



METHODISM
IN
BURNHAM
— ON —
SEA

PROLOGUE

Some said, 'John, print it', others said, 'Not so,'

Some said, 'It might do good';

Others said, 'No'

(From John Bunyan, "Pigrim's Progress" - Apology for his Book).

This history has been compiled in the belief that the reading of it may do 'some good' in helping one to realise the benefits and blessings that we owe to those who have gone before.

The reader will notice that very few names are mentioned, this was the_ avowed policy of those who wished to write this book. But in general_ terms thanks must be expressed to those who have given advice and suggestions. Especially to one who by her help in the crossing of the "ts" and the dotting of the "is" has made this treatise really readable.

Burnham on Sea.

Arnold Houldin

June/October 1973

Our earliest, but scanty knowledge of Wesleyan Methodism as practised in a church building is contained in a vellum bound book, yellowed with age, with clear writing, carefully done, in a book which is inscribed,

'Burnham Wesleyan Chapel, Book,
The Chapel was opened by the
Rev. J.' Rattenbury,

January 17th 1860'.

Such a book contained each year's 'Receipts and Disbursements' from its building until the time when it was no longer a church, but became a Sunday School in the year when our church as we know it was built in 1879.

This earlier church stood on the corner of Adam Street and High Street, (known in those days as Alfred Street.)

It cost f300 to build, and most of this was raised by subscriptions, the names of all the subscribers are given, the highest amount being £5 and the least 5/-d. The land cost £50.00, and the builder's contract (Mr. Hodges) was £212.14s.0d. A bazaar raised the princely sum of £82.14s.9d. And the collection at the opening services was £16.6s.5d. Gratuitous materials and labour figure prominently in the account - glass, glazing, roofing and a solicitor's account. The sum realised from the sale of cards which we presume to be photographs of the church realised £11 5s.0d. But one item on the credit side does intrigue us "Balance of Old Chapel account - 4/6d." Does this mean that there was a chapel even before this one of 1860? Doubtless we shall never know. There were 11 original Trustees, and the Trust was to be renewed when the number was reduced to 5.

An Harmonium was bought in 1862 and cost £12, the rails around the harmonium were £1 5s.0d. Various sums, from collections at Social Tea meetings, donations, subscriptions and chapel collections realised all but f1.10s.2d. of the cost. In 1867 the instrument was repaired - cost 2/6d, the clock was; put to rights 3/-d. In those days, moneys received from pew rents accounted for most of the

revenue for the Trust, the contribution to "Quarter Board being f4.". It cost 1/-d. to remove the snow, and the grass in the Chapel Yard was mown for 1/-d. also. In the following year the Anniversary services were held in the Town Hall, the collection taken realising £2 19s. 7d.

The "Sabbath School", we presume was held in the same building, and in 1876, paid "One year's rent of 10/-d." Temperance organisations such as the "Good Templars Lodges" were very prominent in those days, and one of those evidently hired the church periodically for their meetings, because on October 7th 1880 they paid "One quarter's rent - 10/-d."

As we have already said, our church in which we now worship was built in 1879, but the building of which we now write, still continued to be used as the Sunday School. Proof of this is shown in the change of heading in the accounts - "Trustees of Wesleyan Schoolroom - 1898". We imagine that the premises were utilized to the utmost when not being used for religious purposes. The Burnham Building Society paid £4. 10s. 0d. for a "yearly rent", and a Band of Hope paid £1 a year. A Mrs. Osman was the valued caretaker at this time, and was paid 15/-d. a quarter for her services, (it was called "salary"). At various times she was paid 10/-d. for "her attendance on the Building Society". A certain William Baker was paid £3 as per his contract for painting the chapel".

On the credit side of the balance sheet of 1896 is an item of £4.0s.6d. "received from the Philharmonic Society, and £2.6s.0d. from the "Mother's Meeting".

A lock costing 4d. was purchased for the harmonium - evidently to stop budding Liberaces from practising to the detriment of the instrument, it had to be repaired at a cost of 1/5d., which in those days was quite an amount.

Perusing these accounts which date back over a hundred years or more it is interesting to read of bills paid to certain firms whose successors are still "in business" - printers,

ironmongers, the local Gas Board all feature in this book.

A certain Mr. Underwood was paid £2 16s.0d. for "laying onwater, which seems to imply that prior to 1887, there was no internal supply. Including in the estimates for the building of the church in 1860, is an item of £1.4s.0d. "for stained glass for window borders". One still exists to this day and can be seen when walking down Adam Street. Such a window exists as tangible proof, as we know it, of the earliest beginnings of Wesleyan Methodism in Burnham on Sea

A narrative of the early history of our church of necessity harks back to 1879 when "The NEW WESLEYAN CHAPEL BURNHAM, was opened for DIVINE WORSHIP by Rev. Marmaduke C. Osborn, Secretary of the Conference on 25th day of June 1879.

Such is the inscription on page 1 of the ledger, continuing with the names of the thirteen Trustees. The treasurer at that time was a Mr. G. G. Golding, (his writing and his penmanship are a joy to behold even after nearly a century).

The balance sheet of the Building Account shows that the land cost £200, and it cost £1041 10s.0d. to build the "chapel". In addition there were various accounts for gas fittings and piping, locks and chains for the gates 1/11d., and remembering that these were the days of "seat rents", "card holders for pews £1.8s.6d.". The actual ledger recording all these facts and from which we quote, cost 2/3d.

Varied and interesting are the ways and means whereby the chapel was paid for. In July 1878 a bazaar realised £103 15s.8d., three subscriptions brought in £250, the Highbridge Choir gave a "Service of Song" realising £1. 3s.3d. What is so commendable is the fact that large numbers of friends and members made themselves responsible for collecting amongst their friends and neighbours, amounts from 5/-d. to £5. The sum of £80 9s.6d. was raised by "Memorial Stones", but, we have no trace of these in 1973. The names of collectors and donors are all given with great legibility in this ledger of 1879.

A "Service of song and dissolving views" in 1878 brought in the sum of £3 11s. 9d. Such an entry has set us thinking - what were "dissolving views"?

Bazaars, tea meetings and lectures were the order of the day, and by such means were substantial sums raised.

Five days before the opening of our church a meeting was held by the Trustees in which the rates at which seats were "let" some were free, others according to their position were - 1/-d., 1/3d. and 1/6d. Later on in July a Chapel Keeper was appointed at £3 per year and Baptismal fees.

The Treasurer needed £200 for current expenses, and so he was asked to try and obtain that amount at 4¹/₂% per annum. Eventually £300 was made available from two worthy friends from Mark, at 4¹/₂%. And this amount was quickly repaid.

The opening services must have been a day of worth remembrance to those who attended it. We do know that there was a collection on "the Ground - £4 17s.3d." at the Public meeting - £6.0s.3d. Lecture - £2. 0s.7d. "profit of tea meeting - £7. 8s. 5d". one item which has given us food for thought reads "Collections at OLD CHAPEL - £5 2s.0d". We shall have something further to say about the OLD CHAPEL later.

By October of the year of opening winter was approaching and it was resolved "that the Chapel be warmed by two gas stoves placed on brick chambers under the floor, one in each aisle covered each with iron grating". The first yearly account of the New church showed that the building was insured for 1/3d. yearly, the drainage rate was 6d., and it cost 3/-d. a year to have the grass cut. The harmonium, which had been brought from elsewhere was in need of repair - cost £1. 5s.4d.

It was reported at a Trustees meeting in 1881, that a certain lady a "Mrs. K, a member of Society, having collected £1.14s.0d for the purchase of black cloth to drape the pulpit at the decease of members, - this cloth now being accepted by the Trustees as their property, .and thanks were expressed to Mrs. K. for securing the same".

