

# BELPER CENTRAL METHODIST CHURCH



# 1807 - 2007

# The Year in Pictures



## **Circuit and Civic Service held on Sunday 4th March**

President of the Methodist Conference, Revd Graham Carter, with the Lord Lieutenant of Derbyshire, civic leaders and ministers.



## **The Regal Singers from the Isle of Man.**

A Concert held on Friday 22nd June and organised with The Rotary Club of Belper and Duffield.



## A message from our Minister, Revd Susan Chambers

**I**t is a delight to be able to contribute to this booklet celebrating 200 years of worship, witness and preaching the good news of Jesus Christ in the one building in Belper. At such a time it is good to rejoice in the fact that 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever' (Hebrews 13: 8). He is always the one who provides the way for our sins to be forgiven so that we can have a relationship with God. It is him whom we continue to worship and praise today and in the coming years.

Much has changed over the last 200 years in society, in Belper and in the church but the message we proclaim has remained the same and is as relevant as ever.

This booklet has been produced as a reminder of all that has happened over the years and will no doubt bring back memories for many. Others will learn from it. Whoever you are - as you read it and learn or reminisce, don't forget to give thanks to God for all that it reminds you of and the part the church community played, could play or still plays in your life. Wherever you are reading this, God is with you, interested in you and loves you!

We are very grateful to all who have made this publication possible and although I won't be here perhaps there will be another one after 300 years!!!

God Bless you all

*Susan*

# “I look upon the whole world as my parish” *John Wesley*

**T**owards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the British Isles were caught up in a non-conformist religious revival, led by Protestant reformers. There was a new radical approach to faith, with fervent open air preaching, a call to repentance and scriptural holiness, and a new social gospel of salvation for all who repented and believed. Among the leaders of this revival were the brothers John and Charles Wesley, whose followers became known as “Methodists”.



John Wesley was born in 1703, the 15<sup>th</sup> of 19 children born to the Revd Samuel Wesley and his wife Susannah. The family lived in the rectory at Epworth in Lincolnshire. There they survived two major house fires, the second of these almost claiming the life of the six year old John, who was rescued at the last moment from an upstairs window. This experience led him to believe that God had a purpose for his life, and he described himself as “a brand plucked from the burning.”

During his time as a student at Christ Church, Oxford, John and his brother Charles established a “holy club”. Their methodical, disciplined approach to religion led them to being nicknamed “Methodists”. John was ordained an Anglican clergyman, but became dissatisfied with Anglican worship and longed for a deeper spiritual experience. This longing was increased by his contact with Moravian Christians. He became a controversial figure in the established church and, finding himself banned from many churches, began to preach in homes, barns and in the open air. His heartfelt preaching won many converts to this new form of religion.

John Wesley famously had a conversion experience in Aldersgate, London on May 24<sup>th</sup> 1738, which increased the urgency of his mission. He was a campaigner on social issues such as the abolition of slavery, prison reform and universal education. By the time of his death in 1791, the Methodist movement was well established with 135,000 members in Britain alone.





Thomas Slater,  
known as “Parson Slater, of Shottle.” Born  
1738 - died 1821

A local preacher from 1770, he preached in every town, village and hamlet in the County of Derby. He opened his house at Shottle in 1767 to the Methodist Preachers who regularly visited it in the “Derbyshire Round.” In 1816, the Shottle Chapel was built on his ground. He preached the first Methodist sermon in the street at Duffield in 1770, gathered together a Society, opened a Preaching Room and in 1777, laid the foundation stone of the old Chapel, of which he was Trustee. He gave the ground on which the first Methodist Chapel in Belper was built, in 1782, of which he was Treasurer and Trustee and also Trustee of the present Chapel, built in 1807. One of Thomas Slater’s direct descendants is still a member of our church, some 240 years after his conversion

Among those inspired and converted by the message was Thomas Slater, a farmer from Shottle near Belper. He held Methodist meetings in the kitchen of his farmhouse and became Belper’s first Methodist preacher. In 1782, the Methodist society he had founded built themselves their first chapel on Chapel Street.

