

# Belper Unitarian Chapel

## WHO ARE THESE UNITARIANS?

We are a Free Church.

We do not seek to impose any particular creed upon either Minister or Members.

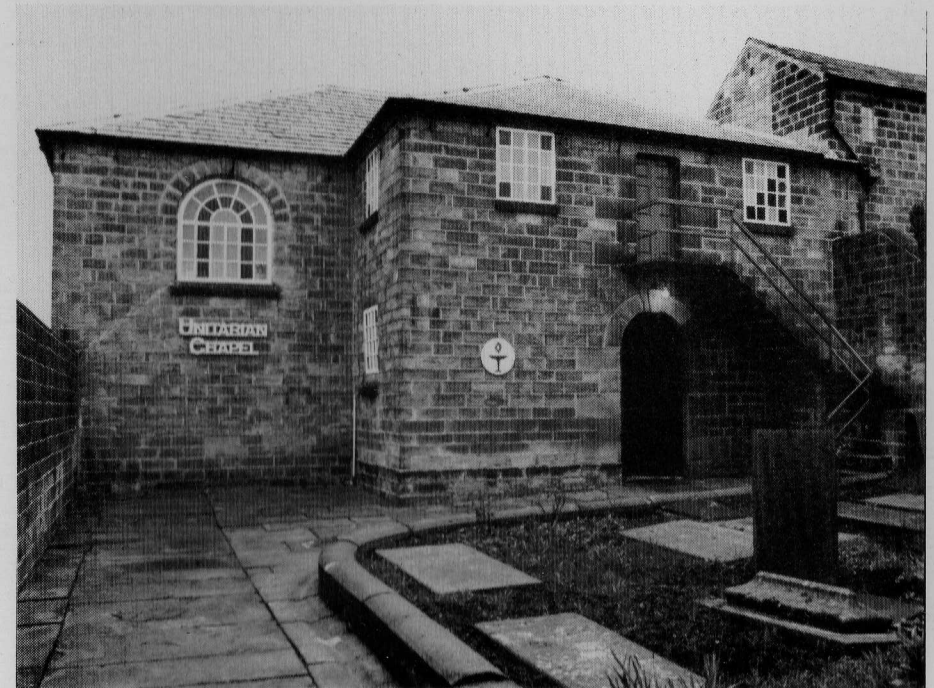
We affirm the right of each individual to follow the light of inward understanding wherever it may lead.

We have our roots in the Christian Faith, but we salute the faithful of all the great world religions because we hold that the love of God embraces all the members of the human family.

We welcome new discoveries, new thought, and all forms of culture as aids to a clearer understanding of the divine dimension in our lives and in our world.

We reverence all the good which the past has known, but we refuse to live on our capital for we hold that the best is yet to be.

Our faith, therefore, is always a continuing adventure.



*Present Chapel – Field Row, off Green Lane*

In re-printing this "historical sketch" of the Unitarian Chapel in Belper, first published in 1978, we have taken the opportunity of including some fresh material and of bringing information up to date. We still have the hope that one day someone will have the time and skill, and the patience, to do the research necessary for a fuller and more detailed history of the chapel. In the meantime we offer this "sketch" in the belief that it will be interesting and useful, and we renew our indebtedness to Dr. David Wykes for the original "outline". He used the following sources—

*Aspland MSS*, at Manchester College, Oxford.

C. G. Bolam's *Three Hundred Years 1662-1962* (Nottingham 1962).

*Index of Obituaries 1796-1943* at Manchester College, Oxford.

E. Calamy's *An Account Of The Ministers, Ejected or Silenced* (London 1713)

John Evans *List of Dissenting Congregations 1715-1729*.

R. S. Fitton and A. P. Wadsworth's *The Strutts and the Arkwrights 1758-1830* (Manchester 1958).

Additional material was added from local sources, including the Minute Books of the Chapel Committee from 1859 to the present day, and information supplied by the late Mrs. F. C. Robson and members of the Belper Historical Society.

This re-print has used material from the Sunday School Minute Book, and from the newly re-discovered *Sunday School Book* of 1856, as well as from more recent research.

The photographs are different from those used in the first publication.

Rev. Derek Smith (May 1994)

### ERRATA

In the middle of page 3

"1660" should read "1690".

Towards the bottom of page 10

"1850" should read "1890"

## THE CHAPEL

The Unitarian Chapel at Belper in Derbyshire is tucked away up Field Row, off Green Lane. The well known local industrialist had the central rectangular section built in 1788, on land known as "Short Lands" which he had purchased from the Lord of the Manor of Beaurepair, Mr. Richard P. Jodrell. The two side sections were added some years later, though their exact dating is unknown, and historians hold different views. It is possible that the two side sections were added at different times! There is some evidence<sup>1</sup> that the right hand section as you enter the chapel was there by 1805, and not later than 1815. There is also some evidence<sup>2</sup> that the left hand section was there by 1821, and no later than 1823<sup>3</sup>.