In February 1881 the Building Fund Account was closed and the office of treasurer lapsed, and the Trustees meeting closed with a Te Deum couched in the following phrases "Resolved that the best

thanks of the Trustees be presented to Mr. Golding for the diligence and success with which he has conducted the business of the Fund, and the meeting herewith records its humble and devout thanks to Almighty God for his manifest guidance and gracious blessing in accomplishing the scheme".

The Trustees said in 1882 that "The Gasolier in the centre of the Church is now no longer required for lighting the building, so in the event of the OLD CHAPEL being repaired the said .gasolier (if suitable) for lighting the OLD CHAPEL should be given WITHOUT PAYMENT to the TRUSTEES of the OLD BUILDING." But the Trustees must have had second thoughts about their proposed gift, because by the next year the said gasolier had been repaired for "their own immediate use".

1884 - this was the year when the church was licensed for "The Solemnisation of Marriages", and in this connection it is interesting to note an entry of March 5th which reads "Bible 11/-d. Hymn Book 7/2d. Presented to Mr. and Mrs. Gilling theirs being the first marriage".

A perusal of the Trustee Annual accounts of 89 years ago, makes a marked contrast to those of our day - tapers 1/-d., padlock 6d., keys for vestry door - 1/6d., posting bills -2/6d., man for cutting grass 1/6d.". A letter was sent to Mr. C. R. informing him that a portion of his fence extended over the church property boundary. We are not informed whether the said gentleman did accede to the request of the Trustees to remedy same, or even -if he answered their letter.

In 1886, after some discussion the following resolution was passed, "That the Quarterly meeting be informed that the Trustees do not consider that the Burnham Trust is in a position to increase its contribution at present".

The years between 1887 and 1890 passed without many highlights - the usual accounts were passed, sometimes there was a credit balance, other times a deficit, fluctuating

between "red" 14/6d. and "black" £3. 4s.0d.

But in 1891 it was realised that some alterations were becoming necessary to the chapel, and a committee was formed to work with the Trustees to consider all aspects of the project, and more important the ways in which the money could be raised. Coffee suppers figured largely as a means of raising moneys, but the bulk of the money came from individual giving - the highest amount being .£4.4s.0d. down to amounts of 1/-d, and in this respect we must remember that

the average wage in those days was very small.

The alterations were made, and afterwards a man was paid 6/-d. for cleaning the Chapel Yard, which took four days, and at the same time the cleaner was paid 10/-d. for "cleaning the chapel after the workmen". Evidently somebody forgot to "tidy up" after their labours.

A holly bush was bought for 2/-d., it cost £3.3s.0d. for linoleum and £2 17s.2d. for chairs. The account was closed with the following entry, "Committee to subscribe 14/9d. extra to square".

The number of young men in the Sunday School had grown to such an extent that in 1892 "two pews were set apart for their use".

By the year 1894 a great many of the old Trustees had died and so a new Trust was formed - all worthy men in their day and generation - from every walk of life - grocers, saddlers, watchmakers, shipwrights, cordwainers, and blacksmiths. We owe a great deal to them for their zeal, faith and generosity.

On a more sombre note - in an entry of 1896 the stewards

were asked to purchase "a pair of tressels for use at funerals". After their deliberations in 1899, the Trustees "empowered the stewards to provide a notice to the effect that all seats in Chapel were to be considered FREE after the commencement of the service".

Evidently the Trustees acknowledged a public right of way across the land on which the chapel was built, but at the same time they complained about the "filth and nuisance in the pathway', so a

complaint was sent to the "Urban Council of Burnham" with a request that it be put in a "wholesome condition".

In 1901 Her Majesty Queen Victoria died and a United Service was held with the Baptists in her memory. This took place in our Chapel on Saturday, 2nd February at 2.30 p.m. In this connection a United Children's Service was held in the Baptist Church on the following day.

The accounts for 1903, amongst other items, show that our contribution to "The Brue Drainage rate for the year was 10d.", whilst the amounts received for seat rents for the month of March was :-

C	£3.0s.9d.
W.....	£2.12s.9d.
.....Total:	£5 13s.6d.

We pondered at some length over the meaning of "C" and "W", but realised eventually that they were the initials of the two Chapel stewards. In 1906 the school caretaker had an extra £1, making the remuneration £6 per year, whilst the chapel keeper was also treated the same making her yearly salary the same - £6. It was decided that the schoolroom was not to be let for school teas to anyone excepting those Sunday Schools in our own Circuit. A letter was received from the Burnham Urban Council as it was then, asking for the use of the schoolroom for cookery lessons. After some discussion it was decided to send a courteous reply to the effect that "the Trustees did not see their way clear to the granting of their request". The population of Burnham at this time was growing rapidly, and it was felt that the time was ripe for the enlargement of the Church by adding two transepts, and the erection of new Sunday School premises at the rear of the church. Moreover the then present schoolroom in ALFRED STREET (now High Street) were to be advertised for sale by auction. One stipulation of the sale was that the premises were not to be used "for the purpose of a church" and another that "it was not to be licensed for the sale of intoxicants".

And so, at a social gathering held in October 1906, the congregation decided with a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority to proceed with the scheme.

The secretary "was instructed to enter in the minutes the proposed expenditure and sources of income as per the details following".

<u>Expenditure</u>		<u>Income</u>	
Buildings	£1000	Sale of old school	£550
Heating	£ 1 0 0	Subscriptions	£300
Architect's Fees	£60	Stonelaying & Opening	£1
Furnishings	£50	Bazaar	£50
Extras	£40	Grant	£50
		Debt left	£200
Total	<u>£1250</u>	Total:	<u>£1250</u>

Finally the old schoolroom was sold for £600, the Secretary reported that the £600, the proceeds of the sale were lodged in Stuckey's Bank and thanks to Mr. Bevan's kind offices, would receive interest at 3¹/₂%. Mr. R. Bevan was a worthy trustee, a very capable treasurer, who owned a grocer's shop in Alfred Street.

The Pavilion had to be hired at a cost of £15 11s.4d. and the Adult School (£6. 5s.0d.) to serve the needs of the Sunday School, Sewing Meetings and Guild during the time of building, the Sunday School premises and the church additions were to be finished by Midsummer's Day, 1907.

Several people were to be approached by the Minister with a view to acting as "stone-layers" and at a meeting held in February it was reported that two gentlemen had already consented. The stone laying ceremony was held on March 20th, and the ever resourceful wives of the Society and Chapel Stewards were asked to arrange for the Tea making provision for 100 people. The Tea was held in the Adult and the evening meeting was held in either the Baptist Church or the Pavilion, the collections realising the sum of £116 7s.8d.

One interesting point regarding the stone is that they were to be "laid on the East side of the chapel on either side of the main doorway in that transept". The stones were to be left quite plain, and the matter of engraving the names of those who laid

stones on a brass plate to be fixed in the NEW BUILDING was left to a later date”.

Unfortunately there is no record whatsoever of any brass plate containing these names.

By the next month (March) the organ had been removed and stored, and Church services were being held in the Lifeboat Pavilion. By June 19th, the extension had been completed, and the opening ceremony took place on that day. This auspicious occasion was heralded by a MORNING PRAYER MEETING at the hour of "seven". We do not know the state of the weather on that day, but certainly help from the congregation was much to the fore. Several gentlemen made themselves responsible for seeing that seats were provided, tea tables borrowed, and that there was china ware in plenty. One member was detailed to arrange for the boiling of water, and if necessary the caretaker a Mrs. Churchill was asked, along with another lady, Mrs. Clews, to boil the water in their own houses. (For her extra work at the Tea, the caretaker was granted an extra 10/-d.) We do not have very much detail regarding the opening services, suffice it to say that the sermon was preached by Rev. E. Walters, the collections taken amounted to over £76. At the evening meeting the singing was led by the choirs of the Baptist and our churches. To meet the cost of the alterations, extensions and furnishings the sum of £350 was borrowed, but by dint of much effort and giving on the part of the members, this sum had been, repaid by 1910.

