. It does appear however that cost and the requirement to meet it was beginning to surface as the major issue for the first time since the project commenced and that one-off donations from the congregation, takings from a bazaar or music concert would not address the need sufficiently.

In the meeting held on 8th May 1903 the committee had what it may well have considered to be a most welcome opportunity presented by brother Wagstaff. On top of his agreement to plant trees in front of the chapel, he made an offer to asphalt the land in front and to the sides of the church for free. This would allow the committee to avoid any requirement to add this additional cost to the Sprakes' contract. What is interesting and unique in the record is that this opportunity did not command a majority view as was the case with every other proposal made up

to this point. This matter went to a vote and brother Robinson is recorded as abstaining. There is no detail captured as to why the traditional "all for one" stance did not play out here, but there can be no doubt that brother Robinson had an issue with the offer. All that said, brother Wagstaff's offer was accepted.

By the next meeting on the 23rd It seemed that the Wagstaff arrangement was unravelling and there is most definitely a hint of frustration in the record. Brothers Robinson and Carr are tasked with meeting brother Wagstaff and conveying the message that the committee desired him to complete his promise made on the 8th. The obstacle that resulted in what appears on the surface to be a frustration for the committee is never revealed and neither is any detail regarding the approach taken by Carr and Robinson to bring the matter to a conclusion that satisfied the committee. We do know that brother Wagstaff did ultimately complete the asphalting given that his efforts were noted in a proposal of thanks at a committee meeting on 4th November 1904! This would suggest that the job was not concluded in time for the grand opening.

28th May 1903

One week before the opening of the chapel a final meeting was held. It was agreed that the old chapel officials be thanked for their services over the years and in the first instance they should be retained in the new church until appointments were properly agreed by the trustees.

It was decided that the communion table area and rostrum be carpeted and that red crimson cushions be purchased for the seating in this area. No cost recorded.

Although the renting of pews was becoming outdated by the early 20th century, this meeting did set prices for reserving seats in Bawtry's new church.

Centre -1st 5 rows 10/-, 2nd 5 rows 7/6, 3rd 5 rows 5/-
Sides - 1st 5 rows 5/-, 2nd 5 rows 4/-.

The main reason for it diminishing as a practice in many parts was due to the limited income it provided at a time when congregations were becoming more diverse and social attitudes were changing. Additionally, the administration of the process was burdensome, negating the impact of any income gained. Given the need to raise funds, it would appear Bawtry's Wesleyans were not leading the way in this change; the need for money at this time was high on the agenda. This approach was to some degree diminished even further by the trustees as a potential money maker given that the trustees agreed to purchase seat cushions once 60% of the seats for rent were taken. There is no mention of the cost for this luxury making it impossible to calculate the negative impact it would have on any

income generated. A formal process was arranged for the 8th and 10th of June for those wishing to purchase a pew to be held in the new church.

Arrangements were made for the keys to be available for the Mayoress to conduct the church opening; Lady Crewe, we must assume, was not available. Mrs Lacy was to formally open Sunday school as planned.¹²

It was agreed that the church should be insured in the first instance for £2000.

It was agreed that Revd. Whinecup "wait upon" the manager of the London City Bank in Doncaster and arrange an overdraft facility of £500 for two months. On its own, given Methodist attitudes to debt, this action is surprising. The meeting minutes are specific in setting Revd. Whinecup the task to "arrange" rather than apply for, or request the facility. Confidence in achieving this goal must have been high for reasons that are not clear as there was no indication that the church had any business relationship with this bank up to this point. The minutes do not present any indication as to whether this additional financial avenue is instead of, or as well as, the applications for loans proposed and carried at previous meetings and according to the records yet to be resolved. There is a sense that financial realities of the project were coming into sharp focus as the day of opening was upon them. However, any record of a cohesive financial plan remained elusive.

30th May 1903

On the above date "the place of worship named WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH situated on Station Road, Bawtry.....is registered for the solemnizing of marriages therein", stated the The London Gazette June 5th 1903.

4th June 1903

As planned the School was formally opened by Mrs Lacey from Louth at 12 noon. The proceedings being led by the Mayor of Doncaster were reported in the Leeds Mercury on the 5th. The church was formally opened after lunch by Mrs Robinson the Mayoress of Doncaster; Lady Crewe is not mentioned in any reports so we must assume she did not attend.

Five days after the opening the Retford and Worksop Herald and North Notts Advertiser had a more elaborate piece describing the design of the new building both interior and exterior.¹³ It describes at length the sermon given by the Wesleyan president R S Banks who interestingly is reported to have opened his sermon with comments about the position and appearance of the chapel and the

¹² There is no explanation about what happened to Mrs Jackson, the first choice?

¹³ The paper stated Ancaster bricks were used. This is inaccurate as Ancaster bricks are creamy coloured. Accrington bricks, the ones used, are red.

generosity of Lord Crewe. He noted that it was only a fortnight or so short of the bicentennial of John Wesley's birth, comparing "Wesley's life to the great leaders of the protestant movement".

The ceremonials and formalities went on all day and finished with a public meeting in the Town Hall, presided on by Auldaman Hugh Wyatt from Lincoln, with addresses given by "several ministers and laymen".

The new building was yet to be fully complete but the core of the task had been achieved. The committee members and all local Wesleyans had reasons to feel proud, Bawtry had a new striking building in a position that prompted positive comment, if not yet ready to be considered iconic.

The public observer 122 years after the event is presented with a narrative of the opening ceremonies that are heavy on reverence and solemnity rather than being high on celebration. This perhaps, was as much reflective of the age as it was of the Wesleyan approach to such matters, which, as mentioned a number of times, can be brief in content and uncontroversially matter of fact. Interestingly the next committee meeting held a fortnight after the opening day mentions only the need to purchase umbrella stands and cushions, nothing else.

24th September 1903 - 11th October 1921

The church was built but challenges remained. Some of the challenges were the basic snags experienced by all building projects, but some issues were the kind that are more burdensome and difficult to resolve.

Requirements for soft furnishings and utilitarian items aside, the completion of the church's asphalted perimeter was not noted as resolved until November 1904. Issues with the heating equipment led to what amounted to a standoff with the contractors, as the committee initially agreed to shoulder a proportion of the cost associated with a heating chamber problem on the 22nd October 1903; only to rescind this decision at the next meeting in February 1904. Proposals to secure estimates to adjust and add to the current seating provisions in the church carried in October 1903, were deferred to a date unspecified at the meeting in February 1904. Managing the mounting costs of the project, which were clearly outstripping the rate of income generated, would be the obvious observation for any third party seeking to explain this indecision; however, this is never a position openly declared in the record.

