

A DRIVER and WEATHERHEAD family history

Silsden, West Yorkshire, England

Tracing the story of two Silsden families, through six generations of change

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2024

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Printed in the UK by Swallowtail Print

Appendix 1

Turnpike roads in and around Silsden

From Tudor times each parish vestry was required to maintain its roads. Funding was a problem until, in 1663, an alternative method of road administration was introduced, namely the creation of turnpikes. These turnpikes were toll roads having a tollgate set up across a road. Horse drawn vehicles and farmers with livestock using that road were allowed to pass through the gate only upon payment of a toll. Exemptions from paying tolls were allowed to satisfy local interests and pedestrians were usually allowed to pass without any payment. The revenue collected from tolls would be used to maintain and improve the road.

By Acts of Parliament many roads became the responsibility of Turnpike Trusts who were authorised to charge a toll to users of those roads. There was also an obligation to provide milestones and for users to drive on the left. In England and Wales there were about 1000 such Turnpike Trusts.

In the Silsden area there were three turnpikes, the Keighley to Kendal Turnpike, authorised in 1753, which passed south of Silsden on the other (south) side of the River Aire and through Steeton. Secondly the Leeds to Skipton Turnpike, which passed through Addingham, north of Silsden, and was authorised in 1754. Thirdly the Blackburn to Addingham Turnpike, authorised in 1755, which passed through Silsden. The first and third of these turnpikes met at Kildwick and crossed the River Aire by means of a rather narrow stone bridge. The Kildwick website tells us that this bridge was paid for by the canons of Bolton Priory at Bolton Abbey over the years 1305-1313. Having crossed the bridge, the Keighley-Kendal road turned west through Farnhill and then north through Bradley to Skipton, and the Blackburn-Addingham road turned east proceeding over high ground to Silsden.

In early periods the main activity was to 'metal' the existing roads, bridleways and tracks to make them more suitable for travellers, their

coaches, horses and carts, achieving a minimum width and usable in adverse weather conditions. In doing this the turnpikes improved existing routes and the field boundaries were largely undisturbed. In later turnpikes wider and new routes were created and these sometimes cut across field patterns. They were the 'motorways' of the nineteenth century.

The river bridge at Kildwick originally built in the early fourteenth century, was widened in 1780. This was achieved by adding what could be looked upon as an additional bridge, alongside and joined to the existing bridge. Viewing the underside of the bridge shows the different constructions of the arches. On the upstream side are the ribbed arches of the

Blackburn and Addingham Road.

LETTING OF TOLLS

Notice is Hereby Given,

THAT the TOLLS arising at the several TOLL-GATES, upon and on the sides of the Turnpike Road leading from *Blackburn* through *Padiham, Burnley, and Colne*, all in the County of Lancaster, to *Addingham and Cocking End*, both in the West Riding of the County of York, and on the New Line of Road from *Burnley to Accrington*, will, together with the Toll-Houses, and the Weighing Machine and Keeper's House at Colne, be

Let by Auction,

AT THE
BLACK BULL INN, IN BURNLEY,
On Friday, the Twenty-third day of November next,
Between the hours of 11 and 12 in the Forenoon ;
In the manner directed by two several Acts, passed in the 3rd and 4th years of the Reign of his late Majesty, King George the 4th, "for regulating Turnpike Roads," which Tolls are let for the current year at the following sums, clear of the expenses of collecting them, viz :—

	£.	s.	d.
The Tolls arising at the Bars between <i>Blackburn and Marsden, and between Burnley and Accrington..</i>	2,910	0	0
Those arising at the <i>Bradley Bar, in Marsden</i>	780	0	0
Those arising between <i>Marsden and Cross Hills, including the Cross Hills Bar, and the Weighing Machine at Colne.....</i>	855	0	0
Those arising at the <i>Silsden Bar, and the Turner Lane Bar, between Silsden and Addingham.....</i>	345	0	0
	£4,890	0	0

The Taker or Takers must give Security, with sufficient Sureties, to the satisfaction of the Trustees of the said Road, for payment of the Rent or Rents agreed for, and at such times as they, the said Trustees, shall direct.

By Order of the Trustees,
JOHN HARGREAVES,
Their Clerk.

Blackburn, Oct. 22d, 1837.

fourteenth century bridge and on the downstream side are the smooth arches of the eighteenth century. This bridge has now been bypassed, but



the old bridge is preserved by having been listed as a Grade 1 structure.

Each turnpike was authorised for a period of years when another act had to be passed in order to continue the process and renew the appointment, or appoint new custodians. The process of renewal, which in general took place every 21 years, is illustrated by the 1838 advertisement which indicates that portions of turnpikes were let by auction to management organisations.