In 1907 the Trustees were asked to move "in the matter of a Memorial Tablet to certain laymen who had rendered most valuable services in earlier years". The Trustees agreed readily on two conditions, one that the instigator should collect the necessary funds, and that the design should be submitted to them for their approval. Two months later a Memorial Tablet Committee was formed, but nothing further seems to have transpired.

It was also agreed at this meeting to arrange for a platform

to be made for the Schoolroom, chairs and a reading desk for the Church Parlour (?) furnishings for the Minister's Vestry, and the "varnishing of any forms that needed the same".

Permission was granted to the members of I.O.G.T. (I owe God Thank's) to use the Infant's room at a rent of 10/6d. per quarter. As early as July 1908 the Trustees were asked to grant use of the Schoolroom as a Day School, but the decision was postponed until it could be definitely established whether the premises would be rated.

Even 62 years ago we experienced-'trials and tribulations' regarding the warming of the Church because in January the Secretary was asked to write to *Messrs. J. W. & Sons* "re the unsatisfactory conditions of the heating apparatus".

The month of July saw the opening of the church each day "so that visitors may have an opportunity of quiet for meditation and prayer". Permission was granted to the Burnham Men's Own Brotherhood to hold meetings at intervals in the church on Sunday afternoons.

In those days we boasted a clock both in the vestry and pulpit, because a Mr. B. was thanked for repairing them.

Easter Day 1911 must certainly have been a RED LETTER DAY, the collections on that occasion being £50 5s.0d

CORONATION SUNDAY was June 25th, 1911 and permission was sought from the Trustees "to use the church for a Service of Praise". We do not know who requested this, neither do we know if such a Service was held,

By 1913 there is written proof that all was still not well with the water heating system because "a man was appointed" to put two screws in the Schoolroom to prevent the water going UPSTAIRS.

In 1914 the Red Cross Society had made application for the use of the school, and the reply of the Trustees was "we shall be most pleased to grant the use any afternoon when the premises

are not already in use. No charge will be made for this, but if fire and light be required a contribution of 2/6d. would be asked towards the cost. In any case it is understood that the caretaker is to be paid for her work in connection with the series of meetings".

An entry in January 1915 shows that troops were already in the district. As always, in times of National Emergency the Church threw open its doors to those soldiers who felt the need for such facilities offered. The minutes say that the schoolroom was opened each weekday at 5.30 p.m. and on Sundays from 7.45 p.m. The troops were to enter by the lower door in College Street, all other doors being locked, the Church generously provided 5000 sheets of notepaper and envelopes, and permission was sought from the authorities to sell postage stamps and the provision of a Letter box. A request was made through the columns of the "Gazette" for newspapers, magazines and games. This enterprise was undertaken with great zeal and a committee comprising some 28 ladies and gentlemen was formed. All this utilisation of the schoolroom by the soldiers meant that the caretaker had extra cleaning, and so she was granted £2 2s.0d. extra "in connection with her extra work with the Military".

In 1916, the church premises were insured against air raids for £3.0s.0d, and in September of that year arrangements were made for "the darkening of the schoolroom, church parlour, chapel windows and also for the shading of the lights".

Amongst the resolutions passed at the Annual Trustees meeting held in 1917 was one which read "That a Certificate of Public Worship be obtained".

In 1919 Mrs. R. was allowed the use of the Sewing Machine at a cost of 1/-d. each month, she was to keep it in repair, and it was to be returned to the Trustees when they so desired.

The caretaker who had held the position for so long had resigned and a Testimonial Fund was inaugurated and the sum of

£10 was presented to her. Her successor "being a fit and proper person to carry out the rules was engaged at a salary of £40 per annum".

At this time it was felt desirable to erect "A Memorial to the Fallen members, of this church". A treasurer was appointed, subscriptions collected and by 1921 the War Memorial and Roll of Honour was erected. *We* are not told when these were unveiled. The church was opened daily for "Prayer and Meditation".

It was felt that a cupboard was necessary for "keeping cup, saucers and plates in to be fixed over the present cupboard in the Infants Room", so, the Secretary was authorised to consult the cabinet maker, "as to prices of same". But at a meeting, held a month later, after an estimate had been received, it was decided "for the present, not to proceed with same".

A library was inaugurated by the splendid gift of books from a Mrs. Rawlings. Evidently in 1922 there was still no satisfactory working of the heating apparatus, and the firm who installed it was asked (once again) to "thoroughly inspect it, and give the caretaker instructions as to the proper use of taps and the general working of same". Moreover two trustees were detailed to be present when "the man comes to inspect same".

The first book in our possession regarding LEADER'S Meetings of fifty years ago is one covering the period June 1922 until 1954. A long discussion took place in 1924 regarding the financial position of the church, and a meeting was called of Trustees, Leaders and members to discuss details of the Envelope scheme.

In this year the Poor Stewards were asked to be careful and see that only non-alcoholic wines were used at Sacramental services. The Minister suggested that a Gift Day be held on July 1st, in 1925 to receive gifts for the relief of the Society and Trust accounts.

A GIRLS SOCIAL HOUR was formed for work amongst the girls

of the church and the Minister's wife was its first President. In 1923, it was necessary to have alterations, renewals and electric light installed. Suffice it to say that by the end of this financial year so much was raised by various means, donations, subscriptions and efforts - that all the work had been carried out, and a surplus of £3 13s.1d. was placed to the Trust account.

Up to the year 1924, coke was used as a means of heating the church, but now there was an offer from a merchant to supply anthracite delivered to Burnham station at 37/-d, per ton. Under the heading, "Methodist Union" at the Annual Leaders' meeting in January 1924, appears the following report - "a vote was taken on the question of Organic Union with Primitive and United churches - result 4 in favour - 4 against - 3 neutral".

In 1925 the attention of seat holders was drawn to the fact that "when visitors are in town, seat holders should be in their seats as early as possible, and if stewards are obliged to put visitors in their seats they should for bear criticism".

In consequence of the coal stoppage in 1926 endeavours were made to obtain one ton of logs and in the following year 10 trustees offered to advance the money to purchase five tons of anthracite coal at 40/-d. per ton.

In 1929 the members of Brean Society requested permission to use our schoolroom in aid of the funds of their new chapel. This was agreed to, on condition that no charge was made for admission. The Minister offered to conduct "morning prayer", during the summer months at 8 o'clock". At a Leaders' meeting he read out the names of the members and reported an increase in membership. He said that seventeen members were to be received into church membership on the Sunday following.

The love of money, according to Holy Writ, is to be abhorred, but even so a certain amount can be very useful at times. This was so in 1932 when it was realised that there was only £21 in hand to meet the "quarter Board" cheque of £62.10s.0d.

However a certain Brother C. offered to lend £60 free of interest. But another member Mr. W. wondered whether Brother C. should be allowed to bear the whole of the debt, and offered himself to lend £50 free of interest. Naturally this further offer of help was cordially received, and thanks offered, but it was felt that as security had been lodged at the Westminster Bank it was considered best to accept that.

A letter expressing thanks was sent to the donor, and this together with the original letter of offer appears in the Minute Book.

The new Rules and regulations relating to Leaders' meetings under the Methodist Union were brought to the notice of the Leaders. It was felt in 1933 that the Leaders should meet each month "to talk over church work in general, these meetings would follow the monthly prayer meeting'

The advantages of an "All-in" envelope system had been explained, inaugurated, and by the end of the year the Secretary reported that 68 members "had sent in their promises for a weekly amount totaling £3 14s.9d.". The hope was expressed that many more would fall in with the system.

Armistice Day in 1934 fell on the Sunday, the service started at 10.55 and the two minutes silence was observed. This was also the year of the Gresford Pit Disaster, all the churches made special collections on September 29th, ours totalling £4.3.2d.