The appeal of this stone, well proportioned building, is that it remains very much as it was originally built, with many interesting, if not unique, features. Externally at the front there is the cantilevered stone stairway, considered to be "quite a rarity"<sup>4</sup>,

the only means of access to the internal gallery. Internally there are the original box-pews set in tiers rising from the centre of the chapel on one side, and the choir and children's seating rising in tiers from the centre on the other side. Underneath the tiered box-pews



*Inside the present chapel*

there is an arched catacomb, entered only from the outside, where members of the Strutt family are interred in simple, unadorned, shelf-like compartments. Although there is no specific proof, there is a well documented tradition<sup>5</sup> that Jedediah Strutt, and his brother William, are buried somewhere at the chapel. Inside the chapel there are also the typically Strutt iron cruciform columns; a

1. James Hickin's 1805 Map Of Belper.

2. George Henry Strutt, whose body is interred in the catacomb, died in 1821.

3. The Derby Reporter of the 22nd May, 1823, records that the Belper Female Friendly Society held a service in the chapel. They had 455 members!

4. A Survey carried out by the Amber Valley District Council in 1976.

5. The earliest known reference is in the Rev. David Peter Davies' *A New Historical and Descriptive View of Derbyshire*, published in 1811. Davies had been appointed minister at the chapel in 1810 - only thirteen years after the death of Jedediah Strutt!

framed lithograph, engraved by H. Mier, of the Joseph Wright portrait of Jedediah Strutt; and a gallery clock made by the firm of John Whitehurst of Derby - and known to be earlier than 1810.

These are features which, unfortunately, have too rarely survived in many non-conformist chapels following the "improvements" carried out by many congregations around the close of the 19th century.

## ROOTS

The congregation, however, has its roots in the middle of the 17th century. These roots belong to the period of the oldest non-conformist congregations in Derbyshire which trace their origins back to the great ejection of 1662. Two years earlier, in 1660, the Restoration of Charles II had meant the re-establishment of the Church of England. This, perhaps not surprisingly, had resulted in an Anglican reaction against the many puritan clergy who had become settled in parish livings during the Commonwealth. There were a number of acts, of which the 1662 Act of Uniformity had the most notable impact, which created the religious divisions between the Church of England and the Non-conformists, or Dissenters as they were often called. The imposition of uniformity of belief, of worship, and church authority, meant the acceptance of the Book of Common Prayer in every detail, the recognition of episcopal authority, and the renouncing of the Solemn League and Covenant. In all 1,909<sup>1</sup> clergymen and schoolmasters refused to conform, and were ejected from their livings or academic appointments between 1660 and 1662. In Derbyshire thirty-eight were ejected, of whom four later conformed.

One of the ejected ministers was the Rev. Samuel Charles (1635-1693) of Mickleover. Born at Chesterfield, and educated at Cambridge, he first settled at Kniveton near Ashbourne. Although actively preaching he was not formally ordained until 1655 when he exhibited his thesis before the Wirksworth Classis - a classis, or presbytery as they were also known, being a meeting of ministers and elders from a number of churches in the district. He then resided with Sir John Gell (1593-1671) and his family until he was appointed to Mickleover, from where he was subsequently removed. Edmund Calamy, who recorded so much of the detail about early non-conformity, wrote of Samuel Charles that -

"He observed the day of his ejection out of his living as a fast all his life after. He viewed conformity in such a light, that he could not yield to it without doing such violence to his conscience as to express his persuasion that if he had conformed he could not have been saved."

Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence in 1672 did allow non-conformists to gather for worship in licensed buildings with clergymen or teachers who had been licensed to preach or teach. Samuel Charles, who was then living in Belper, registered his own house at this time. However, the following year Parliament withdrew the Declaration. Charles continued to live in Belper until about 1680, when he moved to Hull where he became minister of the Bowl Alley Congregation there.

Other ejected clergymen in the area were the Rev. William Bagshawe and the Rev. Robert Porter. Bagshawe, who had been minister at Glossop, wandered

1. A. G. Matthew's *Calamy Revised* 1934

as a preacher all over Derbyshire, and became known as, "The Apostle Of The Peak". It is recorded in W. H. Greave's *A Memoir of the Apostle of the Peak* that he visited Wirksworth, which at that time was frequented by Belper people for marketing purposes. Porter had been minister at Pentrich, and although he moved to Mansfield for safety it is recorded that he revisited the Pentrich area, in secret, to encourage his sympathisers.

It is from this kind of background that a non-conformist congregation sprang up in Belper.

## EARLY YEARS

In volume 1 of *Three Centuries of Derbyshire Annals* by J. C. Cox it is recorded that in 1689 a layman, John Taylor, obtained a licence to have Presbyterian forms of worship in his home. This marks the official beginning of the congregation, though meetings and services were probably held, illegally, before that date! This date is of significance because it was in 1689 that there was passed the Act Of Toleration which first allowed different religious groups, though Roman Catholics and Unitarians were not then included in the toleration. Unfortunately, we have no knowledge as to where John Taylor's house was situated, though a tradition has grown up in the congregation that it was on what is now Green Lane, and near to where the present chapel is situated.