The turnpike through Silsden, managed by the Blackburn Addingham and Cocking End Trust, originally ran from Blackburn and Colne, through Cross Hills and crossed the bridge at Kildwick. It then climbed a steep slope to Kildwick Grange and continued eastwards until dropping down into Silsden, by what is now Skipton Road. It then continued along the line of Bridge Street, up Fenkhill Street, later renamed Chapel Street, up North

Street to the area of the village known as Town Head. Here it continued up Brown Bank, (Bolton Road, which now crosses this old turnpike, did not



exist), passed the top of Swartha Lane and Light Bank Lane onto Addingham Moor and to a crossroads. Addingham Moor and Silsden Moor are portions of the much larger Rombalds Moor. At this cross roads the turnpike divided. The left turn went down the north facing hill, Turner Lane, to Addingham. The lane straight ahead is Cocking Lane and that branch went to the end of Cocking Lane where it met the Skipton to Leeds turnpike. It is at this hill top junction that a signpost, perhaps better described as a milestone, still stands from the early turnpike days. It consists of two hands carved into a block of stone, one pointing to Colne and the other to Otley, with mileages 14 and 10 miles respectively.

There is some concern about this stone and it may be that it is set slightly wrongly. The Colne hand points correctly down Brown Bank Lane to Silsden, the Otley hand points down Turner Lane to Addingham, whereas it should direct you down Cocking Lane. This was a problem of using two

adjacent faces of a square stone to indicate keep going straight ahead. Perhaps a 45 degree rotation of the stone, relative to the roads, would reduce the confusion. Going down Turner Lane takes you, via a toll point, to Addingham and then by the Leeds-Skipton turnpike through Ilkley to Otley. Going down Cocking Lane avoids the toll bar and Addingham. It meets that Leeds-Skipton turnpike at Cocking End, a significantly more direct route. To correctly direct wayfarers three hands ought to have been used. Using the top face of the stone could have solved their problem. Could it be that at the time the milestone was erected that Cocking Lane had not been improved?

Some 70 years after it had been created the turnpike through Silsden had some major changes and became the 'old turnpike'. This second phase was probably completed in 1826. The road from Blackburn arrived at the Kildwick bridge as before, but instead of crossing the bridge it turned east along the Keighley to Kendal turnpike as far as Steeton. This avoided the village of Kildwick and the steep climb out of the village. At Steeton the road turned north, crossing a recently built bridge and into Silsden from the south. The new bridge had been built a short way away from an old packhorse bridge and the course of the river was then changed making the old bridge redundant.

The turnpike passed over the Leeds Liverpool canal bridge, passed by where the Clog Bridge over the Beck would be built in 1830, up Towngate, now known as Kirkgate, and passed the ford over the Beck, opposite the Red Lion, and then passed the renovated church of St James to an existing road junction. A new road was constructed from that junction which took the turnpike directly up to Townhead. Here it crossed the old turnpike, bore left uphill to Cringles and there bore right over the hilltop and joined the old turnpike at the foot of Turner Lane, and so into Addingham. It is characterised by having long straight stretches that clearly were not influenced by features such as hedges, stone walls or field boundaries. On this new turnpike road are two milestones recording the origins of this important new road.

This new road eventually was named Bolton Road.

Stage coaches used the Keighley and the Otley turnpikes with coaching inns located at regular intervals along the route. Silsden did not have any stage coaches but the King's Head in North Street could accept coaches and Silsden was well served by having good access from all directions.

The question arose as to where were the toll gates?

The old turnpike probably had a toll gate at Cross Hills, on the western approach to the river at Kildwick, none in Kildwick or Silsden, and then probably the one on the approach to Addingham. This tollhouse is shown in the photograph.



There were also toll gates at the approaches to Keighley, to Ilkley and to Skipton.

The toll gate south of Silsden was part of phase two. It may be that the one on the approach to Addingham was also installed at the time of the phase two turnpike. If it was at phase one it could be avoided by using the longer route of Cocking Lane and turning left into Addingham rather than turning right into Ilkley.

The location of the tollgate south of Silsden had been uncertain but further search, and a particular map of 1853, finally fixed its position as being on Keighley Road at the junction with Thanet Square.

The auction advertisement shown above tells us that in 1838, some 12 years after the new turnpike had been introduced, the net annual income from the Silsden and Addingham turnpike was only £345

The turnpike system worked adequately for local traffic but, with increasing use and heavier loads being moved on major thoroughfares, it proved unable to fund the work needed. In places the arrival of railways caused such a significant reduction in toll receipts that an alternative method of funding became essential.

Many acts of parliament authorising the turnpikes were repealed in the 1870s, handing responsibility for roads to local Highway Boards and they were to be known as main roads. In 1888 the Local Government Act paved the way for closure of all remaining turnpikes, the final closure being in 1895. The 1841 and 1851 censuses showed the Silsden toll bar keepers to be Thomas Townson and John Clarkson respectively. John Driver, O5+, was Toll Bar Keeper in Keighley Road at the time of the 1861 census but a farmer in 1871, when there is no mention of anyone being toll keeper. This supports the idea that the toll in Silsden had been abolished by that time.