The church was re-decorated in 1935, and the records state that "the new coat showed up the weaknesses on other directions, and the ladies who seem to have a special gift for detecting such things, thought it would be nice if we could have a "fall" for the pulpit and reading desk". With the help of a donor and various sources including the Guild and Ladies Sewing Circle, the expenditure on these was met.

In the year 1936 the annual Society Meeting must have proved a very happy and successful one, the Church Membership was 152, the Sunday School in the morning had an average attendance of 30,

and in the afternoon - 70 scholars. The Junior Guild attendance averaged 70, and the balance sheet showed a surplus of £15 3s.3d.

It was decided in 1938, that the services of any Minister who was in the district in the month of August should be prevailed upon to take the services paying them £1 1s.0d. per day.

The War clouds were now gathering over Europe, and on November 13th at both Sunday services a retiring collection was taken for the Czech Relief Fund.

A Year Book and Blotter 1939/40 bears the following inscription

DIAMOND JUBILEE OF THE PRESENT CHURCH

June 25th 1879 - June 25th 1939

Then follows details of special services held on the Sunday at 11am. and 6.30 pm. conducted by a former minister Rev. A. P. Bourne (1926-1929). There was a Young People's service in the afternoon, and at 8 o'clock that evening there was a Service of Thanksgiving in the Ritz Cinema when it was hoped that Minister and leaders of other churches would take part.

On the following Wednesday a DIAMOND TEA was held in the Schoolroom, and in the evening the members of the Wesley Guild and their friends proceeded to the top of Brent Knoll for a service.

In the Blotter a full and comprehensive list of the Church officials was given, and an appeal was made for more supporters of the Envelope scheme. At that time there were 71 members in the scheme. The church membership was 140, the deficit on the Church Account amounted to £58 15s.11d. and the Church Treasurer "hoped that the year being our 60th Anniversary, efforts would be made to clear us".

The month of September brought together the Trustees, leaders and members of the Finance Committee to "discuss alterations to our Church work as is necessary owing-to the present

crisis". The decision was taken to hold Sunday services at 11am in the morning and 3pm in the afternoon.

The curtains in the schoolroom were washed and backed with thick material and voluntary help was requested to render all other doors and windows acceptable for blackout purposes.

1940 saw Burnham accommodating evacuated children with the result that the Junior Guild now had a membership of 112 with an average attendance of 97. There was now a distinct possibility of soldiers being billeted in the town, and the General Purposes Committee was to be called as soon as any information was forthcoming.

In 1941 monthly letters were sent to all our boys serving with H.M. Forces and an appeal was made for funds to meet postages and the providing of Christmas gifts.

It was decided to recommence evening services from February, 1942.

By 1943 there were 30 members serving in the Forces and it was decided to send each of them 5/-d., the cost to be borne by Church funds, when retiring collections were not sufficient. The church membership was now 117, and the names of three ladies were added to act as sidesmen. A gift was sent to those in the Forces in 1944, the same as in the previous year.

The question of a "Welcome Home" to members of the Forces was referred to the General Purposes Committee in 1946.

At this Annual General Meeting, "Letters of Greeting" were sent to several members (9).

We are not told what difficulties were experienced at this time but the "thanks of the Leaders are expressed to the men who had kindly kept the organ inflated".

The work of the Overseas Missions and Women's Work had always claimed the interests of our church. In 1948 the Secretary of Overseas Missions resigned after 30 years service as such which prompted the Leaders to express their appreciation in a letter of thanks.

The "Envelope" scheme was in vogue in 1950, 54 members taking

advantage of it. The income being £191 3s.9d. The amounts were entered each Sunday by means of numbers on to a sheet. What is interesting is the fact that the state of the weather at both Sunday services was also entered, such as:

2nd April 1950	Morning	Rough
	Evening	Rough

The Membership in 1951 was 113, the year following saw the restarting of the Junior Guild with an average attendance of 30.

It was decided in 1952 to purchase Braille hymn books for the use of blind worshippers.

The Leaders' meeting in 1954 June, decided to allow the Television Club to use the name of "Methodist Club" six Junior members were received into full membership, the total number of members was then 103.

At the Annual Society meeting the decision was taken to start a fund for the renovation of the organ.

Thirty two members at the Annual Society meeting held in 1955, and the resident Minister spoke in glowing terms of the healthy, spiritual and friendly atmosphere in the church, the membership being 94.

A class was started for the instruction of Juniors in the hope that eventually they would become church members.

In 1960 the treasurer was able to report a reduction in the amount of debt to £77 11s.8d. This great achievement was due to increased giving by members and friends and the proceeds of two Gift Days, which brought in £264 16s.9d.

1964. All local organisations and churches had been asked to appoint some of their members to visit and comfort old folk at Frith House. In 1965 a sub committee reported on the advisability of turning the morning service into a Family Service. A start was made by a Sunday school scholar reading the Old Testament lesson and another announcing the

children's hymn.

By 1967 the roof of the church was sadly in need of renewal, and this necessitated the raising of money in addition to that brought in by the two Gift Days.

A meeting for the men of the church had been started at the Manse, and it was hoped that many would join.

By 1970 the recently formed House Groups were well established became an integral part of the life of the Church, and so had enriched it.

Conference had asked that every member help World Development by contributing a day's income before the Good Friday, and the Church participated. It was suggested that the members representing the Church should take a more active and effective part in the Hospital Scheme, this has been borne out by the Church being responsible for a Stall at the Annual Fete, support for this is always forthcoming.

In addition, the ladies of the Church take their turn in arranging the flowers in the wards at the Hospital.

At the Annual Leaders' Meeting in November 1972, great concern was felt regarding the state of the organ and heating and latterly, the electrical installation. It was felt that the boosting of the Envelope and Covenant schemes would prove helpful in the raising of the moneys necessary for these repairs. The idea of an Autumn Fayre to be held in November 1973 was proposed and received the sanction of the meeting. To raise the nucleus of moneys in order to provide stock for the stalls, various efforts such as Coffee mornings, sponsored events etc., have proved most successful.

Finally, we have always been mindful of the needs and cic that others have had upon our resources. In the current year to J.M.A. and Overseas Missions over £172, N.C.H.O. £357 On behalf of Christian Aid -collection - £48.30, Famine Lunch - £25 and Sponsored Swim - £34.50. Women's work - £61 and Axbridge Air Disaster £17.61. In addition our contributions to the Circuit Funds are ever increasing.

BURNHAM WESLEYAN SABBETH SCHOOL

Burnham Wesleyan Sabbath School was commenced January 29th, 1860 in the afternoon in the NEW CHAPEL just opened through the very great and labourious efforts of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, Superintendent of the Circuit. The school was commenced with singing and prayer with the following persons, and the Children entered in the Children's attendance for that date".

Such was the opening entry in the "Burnham Wesleyan Sunday School Minute Book of 1860". The last entry in this book concerns a teacher's meeting held on 4th July, 1872, when "a decrease of two scholars in the past six months" was reported. There was a balance in hand of £1 2s.7¹/₂d. and the school treat was to be held about the middle of August.

Unfortunately, we have no record book as such of the Sunday School from 1872 until 1937.

The first meeting of Preachers and Teachers was held on February 27th 1860 and was presided over by the Rev. S. Wesley. He brought with him a copy of the rules from Weston-super-Mare, and various officers were appointed. It was proposed that "Mr. E.C. be received as a transfer teacher from Midsommer Norton School, that Miss J.H. be received as a transfer from Berrow, and that Miss E.W. be received on three months trial from Burnham Baptist School"

Lengthy though the following rules may be, we think that they show very clearly the changes that the passage of 113 years has brought about.

