

Methodist Chapels

A booklet published in 1994 by Kathleen Brown, a member of the Chapel, gives useful information. I am also in possession of notes written in 1988, also presumably by a member of the Chapel. I have used both to help put together these notes.

Where I use the booklet I have marked this below with the number (1)

That Booklet refers to there being an earlier chapel in the village and I have researched this point at some length as will be seen. The most helpful document from this aspect was The Northallerton Record Office Document No. Z 747 Stillington Histories of all Freeholds c 1767 to 1820), that I have marked (2).

Finally A notebook written by G.C.Cowling of Easingwold that can be found in the York Reference Library, gives further detailed information and references to sources. Where used this is marked (3).

One of the earliest preachers was Robert Spence, who was born at Stillington; (Baptised 9th March 1748) his father William Spence was a blacksmith. Robert attended a Dame's school and trained as a ploughman when he left school, later becoming a groom to Rev. Lawrence Sterne but was dismissed when he became a Methodist. He was local preacher for 57 years".(1)

Meeting House on the Green

In 1767 Thomas Wilkinson built a Methodist Meeting House, with Joiner's Shop above on the west side of the Green (2). (see note at end) It remained in the Wilkinson family until 1806 when, still described as a Dwelling House and Methodist Meeting House, it was purchased by Benjamin Siver for £215. In 1811 it was inherited from him by Joseph Siver (2).

Chapel in Main Street

It would appear that on the site in Main Street where the Methodist Chapel now sits there was, in 1767, a Front House Garth and Shoemaker's shop which was owned by a George Walker. In 1785 this property was inherited by his son, also called George Walker. It would appear that between 1785 and 1818 George Walker junior built a Methodist Chapel on this site as in 1818 this property is described as being a Front House Garth and Methodist Chapel, still owned by George Walker.(2)

According to Cowling, "In 1800 the Methodist Society at Stillington had consisted of 11 members led by George Walker. In 1812 this number had increased to 59. But by 1822 had dropped again to 40" (3).

The Chapel Booklet, published in 1994 states that "The earliest document found relating to this building is dated 26th October 1819 and this was a document sworn in the court transferring the building, 12.5 yards long by 10.5 yards wide, from George Walker to the trustees – William Farrer of Marton. Thomas Webster and William Gibson of Stillington, Robert Jackson of Farlington, Thomas Scaife, John Scaife and Charles Thomas Bainbridge etc"(1). In the absence of knowing where the writer of the Booklet saw this document, I have assumed that it is referring to the chapel in Main Street mentioned in the preceding paragraph. The reason being that both documents mention the name of George Walker as being the owner.

According to the Booklet - In 1844 a new Chapel was built on this site. It was a very large building capable of holding 400 people, although the average attendance was 45. There were, however, 200 lettable seats realising an income of £7.10s 00d. The

Indenture was sworn on 4th April, 1844 and the Trustees nominated were William Turner of Stillington, William Gibson of Crayke, William Barker of Habton (gentleman), Robert Jackson (Yeoman), Robert Farrer (Gentleman) of Stillington, Charles Thomas Bainbridge (Spirit Merchant), Thomas Scaife (Cordwainer), Robert Gill (Gentleman), William Teasdale (Surgeon), and John Driffield (Grocer) of Easingwold. The Minister was Rev. William Ash. Correspondence relating to this time reveals some confusion as the chapel was built on what was two sites and were two sets of trustees required? After copious correspondence between J.H.Turner of York (solicitor) and the Wesleyan Committee in Manchester the matter was resolved with the exception of whether the land was copyhold or freehold. Finally it was decided that the land was copyhold⁽¹⁾.



The Chapel Booklet states “In 1860 permission was given by the Wesleyan Chapel Committee to erect a school at Stillington provided it did not cost more than £100 and that the entire cost would be defrayed in 6 months. A grant was given from the Wesleyan Chapel Fund of £20”⁽¹⁾

This is supported by Cowling who states “There was a school attached to the chapel in 1859 (he quotes his source as being Whellan & Co). In 1890 and 1901 this school was attended by some 50 children. Its capacity in later years was 70. The master in 1890 was James E. Charnock and in 1901 Albert Stafford. (Kelly’s Directories 1901)” (3).

In 1935 the school was repaired and in 1936 it was leased by Mr. G.F.Baker of Marton Lodge for a period of years for use as a Boys Hall.(source G. Richardson)

In the 1970’s it was decided that the Chapel was far too large and took a lot of heating, it was also in need of repair. After some deliberation it was decided to sell the old chapel and convert the school room into a multi-purpose building. The cost was

£3000 and the builder Mr. Lesley Salton. The new chapel was officially opened on Saturday 1st May 1971⁽¹⁾.



The current Methodist Chapel, March 2009.

A Primitive Methodist chapel was built in 1866 at the corner of the road junction leading to York on the Easingwold corner.(3).



Charles Hutchinson told me that he could record this as being in use for religious services in 1931 as he went to one or more at that time. (Charles told me this on 30.3.2009). He also went on to tell me that it ceased to be used shortly afterwards and became a cycle repair depot operated by Mr.Morse. During the 1939/45 War it was used to store waste newspapers for the war effort.

The building was pulled down after the 1939-45 War in order to widen the road junction.

This Chapel is not listed in the above Stillington Histories of all Freeholds circa 1767-1820, which tends to confirm that it was not built until after that date. However as far as I can make out from that list the property on the site was owned from 1771 to 1819, by William Wilkinson when it passed to Thomas Wilkinson.

Note 11th Jan 2010 as a result of a search at the Borthwick of The Dean and Chapters Abstract from 1739-1774. A house in Stillington entred for Protestant Dissenters.

We whose names are hereunto subscribed being Protestant Dissenters Do intend to make use of the house of Thomas Wilkinson situate within the Town and parish of Stillington in the County of York and Jurisdiction of the Dean & Chapter of York for a place of Religious worship of Almighty God as Witness our Hands this 23rd Day of April 1760

Thomas Wilkinson, Thomas Vasey, Robert Thompson, Richard Gawthorpe, Elizabeth Skaife, Thomas Snowdan.

The 23rd day of April 1760, A Certificate was given of the above being Registered.

Thos Wilkinson died on 25th September and was buried on 27th September 1787 at Stillington. Cause stated to be Rheumatism and Asthma.

Grahame Richardson March 2009 (added to Jan 2010)