Appendix 2

Churches and Primitive Methodism in Silsden

From early times most of Europe had adopted the Christian doctrine with the Pope as its head. This church was not without its critics and attempts were made to introduce reforms. The Protestant Reformation started in Europe in the 16th Century. In England Henry VIII took advantage of the discontent to overcome the refusal by the Pope in Rome to grant him a divorce. He persuaded Parliament to pronounce him Head of the Church in England and, with the Act of Supremacy in 1534, separated the English Church from Rome. Those who wished to continue the allegiance to Rome were persecuted.

One reads of people in the 1700s, who had transgressed in matters that the church considered contrary to their teaching and to the wellbeing of their parishioners, being summonsed to attend at a visit to the parish of a senior prelate. Those who had been summonsed were reported and after consideration a penalty may have been imposed.

However, much of the style and practices of the church remained unchanged and nonconformist groups began to take root. One such group, meeting firstly in 1729, became known as the Methodists and was inspired by John Wesley. However, the earliest nonconformist registers in England and Wales date from the 1560s.

It was noted that nonconformists needed to continue to be baptised, married and buried in Anglican churches, which with their officially recognised records apparently enabled them to inherit property more easily.

Although nonconformists often baptised their children in Anglican churches many groups held their own registers of baptisms and burials. These were often the property of the minister rather than the chapel. This causes problems to the researcher as the minister tended to move round a circuit of chapels. This circuit needs to be identified to trace where

records might be held. The 1851 Religious Census, held at the National Archives, and County Directories can help to identify chapel locations.

With the exception of Quakers, protestant nonconformists could only marry in Anglican churches between 1754 and 1837. Therefore, marriages of nonconformists appear in the parish registers between these dates. After 1837 a registrar had to attend nonconformist marriages to record them in his register until 1898 when the rules changed and chapels could gain licences to conduct marriage services.

The map at the end of this appendix shows the location of all the chapels and churches in Silsden over the period of this family history.

Church of England

For much of the history of the Silsden Parish Church we have drawn from the online timeline of St James Church by Brian Turner. It is also important to appreciate that the clergy were well educated men who, after the year 1548, were allowed to be married.

At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 only Kildwick of the villages in this part of Craven, Yorkshire, had a church and it therefore became the parish church for a wide area, which included Silsden. Hence, for Silsdeners, attending church meant a mile and a half walk each way, on bridle paths or, after 1773, along the canal tow path.

In 1711, four Silsden yeomen; Henry and Francis Stirk, Edmund Horsfall and Peter Cowling represented the village in asking the Earl of Thanet, who was the Lord of the Manor of Skipton Castle, for permission 'to buy land on which to erect a place of worship complete with requisite furnishings, and a church graveyard.' One of the reasons given for making the request was the onerous task of carrying the dead to Kildwick for burial. In March permission was granted. The Steel Family History tells us 'On 24 June 1712 the old chapel of Silsden Hall, originally built by the Jennings but by then long used as a barn, was consecrated by the Archbishop of York as a Chapel of Ease for Silsden township.' This was in the same location as the current

St James Church. Recent research by the Silsden History Group indicates that the Earl of Thanet paid for the old chapel to be renovated prior to it being purchased by the village for a nominal sum.

This was the village's first purpose built place of worship and Silsden was the first village in the area to provide its own church. The cost of creating the chapel was £66. Silsden had a population of about 600 at that time. Consecration took place on the Feast of St James, hence the church's name. The Earl of Thanet paid expenses (£12) incurred in entertaining the Archbishop of York, John Sharp, and his party, who carried out the ceremony.

Heating came from a stove below a three decker pulpit. Music was provided by a few instrumentalists and there was no lighting, so the Sunday services were held in the morning and afternoon. There was a chamber where one bell was hung. The bell was inscribed 'AP 1659', referring to Anne Pembroke, locally known as Lady Anne Clifford. She was Countess of Pembroke, Dorset, Montgomery and Westmorland. The bell originally hung in a chapel at Skipton Castle, one of Lady Anne's residences.