We have little information about the history of the congregation during the closing years of the 17th century and the early years of the 18th century. Belper was at that time officially described as a township in the Parish of Duffield and Hundred of Appletree. The congregation was frequently unable to support a minister on their own, and shared ministers with one or more neighbouring congregations such as those at Heage, Duffield, or Pentrich. We learn from the Minutes Of The Common Fund (set up to give financial aid to poor non-conformist congregations) that the congregation had difficulties in raising the necessary funds. It records that between 1660 and 1692 the congregation was only able to raise £13 a year towards the minister's stipend, following the loss of certain charitable contributions, though £15 was considered, "ye least a minister can subsist on in this county". These financial difficulties probably contributed to the comings and goings of ministers at this time. Samuel Statham, the grandson of an ejected minister, arrived in Belper in 1708, but two years later in 1710 he returned to his home town of Loughborough where he remained for fifty years. The Minutes Of The Common Fund mentions that Stephen Parker had joint ministerial charge of Belper and Heage with the Rev. Milward. Later Nathaniel Ward, educated at Richard Frankland's Academy at Rathmell, in the Derbyshire Pennines, joined Parker as his assistant in 1712. The John Evans *List of Dissenting Congregations and Ministers* reveals that by about 1720 Ward was the sole minister of the congregations at Belper and Pentrich.

The Rev. Nathaniel Ward stayed for more than thirty years, and provided the congregation with a settled ministry. It would seem to have been a time of either increasing numbers, or greater enthusiasm, or perhaps both, because it was in 1721 that the Meeting House was built in what is now Green Lane. This is the old Sunday School building now owned and occupied by Robey's heating business. A little observation reveals that the lower storey is built of stone,

and the upper storey is built of brick, and the windows on the lower floor are metal and much older than the wooden window frames of the Victorian era in the upper floor. This suggests that the lower floor is the original Meeting House built in 1721, and the upper floor is the extension carried out in 1855. The whole building was stuccoed at the time of the enlargement in 1855 to give a uniform appearance. James Hicking's 1805 Map Of Belper shows the "Old Meeting House" on what was then Meetinghouse Lane, but is now Green Lane.

Another period followed without a settled minister. Eliezer Haywood of Alfreton conducted some services at Belper for a year after Ward's death, prior to his becoming minister of the Old Meeting House in Mansfield in 1750. The Rev. Jonah Malkin succeeded Haywood at Alfreton, and although he supplied Selston once a month, he probably also gave some help at Belper. After 1773 John Orell, minister of Findern, came over to take services at Belper once a fortnight. John Davis, who had settled at Duffield in the 1780s and is said to have had a school



*The Old Chapel and School as it now appears*

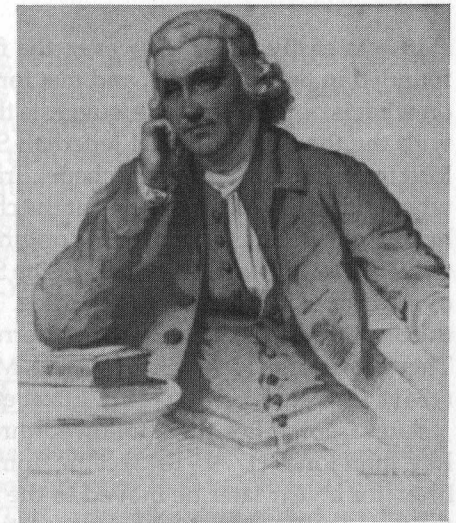
there, also preached at Belper and Ilkeston up to about 1787. This pattern of supply from neighbouring chapels continued over the next few years.

It was from this time that Baptisms were recorded in small and simple booklets. There are five of these booklets covering the period from 1776 to 1805. The first entry reads, "Mary Williams was baptised September the 22nd. 1776".

## JEDEDIAH STRUTT

Then came Jedediah Strutt (1726 - 1797). He was the son of a South Normanton farmer and maltster, and had a strong dissenting background. Apprenticed to a wheelwright at Findern in 1740, he came under the influence of Ebenezer Latham (1688? - 1754) who, beside conducting his own Academy, found time to provide a supply to neighbouring congregations, as well as practising locally as a physician. It was at Findern that Strutt met his future wife, Elizabeth Woollat, and no doubt was introduced to her brother William who was later to become his partner. Strutt laid the basis of his fortune in the hosiery industry

by introducing an improvement in the making of ribbed hosiery on the stocking frame. It was around 1770 that Strutt and Samuel Need, a wealthy Nottingham hosier, entered into their famous partnership with Richard Arkwright, and helped to finance Arkwright in his earliest cotton-spinning factory ventures. The erection of the mill at Cromford, and the application of water-power to drive the cotton spinning machinery, were momentous occasions in the early growth of the factory system. The partnership seems to have continued until Need's death in 1781, when Strutt and Arkwright parted. By now Strutt had been attracted to Belper.