The local Methodist historian, George A Fletcher, claimed that John Wesley preached in this chapel before the roof was closed in the year 1782. Certainly, Wesley was in Derby at the time and there is a gap in his diary.

However, Wesley’s journal for July 5th 1786 does show that he visited the town on that date, which must have been a red-letter day for the Methodists of Belper and the surrounding area. That first Methodist chapel is no longer standing, but it was sited in the garden of the current building.

By 1807 the numbers gathering for worship had grown too large for the chapel, and the building we now know as Central Methodist was begun. The land was once again donated by Thomas Slater. The cost of building was £3,000. It was part of the Wesleyan branch of Methodism, was called "Trinity Methodist" and was formally opened on June 28th 1807.

Trinity Methodist Church was "the wonder of the country for many miles around", accommodating as it did 1400 souls. This was due in part to the innovative use of iron pillars to support the horse shoe shaped gallery; technology which had only a few years before been used for the first time in the building of Strutt's Mill in Belper.

At first, the congregation were all seated in the gallery, with the ground floor used for the children of the Sunday School, who sat on benches overlooked by the stern gaze of their teachers who supervised them from high-legged stools. Apparently they were not averse to poking their scholars with long poles if their attention should wander during the service!

One of the foremost families in Derbyshire industry, the Bournes, were members of Trinity Methodist. They were the founders and owners of the famous Denby and Belper potteries.

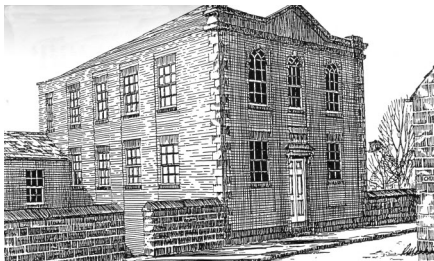
William Bourne of Belper was one of the founding fathers of Trinity Methodist and along with Samuel Froggatt founded the Sunday School in 1791. When the original church was built in 1782 he made a donation of £15 towards the building costs; as the total cost of the project was only £135, this was obviously a very substantial amount.

Two of the Bourne descendents are currently retired ministers and they have been invited to preach at special services during this Bicentenary year.

In 1841 the new schoolroom was opened, which was used as a day school and also as a Sunday School. This freed up the ground floor, and in 1873 the present box pews were installed. The pulpit, which had been high on the west wall, was replaced by the current model in the central position. With the addition of a new organ, the chapel as we now know it was complete by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

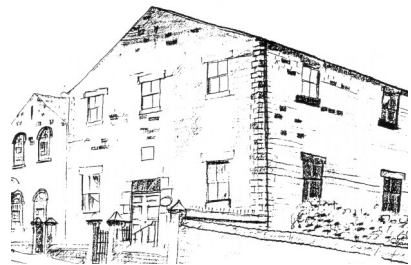
Among the more bizarre events in our history is the story of a 19<sup>th</sup> century earthquake. In 1894 an elderly gentleman in his 80's recalled how when he was a young boy, the building had shaken during morning worship. This had caused much dismay among the congregation who fled outside for safety.

In 1965 three Methodist churches in the town of Belper amalgamated. Field Head (the Primitive Methodist chapel in Chesterfield Road), and Salem (the United Methodist chapel in Green Lane) closed their premises and joined with Trinity to form the new Belper Central Methodist Church. At this time there were 142 members of the new united church and 922 Methodists in the Belper Circuit, worshipping in 24 churches.



**Salem Methodist Chapel**

Green Lane  
Built 1856



**Field Head Methodist Church**

Chesterfield Road  
Built 1817, rebuilt 1822

Both buildings were demolished in 1966

Ministers who have served here since the union of the three churches in 1965 include:

Revd Victor Sallnow	(1964 - 1966)
Revd Albert Gibbins	(1966 - 1971)
Revd Kenneth Cheater	(1971 - 1978)
Revd Kenneth Cupit	(1978 - 1986)
Revd Peter Kindleysides	(1986 - 1992)
Sister Pat Moore	(1992 - 1993)
Revd Ian Williamson	(1993 - 1998)
Revd Dr Robert Whitfield	(1998 - 2002)
Revd John Amankwatia	(2002 - 2003)
Revd Susan Chambers	(2003 .....)
and Revd David Blanchflower (Team Ministry)	

(their photographs are shown opposite .....