In the immediate aftermath of the opening ceremonies an issue not directly related to the thorny problem of finance emerges for the first time and prompts a strongly worded reaction captured within the committee meeting minutes. The issue first appears in the record of the meeting held on 24th September 1903,

when it was agreed that the secretary should write to the architect and request suggestions for replacing ornamentation currently in place at the front of the church. The record does not state what the ornamentation was or why they were requested to remove it. Without any referral to the outcome of the task set at the September meeting, the meeting on October 22nd captures the intention to have any discussion or decision on this issue postponed until the annual meeting in February 1904. The February meeting does address the matter in a swift and succinct manner stating, "proposed and seconded and carried unanimously, that the ornamentation on the front of the church remain as at present". It is however the additional comment accompanying this declared position that is striking and out of character for how this committee has, up to this point, recorded events. "The meeting expressed its regrets and deplores the action taken by certain members of the congregation in regard to it".

This issue rumbles on into 1905 when on the 15th March at a very lengthy meeting brother Willows proposed "that the ornamentation at the front of the chapel be taken down". The record does not explain why but hints that the issue centred on the ornamentation in place not corresponding with those at either side and that the offending piece should be replaced by one that does. Whilst a Mr Russell promised to submit a new design the committee expressed the view that before any removal the original architect from London should be consulted.

The meeting of April 12th 1905 agreed to a new design identified as submission "C" from the London architect and that Sprakes and Sons be charged with the task of replacement forthwith.

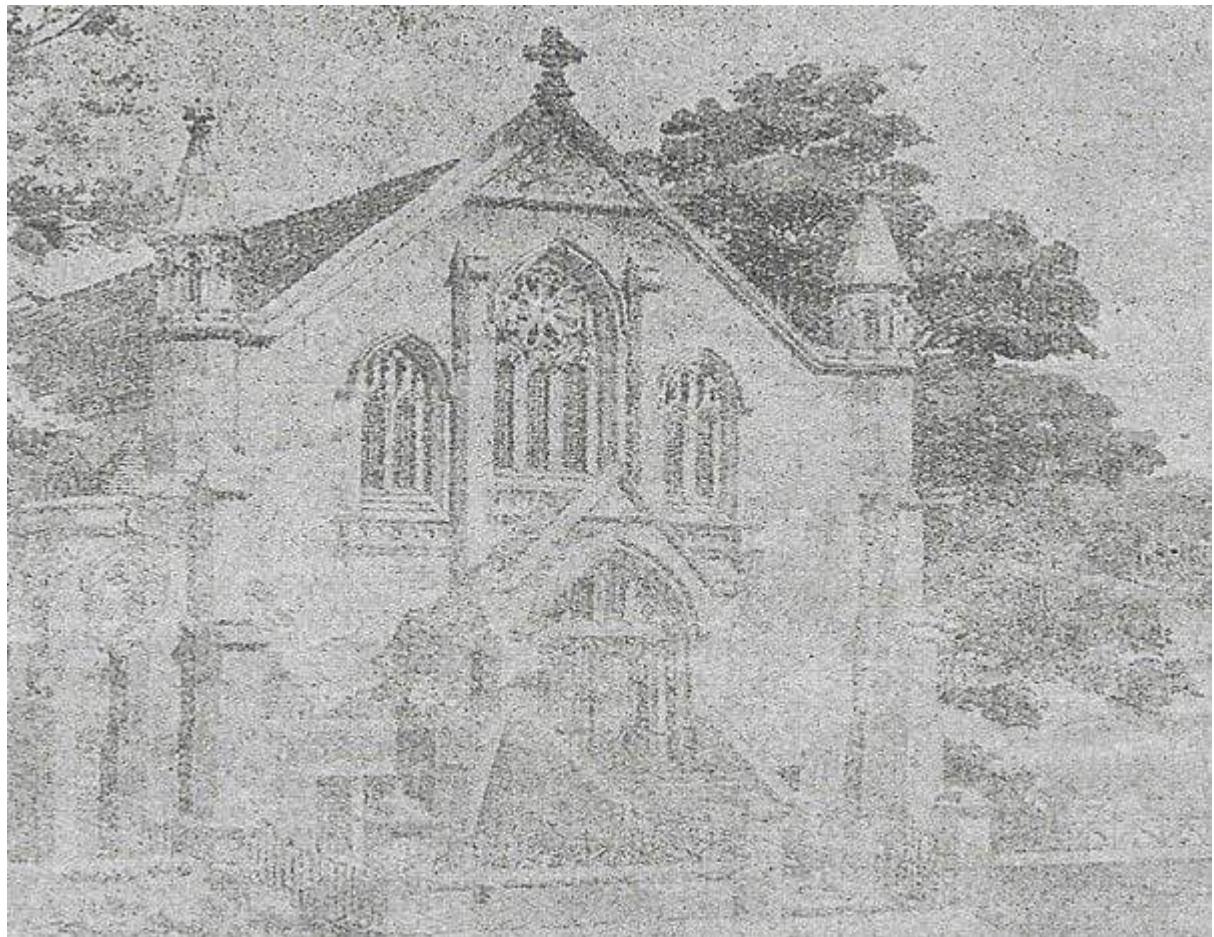
The reason for what clearly became an important emotionally centred issue is frustratingly lost in the mists of time. The detail fuelling the disquiet that was evidently expressed and forcefully advanced by some is never described in the minutes of the committee meetings and neither is the rationale for the committee ultimately deciding, nearly two years after the church was opened, to make the change. The issue could have been one solely about aesthetics although the minutes, particularly those recorded in February 1904, point towards something more to do with beliefs within the Wesleyan doctrine and how they are interpreted; an issue which amounts to more than a basic like or dislike; one that would trigger the exposure of strong feelings. Without those involved on hand to explain we are left only to speculate.