*Jedediah Strutt*

His arrival stimulated tremendous growth at Belper, and transformed the township into the second largest town in the county. Previously the only major non-agrarian activity was the declining nail-making trade and the coal-getting associated with it. Strutt, attracted by the water-power potential of the area, constructed his first cotton-spinning mill at Belper in 1777. Between 1784 and 1786 he built North Mill, which had to be rebuilt after a disastrous fire in 1803. His West Mill was completed in 1795, and spinning began the following year. The warehouse built at Milford in 1793 saw a most important advance in the construction methods used in such buildings. The four-storied warehouse, together with the cotton mill at Derby, were the earliest fire-resistant buildings constructed, and also the first to use a cast-iron framework.

## THE STRUTT YEARS

The arrival of Jedediah Strutt also brought renewed vitality to the small Presbyterian congregation, and the chance of a more settled ministry. The central rectangular part of the present chapel was built in 1788, largely at Strutt's expense. Then in 1789 George Lee, originally from Elland in Yorkshire, was appointed tutor and family chaplain to the household, and minister to the congregation. Lee abandoned his earlier Calvinism, and moved to a more rational and liberal Christian position in theology. It was no doubt something of his influence that gradually led the congregation to openly express itself as Unitarian - a theological position not officially tolerated until 1813. Although previously Presbyterian the congregation had never followed that form of church government, but in practice had been more independent, so that the

shift was easily made. However, the fact that a Congregational Church was founded in Belper in 1790, and met for a few years in the old Meeting House, on what is now Green Lane, suggests that perhaps not all the members agreed with the theological move! Jedediah Strutt died in 1797 and, according to a long tradition, is buried at the chapel. Tradition also says that his brother William who died in 1800 is also buried at the chapel. Lee moved to Hull in 1799 where he became editor, and one of the original proprietors, of the Whig newspaper, the *Hull Rockingham*. Members of the Strutt family remained active members of the chapel for many years to come. This is indicated by the six members of the Strutt family who were later interred in the catacomb beneath the chapel. They are George Henry Strutt (1821), Mary Strutt (1828), George Benson Strutt (1841), Catherine Strutt (1842), Elizabeth Strutt (1854), and John Strutt (1858).

After George Lee there followed three comparatively short ministries. The Rev. John Jones (1779 - 1813) came from Bridgwater in 1800. His stay was very brief, for a year later he moved to the West Country where he later accepted the ministry of the Plymouth congregation. He was followed by the Rev. William Marshall (1766 -1849) who came to Belper in 1801, and then moved to Rochdale in 1806. Then followed the Rev. Evan Owen Jones (1781 - 1867) who was minister at Duffield from 1806, but looked after the Belper congregation till 1810.

## REV. DAVID PETER DAVIES

In 1810 the Belper congregation appointed the Rev. David Peter Davies (1786 - 1844) as their own minister. He was the nephew of the Rev. David Peter, tutor at Carmarthen College, under whom he was educated. He had been minister at Duffield and Findern in 1804, and had conducted a boys' boarding school there. The school was moved to Makeney, where he continued to live after his appointment at Belper. Charles Willott in his 1894 book, *Belper and Its People*, tells of a woman who worked for Mr. Davies as a domestic servant, "that it was part of her duty on each day after dinner, to place a newspaper and a quart of ale on the table in his study".

While minister at Belper he undertook, in conjunction with the Rev. Evan Owen Jones, the supply of Duffield, Lee, Milford, and Ripley. In 1811 he had published, *A New Historical and Descriptive View of Derbyshire*, which sold for sixteen shillings (80p) a copy. He also edited the *Derbyshire Chronicle and Universal Advertiser* in 1813, but it only lasted a few months. It was also during his ministry that the congregation printed and adopted, in 1823, *Forms of Prayer, For the Use of Protestant Dissenters in Belper*. Copies of this leather-bound book, containing four liturgical services, are still in existence, one bearing the name of "G. B. Strutt". Davies' name also appears as one who was there at the inaugural meetings of the Belper Savings Bank in 1818. He resigned from Belper in 1833, and four years later was appointed Headmaster of the Grammar School at Carmarthen, a position he held until his death in 1844.

After Davies the congregation was supplied for two years by the Rev. John

Williams (1768 - 1835) of the Old Meeting House in Mansfield. On his death an unsettled period followed until Williams' son, the Rev. Ebenezer Williams, was appointed minister. Recently out of Manchester College, York, he appears to have had a greater interest in engineering than preaching, for in 1844 he resigned to become assistant to Frederick Swanwick, a fellow Unitarian who was assistant to George Stephenson, and engaged at that time in constructing the railway line from Derby to Leeds. The Rev. Noah Jones, of Friar Gate Chapel in Derby, then supplied Belper for about a year.

## CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Education, particularly of the young, has been an important part of the life of the congregation. A chapel's *Minutes Book* refers in 1880 to plans to celebrate the Centenary of the Sunday School! The earliest known record we have, however, is the following which appeared in the *Derby Mercury* on the 25th August 1785 -

"We hear from Belper that Mr. Strutt has (with a Liberality which does Honour to the human Heart) entirely at his own expense, instituted a Sunday School for the Benefit of All the Youth of both Sexes employed in his Cotton Mill at that Town; and provides them with all necessary books, etc. for learning to read and write. This school was opened on July 3rd, and 120 Scholars have already been admitted."

In his book, *A New Historical and Descriptive View of Derbyshire*, published in 1811, the author, Rev. David Peter Davies, reports, "Four hundred children are taught at the Sunday School, supported here by Mr. Strutt.

In the chapel there is a plaque to honour James Barlow who for "upwards of fifty years" was Master at the Lancastrian School<sup>1</sup> which, during the early 19th century, is thought to have existed at the bottom of Long Row in Belper.

The enlargement, in 1855, of the original 1721 Meeting House, suggests the needs of the times for more space for educational purposes. The *Unitarian Sunday School* book shows that in 1856 there was a grand total of 206 youngsters on the register, with an attendance of 124 in the morning, and 114 in the afternoon. The age of the youngsters ranged from three year olds to a twenty-seven year old. The book also shows that even eight year olds were going out to work as mill hands, seamers, nailers, and glove hands. Of special interest is the collection of 236 listed books which constituted the Sunday School Library. The books included, *Sketches of Nature in the Alps*, *Tales of a Grandfather*, *Lives of the Apostles*, *Wonders of Science*, *Milton's Poetical Works*, and various novels by Charles Dickens. These, together with an 1856 edition of, *A First Book of*

1. Such schools were named after Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker, who introduced the "Monitorial System" whereby a Master instructed the more able pupils who passed the instruction on to the less able pupils.

*Arithmetic*, being used in 1857, are evidence that the education provided was more general than specifically religious. The existence of a Savings Bank from 1856 to 1860, and again from 1912 to 1923, shows that thrift was encouraged and practised, as well as taught!

Nor was the education provided limited to Sundays! We learn that, in 1858 "Classes are held during the week evenings in the winter for geography, arithmetic, writing from dictation, and spelling, also a recreation class."<sup>1</sup>

There was, however, the other side of this concern to provide education. In his book, *Belper and Its People*, the author, C. Willott, recounts how, as a boy in 1830, he went to work at Strutt's mills. In addition to working from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., and till 4 p.m. on Saturdays, he also had to attend the Unitarian Chapel on Sunday afternoons. Failure to do so incurred a fine of "threepence" - a substantial fine out of a boy's weekly wage of "sixteen pence"! Jeremiah Ratcliffe who, in the *Belper News* of the 16th August 1907, recalled Belper of sixty years ago (1840s), also referred to a threepence fine if mill boys failed to attend any of the Sunday Schools in the town.

The benefits from the schools, however, are widely acknowledged and recorded. One instance is that of the Rev. Thomas Jackson who was minister of Clapton Primitive Methodist Church. He was born in Belper in 1850, and acknowledged that he learnt to read and write at the Unitarian School in Belper.

The Mundella Act of 1880 finally provided free and compulsory education for all children in this country between the ages of five and twelve years of age. This, no doubt, contributed to the decline and changed role of Sunday Schools during the 20th century. Here, by 1928, the number on the register was down to 36, with just 23 in attendance on the second Sunday in April. The books in use gradually centred on more religious themes, such as the Bible and moral behaviour, rather than the earlier, broader, secular education. Finally, the Sunday School here ceased to function in 1975, though some of the old traditions, like the Christmas Party and the Annual Outing, were continued for a number of years. The old Sunday School building on Green Lane, in a poor state of repair, was eventually sold for £6,000 in 1981. The vestry in the present chapel was then enlarged by extending into the old boiler-house so as to make a Chapel Room, with kitchen facilities, for general use.



Dates above the old doorway

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1. Derby Mercury 7th July, 1858.

## REV. REES LEWIS LLOYD

The Rev. Rees Lewis Lloyd (1819-1885), son of the Rev. Rees Lloyd of Kingswood near Birmingham, was invited to be minister in Belper in 1845, following the completion of his studies at Manchester New College in Manchester. He was to provide the congregation with independency, permanency, and influence.