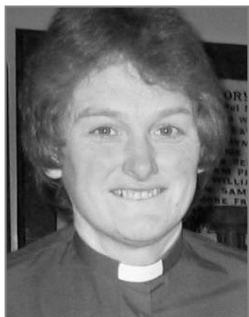
The minister who is currently responsible for Central Methodist is Revd. Susan Chambers, who joined us in 2003 from Morecambe in Lancashire.

We have two supernumerary (retired) ministers in our membership: Revd Kenneth Cupit, a former minister at this church, and Revd Christopher Scotchbrook, who has just retired to the town.

In past years, two members of our church family have become ordained as Methodist ministers; Rev Harry Jones and Rev Tim Thorpe.

A selection of photographs from church members are shown on pages 10 and 11 and they remind us of some of the events and celebrations we have shared over the last half century.







Annual Fayre  
1951



Garden Party 1960



Garden Party  
1965



Pantomime "Humpty Dumpty" 1976 (*Belper News*)



Ladies Fellowship 1985

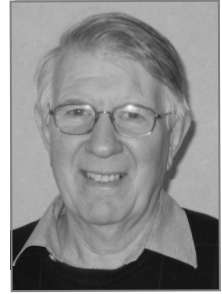
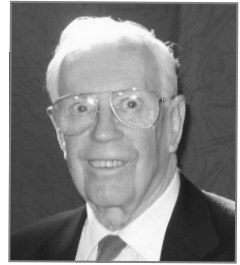
**B**elper Central Methodist remains one of the largest churches in the Belper Circuit, which now numbers 12 churches and our membership stands at 73. We meet for worship every Sunday at 10.45 a.m. and 6.15 p.m. There is also an active Sunday School, now known as the Sunday Club, who meet weekly.



Sunday School 1992

The current church officers, pictured opposite, are as follows:

Church Stewards:	Mr Stephen Parkin Mrs Doreen Scotney Mrs Rachael Walker
Church Treasurer:	Mr David Gent
Assistant Treasurer:	Mr Barry Titterton
Church Secretary:	Mrs Glenys Briggs
Sunday Club Leader:	Mrs Liz Allen
Organist:	Mr Vernon Barnes
Property Stewards:	Mrs Anne Kettlewell Mr Carl Postles Mr Anthony Kettlewell
Local Preachers:	Mr Keith Bryan Mr David Gent Mrs Sheila Gent Mr Peter Morley Mrs Janet Titterton







Rainbows



Brownies



Cubs



Scouts

Our school room and Scout hut are in constant use. We have many youth organisations meeting on our premises, including Rainbows, Brownies and Guides, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts.