1. The school shall open punctually at 9.30 in the morning and at 2.30 in the afternoon, and in every case with singing and prayer.
2. The Superintendent shall open the school, mark the teacher's attendance, supply classes with teachers, remove scholars from one class to another. He shall receive children on application and assign them to proper classes. He will reward scholars, and prevent unjust punishment. He will suspend such scholars 'as have despised repeated admonition, address the children when thought desirable, and furnish the Teachers'

meeting with a Quarterly Report.'

The Superintendents shall be members of the Methodist Society, the teachers and all other officers shall be members of Society, or persons of strict moral character."

The Superintendent and teachers were expected to be in the schoolroom five minutes before the time "fixed for commencing the duties of the school'.

"The teachers shall call over the names of their scholars after the opening service and mark the names of those present" Where a teacher was unavoidably absent, he or she had to provide a substitute "subject to the Superintendent's approval.

Every absent scholar had to be visited at home during the next week and 'a proper return made to the Superintendent on the Sabbath following of the reason of each scholar's absence'.

Rule 7 stated that "The scholars shall all be taken to attend Divine Service in the Chapel every Sabbath morning, and shall be in their places and seated at least three minutes before the appointed time of public worship".

Rule 9. "One reward ticket shall be given to every scholar coming in time for early attendance, morning and afternoon, an one ticket for good behaviour throughout the day. TEN tickets shall be in value for a penny and rewards proportionate thereto shall be distributed".

An entry says that these rules were agreed to, and "The number of children received into school

23

Boys gone to Torquay 2

Total - 21

Rules were rescinded and added to from time to time, and at the first (quarterly meeting of the teachers held on May 31st 1860, Rule 14 was agreed to, which read as follows - "No book or tract be used in the school or given to the children, but such as are approved by the Superintendents of the school or by Wesleyan ministers or printed at the WESLEYAN BOOKROOM".

Number of children on Book	31
Doubtful	7
Attended in the month	24

Another rule was to the effect that "Persons desirous of becoming teachers shall be proposed at a teacher's meeting and shall be THREE months on trial".

We learn that in the following year it was proposed that a Class was formed for all teachers and scholars to meet on Friday evening for religious instruction. We were not able to ascertain Christmas parties, but the teachers did meet on December 27th when the number of scholars was 28. A single line entry dated April 18th (Good Friday) in 1862 says: "Children and teachers took tea together" and again on September 15th - "Children took tea together".

By the end of that year the number of scholars had reached 40. Entries of meetings from then onwards are very sparse until the Teachers' meeting held in 1864. But at the meeting held on January 30th, 1865, it was resolved that "6 class books and 24 Sunday School hymn books be ordered for the use of the school".

Furthermore "that one additional large ticket be given to each child who attends regularly morning AND afternoon, not being absent more than twice during the quarter". The awarding of tickets to the scholars was a prominent feature in those days. At the same meeting 2 gross of "early attendance", 2 gross "good behaviour" one gross "verses" and one gross of large tickets to be ordered for the use of the school"

It was further resolved that "24 Part Catechisms and 12 4th Sunday School lesson books be ordered". Moreover "All verses to be learned at home, that one ticket be given for very FIVE verses, and that no child be allowed to learn more than TEN for one afternoon".

We read in July 1965 that "only those children who have attended

SEVEN Sundays during the quarter shall be admitted to the Children's treat".

This is the first 'occasion in which a treat is mentioned, no indication of the place or circumstances under which this innovation took place is given.

In 1866 the "general estate of the school was favourably reported onus to the attendance of teachers and behaviour of children". The number of scholars was 67, and their average attendance was satisfactory. Two ladies were received on trial as teachers, and at the same meeting a resolution was passed saying that at Divine Worship on Sunday mornings the children "should be removed to the seats immediately before the porch".

A prayer meeting was to be held on the FIRST SUNDAY of each month after the reading of the lessons.

Those present at the meeting on September 5th, 1867 requested that the usual PUBLIC TEA MEETING should not be held in consequence of the recent Chapel Anniversary, but that a TREAT be given to the children, to be paid for by special subscriptions. The treat came to pass on September 18th and eventually the expenses of the treat were more than covered by the subscriptions, and "thanks were presented to the ladies who had so kindly provided for the children".

By the following year the scholars numbered 68, the attendances were good, but the behaviour of the elder boys was reported BAD, It was decided at the April meeting that "in future no award should be given of greater value than SIXPENCE above the amount to which the scholar is entitled".

At the same meeting it was resolved that any teachers absenting him or herself for six consecutive Sundays without giving a satisfactory reason to the Teachers' meeting should be regarded as having resigned. Also it was requested that some "hatpins and a blind be ordered (if the Trustees did not object) for the use of the School".

(A blind by all means, but hatpins - we wonder!!!)

In July, 1870, 25 spelling books, 25 First and Second Catechisms and 12 hymn books were ordered.

The scholar's treat was held on August 8th at 2 p.m. and the Secretary was instructed to "try and get the PUZZLE GARDENS for the treat if they could be had at 1¹/₂d. each INCLUSIVE of HOT WATER". Furthermore there was a proposal that the teachers should collect for the treat, and this was done. We are told that "the school walked in procession with the teachers, Superintendent and Secretary from the chapel to the PUZZLE GARDENS, where they were provided with tea etc., and various amusements etc."

(In an old book on the history of Burnham by M. B. Sanders we are told that "On the Berrow Road is a garden recreation ground, owning an old maze very like that kept at Hampton Court. It is quite a curiosity, charming with its tortuous paths, and so difficult is it to find the way that people have wandered for a considerable time, being unable to find the centre. This is now called the PUZZLE GARDEN and is of unknown origin. There is no trace even in the old deed saying when it was made").

The accounts for the treat were paid, unfortunately we are not told the actual cost of it, only that "a balance of £4 12s. ¹/₂d. was left in favour of the school".

During this time the Superintendent offered 10/-d. to be given in rewards to the children for answering questions from the Bible, the teachers asked him to select the questions and the offer was made until the Christmas time.

We do not know what happened at the next meeting, but evidently there was a "rift in the lute" because "the three preceding leaves were cut out at the request of the teachers because the minutes of the following meeting were incorrectly recorded by the late secretary". At the next meeting, the Superintendent, the Secretary and a teacher all tendered their resignations.

In 1871 it was "Thought desirable to dismiss the very little ones at the close of Morning School, and not take them into the chapel. The parents of the children concerned were contacted and it was represented to them that we are in want of room to accommodate them".

It was also decided "that for the future a large ticket only be given for learning a chapter in the Bible - such chapter to consist of not less than

THIRTY verses".

One cannot help but admire the stamina and memory of those who wished to obtain such a prize.

We first read of Sunday School Council Meetings being held in 1937, and in the following year, a certain William Bradford was awarded a book for "good work in connection with Foreign Missions, to be presented at the Anniversary service".

By 1939 it was decided that the school library books would be distributed to the scholarsas the need for the library no longer existed".

The morning school was still an integral part of the Sunday School at this time, indeed the number of scholars had greatly increased with the evacuated children who were in Burnham with their teachers. Scholars sat for the Scripture examinations and ¹¹ a hearty vote of thanks was accorded to those teachers who gave special training to the children" in 1940.

These were years of War time, but there was no curtailment of any of the Sunday School activities, except that in one year (1940) the Annual outing "was not of a type similar to previous years".

The year 1945 brought with it shortages and restrictions as we all know, and it was decided to defer the question of books as prizes until the cost and choice be "ascertained and reasonable". The morning school was in being but in 1947 it was reported "Ceased".

At a Council meeting in 1947 it was decided to inaugurate a "PRIZE SCHEME" based on Star Attendance cards and Teachers' registers. There would be ONE mark for attendance and TWO marks for conduct. To qualify for a FIRST Prize, it was necessary to obtain 80% and for a SECOND Prize 60% of possible marks. The summer outing in 1948 was to take place at Sidmouth and Seaton on July 17th. Adults were to pay 10/6d., scholars 2/6d. - inclusive of tea. The Annual outing in 1949 took place in Minehead, and a suggestion was made at the Council meeting that it be held on a Saturday to enable the Senior scholars to attend. It was also agreed that the scholars prizes should take the form of hymn books at a cost of 1/9d. each, but in the following year no prizes were given.