During his early years at Belper the chapel was still the private property of the Strutt family, but the only Strutts still attending were John Strutt (1793 - 1858) and Elizabeth Strutt (1796 - 1854) - two of Jedediah Strutt's grandchildren. Lloyd was responsible for ensuring that the chapel buildings and property were placed in trust for the benefit of the congregation. One of those earliest trustees was William Hollins of the Pleasley Vale Mills, Derbyshire, a notable industrialist who produced the well known cloth "Viyella" which derived its name from the area of Via Gellia, near Cromford, where Hollins had one of his mills. There is little doubt that the far-sightedness of Lloyd saved the congregation from losing the chapel building!

Following the death of John Strutt it was Lloyd who called a meeting of the congregation to accept the responsibilities for running and administering the chapel. A committee was formed in 1859 with Mr. Midworth as the Treasurer, and the Rev. Rees Lewis Lloyd as the Secretary. It was agreed that "membership" should consist of paying one penny a week and signing the Chapel Book. Pew rents were to be done away with, though members were allowed to retain their previous pews. It was further agreed that a Tea, followed by an Annual Meeting of all "subscribing members", should be held each year on Good Friday. The first of these Annual Meetings was held on Good Friday in 1860, and they continued until 1896 when the Annual Meeting was moved to April. The first of the socials on Christmas Day was held in 1860, and continued each year till 1896 when it was moved to the 26th December. The entrance charge to these Christmas Socials was eightpence, and remained at that in 1896! A Sunday School Committee was also formed. One major change that was agreed was that they should return to both a morning and an evening service each Sunday, instead of the one service in the afternoon which had previously been the practice. This was possible because Lloyd had given up conducting services at Ripley and Lee, where he would have known the Nightingale family, and possibly their daughter Florence!

Lloyd was also very much involved in the town's affairs. So much so that he gained the reputation of being "one of the most prominent and useful of Belper citizens".<sup>1</sup> For more than thirty years he was active in the local Savings Bank which held its meetings in St. John's Chapel, he was Chairman for many years, and was the one who proposed the move into the premises in Bridge Street where the bank eventually developed into the Trustee Savings Bank, now on King Street. On the formation of the School Board he was one of its first

1. Charles Willott's *Belper and Its People* 1894.

members, and was appointed Chairman in 1882, and at the end of his three year term was unanimously re-elected only a few days before his death. He ran a Party for reading the works of Charles Dickens, and the Lloyd family still possess a letter to him from Charles Dickens dated April 1852. He was one of the founders, and for some time variously Treasurer or Chairman, of the Belper Philosophical and Natural History Society. He also organised a movement under the name of "The Working Men's Franchise Association" to consider the desirability of Household Suffrage in the counties. He was also involved in local politics, and for some years was Chairman of the local Liberal Association. His death from Typhoid Pneumonia in 1885 saw the end of the chapel's longest ministry, and the loss of a prominent local figure.

## CONFLICT

The Rev. Charles Cowan followed Lloyd in 1885. His stay in Belper was short, and a traumatic time for both minister and congregation. It would seem that a division opened up within the congregation between those who were "for" the minister and those who were "against". This manifested itself in the conflict that arose between the Chapel Committee who were "for" the minister, and the Chapel Trustees who were "against". After Cowan had "left", the Chapel Committee ordered the chapel closed on one Sunday as a mark of their respect for him, while after a new minister had been appointed the Chapel Trustees arranged to have the locks changed on the buildings! The sudden appearance of a new Chapel Committee, with a fresh Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer, is evidence of the conflict and division.

## STABILITY AGAIN

The conflict continued for a short time following the appointment, at a stipend of £145 a year, of the Rev. John Kertain Smith (1835 - 1912) in 1889. However, under Smith's leadership the congregation found new stability and growth. An organ was put in the chapel in 1890, and Mr. Edwin Robinson was appointed organist and choirmaster at a salary of £5 a year. The two musical instruments, a Violoncello and a Double Bass Violin, which had previously been used to lead the singing, were put up for sale. The packing case in which the new organ had been delivered was put up for auction. In that same year of 1890 there was formed the Mutual Improvement Society which each year provided varied programmes of lectures, socials, musical evenings, and plays. The meetings were held every Wednesday evening, and Member's Tickets were sixpence. They were still sixpence in 1916 when the Mutual Improvement Society ceased to exist. It was in 1893 that a collection was first taken in support of the Derbyshire Royal Infirmary, a practise that was maintained each year until 1947. The Rev. Kertain Smith was minister for sixteen years, and was active in the town as a member of the School Board, and a Governor of the Herbert Strutt Grammar School. He continued to live in Belper after his retirement, and remained as a member of the congregation. His daughter, Clara, married the Rev. Rees Lewis Lloyd's son, Lewis!