Whilst we have nothing explicit to go on, the minutes from 24th September 1903 and the 15th March 1905 provide clues. The 1903 minutes indicate that the feature in question was at the front of the church. The 1905 record presents a little more detail describing the ornamentation as not being in sync with those on either side. The image below zooms in on the church front and comes from what we know is, an artist's sketch of the building completed early in the 20th century. The sketch is signed by the architects in the bottom left hand corner. There are three aspects

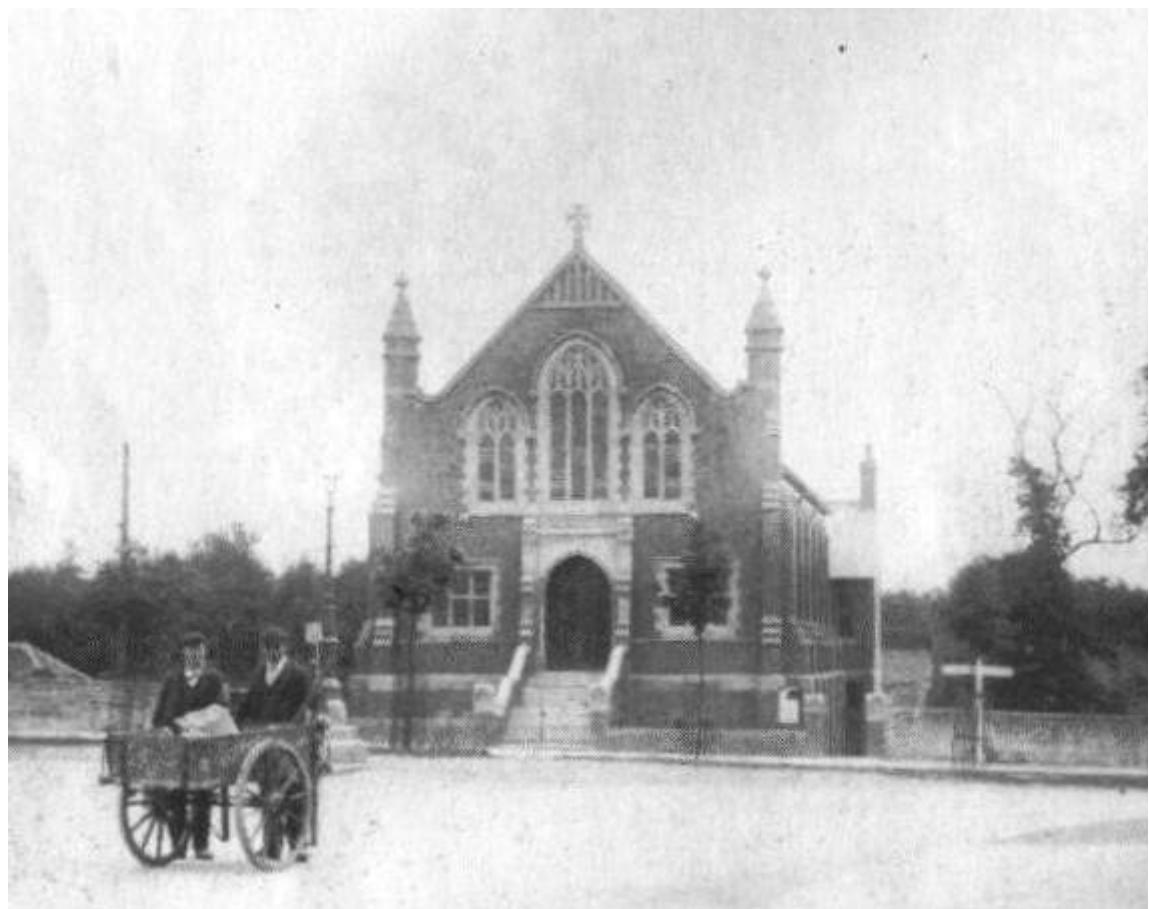
to this work that present us with clues as to the possible root of the dilemma the building committee was facing between 1903 and 1905. Before elaborating on these observations it is important to raise a word of caution with regard to the sketch's level of authenticity we can present to any speculations we make using this picture as our source. Firstly, we only know of this picture as it graced the pamphlet that presented the Bawtry Empire Fete and Sale of Works event which took place in 1920. There are indications in the piece which hint at it being a work much earlier than 1920 but we cannot be certain.¹⁴ Secondly, it is difficult to be sure how much this can be taken as an accurate depiction of the church. It is likely to be an artistic impression by the architects in advance of the construction; therefore laced with elements of the artist's imagination and design ideas.¹⁵ With those two points in mind let us consider the observations possession of this sketch allows us to make if it is an authentic image of the building pre June 1903, and do so against photographic evidence dated after 1905.

¹⁴ If one views this image in its more expanded form on the front cover of this work the lady depicted in the left foreground seems to be dressed in fashions more usual with the very early part of the century rather than 1920. The architect's moniker hints at it being a pre-build impression.

¹⁵ Note the positioning of the lower windows in the sketch and those depicted in the photograph on page 1. The position of the lower windows in the photograph chime with those of modern day photographs, whilst the same windows in the sketch are significantly lower. We have no accurate record of when the photograph on page 1 was taken but it is likely to be post 1905.



Architect's sketch, thought to be pre 1903.



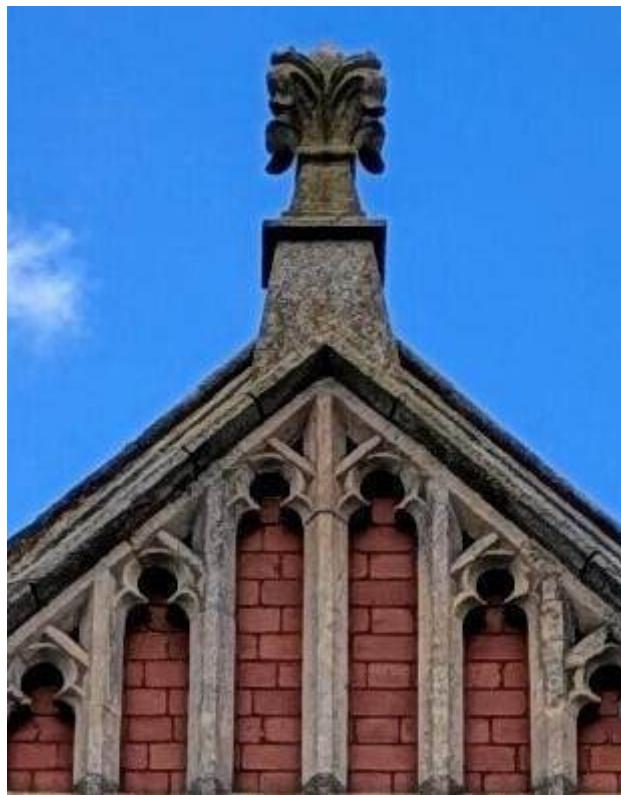
Photograph 1 possibly pre 1905. The central icon seems to be a cross.