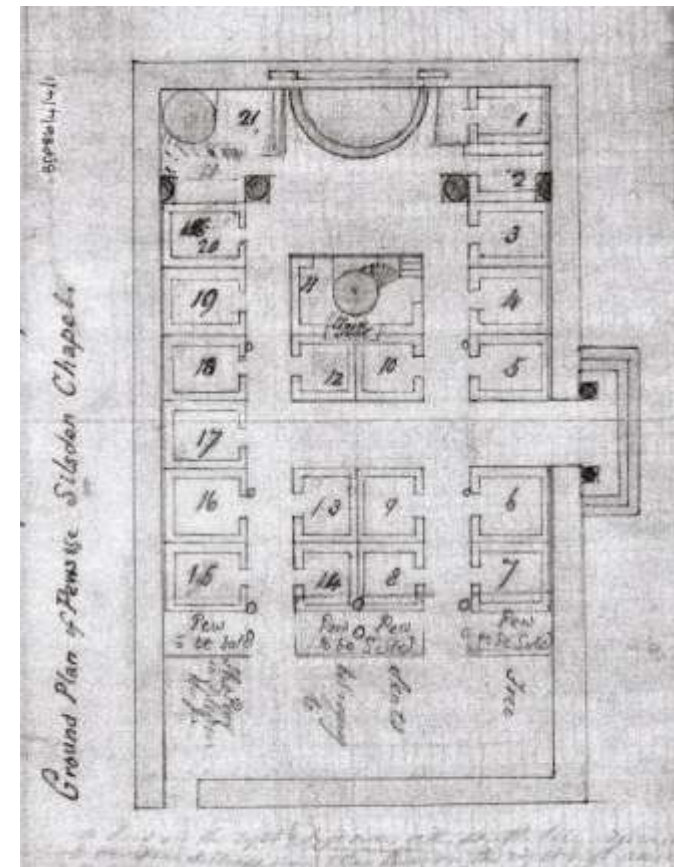
A plan of uncertain date but marked as 1712, showing the box pews in the chapel with a list of pew holders has been found at Bradford West Yorkshire Archives. A second pew holder list, also quoting 1712, was published in 1962 by William Cowling. These lists are slightly different but have many similarities. The William Cowling list shows that pew 14 of the 21 listed in the main body of the chapel belonged to John Clark and Wm Weatherhead. Also, that pew 20 belonged to John Longbottom, John Driver and Joseph Parker.

However, pew 5 on both lists is shown as belonging to the curate, Reverend T F Wilson. This curate was not appointed until 1813. The pew holder list is referred to again in the early part of the Weatherhead section of this family history. It is clear that both lists of pew holders are post 1813 and not 1712. Therefore, the lists were probably created prior to the demolition and rebuild of the replacement church completed in 1816.

On the other hand, the plan of the chapel has the same length to width ratio as the record of the 1712 chapel found in the Skipton Castle records. This was prior to its enlargement in 1776. So, the plan date of 1712 is correct even though this document is likely to have been drawn and used to identify current pew holders more than 100 years later.

Many pews in churches were rented or purchased by local families and there is an indenture of 1817 recording the purchase of a pew by three residents from the Lord of the Manor, Earl of Thanet, who was patron of St James Chapel. Free seating was available for the poor of Silsden.

The data base of the Clergy of the Church of England tells us that Deacon David Clark was appointed as the first curate of the Silsden Chapel in 1711/1712. He was also admitted as school master of the village school.



In 1764 in preparation for Archbishop Drummond's 'visitation' (about every third year) a dozen questions were sent to the parish of Kildwick. These, together with the replies, are published on the Farnhill and Kildwick History Group website in a piece entitled, 'A snapshot of Kildwick Parish in 1764'. Question number 11 is relevant to Silsden.

'Question 11: Have you any chapels within your parish? What are the names of them? How far are they distant from the parish-church? How are they endowed? By whom, and at what times, are they served? Is the curate duly qualified? By whom, and when, was he nominated? Have you any chapel in ruins in which no divine service is performed?

Answers: One chapel at Silsden, about a computed mile and a half from the parish church, endowed by the right honourable Thomas Earl of Thanet with £20 per annum in the time of Archbishop Sharp, who consecrated the same. (1712)

The Rev. Mr. Jackson is the curate, and the Rev. Mr. Newby is the substitute who performs divine service on Sundays in the morning about 11 o'clock and about 3 in the afternoon, the curate of Silsden usually assisting the vicar on Good Friday and Easter Sunday in the morning. The curate and his substitute are both duly qualified.

This chapel was augmented in the year 1719 with Queen Ann's Bounty and £200 given by the Earl of Thanet, which was laid out in a purchase of land in Silsden in the year 1751.'

Even though St James Church was built baptisms, marriages and burial services still had to take place at Kildwick. The timeline for St James states that in 1801 the Silsden Chapel of Ease sought and was granted a licence to register baptisms and burials. Similarly, that in 1843 Richard Heelis, the curate attached to St James, asked the diocese for a licence, which was given, in order that couples could marry at St James. Unexpectedly, evidence shows in some cases that these church events took place at Silsden's Chapel many years prior to the licences being granted. In these

cases, the events were recorded in the register of the Parish of Kildwick-in-Craven. Silsden was not yet its own parish.

By 1815 the population of Silsden had increased to 1500 and the Chapel of Ease was much too small and in bad repair. It was decided to pull it down and build a bigger one. Coincidentally, England was celebrating after Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig in October 1813. The Earl of Thanet donated £80 for the festivities at Silsden to mark the longed for peace after war with France. The locals, however, agreed to put the £80 towards the £390 needed to build a new chapel.