## TWO SHORT MINISTRIES

Two comparatively short ministries followed. The Rev. David John Williams was minister from 1905 until 1908. It was during his ministry that the decision was finally made and carried out to move the pulpit, in 1906, from its central position facing the entrance doors to where it now stands, slightly on one side and turned so that the preacher faces the congregation. There is also recorded a resolution voted on and passed, in 1907, whereby letters were sent to the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, and the local Member of Parliament, calling upon them to oppose the sale of intoxicating liquor on Sundays. The Rev. Leslie Arthur Smith was then minister from 1909 to 1918. By 1909 the attendance at the Sunday morning Sunday School had become so depleted that it was decided to close it down, though the afternoon Sunday School continued. It was also in that same year of 1909 that Mrs. Leslie Smith initiated regular meetings of the "females" for "mutual benefits". Although we have no information on this new group, in later years there are references to help being given by a "Ladies Sewing Club".

## REV. JOHN CARRARA DAVIES

There followed the second longest ministry at the Belper chapel. The Rev. John Carrara Davies, originally from Lampeter and trained at the Home Missionary College in Manchester, came to Belper in 1918, following a seven year ministry in his native language at Cefn Coed. It was during his ministry that the long discussed installation of a new organ took place. This was in 1937 when the present electric Hammond Organ was bought from Boosey & Co. by a down payment of £200 and a promise of twelve monthly payments of £11 14s 0d. An Organ Fund was opened, and two years later the whole £340 8s 0d had been raised. Carrara Davies had a tremendous gift for friendship and concern for the less fortunate. He served for many years as a member of the Board of Guardians, and later as a founder member of the Belper Social Services. He was one of the most respected members of the town during the thirty-four years of his ministry. Following his death in 1952 his wife and daughter, Eluned, continued to live in the town and remained loyal and active members of the chapel: Eluned, a well known local schooteacher, taught for many years in the Sunday School, and was Chapel Secretary from 1976 until 1983, just before she died.

## WOMEN MINISTERS

The very first of all women ministers, the Rev. Gertrude Von Petzold of Leicester, who was born in Germany, was invited to preach at the Chapel Anniversary Service in 1906. Unfortunately, she was not able to accept the invitation. So the first woman minister to preach in the chapel would seem to have been the Rev. Rosalind Lee, M.A. of Leicester. She preached at the Chapel Anniversary Service in 1924.

## RETURN TO A JOINT MINISTRY

For years, even with grants from district and national organisations, the congregation had struggled to raise the necessary finances to have their own minister. Now they were to return to an arrangement that had served the congregation so well during the first part of the 18th century. They entered into a joint-ministry with Friar Gate Chapel in Derby in 1953 with the appointment of the Rev. Arthur David Williams. When he resigned in 1956 the congregation accepted pastoral oversight by the Rev. Kenneth Sherratt of the Old Meeting House in Mansfield. In 1960 this became the present joint-ministry with Mansfield, and saw the return to one service a Sunday - at 3 p.m. in the afternoon. During the years up to 1973 that the Rev. Kenneth Sherratt was minister he brought about a close and caring relationship between the two congregations, which continues to this day. He was for many years a Hospital Chaplain, and as such became a friend and counsellor to many outside his own congregations.

## DECLINE, RESTORATION & RENEWAL

The Rev. Derek Smith moved from Plymouth in 1975, and undertook the joint-ministry till his retirement in 1993. It was his optimism and hard work that helped the congregation to survive a period in which the elderly membership declined. His leadership led to the restoration of the chapel in 1978 at a cost of £6,000, the sale for £6,000 in 1980 of the no longer used and deteriorating schoolroom on Green Lane, and the "miraculous" restoration and re-opening in 1985 of the chapel cottage which had been closed down some thirty years earlier.

An upturn in the vitality of the congregation began in 1992 with a renewal of spirit, and the presence of new and younger people, and this has continued with the Rev. Michael Joyce B.A. as the minister since 1993.

It would seem that the congregation has always been small in numbers - with the exception of the Strutt years. Despite some personal reminiscences of

larger congregations, the records reveal that at the Annual General Meeting of the congregation in 1862 there were thirty-four members present, but each year this number declined so that at the same meeting in 1876 there were only eleven members present. At the same meeting in 1913 there were only seven present, though the number at the meeting in 1925 had increased to fifteen. In this year of 1994 the congregation consists of sixteen official Members, six official Friends, and about a dozen supporters and well-wishers, some of whom worship with us regularly, and work hard for us. Our record of involvement in the life of the wider community is still maintained, as indicated by three of our official Members being District Councillors in the area. In spirit and commitment we are strong in maintaining here in Belper a chapel where religious freedom, reason and tolerance are prized and practiced, and service to others is encouraged.

A service of worship is held at 3 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month, and additional special services such as a Musical Celebration Of Spring, Chapel Anniversary, Flower Communion, Harvest, Carol Service, are held each year. The chapel is also registered for Christenings, Weddings, Re-Marriages, and Funerals.