Photograph 2



Photograph 3



Photographs 2,3 and 4. All three taken in August 2025

In the first instance the most obvious difference displayed in the sketch not present in any photographs is the pointed stone arch above the entrance and the hint of a more elaborate door. Rising above the angled stonework forming the arch are two pillars which flank the large central window, with the smaller windows outside the frame set by them. Additionally, the large central window clearly has a more ornate design in its top quarter than those on either side.

It is difficult to attribute the comments made in the March 1905 minutes to the entrance features. The record draws attention to the offending ornament being central and not in keeping with complementary features on either side. The presence of the pointed archway capping a more decorative doorway does not match with the objection captured in the March minutes and neither does the presence of the pillars above it flanking the central window. Comparing these features with the photographed image taken early in the century which clearly show that the pointed arch and any hint of an ornate door are absent. The pillars depicted above the arch are also missing although their shape and form are similar to those depicted lower down on either side of the doorway. Closer examination of the brick and stonework around the entrance porch conducted at the scene recently, see photograph 3, do not indicate any remedial work commensurate with removing the arch or pillars negating this aspect as being the offending feature; along with it being doubtful that what is contained in this aspect of the sketch ever made to the construction site.

The central window directly above the door does show a significant difference in the design presented in the sketch when viewed in photographs of the building post 1905. It is clear from the photographs that the ornate design presented in the sketch is not evident in the photographic evidence of that window which is more in keeping with the smaller windows on either side. This observation does chime with the clue presented in the committee minutes in March 1905 to some extent; could this be the change that was demanded? As with the entrance way it seems unlikely that this was ever part of the final construction plan, probably on the grounds of cost and maybe due to issues of it being too ornate. If it had this would have been a very elaborate and costly change making it unlikely. This is further reinforced by a third option that is perhaps more compelling and fits more neatly alongside the phrase brother Willows made in March 1905, when he proposed that the offending item should be "taken down".

If one looks closely at the sketch, positioned on the apex of the southern elevation (the front of the church) support it would seem by the image in photograph 1. An empty cross displayed on Methodist churches is not unheard of as long as they are not over elaborate. The one depicted in the sketch does not appear to portray the crucifixion, which would not be acceptable, but could be described as ornate and more than an empty cross. A common Methodist symbol is an empty cross with a flame and it could be that this is what the image is seeking to portray, it is difficult to tell. What is clear is that what is depicted in the sketch is different to the ornamentation visible in photographs 2,3 4 and 5.¹⁶ This would point to a change if the sketch is authentic, making it unlike the others, a simple change in comparison. The ornamentation on both sides of the central apex on top of the west and east towers appear to be flaming torches, the central feature in the post 1905 photographs look similar unlike the feature presented in the sketch. This begs the question: was the original central feature "taken down" and replaced with a new design more akin to those either side?

Given that additional research has failed to definitively resolve the mystery of the ornamentation that caused offence it must be left to the reader to decide whether the observations presented here are worthy of providing a plausible answer.



Photograph 5 taken in August 2025 indicates the three roof ornaments are of a comparable theme.

¹⁶ Although it is difficult to see clearly in photograph one it is we believe to be contemporary with the issue.

The cost of building the new church could also be described as a mystery and the true cost may forever remain hidden owing to the confused record and the passage of time. The two newspaper pieces reporting on the opening ceremony provide different figures. The Leeds Mercury noted a sum "close to £2,500", whilst the Retford and Workshop piece quoted a figure of £2,614. The 1993 90th year celebration programme presented £2,700 as the final cost. This figure is obviously taken from page 371 of the minute book. Between pages 371 and 375 is what amounts to a running commentary of expenditure between June 1901 and May 1904 capturing a final figure which includes, strangely, a £100 fee for the "cost of the site".¹⁷ The final figure presented in this handwritten account is £2716.15s.5d. The difficulty with presenting this figure is that it does not present the difference between the actual cost of the structure and the additional costs incurred by the committee in ensuring they had the funds to pay the bills. At first glance one could make the mistake that the financial burden of the building project was settled by May 1904 but that is not the case.

In examining the contemporary record it is easy to conclude, with hindsight, that the financial elements of the project were hindered by uncosted piecemeal decision making, that became ingrained and prevented prudent oversight of expenditure; notwithstanding that there are numerous references indicating a desire to keep costs under control. Many of the proposals carried at meetings were rarely identified as having a cost impact or required scrutiny regarding affordability or best value. This is perhaps an unexpected feature to be associated with a Methodist group.

Sermon 50 listed in the Wesley Online Collection of sermons given by John Wesley himself is entitled, "Use of Money". Taken from Luke 16:9, the central theme of the sermon is the good stewardship of money and awareness of it being the "mammon of unrighteousness".¹⁸ Wesley said "Make yourselves friends, of the mammon of unrighteousness" advising that embracing this maxim was good preparation for being received by those who have gone before to "everlasting habitations". This is forthright and heady stuff and not utilised here to suggest that those entrusted with the church building project were unrighteous, but to illustrate that financial probity and prudence was a central value for Methodism dating back to John Wesley himself and that better recognisance of this value may have benefitted the project committee. In a more modern sense the theme implies "Godly wisdom is marked by prudence and foresight", states the Christian Leaders Enterprise online.

¹⁷ This had been £50 in 1901.

¹⁸ "Mammon". Wealth regarded as an evil influence or false object of worship or devotion.

Linked to the spending of money in any project should be the plan for generating the income required. Between June 1901 and May 1903 there were numerous occasions when the project was clearly being conducted without any clear vision of what the end product would cost and how that need would be met.

For the historian seeking to bring together this story of worthy endeavour the issue of finance is a blur, rarely did the committee minutes show when, or if, a proposal carried by the group came to fruition. When a cost was applicable to such actions it was consistently unclear if the financial impact was properly considered or even if the action was ever carried out. A small example of this is the brass tablet supposedly commissioned to mark the stone laying event for posterity. This item has no record of being costed and no such tablet is recorded as having been acquired, or placed in the church.

Any retrospective appraisal of the financial management of the project has to be one laced with an element of criticism. Balancing the books in respect of the project took in excess of 18 years after the opening ceremony and the financial aftermath was a recurring concern discussed between September 1903 and November 1921.

Examples of a piecemeal approach to the management of this important element of the project are evident from the beginning. The lack of a clearly balanced financial plan left a difficult legacy for almost two decades and one I am sure the original team of Wesleyan brothers did not intend. The story of the group's association with the 20th Century Fund is an illustration of this.