A Church member had offered to provide a Christmas Tree to be placed in the Church. The scholars were asked to bring gifts, which were distributed to the

children of York House. There was also a suggestion to place a Crib on the Communion Table.

At this same meeting in 1949 a resolution was passed advocating that "Occasional Children's services be held in the Church".

In 1955 the Sunday school registrar reported that there were 29 scholars on the roll and 8 in the Staff.

This year (1973) there are 85 scholars and 17 teachers on the Roll.

The importance of the Scripture examinations was such in 1957, that moneys were made available for three prizes to be given on the result of the examinations. In 1959, the Secretary of the J.M.A. was thanked for her very successful years work.

On July 9th, 1960 the Annual outing took place at Bristol Zoo, this was also the venue the following year for the Primary, but the outing for the Senior scholars was to be decided later.

For many, many years the Sunday School had supported various organisations from their funds, amongst others - the Methodist Youth Dept., National Sunday School Union, J.M.A. and the Church Funds.

By 1963, the number of scholars had increased immensely, but as is sometimes the case, there was a shortage of teachers, and arrangements were made to remedy this situation.

In the Scripture examinations held in 1966, the scholars obtained. 6 honours certificates out of a district total of 26.

The number of scholars had grown to such an extent that the school was now divided into four sections, and two extra rooms upstairs had been decorated, which made it easier for the divisions just mentioned.

A Bible Quiz was held in 1968 between Sunday schools in the Bridgwater district, and pictures for the school walls were bought with the voucher awarded to the school.

An Annual Toy service held in December has been held for several years - the toys brought by the children were given to the Bristol University Settlement.

Another feature of Sunday School life is the Candlelight and Carol service held in December, this is appreciated greatly by scholars and congregation alike.

A "Friday Club" was started in late October 1970, to run for an hour, to be followed by a Badminton Club for senior scholars and older people.

The Sunday School calendar is a very full one, involving as it does both teachers and scholars alike in services such as Sunday School anniversaries, Toy Gift, Teacher's Dedication, Mothering Sunday, Monthly Family service, not forgetting the Christmas parties and summer outings. The interest shown in the work of the J.M.A. has always resulted in the large amounts raised each year. The National Children's Home has for a great number of years claimed the interest of the Sunday School which is typified in the amounts collected yearly, and its participation in the District Festival of queens. They have also assisted in "Sponsored" events and Jumble sales as a means of raising funds for Church and Sunday School.

The Church counts itself very fortunate in having such an enthusiastic band of teachers and workers alike, endued with a modern approach to the claims of Christianity as it affects the youth of this modern day and age.

YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

This body of young people comprising Sunday School scholars aged 12 and over, meet twice weekly under a very able leader. On a Sunday evening after usual church services they meet in the Beginners room, their attendance averaging 15 - 25. On these occasions, during which coffee is served and evangelical choruses enjoyed, the evenings are mostly concerned with discussions, not only on religious matters but the Humanities in general, and Biblical quizzes".

On Saturday evenings the Youth Club meetings are taken up mainly with games such as table tennis and volley ball. They have also been responsible for the organising of "sponsored" events for charity, and their cycle ride to Wells as a means of helping our Renovation Fund.

Plans are afoot for making it possible for the Youth Fellowship to tak^e a more active part in the life of the church by being responsible for conducting four services yearly.

CRADLE ROLL

The first occasion on which we read of the Cradle Roll was in 1951, when the minutes read that "The Annual party was fixed for January 8th, 1952, when the Cradle Roll and Primary would meet at 4 o'clock, and the Juniors and Seniors at 6-30". In 1954, it was reported that there were 15 names on the Cradle Roll, an increase of 4 from the previous year.

An invitation was sent in 1963 to the parents of children whose names were on the Roll, to attend the Christmas Party.

The yearly service held on Mothering Sunday gives an opportunity for parents to attend, the names of the children on the Roll are announced, and posies presented.

SOCIETY STEWARD'S BOOK

We came across such a book dating from 1902 to 1907. In it are contained the names of the various Class Leaders, together with totals of Weekly money, Ticket money, quarterly Collections and Grants from Chapel Trust. These quarterly amounts were verified by the Society Steward and two Circuit Stewards. On one occasion the Sewing meeting made a contribution of £6 11s.Od. to the "Quarter Board". "Not slothful in business, Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord". Such is the caption heading in this book.

Perhaps the duties of Society Stewards have changed somewhat since this book was printed, but the intent and purpose are still the same as embodied in the words of the caption.

It was the duty of the Society Stewards to see "in case the Preacher should fail to keep his appointment that some service is properly conducted". And so it was suggested that if no preacher could be procured, "perhaps the best way to meet such an emergency, is for one of the Society Stewards, or some other proper person selected by them, to read one of Mr. Wesley's sermons or any other suitable sermon,

conducting the whole service in the usual order".

One entry informs us "£1.12s.0d. - being horse hire".

It must be remembered that these were the days when local preachers had to fulfill their preaching engagements in the country churches by using the only means of transport available - by horse and trap.

In this particular book there is a quote from an earlier book called the "Class Book Compendium" - "Let no person attend any Love Feast without a Society ticket.....no person shall be suffered to partake of the Lord's Supper among us, unless he be a Member of Society, or receive a note from the Superintendent or from the Minister administering". Such instructions make us realise how liberal our attitudes have become.

The first reference to the love-feast in John Wesley's journal shows that sixty of the brethren (including seven clergymen of the Church of England) were present on January 1st 1739, in Fetter Lane, London. They were "continuing instant in prayer, at about three in the morning, the power of God came mightily upon us, that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground We broke out with one voice, "We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord". The following words are taken in part from "A History of the Wesley Methodists" by Crowther, 1815.

"A Love-feast was begun and ended with singing and prayers, a preacher presiding. The time was chiefly taken up with any person who chose to, relating their Christian experiences. Such meetings tended to promot piety, mutual affection and zeal. A collection was made, the first object of which was to pay for the bread used on the occasion and the surplus was divided among the poor members of the Society where the Love-feast was held.

"The bread (or cake) was distributed and eaten, and water drunk from a two-handled "loving-cup" passed from person to person, as an expression of their sense of being one family, united, by love to Christ, in love to one another".

In some smaller Societies where no Poor Stewards existed, the duties of that office devolved upon the Society Stewards. It is not well

known, perhaps, that we are still using a record book which was started 15 years before the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The frontispiece says "Burnham Wesleyan Methodist Poor Stewards Account Book from 1882", and shows the amounts of collections taken at Love-feasts, Sacraments and United Services. Such collections were used at the discretion of the Minister for distributions to sick and needy folk, and to pay for wine and other incidentals used at the Communion.

In 1883 we read "Biscuits for LOVE Feast 9d."

The collection taken at the Love-feast in 1887 was $6/7\frac{1}{2}d$.

and the bottle of wine cost $2/6d$. A serviette in 1910 cost 6d. To purchase two damask cloths in 1922 would cost $17/-d$ One Table Cloth was sent to the Laundry in 1936 charge 4d. Whist in the same year 12 Communion glasses were bought for $4/6d$.

The War evacuees, York House, the Blind Home, together with the sick and needy have all benefitted over the years from this Fund. The total number of communicants during the year was first quoted in 1949, and was 358. It is interesting to note that in 1971 the number was 722.

Some 60 years ago, the Poor Steward, evidently with a mathematical frame of mind worked out by logarithms, the interest earned at $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ on the years collections.