In 1816 St James Church in Main Street (Kirkgate) was built, replacing the Chapel of Ease. Local workman Robert Wade and David Tillotson completed the new larger place of worship. Incumbent, Thomas Wilson, contributed to the building fund and paid for the bell tower which housed the 'AP 1659' bell. The licence to register births and deaths was carried forward to the new church.

Following the 1843 grant of a marriage licence the first marriage recorded in the first St James' Register of Marriages was that of Stephen Tillotson and Ann Driver, two Silsden people, a farmer and a farmer's daughter. The marriage was performed on 31st July 1845. This Ann Driver was the daughter of William Driver and Mary Sawley, O5, as shown on the John Driver and Sarah Glover (pink background) chart.

Worryingly for St James from 1865 attendance dropped to its lowest with the new vicar, John Marriner. In 1861 John Phillips, a young school teacher, described the church as, 'Silsden Church is Low indeed. We have neither organ nor choir, and if any special preacher comes, singers and musicians are invited from the Nonconformist chapels to lead the worship.' In 1873 John Marriner was found in a state of intoxication and resigned immediately. Four years after leaving St. James' vicarage in disgrace, the story of Rev. John Stuart Marriner hit the national newspapers and brought much unwanted attention to the village.

In 1876 the 1816 church was extensively remodelled, extended and modernised. It was closed for a year. Gas lighting and a heating system were installed. In 1895 the AP bell was returned to Skipton Castle, the tower was increased in height and a new peel of bells and a clock were installed. In 1956 when a sale of Skipton Castle's assets was taking place the AP bell was purchased for £40 and returned to St James where it is on display.

In 1881, Rev. Francis Knowles of St James started a monthly parish magazine. He also instituted many new church-based societies and organisations. During the following years he brought together four local churches in joint worship services; St. James, Primitive Methodists, Wesleyans and Bethesdans.

In 1898 St James became independent of Kildwick and in 1919 the new Bradford diocese was created.

Following the death of John Morris Driver, Q1, in 1933, his widow Jane arranged for bound copies of the Silsden Parish Magazine to be given to the Parish Church. In looking through the pages it becomes clear that a number of the persons shown on the Driver and Weatherhead charts were active members of St James parish organisations. In particular the names Mr J M Driver, Mr F Driver, Mr A Driver, Mrs F Driver, Mr C Fletcher, Miss S Driver, Mrs William Driver, Mrs J Driver, Mrs John Booth, Miss M A Driver, Mrs C H Fletcher, and Mrs W Weatherhead have been noted. There will be a number of other family names that have not been spotted. These bound copies are now held by Bradford Local Archives.

Church of England parish records in the Craven area include Skipton, Kildwick, Silsden and a number of other smaller villages. All the Drivers and Weatherheads listed in these records as living at Silsden, and its immediate surrounding hamlets, are included in the family trees of this family history. Initially records of Church of England and Non-Conformists were to be found at St Andrews, Kildwick and at a later date St James, Silsden.

Methodist Church

Methodism became popular as a result of Charles Wesley's ministry in the mid 1700s and it is reported that he came and preached in Skipton. No doubt some of his audience would have travelled from Silsden to hear him.

By the late 1700s nonconformist groups had sprung up in Europe and in England. Methodism was probably practised in Silsden in the mid and late 1700s. The first local record seems to be in 1808 when William Steele led a Wesleyan Methodist class meeting in a garret at his nephew Thomas Booth's house at Howden from 1808 to 1813. This was prior to the building of a Wesleyan Chapel in Silsden. Howden is on the south east fringe of modern day Silsden.

In 1813, thanks to a local farmer who donated a piece of land, Wesleyan Methodism opened its first purpose-built chapel in what is now known as Highfield Lane, known as The Wannocks. The number of members continued to grow and in 1871 they moved into a fine new chapel in Wesley Place.

However, some Methodists were becoming critical of their Church's theological position. They wished for the right and responsibility of each properly organised congregation to determine its own affairs without having to submit these decisions to the judgment of any higher human authority, and as such it eliminated bishops and presbyteries. Each individual church would be regarded as independent and autonomous. This group became known as the Primitive Methodists.

Primitive Methodists

Two key sources have been used. The first being Rev W. J. Robson, who in 1910, was the editor of the book entitled, Silsden Primitive Methodism. Secondly, the My Primitive Methodists website.

Primitive Methodists wanted to preach outdoor services and at times would have day long events. Members wanted to ensure that day to day decisions were being made locally and favoured decentralisation. Primitive

meant simple or relating to an original stage. The Primitive Methodists saw themselves as practising a purer form of Christianity, closer to the earliest Methodists. However, at the Methodist Conference in 1811, the Primitives were expelled.

The Primitive Methodists were characterised by the relatively plain design of their chapels and their Low Church worship, compared to the Wesleyan Methodist Church, from which they had split. Its social base was among the poorer members of society, who appreciated both its content; damnation, salvation, sinners and saints, and its style; direct, spontaneous and passionate. In 1818 it was recorded that 1 in 5 of the preachers were women.