Play Group  
Leaders



Parent & Toddler Group



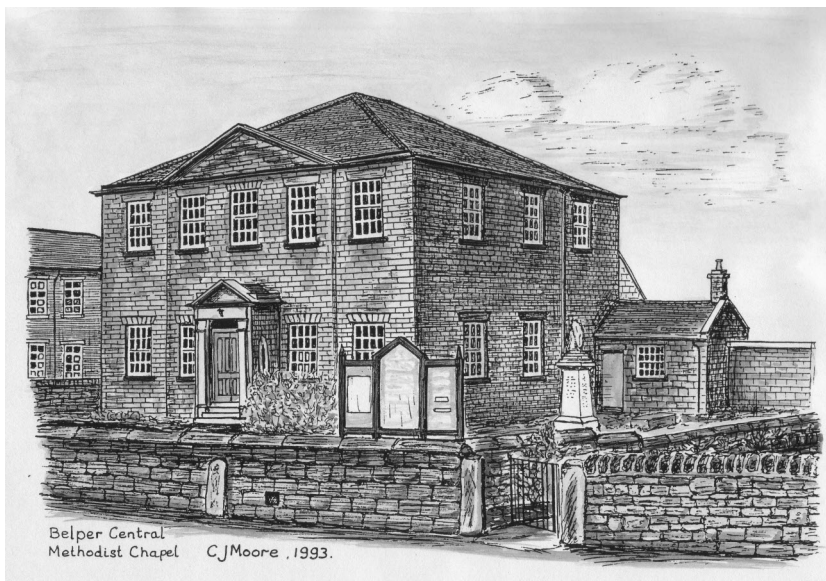
Ladies Thursday Group



Ladies Fellowship

We have a Pre-school Playgroup and a Parent & Toddler group. There are also two active ladies' meetings and a Friday coffee morning. Other groups such as Belper Musical Theatre, Keep-fit and dancing classes are also regular users of our rooms.

Our building in the church grounds, known as “The Cottage” is home to “The Cottage Project”, an ecumenical Christian project supported by several Belper churches that aims to serve the local community by providing facilities for lunch clubs, counselling and advice, and self-help groups.



Belper Central Methodist Church is a listed building and as such, there are restrictions upon the restoration and building work that can be carried out. Recent improvements have included complete re-decoration and installation of appropriate lighting, restoration and repair of the original Georgian sash windows, and an overhaul of the pipe organ. Ongoing work includes re-pointing the exterior stonework, installation of disabled access and toilet facilities, and improvements to the communion and worship areas. Thus, the members strive to meet the needs of a 21st century church family while remaining true to the heritage of the past 200 years.

We have celebrated our Bi-centenary year with special services, which have been conducted by previous ministers. We have been privileged to host a visit by the President of the Conference, Revd Graham Carter. Our Church Anniversary on June 28<sup>th</sup> co-incided with a Flower Festival, entitled “Past, Present and Future”. There have been social events, lunches, dinners, dances, concerts and parties. We have held services celebrating those baptisms and marriages that have taken place on our premises. We have, for the first time, taken part in the Annual Belper Well Dressings. The church has been visited by interested people from all over the world, including local groups and school children, who have learned of our history and heritage.



**Preparing the Well Dressing**

The outline of the design is marked out on the damp clay with black wool and the picture is built up using different coloured natural materials, such as gravel, wood and seeds. The last areas to be filled are those coloured with flower petals as those fade after a few days in strong light.

# The Future ?

**C**hristian worship, service and witness have been the common thread running through 200 years. The church has seen many changes in the community it serves, and no doubt it will continue to do so. Our founding fathers could never have imagined the challenges and opportunities that we face in 2007, but they trusted their future to Almighty God. As we remember them and look to our own future, let us do the same.

This, this is the God we adore,  
Our faithful, unchangeable friend  
Whose love is as great as His power  
And neither knows measure nor end.

'Tis Jesus the first and the last  
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home.  
We'll praise Him for all that is past  
And trust Him for all that's to come.

*Joseph Hart, 1712-68*

## Epilogue

For each new venture, give us new heart  
For each new step, give us new strength  
For each new problem give us new wisdom  
For all things new, give us the word that is old,  
Yet ever new.

Amen



### **Flower Festival “1807 - 2007: Past, Present and Future”**

The Flower Festival started with a Special Service on Thursday 28th June to commemorate the Bicentenary of the Chapel’s opening.



### **Celebration of Marriage Service held on Sunday 15th July**

The service was led by the Revd Ian Williamson and the chapel was decorated with photographs and memorabilia from couples who had been married there in a period covering 64 years





Some of the banners displayed in the chapel.

The Banner Group was formed in 1988 and the members have designed and made a selection of banners which are used when appropriate. Three banners have been presented to other churches, two in Hull and one to Heage Chapel.

*A full account of the history of the Chapel can be found in the book "Methodism in Belper" by George Barrass and we thank Mrs Audrey Barrass for allowing us to use it.*

[www.belpercentralmethodist.co.uk](http://www.belpercentralmethodist.co.uk)