The 20th Century Fund was identified as a potential source of income relevant to the project at the meeting held on the 7th July 1902. One might suggest this was somewhat late given the project began a year earlier and the scheme had been operating since 1898. The intention to apply was proposed and carried on a number of occasions from 1902, with a variety of sums between £100 and £500 as the stated ambition. The Leeds Mercury on 5th June 1903 declared that a sum of £300 had been secured from the fund as income towards the building of the church. This statement cannot be correct as no application had ever been made according to the meeting of 15th March 1905, long after the opening event. This meeting indicated that the group had remained short on its efforts to recoup promised payments that would qualify it to make an application to the fund. This is something of a revelation given that the fund had been quoted on a number of balance sheets in the income generated column presented at meetings between July 1902 and March 1905. Post March 1905 the fund was never again mentioned and ceased to be a line in any income column presented. The fund eventually closed all aspects of its administration in 1909. The example of the group's management of the 20th Century Fund opportunity points to the lack of the required proactive grip and sufficiency of oversight needed to successfully access

it and make the financial aspects of the project less burdensome. The opportunity was allowed to slip away.

The core of the group's approach to income generation centred primarily on goodwill donations, small fundraising events and loans from both private individuals and agreements with commercial institutions, some of which were subject to yearly interest payments. The number of loans taken is uncertain as is the number attracting interest and the percentage rates accompanying them.

Following the construction of the building it becomes clear that the general maintenance costs of running the new building are managed alongside the issue of repaying the debt accumulated by the project to build it. The table below is a summary illustrating aspects of the challenge to service and ultimately repay this debt between 1904 and 1921.

Date	Comment or Intervention	Total debt outstanding
4/11/1904	"After discussion it was unanimously resolved that a further effort be made during Xmas week to reduce the debt".	£830
15/3/1905	Mrs Carview's loan of £180 was called in. Revd. Whinecup secures another loan of £325 from Mr Shipley.	£975
23/2/1906	Sale of the old chapel on Church Walk for the much reduced sum of £120 helps with other income to reduce the debt.	£775
2/11/1906	Mrs Watkins' loan of £250 called in. A proposal is carried to secure a further loan of £300 at 3 to 4% interest.	Not reported.
15/2/1907	The account report shows a small reduction of the outstanding debt.	£725
20/11/1907	Proposal to launch a "Shilling Scheme" to address the building debt carried.	Not reported.
21/2/1908	Debt recorded as the same as February 1906. A donation by the Wesley Busy Bee group to the Shilling Fund does not impact the capital.	£725
8/3/1909	Loan debt remains the same following interest payments.	£725
10/2/1910	Brother Willows offers to take responsibility for this year's interest payments on the building	£725

	debt if £100 is raised to reduce the debt.	
15/2/1911	When the account spread sheet for the year was presented showing no reduction in the debt the committee agreed to use £120 from general funds and a small amount of "cash in hand". A separate record at the rear of the minute book indicates that brother Willows did cover the interest. However, the amount has been redacted from the record.	£599.3s, 6d.
22/2/1912	A rare entry at the rear of the minute book indicates that the interest paid for that year was £27.9s.0d. The meeting minutes show a small fall in the capital.	£575
19/2/1914	Most of the Trustee records for 1913 and 1914 are taken up with the purchase of a new organ the building debt remains unchanged when revealed in 1914	£575
18/2/1915	A loan from Mr Oxtby called in. Mr Willows tasked with securing a further loan from the Hexthorpe Trust at a rate of 3%	£575
12/2/1916	Meeting record hidden at the very back of the book? No change in the capital debt.	£575
Oct 1918	No change	£575
11/2/1920	A very decisive proposal is made and carried to write to the Chapel Building Committee ¹⁹ seeking a figure to help write off the debt.	£495
11/10/1920	Reported that the full liability has been paid.	£0

With the full debt repaid the church building project could now truly be claimed to be complete. We can say for certain that the final cost was well in excess of the original £1,500 estimate arrived at by the committee at its inaugural meeting in June 1901 and that it could be in excess of £3,000. A rough calculation that includes the stated cost of the structure being £2716. 15s. 5d plus a figure based on an average interest rate of 3.5%²⁰ on the average capital debt over 18 years. This would amount to around an additional £315 for servicing the loans required to maintain financial viability. This figure, if accepted as fair, would suggest the final total cost of the project was more like £3,021.16s.5d.

¹⁹ Not clarified but probably a circuit or national body?

²⁰ Based on the interest sum declared as paid in 1912.

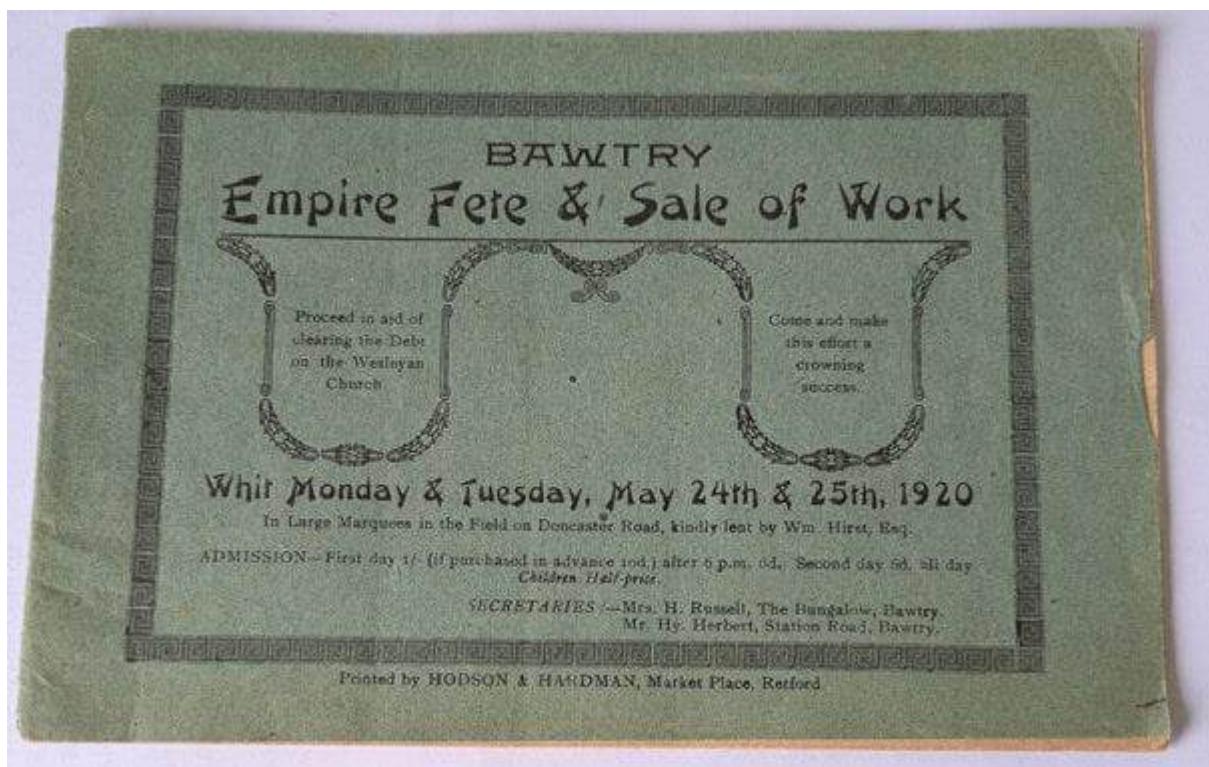
The only remaining question is whether the project had to rely on the Chapel Building Committee to bail the project out or was there an inhouse resolution? It would be nice to prove the latter and there is a piece of tangible evidence to strongly suggest that was the outcome.

