

Kensal Green, London. Unfortunately this window was destroyed by enemy action in the Second World War.

The unusual pulpit (about £100) was presented by Mr. Walter Webber of London. It is made of Caen stone, with Italian Griotte marble panels, shafts of Genoa green marble and the caps and bases of the shafts of Devonshire red marble. The beautifully carved angel has a reference to a text from Revelation 14:6-7.

Outside, on either side of the window over the front entrance of the church, are carved stone faces reputed to be of the Rev. George Terry and Mr. George Burt; by whose efforts the church was built.

The Organ

Until the debt of £3,000 was paid off in 1891 a harmonium was used, then a "good American organ" was acquired. In 1896 a pipe organ was installed. Tradition says this came from St. Mary's Parish Church, and was eventually paid for in February 1898. It lasted over 100 years, even after being damaged during the 1939-45 war, but was replaced by the present instrument in the 1980s. When the church was renovated in 1997, the old organ and choir seats were removed, and the pulpit was moved back to the wall, leaving a raised area to be used flexibly.

Centenary 1907

In May 1907 Rev. Thomas Ivens, Superintendent Minister led the Trustees to build a new Hall on the

site of the 1807 Chapel to mark the Centenary. By November the building was complete. Raising the money was achieved within 12 months of the completion.

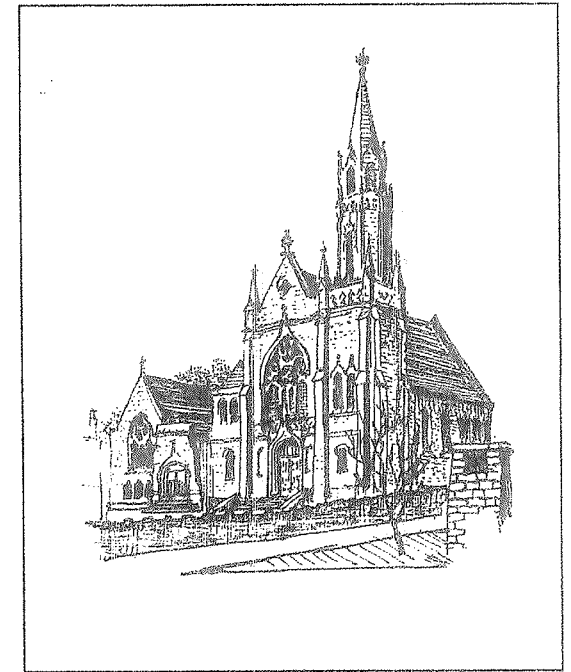
World War 1939-45

Bomb damage to the window in 1941 and further damage in 1942 rendered the church unusable, and after a short time sharing the Congregational and later the Baptist Churches, Methodist services were resumed in the Hall from 5th September 1943. After the end of the war the church was repaired and reopened in 1948. The original window was replaced by a new one, depicting the Ascension.

The years after WWII were active, with a flourishing Wesley Guild, Drama Group, House Groups, and the start of the Swanage Christian Centre on Methodist premises.

Refurbishment 1997

In the late 1990s heating problems, the "death" of the organ and both dry and wet rot in the floor led to the complete refurbishment of the Church, and later the Hall. The pews were replaced by chairs, the area below the balcony was converted into a lounge with a kitchen, separated from the worship area by a glass screen. This substantial project was achieved in large part by the labour of members and friends of the church: about 12% of the total cost was offset by this DIY effort. And the work of the church goes on...!



A SHORT ACCOUNT OF SWANAGE METHODIST CHURCH

By H. Mary Wills

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First Steps

Methodism in Swanage started when John Wesley first came in October 1774. He was invited by Mary Burt, who walked to Salisbury (48 miles) to ask him to come to the town to preach.

He addressed a large congregation in a meadow, probably just north of where Manwell Lane is now, and stayed the night with Mary Burt and her family at their cottage in the High Street. The building was later known as "Wesley's Cottage", and was destroyed by bombing on 14th May 1942.

Wesley visited again on 13th August 1787, when his ship (en route to Guernsey) was forced by a storm to take shelter in Swanage. He preached at the Presbyterian Meeting House, because the Methodist Room was too small, and visited various old friends before leaving again on his ship that same night.

The Methodist Meeting Room at that time was in a small cottage near the present church, and was 14ft by 12ft(4.3m x 3.6m) with a wooden beam 4ft6in (1.4m) high across the middle. The highest part of the ceiling was 6ft6in (2m), and there was one window 4ft by 3ft (1.2m x 0.9m) in the gable end.

Building a Chapel

In 1807 the church leaders bought land near the old building for £50, and personally started digging the foundations. Following an appeal for funds £70 was raised, and local workers collected stone dust from the street for mortar. Within a few months the

Chapel was completed: it cost £980 and had seats for 250.

The present building is Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, and the address is 'Jubilee Square, High Street' – the Square was named in the 1830s on the occasion of a grand United Sunday Schools Jubilee Rally which started and finished in the open space alongside the 1807 church.

In 1838 a tablet was placed in the chapel by Robert Burt (son of Mary) in memory of his parents, and in 1848 another tablet, dedicated by the Burt family, was added to remember Robert's own death.

Extension

By 1842 more accommodation was needed, and after an argument and a violent altercation with a neighbour who had encroached on Chapel land, the leaders managed to get their extension built. Renewal Meetings and Prayer Meetings followed this expansion, and led to the conversion of 148 people.

By the 1880s, the 1807 Chapel, even with the 1842 extension, was inadequate, old-fashioned, and very cramped. When a new Superintendent Minister, the Rev. George Terry was appointed in 1883 he proposed that a new Church should be built.

A New Church

So, in 1884 the Trustees acquired land next to the existing building. It cost £800, and was bought from Mr. George Burt. An architect, Mr. Jennings, of

Bucknall & Jennings of Bristol & Swansea, was appointed, and some funds were raised – not nearly enough – but on 14th August 1885 the foundation stones were laid in the hope and faith that the money would be found.

Building was carried out by Mr. W. Griffin of Broadstone (interior and all woodwork) and Mr. Wellstead of Swanage (stonework and all outside work). The total cost was £5,800 but when opened there was a deficit of £3,000! However by 1891 the deficit had been cleared.

On 1st July 1886 the new church was officially opened. The Celebrations started with Luncheon at the Town Hall, and continued with the Opening Service at 3.30 pm at the church. This was followed by a Public Tea for 400 (at 1 shilling a head – 0.5p!).

George Burt was the grandson of Mary Burt, who had walked to Salisbury in 1774 to fetch John Wesley. After a very successful career, this London builder and entrepreneur retired back to Swanage and proceeded to put his stamp on it - but that is another story.

Features of the Church

Burt donated the spire (cost £540) of the new Church, in memory of his grandmother; other members of the Burt family paid for a special stained glass window. This depicted Faith, Hope & Charity, above a representation of Mary inviting John Wesley to Swanage. The whole window (cost over £100) was made by Messrs F. & A. Luxford of