From an article written in 1905 we learn how one of the first people to encourage Primitive Methodism appeared to the local community around 1820/1821. This introduces John Flesher who was born in Otley in 1801 and when still young his family moved to Silsden. The article reads: -

‘At this time, John Flesher was living in Silsden at the house of his father, the village schoolmaster. Though but a youth of twenty he had been a Wesleyan Methodist five years, and already had

preached his trial sermon before the Rev. Joseph Fowler, of "Sidelights" fame. As is the case with the many, the young "local" might have been content to tread the beaten path of routine; but he was not. He spent much time in visitation; he made personal, pointed appeals to his friends and neighbours on soul-matters; he even went the length of preaching from his father's doorstep. We need scarcely wonder if some of his proceedings

were little relished by his co-religionists. "How forward! How indiscreet! So young a man, too!" There were head-shakings, and non-committal, critical looks and whisperings. Still there were not wanting those who approved, although they might not share his zeal. One who had been down in Lincolnshire buying wool, brought back glowing accounts of the doings of the Primitives in those parts, and finished with the observation that the young schoolmaster might do worse than invite these people into Craven: they would suit him to a nicety. Whether the suggestion Avere seriously meant or not, it was seriously taken and soon bore fruit.’



In the early spring of 1821, seven years before Charles Weatherhead was born, ‘... two young men, John Flesher and John Harrison, petitioned the authorities of Hull Primitive Methodist Circuit to send preachers to mission Silsden, then a village of 1300 inhabitants, and mainly engaged in the nail-making and wool-combing trades. The response to their request came in the person of the Rev. John Hewson, who conducted the first service in the open-air, just in front of Flesher's home.

The next service was held in the house, but the congregations so rapidly increased that the house became too strait, and subsequent meetings and services were held for nine months in "Flesher's barn," which became the scene of marvellous spiritual triumphs. History records that one night in that barn as many as forty-four people professed their faith in Christ.'

Staying with John Flesher, he was editor of the PM Magazine from 1842. It stated, 'From 1830 to 1850 he was one of the busiest and most influential members of the PM Church life. He had particularly hard missionary tasks in Edinburgh and London, with trials and privations, sleeping on the floor and going without meals. John arranged that the Book Room should be moved from Bemersley in Staffordshire to London. He was an orator with an enviable delivery.'

Joshua Fletcher, born in 1803, a stalwart with a name not to be confused with John Flesher, was converted in the old barn in Silsden on the evening of April 21st, 1821, and was one of the first members of Primitive Methodism in Silsden. It is estimated that during his life he walked over 16,000 miles and preached not less than 3,000 times for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ.

The first Primitive Methodist chapel was erected at Quarry Hill, also known as Feather Lane and now known as Chapel Street, at a cost of £350, and was opened on Christmas Day 1822, only nine months after Silsden was first missioned. It seated two hundred people.

The work of the Primitive Methodists grew and multiplied. In December 1821 Silsden was made a 'Branch' of the Hull Circuit, and on the Branch Plan for the next quarter there were thirty preaching places. By June 1822, 626 members were enrolled, and this at a time when the population of Silsden was approaching 2000.

Also, in December that year Silsden became a separate circuit, and in the ensuing year it comprised fifty places. From this mother church sprung the Otley, Shipley, Bingley, Keighley, Skipton, Clitheroe, and the Grassington circuits. One record found relating to the Burnley Primitive Methodists

reads, 'Curzon Street Chapel was founded in 1822 in the Blackburn branch of the Hull Circuit. In 1823 it was placed into Clitheroe branch of Silsden Circuit. In 1824 the Clitheroe Circuit was formed and in 1829 the Burnley Circuit.'



The stay in Silsden of Rev. John Hewson, the first Primitive Methodist minister, was brief and he was succeeded by Thomas Batty, 'The Apostle of the North.'

W.P Patterson, in the Silsden PM book, states, 'It is a very remarkable thing that tavern people in villages, in so many different counties, showed special kindness to the fathers of the Connexion; and it is a further remarkable thing that not a few of the children and grandchildren of innkeepers have taken a prominent place in Primitive Methodism.' Silsden furnishes a striking confirmation of the truth of these words in the person

and family of Charles Weatherhead, generation P, who was born on November 28th 1828 at the Red Lion Inn in Main Street.

To connect these happenings with the Charles Weatherhead narrative, the 1843 PM's Preachers' Plan would include the name of the 15-year-old Charles and it was the following year that he was sent to the London Book Room.

In his writings Charles comments on the preachers of the time with praise. "We had at that time a splendid array of adult local preachers to encourage us on and to instruct us, and to serve us as examples. Indeed, I sometimes think that we as local preachers have somewhat degenerated since their time, and especially in earnestness." He no doubt had in mind John Flesher who was considered to be one of the greatest orators in the country in the 1840s. Later it was said that other PM preachers like John Driver, and Sugden Lund had acquired fame beyond the Dale by their eloquent advocacy and valuable service to the cause of Temperance.