*Some of the 1994 worshippers*



## THOSE BURIED IN THE CHAPEL GRAVEYARD

(from Records and a Burial Map)

Name	Year	Age	Name	Year	Age
Thomas Barber	1810	15	Samuel Radford	1826	76
John Barber	1805	85	Henry Radford	1824	12
Catherine Barber	1815	84	John Thomas Barlow	1840	10
Samuel Mason	1835	63	Matthew Simpkinson	1815	81
Sarah Mason	1828	67	Martha Simpkinson	1824	?
Rebecca Barber	1825	63	William Green	1825	62
Samuel Barber	1842	75	Sarah Green	1826	18
John Harvey	1838	53	Jane Green	1830	7 mnths
Maria Harvey	1840	1	Sarah Green	1833	14
Sarah Harvey	1833	24	Norman Green	1832	20
James	1839	26	Sarah Green	1834	70
Mary Hibbert	1841	30	Sarah Green (no further information and no indication on the map)		
John Hibbert	1841	5 wks			
Sarah Hibbert	1839	3			
Thomas Brooks	1840	4	James Smith	1830	4
Mary Lee	1822	85	Thomas Smith	1838	8
Joseph Lee	1824	47	Joseph Banks	1842	33
Mary Lee	1819	14	Benjamin Banks	1825	14
Hannah Lee (baby)			Daniel Banks	1838	18
Elizabeth Lee	1831	54	William Robinson	1826	1
Hannah Stockell	1819	85	George Robinson	1828	1
Anne Stokell	1833	72	Agnes Allsop	1842	?
George Williamson	1828	54	William Robinson	1830	55
Ann Marsh	1823	64	Joseph Robinson	1829	22
William Marsh	1833	?	John Millner	1827	75
Thomas Brooks	1830	43	Catherine Millner	1841	55
Jacob Brooks	1840	1	Ann Bartholomew	1809	6
Hannah Kirkland	1836	29	Sarah Bartholomew	1811	11
Maria Banks	1838	29	Thomas Hicking	1826	1
Mary Brooks	1842	61	(child of Thomas Orme)		
Eliza Edmonds	1841	21	Eliza Harvey	1842	18
George Hawkes	1818	11 wks	Robert Riley	1842	4
Mary Bartholomew	1832	71	Hannah Banks	1842	39
Samuel Bartholomew	1832	35	Elizabeth Banks	1845	21
Ann Gamble	1840	16	Thomas Riley	1852	26

(There is also a reference to a JESSE RADFORD and a JOHN RADFORD buried in "23b" but no such marking appears on the Map, and no information is given)

## MINISTERS

1689 – 1708	Supplied by visiting Ministers and Preachers.
1708 – 1710	Rev. Samuel Statham *
1710 – 171?	Rev. Stephen Parker *
	Rev. Milward *
1712 – 1749	Rev. Nathaniel Ward *
1749 – 1750	Rev. Eliezer Haywood *
1750 – 17??	Rev. Jonah Malkin *
1773 – 177?	Rev. John Orell *
1780 – 1787	Rev. John Davis *
1789 – 1799	Rev. George Lee
1800 – 1801	Rev. John Jones
1801 – 1806	Rev. William Marshall
1806 – 1810	Rev. Evan Owen Jones *
1810 – 1833	Rev. David Peter Davies
1833 – 1835	Rev. John Williams *
184? – 1844	Rev. Ebenezer Williams
1844 – 1845	Rev. Noah Jones *
1845 – 1885	Rev. Rees Lewis Lloyd
1885 – 1889	Rev. Charles Cowan
1889 – 1905	Rev. Kertain Smith
1905 – 1908	Rev. David John Williams
1909 – 1918	Rev. Leslie Arthur Smith
1918 – 1952	Rev. Carrara Davies
1953 – 1956	Rev. Arthur David Williams *
1956 – 1973	Rev. Kenneth Sherratt *
1975 – 1993	Rev. Derek Smith *
1993 –	Rev. Michael Anthony Joyce *

\* The Minister was shared with neighbouring congregation(s). Since 1956 the Minister has been shared with the Old Meeting House in Mansfield.

## SECRETARIES

Rev. Rees Lewis Lloyd	1859 - 1885
Ernest D. Briggs	1885 - 1886
W. Jones	1886 - 1887
Mr. Gregory	1887 - 1890
Rev. J. K. Smith	1890 - 1892
W. Jones	1892 - 1894
John Loving	1894 - 1905
S. Allwood	1905 - 1907
W. Jones	1907 - 1922
Mrs. M. E. Ryde	1922 - 1976
Miss M. E. E. Davies	1976 - 1983
Rev. D. Smith	1983 -

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## TREASURERS

Mr. Midworth	1859 - 1885
John Loving	1885 - 1887
Isaac Needham	1887 - 1890
Rev. J. K. Smith	1890 - 1906
Rev. D. J. Williams	1906 - 1908
Rev. L. Smith	1908 - 1919
W. Jones	1919 - 1922
F. Dawson	1922 - 1938
F. Smedley	1938 - 1965
G. McAra	1965 - 1976
Mrs. B. Ryde	1976 - 1990
Miss A. Crombie	1990 - 1992
Mr. M. Higgins	1992 -