"Log 194640.5 plus log 2.5 – log 36500

Therefore log 1257 equals log x.

x equals 13.36 pence.

Interest @ $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ is $1/1\frac{1}{2}\%$

THE CHOIR

The first mention of a Choir was in 1886, when the Trustees resolved to provide SIX $3/-d$, hymn books for the use of the Choir". At the same meeting a lady was appointed as organist in place of the gentleman who had resigned. He had held the position for five years, because in 1886 he was thanked for his services as "a player-on the harmonium".

The year 1896 saw the provision of "a board showing the numbers and tunes of the hymns, so that the Choir and congregation may know them beforehand". A new organist was appointed in 1896 a certain Mr. Martin Broad, in 1916 he was called up for military service, and a letter of

appreciation was sent to him for his long services as organist "and we trust that during his military career he may be guarded and guided, and that he would soon be home". Mention was also made to the ladies who had deputised during his absence. He returned to civilian life in 1918, and in view of his services as organist for 23 years, an appreciative letter was sent to him. But to hark back to 1897, this was the year in which a "Committee of Management for the Choir" was formed, composed of Trustees, the organist and two members of the Choir. But in December of the same year, was introduced a scheme, "regarding the purchase of an organ, not to cost more than £150, on the understanding that it is paid for, and the scheme completed by March 1898." The organ was duly installed and officially opened on September 8th, 1898 and was insured for £200.00. The Organ Committee decided to put in extra stops, "oboe", "gamba" and "fifteenth", at a total cost of £38. But even with various alterations and extra spending on an organ stool, curtain rods and a blind for the window behind the organ, the final cost was £204 8s.10d. Needless to remark, this amount was quickly raised by the congregation through subscriptions, a jumble sale, a bazaar, and "profits on public teas". The total amount raised was such that a surplus of £4 10s.11d. was handed over to the Trustees General Account. A suggestion was made in 1899 that "a vesper hymn be sung at the evening service". But after much deliberation it was "decided to omit the hymn for the present". At the same Trustees meeting the members of the Choir were thanked for their services and the organist was "again asked to accept £2 2s.0d. as an honorarium".

Five years later, a Leader was appointed, and in 1906 the Choir was responsible for arranging a concert "on behalf of the seat alterations this to be followed by a Coffee Supper". A request came from the Leaders' Meeting at this time, asking for the sanction of the Trustees for the singing of "Amen" after the hymns, the Choir also sent a letter with 14 signatures asking "for certain concessions in the musical part of the service". After a lengthy discussion it was decided that the Trustees authorise the singing of "Amen" ONLY after the hymns. Permission was granted to use "the new hymn book from hymn No. 1 to 989, excluding the Choir responses to the Ten Commandments and Beatitudes".

By 1912 the ever faithful organist felt that in view of his remuneration (£4 4s.0d.) and other engagements he found it impossible to be responsible for

all the services and he asked to be relieved as far as possible from the weeknight work. After due consideration it was decided to appoint a lady deputy organist and to raise the honorarium of the organist -to £6 6s.0d., the Chairman of the meeting undertook to see that the extra ;E2 2s.0d. was raised by public subscription.

By 1934 the new hymn book as authorised by the newly formed Methodist Connexion was being used and the resident Minister expressed a wish to shorten the service when he was preaching, and to have 15 minutes of congregational singing to learn some of the new hymns. A report of 1936 showed that the choir had a total of 17 members, one male member actually attended 104 times during the year - which speaks volumes for the zeal and interest he displayed. At the Annual Society meeting in 1949 it was stated that the organist Mr. Broad had completed more than 50 years in that capacity, and so a letter of thanks was sent to him, and a sub-committee was formed "to make suitable arrangements for the Church to show its gratitude". We are not told in the records what tangible form of appreciation was given to him.

All throughout these long years *of the Choir's* existence we have evidence of the part played by the Choir in maintaining the musical part of the Sunday services. In rendering concerts and musical evenings, from various accounts we see amounts for printing leaflets and programmes for such entertainments. The Church has always recognised the part played by the Choir, this is evidenced not only by appreciative thanks given at Society meetings, but by members of the congregation.

LADIES SEWING CIRCLE

(NOW KNOWN AS WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP)

All throughout the long history of the church we read time and again of the activities of the "Ladies Circle". An appraisal of their good works can be gained from reading some of the old records. They are first mentioned in 1904 when they "were asked to co-operate and arrange with the Sunday School teachers, a Sale of Work". In 1921 they were responsible for raising ^{fu36} 10s.0d. for Trust funds. Their "help was requested to defray the debt on the Trust Account" in 1929.

In 1936 the "Ladies Sewing Circle who meet week by week have been able to hand over £16 10s.0d. to the church, even if the sewing has practically disappeared. Especially as it comes from the few ladies who are always doing their utmost for the church at all times". So reads the entry. But by the following year they intimated that they were not sewing any more, but nevertheless besides their contributions to the Gift Day, they had also handed over £14.00 They gave an invitation to all members to attend their Thursday afternoon Tea meetings.

In the Diamond Jubilee blotter there is a reference to the "Ladies Circle (October to May), meeting on Thursdays at 3.30 p.m. Tea at 5 p.m."

In 1943-the ladies were thanked for "their good work done for the troops", but it is in 1947 that we first learn of the change in title to that of "Women's Fellowship".

From the first Annual General Meeting we learn that there were 38 members on the Roll, and in 1961 moves were made to hold their meetings in the Schoolroom instead of the Primary room which was proving too small for their growing number:. In the same year the curtains dividing the schoolroom were bought, made and put up by the ladies.

In 1973 there were 55 Roll members with an average attendance of 38 The weekly meetings have always been varied and interesting and they have participated in rallies and visits to other Fellowships. For many years they have supported many worthy causes such as Homes for *the Aged*, National Children's Home, Family Welfare, Women's Work, Cot for Southern India, and by subscriptions, teas and proceeds from Jumble Sales have always been able to assist the finances of the church in no small measure.

WESLEY GUILD

One of the most illuminating facets of Church Fellowship has been shown through the Wesley Guild. Its crowning motto has been, "One Heart, One Way", and the aim of the Great Fellowship of Guilders are fourfold, "Comradship, Consecration, The Cultivation of the Mind, and the application of Christian Service to all".

It was in November 1896 when some 40 to 50 young people met to discuss the possibility of forming a WESLEY GUILD in connection with

the church. Such a Guild movement had been started in the Connexion some few months previously, and it was decided to form such a Guild immediately. The Minister was the first President, the usual officers were appointed and a committee formed. They met on Monday evenings at 8 o'clock, and the hymn book used was Sankey's.

In the year following a Junior section for children over 8 years was formed. By 1898 the Guild had flourished to such an extent that 100 programmes were printed, and also a Band of Hope was in being. In 1899 we find that "Tea was provided for 100 and during the summer months a prayer meeting was held., We are told that at a "special entertainment" in 1900, the sum of 13/-d. was taken for admission, 5/-d of which was donated towards a Social for the children.

Musical evenings were evidently in great demand and on such occasions, one penny was charged for admission. The Guild at that time, ever mindful of its duties and obligations gave from the funds, the sum of £1 towards a "lamp outside the vestry door".

There was a balance of 10/-d. in the account in 1901, while the Missionary Committee had £8.00

Unfortunately, there is a break in the records until 1905/6 when we are told that Tea was provided at 6d per head and the sum of 5/-d was given to Trust Funds.

We are not told what form of musical accompaniment was available up to 1905 but in the following year a resolution was passed which read "That a piano be obtained for 3 months, and if approved, pay for it, if not, pay for hiring. Price to be £21" However, in December 1906 the piano was definitely bought, and in the minutes of the Trustees of 4th March, 1907, is the entry "permission is granted for the piano to stand in any part of the New building".