By 1846 some of the Primitive congregation desired an entirely new chapel, and in that year a resolution was passed 'That the question in reference to a new chapel be agitated.' The needs of the time, however, were met by an enlargement, and the 'agitation' for a new sanctuary was postponed. The existing chapel was enlarged at a further outlay of £750, and remained the home of the Connexion until the Primitives' Chapel on Kirkgate was built in 1871.

In the early days PM priority was on evangelism in the open, where working men and women rallied good crowds. Later in the century the focus became on building chapels and administration within the church. With this change from evangelism to a more organised and socially recognised church, governance was by middle class men. Women's popularity as preachers declined and later in the century one finds that women's names have even been removed from PM documents.

The PM Preachers' Plans of 1849 and 1887 are discussed in Appendix 14. One detail that demonstrates the ongoing family involvement is that in the

1887 Plan both Charles Weatherhead and John Driver are listed as preachers on the Silsden Circuit. John, P4+, the eldest son of Thomas and Jane Driver, who would be 41, had five assignments compared with Charles's three. Charles would have been 59.

Rev. W. J. Robson, who in 1910 was the editor of the Silsden PM book, gives the following information about John Driver, P4+.

'The first appearance in public of John Driver was in reading a paper at a Good Templars' Lodge meeting. On being requested, he preached a sermon, and the late Rev. Jas. Bootland, who was present, came to him after and said he would arrange for Mr. Driver's name to go on the preacher's plan.

Mr. Driver still remembers what a great task it was for him to speak in those early days, but, he says, "They made me do it." He started first as a regular temperance speaker, a department of work in which he has had, as is well-known, a very wide experience, at Keighley. The workers at Keighley asked him to be a missionary for them, but he refused, though he gave them all his spare times and usually visited Keighley four afternoons per week. From Keighley his reputation as a temperance speaker spread to Bradford, Leeds, Birstal, Batley, Dewsbury, Mossley, Manchester, Lincoln, and Stalybridge. Then he commenced taking engagements for ten day missions, on such occasions visiting some of the above places and also Hyde, Pendlebury, Swinton, Blackburn, and other places. Mr. Driver has of late been obliged to curtail some of his temperance work owing to domestic ties.

Mr. Driver's duties as a temperance speaker have prevented him being as closely associated with local church life as some other local preachers, as for many years it has only been occasionally that he was available for work at home. As an example, he told the writer that from June this year to October, he had only one Sunday free from duty. He, remembers with respect the Rev. James Bootland and the Rev. J. F. Parrish. Mr. Driver tells how about eighteen months ago, he spoke in Wakefield at a P.S.A. meeting,

and at its close two or three came to him and asked if he was associated with the Primitive Methodists in Silsden. Mr. Driver said he was, whereupon one of his questioners laughed good-naturedly, remarking that before he had answered he knew that Mr. Driver belonged to them, because he "was sure that all the folks in Silsden worth aught belonged to the Primitive Methodists."

Up to 1857 the enlarged chapel was lighted by oil lamps, and then gas was installed. The trustees decided that 'they would have sixteen lights and pay ten shillings a light deposit money.' Oil lamps had given them trouble for earlier there is the minute, 'that Brother Gill be requested to inform J. B__ that he must not clean the chapel lamps nor dress them on the Sabbath Day, and that he must clean them so as not to oil the seats, complaints having been made of persons spoiling their clothes.'

The idea of having a new Primitives' chapel had only been postponed, for, in 1868 we see that a subscription account had started. We also read that the lease on the North Street Chapel was running out and that there was still a large debt on the building. But,



notwithstanding this, a number of worshippers felt it was time to build a new chapel. Charles Weatherhead who had established himself as a grocer, together with his friends Charles Tillotson and George Clarkson, plus Mary Clarkson and Ann Booth, were part of this new chapel movement.

Bradford Local Archives hold the PM Chapel subscription account book. A number of pages are shown in Appendix 15. It will be noted that the first name on the list is that of William Driver in February 1868. This would be 49-year-old William, P3, the nail maker, the husband of Sarah Morris, thus suggesting that the William Driver family were also Primitive Methodists. William's son, Charles, Q3, was age 8 at the time of this donation, and Samuel Driver's son William, P1+, was 20 and unmarried.