On May 24th and 25th 1920 the grandly titled Bawtry Empire Fete - Sale of Works took place, its main purpose was to address the outstanding building project debt. The following sheet showing the cost of the fete and the monies made clearly shows that sufficient income was taken to cover the expenditure and meet the then current outstanding debt.

BALANCE SHEET OF FETE HELD IN FIELD IN BAWTRY.			
MAY 24th & 25th 1920.			
DESCRIPTION.	1920	1919	1918
Gate Money.	51	11	0
Swings.	30	13	82
Entertainments.	20	5	0
Fig Wrestling.	20	10	0
Fancy Work Stall.	20	0	5
Young Men's Stall.	30	11	0
Bible Class Stall.	40	10	0
Miss James Rossell Stall.	25	1	6
Mineral Water Stall.	11	8	5
Flower & Fruit Stall.	21	0	10
Toy Stall.	8	9	6
Sweet Stall.	12	18	81
Refreshment Stall.	68	0	0
Sewing Meeting Stall.	28	6	45
Sewing Meeting Tent.	19	17	0
Fee Room.	5	18	0
Carried Forward.	565	7	31
			108 0 0
Brought Forward:-	565	7	31
Professor Hatfield.	11	0	0
Ice Cream Van.	2	1	0
Cycles Stored.	1	0	9
Hidden Treasure.	2	17	6
Brush Tub.	2	11	68
Aunt Sally.	2	8	4
Fish Pond.	2	14	71
Parcel Packing.	2	3	4
Advertisements & Sale of Programmes.	7	5	0
Sports Entrance Fees.	5	14	6
Sunday School Purse.	56	14	8
Socials.	5	8	0
Special Efforts.	7	18	6
	2666	0	108
			0 0 0 0 108
To Balance:-	£ 566	0	8

Donated by Vin Brerrer.

This balance sheet came with the Empire Sales of Works programme donated to the Bawtry Heritage Group by Bawtry resident Vin Brerrer. Interestingly the committee minutes do not refer to this event and neither does the financial breakdown at the rear of the minute book. The official minutes of the October meeting of 1921 is equally vague on identifying the source which allowed for the debt to be paid off. It does seem fitting that on the balance of probability we take the plunge and attribute this success to the people of Bawtry and their Empire Fete rather than some distant body permitting the debt to be finalised by embracing the burden themselves. The balance sheet indicates that the expenditure for the fete was just over £108 with the takings coming in at around £666 leaving a balance of just over £558, more than enough to cover the remaining debt including interest.



Programme for the Empire Fete and Sales of Work. Donated by Vin Brerrer.

1921 to 2024

Notwithstanding that the books on the project to build a new Wesleyan Church in Bawtry could not be closed for 19 plus years after the meeting that launched the activity to build it; it remains remarkable that such a large and impressive building was operational within two years. For that, the original band of brothers should be commended for their energy and desire to see the project to fruition.

What of the original band of brothers?

Superintendent Minister Benjamin Carvosso Spencer

Marshall Wagstaff - Auctioneer

Henry Herbert - Draper

John Henry Eyre - Hairdresser

Fredrick George Robinson - Bootmaker

William George Ward - Draper

Herbert John Willows - Grocer

William Ainsley - Grocer

George Robert Hampsall - Platelayer

Ralph Andrew Carr - Draper

William Holmes - Coachman

John Brocklesby - Grocer

Sadly, only the names highlighted in green were present at the annual meeting in October 1921 and able to celebrate the final act of closure on the project. It is unclear how many were still active at that time. We do know via the My Methodist Minister online database that Superintendent Minister Benjamin Carvosso Spencer was still alive and well.

The image below was discovered in the church in the old school room during a research visit for this paper. Unfortunately there is no accompanying record of the people captured in the group. However, we do strongly suspect that the photograph was taken very near to the turn of the century, given the clothing and that it is attributed to Joseph Bottomley, a nationally renowned photographer who originated from Bradford, but was based in Epworth between 1891 and his death in 1909. It is difficult to be accurate with regard to the location of the image, but could it be in the area at the rear of the newly built church or on the land prior to the build? It seems certain that although members of the committee cannot be identified for certain, some members of this group will have been their contemporaries.



Image by Joseph Bottomley. Courtesy of the current church trustees.

Bawtry should feel proud and free to celebrate being the home of a building which, since its initial completion, and down through the decades has prompted comment about its positioning and the striking vista it provides. It is hard to imagine that the financial legacy left in the aftermath of the project was not a source of burden and unease that caused some to question the worth of the venture. With the passage of time it is easier to adopt a more mellow attitude and reflect on what is without doubt a broader legacy that begins with the presence of this grand building's iconic position in Bawtry's townscape. This paper is designed to prompt the town's consciousness of this architectural legacy and encourage vigilance in adopting a sense of protection for this fine and unmissable landmark that graces its centre.

In 2022 the Bawtry Heritage Group with that sense of vigilance in mind submitted an application to have the building recognised on the South Yorkshire Heritage List. Successful listing provides an enhanced element of local heritage protection.²¹ To achieve recognition the application demands a submission that covers content relating to at least 5 assessment criteria out of 8. The following was the BHG submission for Bawtry's Methodist Church.