Another entry from the Guild minutes book reads "That as soon as we leave the Alfred Street schoolroom, we move to Adult School and the night of the Guild be altered from Monday to Wednesday". It was at this time that our church (as we now know it) was enlarged and the Sunday School premises added on to the existing church.

The schoolroom in Alfred Street, (we now know as High Street) has seen

many changes in its use. In this year of grace, with its computers, jets and probings into outer space, **it is** an amusement arcade, having been in turn, (but not in this order) a Central Bazaar, a political club, and a warehouse.

A certain amount of nostalgia can be felt when we read that in 1908 enquiry was made to the Railway at Burnham as to the cost of fares to Bournemouth - per person return 3/9d. If a Saloon was required for 30 passengers this would be 10/-d. extra.

These were the days when "Glee" parties were in vogue, and one was formed consisting of;12, who "must be members of the Guild", but there were to be no engagements on Guild nights".

Annual Guild Festivals and summer outings were the order of the day. One outing took place at Weston, travelling by train and tea was taken in the woods at a cost of 9d. per head. Guild festivals were very elaborate affairs - a sermon at 4 o'clock, Tea at 5'30 p.m. at a cost of 6d. for 60 persons and a public meeting in the Church at 7 o'clock.

By the *year* 1911, interest in the Guild appeared to be at a very low ebb, and after the Christmas party it was decided to give the balance in hand and the profit from the party to the Easter Sunday collection in 1912.

However, brighter days were ahead and in 1919 it was "thought expedient that something should be done to organise the increasing numbers of our church into a Wesley Guild". There was a great surge of enthusiasm for this formation, and owes a great deal to the energies of the Minister and Secretary, together with the various secretaries of the Guild activities. The ladies of the Sewing meeting were holding a Sale of Work in aid of Trust funds and they sent a deputation to the Guild to "ask if it were pleasing in the minds of the Guild members to work a Guild stall". So it came to pass that it was so, not only did the Guilders run a stall but also the side shows.

Fifty years ago the various secretaries were only elected for one year, but of course, were eligible for re-election.

In the early twenties it was incumbent upon Guilders to support an Indian child to the extent of an annual subscription of £5, so in 1921 and 1922

Jumble Sales were held to raise this amount. The finances were such that they were able to give amounts to Trust Funds, N.C.H.O. and by 1931 there were 72 names on the Roll, with average attendances of 55.

Inter visits to other local Guilds were the order of the day, with summer rambles, and Evening Rallies on Brent Knoll. Small parties of Guilders took services in the Country churches at East Brent, Brent Knoll, Lympham, Berrow and Brean which proved a useful training ground for the young members. In the year 1932 the Junior Guild was re-born, with an admirable leader and an enthusiastic band of helpers, this thrived with an average attendance of 65. Many memorable Children's concerts were staged with great success, and they had their own syllabus, and their Games Committee consisted of the Officers, three boys and three girls, members of the Junior Guild.

The report given by the Secretary at the Guild Rally is both interesting and illuminating. He quote ..."And in the years to come maybe, when asked what WE did to celebrate Methodist **Union**, we shall say, "why, we formed a Junior Guild".

The League of Good Companions comprised members of the Baptist Church who joined our Senior Guild for a debate (in this particular year) the subject being "Have we too much leisure?". These debates were a feature in subsequent years, but the Guild Secretary reported later with some misgiving that these "although delightful and interesting were not actively supported by the general members".

The blasts of War, with all its inherent rush and turmoil made themselves felt, the Guild did useful service in entertaining the troops who were stationed in the town. London evacuees arrived in 1939, and the officers of the Junior Guild did sterling service towards these youngsters, our schoolroom having crowded into it, 120 or 150 on Guild nights.

These were days and nights of great difficulty and mental stress, the nights were dark, and the young ones were strangers amongst us. So, "convoys" were organised and Church members helped to accompany them home in safety.

The War had dragged wearily on for a few years, and a Fellowship was formed embodying other branches of the Church activities, but eventually it came to be run to a large extent on Guild lines.

In 1946 it was decided to re-commence the Wesley Guild both Senior and Junior sections and to continue the Church Fellowship. There is a record that the German P.O.Ws were entertained on several occasions and in return "they gave us an excellent musical entertainment".

In 1947, Inter visits between local Guilds were still being maintained, and also visits from the League of Good Companions. In 1950 it was not possible to run a Junior Guild owing to the difficulty in finding a leader. The Wesley Guild Games evening *was* continued during the session of 1952. The Guild report of the following year tells us that the average attendances were about 30, the programme for the session was varied and interesting - socials, literary evenings, a "Quiz"^{ll} a visit from the Burnham and District Singers, a gramophone evening, such evenings being balanced most effectively with Devotional and Christian service evenings.

The Guild went on apace in the same vein for the next few years, contributing to the fellowship of the church in all its facets. All through the years it had supported financially such worthy-projects as the "Indian Child", Ilesha Hospital, Church Trust, Home Missions and Overseas Missions also had their support each year.

In 1953 a sub-committee was appointed to enquire into the possibility of forming a Club for the younger members. This was carried to a successful issue, and in 1954 the membership was about 30, and through successful social evenings were able to make a donation to the Gift Day collection.

High hopes were entertained of forming a Badminton Club during the next winter session, and the possibility of producing short plays with a view to helping the Church.

At the Annual General Meeting held in May, 1961 it was decided that in future the meeting should be called the Church Fellowship, incorporating the Wesley Guild. 'Since that day the Fellowship has functioned having as its ideals the true spirit of Christian Fellowship.

WEDNESDAY CIRCLE **(YOUNG WIVES)**

It was prior to the year 1961 that informal meetings took place consisting

of the young wives and friends with their common interests. Very soon due to the expansion in the numbers of ladies attending, a syllabus was arranged and the meetings properly constituted under the presidency of the wife of the Minister. Throughout the years the programmes have contained a wide variety of subjects from talks on antiques to demonstrations by public bodies. Visits to places, objects of interest and to similar organisations have taken place.

The meetings held from September until June meet fortnightly, sometimes with the ladies from the Baptist Church. Playing their part in the social activities of the Church, amongst other things they make themselves responsible for the catering at the Church Gift Days and hold coffee mornings, one in aid of the funds for the Sunday School Christmas parties.

EPILOGUE

An Epilogue is elsewhere defined as the "concluding section of a Book". Perhaps such a meaning may be put upon these few words. Much has been written about the building of our church over the past century and more. Yet there is no "conclusion" to a live church such as ours.

True it has experienced difficulties of every kind, but has always overcome them, by Faith and Good Works. No Church history could really be called complete without a list of ministers who have served the church over the past years. Unfortunately no such list exists, and has proved impossible to compile, as there are no specific records, and our church has been part of at least three different Circuits.

The "digging and delving" after information for this history brought to light part of a copy of an agreement made on the 15th day of March, but alas, no indication of the year of execution. The spidery writing on paper yellowed with age brought us to the conclusion that this is the oldest document we have. All the participants to the agreement are names well known to us who have perused the ledgers and journals from 1860 - the Hodges, Boards, Lovibonds, Leakers and Frost. The document concerns the letting of a certain room (vicinity not stated) in a house at an annual rent of -£3 for the time of three years.

The owner agreed to "put in a board floor, and the said Committee agrees to furnish the room with pulpit, pews and benches, and these expenses to be defrayed out of the subscriptions and collections made from time to time".

It was let for "a public preaching place by the Wesleyan Methodists whose appointed preachers shall from time to time occupy the pulpit FOR THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL".

It is this preaching of the Gospel that has fired the hearts and imaginations of men and women everywhere to build churches for this main purpose - TO THE GLORY OF GOD.

Having perused this potted history of Methodism extending well over a hundred years, the reader cannot fail to be impressed by the zeal and faith of those who have inaugurated, worked for, and maintained the religious life here in Burnham.

We owe them a deep debt of gratitude.