²¹ <https://local-heritage-list.org.uk/south-yorkshire>

Description

"This Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was built in 1903 to replace the former chapels on Church Walk and Station Road. It is in a Gothic [style built] of red brick with stone detailing around windows, door surrounds, copings and string courses. The building provides a focal point terminating the views north along the High Street". (Taken from the Bawtry Neighbourhood Development Plan (BNPD) 2019-2032). The striking/imposing frontage of this building allied to its location at the northern end of the High Street presents an iconic vista to anyone entering not only Bawtry, but the county of South Yorkshire from the south. The BNPD goes on to capture the aesthetic importance of this when placing it in the wider context stating "there are impressive long views along the High Street in a north south direction. One such view is that taken northwards with the Town Hall, Barton and Crown Hotel in the foreground with the Methodist church in the background

Age

Dates from 1903 and therefore has stood in its prominent position as an iconic building in Bawtry for just short of 120 years. Its presence also provides, for the inquisitive, a study gateway into the history of Methodist worship in the town since 1806, when the first Wesleyan chapel was built in Bawtry (this is now a grade two listed building, on Church Walk). A Primitive Methodist chapel, no more than 50m away from the current chapel, was built in 1862. These two buildings along with the asset in this submission, remain as a reminder of this aspect of community life over two centuries.

Rarity

It would be difficult to claim the structure or its frontage as being particularly rare, given that it requires very little architectural expertise to recognise purpose built Methodist places of worship. However, its positioning, which provides the visual impact and imposing backdrop to the town's urban landscape, is rare indeed. There would be a very big hole in that urban landscape if this asset was lost without thought. There would be a hole in the town's architectural ambience that would be very difficult to replace.

Architectural and Artistic Interest

Across the nation there are many fine examples of bespoke Methodist Chapels. Its presence relates to a wider historical story and one might argue that of the many examples nationally, this one ranks higher than others.

Group Value

The group of buildings mentioned in the 'Age' section, including the 1806 Chapel on Church Walk (listed) and the 1862 Chapel on Station Road (now a theatre), have their exterior architectural integrity intact. Along with the asset application being made here these instantly recognisable buildings provide a visual prompt to the story of Methodist worship and community activity in Bawtry over two centuries. As this application is being prepared the current active Methodist Community in Bawtry is diminishing. The present chapel and its maintenance presents an additional challenge to this church community's future plans. This nomination seeks to raise awareness of this wider group context.

Historic Interest

The current chapel is a reference point on Bawtry's Heritage Trail, depicted via a large public display map in the Market Place and via leaflets available from the local community library. In two highly successful historic walks conducted by the Bawtry Heritage Group as part of the Summer Art Week in June 2022, the asset was included as part of the summarised guided tour of the town enjoyed by over 50 members of the public. As part of the tour, participants were introduced to the asset from the southern end of the High Street (because of its striking presence) and challenged to identify the other two previous chapels from the 19th century as the tour progressed. This example is part of an historical

grouping, providing a tangible link in relation to, architecture, religious development and social attitudes.

Landmark Status

It is the location of the building within the town that is iconic. For well over 100 years its presence at the northern end of Bawtry High Street has been a constant backdrop to events and it provides a readily recognisable feature in town images depicting the day to day community/society developments across that same period. The slight elevation of the building with steps up from the gateway at street level adds to its landmark position in the street scene. This asset could not be easily replaced in a manner that did not detrimentally impact on the visual elegance it provides within the urban settlement.

In February 2024 the South Yorkshire Archaeological Service, administrators of the list, confirmed that the BHG submission had been agreed as acceptable for listing. Sadly at the time of writing we are still waiting for the church to be accessible on the public portal of the list. This is due to the process being adopted by the City of Doncaster Council (CDC) ensuring that the list protection is maximised as far as is permitted by Article 4 directions of the Local Planning Act,²² before any location on the list becomes public facing. Whilst this wait is a little frustrating the BHG supports the process adopted by the CDC as best practice.

2025

Beyond the endeavour to build a noteworthy structure and the creativity required to pay the final bill, has there been an additional legacy one might attribute to this building? Is the church's legacy only about being a place of religious worship for 122 years and counting? Is there more we should present before letting the story rest for posterity?

The first observation in June 1903 was that Bawtry now had a notable headquarters from where an active Methodist community could worship and contribute to the wider Methodist world. Contributions and support for national causes relating to "worn-out ministers" and funds for supporting ageing ministers along with local initiatives such as, providing space for the Debating Society and the formation of a Boys Brigade in February 1919 are all captured in the record.

Of course it is fair to assume that the new church re-energised a confident and expanding Methodist community in Bawtry. Parochially this was most apparent in the expansion of the church's Sunday School, servicing the religious and moral development of the younger members of the congregation.

²² The "Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Article 4" does not refer to a section within that specific Act but rather to a planning mechanism called an [Article 4 Direction](#). This is a planning tool used by local authorities to remove permitted development rights and require planning permission for certain buildings. This allows the local council to protect the historic character of an area by requiring applications for works like window replacement or external alterations that might otherwise be allowed without permission.

Every year young girls from the Sunday School had the opportunity to become the Anniversary Queen. The image below shows the queen from 1971. The young girl wearing the crown and red robe for that year is Susan Old.



Photograph courtesy of Susan Punton (nee Old).

1961	SUSANNE MORTIMER
1962	BARBARA O'LEARY
1963	SARAH HUTCHINSON
1964	PAT WRIGHT
1965	CHAROL WATSON
1966	MARY MCGEELEY
1967	ALISON BELL
1968	JOAN WILSON
1969	FRANCES COLLEY
1970	PAUL TURNER
1971	SUSAN OLD
1972	JULIA HUCKENBERRY
1973	Carol Watson
1974	Julie Huckerby
1975	ANITA ECKERSON
1976	Patricia Scott
1977	Caroline Mad...
1978	Laura Rose
1979	Angela Baker
1980	Suzi Hartman
1981	Leanne Thompson
1982	Lynn Baker
1983	Suzanne Scott
1984	Monique Tanguay
1985	Mariah Rhodes

1986	Sarah Hawksley
1987	Wadeena Thompson
1988	Samantha Payne
1989	Susan Winn
1990	Laura Barton
1991	Judith Winn
1992	Patricia Jones

Hand written record of anniversary queens 1961-1992. Courtesy of Susan Punton.

Although the celebration of the Anniversary Queen is no more, I suspect those on the list above look back with pride and affection regarding their participation and what it meant to them.

The new spacious facilities allowed the Church to expand its reach into the community well into the 20th century. Many Bawtry parents will recall with gratitude and affection the playgroup that operated in the school room space in the final quarter of the 20th century.

This grand building began life with no organ to support the choir and congregation in bringing the great hymns of the 19th century to life. The 1993 Flower Festival Programme speculated that a piano or harmonium might have been employed. The same document records that “a fund for a new organ was opened in 1909”. The records of minutes do not reveal that the church trustees formalised this activity until 1912. At the meeting held on February 22nd when it was proposed, on the basis of discussions undertaken in November 1911, to form a committee to make this aspiration a reality and that a delegation should visit Sutton to inspect an organ there for its suitability.²³

The June meeting of that year recorded that a quote from Mr Keates of Sheffield to supply an organ for £250 was carried unanimously as was the proposal that Mr Mckenzie’s should superintend the building of the organ.²⁴ Additionally, a small group was tasked to pursue the possibility of financial support for the new organ from A Carnegie Esquire.

The meeting in September 1912 was presented with a letter from the Carnegie Corporation of New York which stated;

“Responding to your appeal (the) Carnegie Corporation of New York will be glad to provide the last half of the cost of an organ for your church, at the price of two hundred and fifty pounds (£250), when the first half has been collected by the congregation and payment of the organ is due. This offer expires 31st August 1913 if the conditions attached are not fulfilled”.

This response prompted immediate action, with the proposal to task Mr Keates with the installation of an organ as previously specified and that Mr Keates be asked to attend Bawtry and meet Mr McKenzie to ensure that any need for alterations for the installation was captured for consideration. Not only that, but the date for completion was set for March 12th 1913 and that the first official

²³ The 1912 meeting refers to the church needing to have “a new organ”. It is not clear if this means to replace one in existence or one that is not second hand? It does seem odd that there was no organ at all for the first decade of the church’s existence, unless other financial pressures blocked the enterprise?

²⁴ Strangely Mr Mckenzie, who is recorded reporting to the meeting on other issues, is never recorded as a Trustee.

playing of the organ was to take place on Sunday 16th March 1913. The minutes also indicated that the church was without an organist and that the need for one should be advertised in the local press.

It is clear from the record of 15th February 1913 that a good deal of adjustment was required internally to safely locate the organ and the facilities for the choir. This chimes with the observation made in the 1993 pamphlet that the choir seating in front of the organ was installed at the same time as the organ.

The 1993 document priced the instrument purchased at £250 in 1913; this being the equivalent of around £30,000 80 years later.

The trustee minutes do not capture any detail regarding ceremonies associated with the formal introduction of the new organ to the congregation. The meeting record for 15th February 1913 does leave us with the impression that everything was fine and on time as it was agreed to purchase new music books for the choir and to cover expenses incurred by Mr Mckenzie. What was certain was that the church now had an organ worthy of its grandeur.

"A very handsome instrument for a building of this size" wrote the author of the 1993 Flower Festival Programme. It would be difficult not to agree that this impressive feature, which has stood in position and enhanced services for 112 years, builds on the overall heritage value of this Bawtry landmark.



The organ as it is today.

The building has helped the Methodist community, for well over one hundred years, to engage with the broader population; providing space for weekly/monthly events such as those advertised below.

Bawtry Methodist Church

Monthly COFFEE MORNING on Saturday 6th September from 10.00am to 11.30am
We have a Cake, Craft and Book stalls, with lots of goodies. Entry by donation. Refreshments and a Raffle
On Saturday 20th SEPTEMBER we are having an Evening with TICKHILL MALE VOICE CHOIR.
From 7pm
Tickets available from John Winn ring 07771 601338 or Pay on The Door.
Are you looking for a Venue?
We have a large carpeted room with Full kitchen facilities, Able and Disabled Toilets
Ring John as above or Jannette on 07877 394383

Taken from Bawtry Today, September 2025.



From the church public noticeboard, September 2025.



Doncaster Rock Choir at the Methodist Church

Taken from Bawtry News, August/September 2025. The church was a venue for Bawtry Festival activity.

Before closing our tale it seems fitting having delved deeply into what we might term as the known heritage value of this Bawtry landmark to draw attention to some mysteries we have failed to resolve through our exploration of the records. One might consider these to be equally important aspects of this landmark's heritage.

Firstly, what happened to the foundation stones laid with ceremony and much personal investment in June 1902? These initial components of the planned structure were inscribed with the names of the major donors to the scheme; a memorial to their generosity. One would expect these to be a visible reminder through the decades that followed. However, after much inquiry and scrutiny of the site they are elusive and no-one is able to shed light on what happened to them.

Secondly, the brass tablet commissioned at the meeting of trustees in 1903, is something unknown to those who represent today's congregation and a search has proved negative. Of course it may never have been made and as such never displayed.



1



2



3

Courtesy of the Methodist Church Committee.

The photographs above are of two ceremonial mallets presented as part of the foundation stone laying in September 1902. The one on the left in photograph three has a space for the name of the person it was presented to, however, it is blank, or the name has faded over time? That said, the mallet in photograph one was presented to a young woman called Alys Kellett.

It is highly unlikely that we will ever find out who was the recipient of the mallet bearing no name. However, we do know quite a lot about Miss Kellett. Firstly, she was the niece of a local entrepreneur and councillor William Kellett and she lived with him and his wife on Swan Street. There is no record of her uncle being actively involved in the building of the church or for that matter any aspect of the Methodist movement in Bawtry. We do know that Alys was married in the new church in 1909 and remained a Bawtry resident until her death in 1959. The mystery here is why was she presented with the mallet? There is no mention of any such presentation in the church trustees record or in the press reports at the time. For now this remains a mystery.

Finally, to the reader who finds themselves reading this paragraph after digesting the contents of all those that precede it; thank you and we hope you enjoyed the story. Here at the Bawtry Heritage Group we hope that you have been prompted to think about the Methodist Church in a manner you may not have considered before and that along with us believe it to be a heritage asset for the town worthy of some degree of preservation into the future. If you do, please let us know by contacting us at bawtryheritagegroup@gmail.com and help us build an archive of public opinion that can be presented if needed in the future.

M P Maguire,
Bawtry Heritage Group Trustee,
10/10/2025.

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Susan Punton, Member of the Methodist Church in Bawtry who supplied a considerable amount of information and personal energy to the project.

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