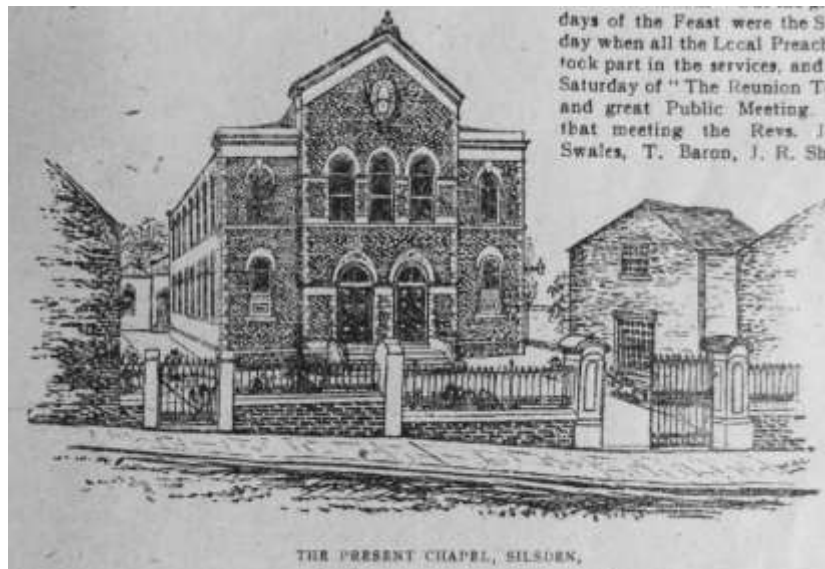
It seems as if the receipt of subscriptions was slow initially, but in 1869 a few businesses in the village were helping to build up the funds. We have not found the final sum that was collected nor the cost of the building project. Page 1 of the subscription account book suggests that many pages would need to be studied if one felt the need to understand the extent of subscriptions, but it was somewhat of a surprise to find that on page 32 the book was recording some farming matters about hay making and how the weather was affecting progress. A couple of the agricultural pages are shown at the end of Appendix 15. On looking at dates it was realised that the four pages of farming work were entered a number of years after the new church had been completed. Is it possible that George Clarkson, who had signed the front of the accounts book, had retained the book and used it later when it was no longer needed? George was a farmer and manufacturer, according to the 1881 and 1891 censuses. He lived in Bolton Road next to the King's Arms Inn. George was the father of Janie Clarkson who is mentioned as the organist at William Weatherhead's memorial service as described later in this appendix.

Evidently, just 18 months after the first subscriptions were received, sufficient funds were available to commence building the new chapel and the foundation stone was laid on August 10th 1869 by Joshua Fletcher. The

account book shows a donation of £50 by Joshua on the day he was laying the stone.

After another 18 months, at Easter 1871, the new Primitives' chapel on Kirkgate was opened. This ceremony was performed by the elderly and ailing John Flesher, the man who had introduced Primitive Methodism to Silsden in 1821. It was to be the last time he appeared in public. He died on July 31st, 1874.

In 1880 a Sunday School and caretaker's house were added to the Wesley Place site creating a much admired home for church activities. The chapel continued to be used by the PMs until the Methodists reunited in 1956 and the Primitive Methodist Sunday School building was used by the United Methodists until they decided that a new facility was necessary.



The 1871 census shows that the old Primitive Methodist chapel in Chapel Street had been vacated and also that the Wesleyan Methodist chapel in

Back Street (now Highfield Lane) was likewise vacated. This old chapel was subsequently demolished.

It is interesting for readers to note that the old PM chapel in Chapel Street was purchased in 1880 by James Boyes for use as a mill. James Boyes then purchased additional land from Lord Hothfield and built a weaving shed and offices. The history of this building is continued in Appendix 8.

Fund raising had been a necessity and continued in various forms. The last Primitive Methodist Bazaar held at Christmas 1900 was called the 'Grand Oriental Carnival and Fancy Fair'. Included in the list of stallholders were the following family members: - Mrs S Driver (*Mary Gill*), Mrs H Cockshott (*Ann Weatherhead*), Miss Weatherhead (*Fanny*), Mrs J Booth (*Elizabeth Weatherhead*), Miss Mary Booth, Mrs C Driver (*Florence Weatherhead*), Miss Sally Driver, Mrs W Weatherhead (*Jane Liggins*), Mrs C H Fletcher (*Margaret Weatherhead*), and Miss Mary Green (*soon to become Mrs H R Driver*).

In 1906 William Weatherhead, Q7, the only son of Charles and Esther, who was a Primitive Methodist and the chapel organist, died at sea and shortly afterwards a memorial service was held at Silsden. Below is the extract from the book *Silsden Primitive Methodism* that describes the service.

Memorial Service for William Weatherhead as recorded by Rev W.J Robson

In connection with the death of Mr Weatherhead, an impressive memorial service was held in the Primitive Methodist Church on Sunday afternoon Dec. 2. There was a large congregation, occupying every seat, which was representative of the religious, musical and other bodies of the town and district. The pulpit and organ screen were draped in black, the latter being surmounted by a beautiful anchor composed of flowers, while the space behind the communion rail was filled with plants and flowers. The service was conducted by the Rev. W.J. Robson and Mr Tom Fletcher. The choir

was attired in mourning. A specially prepared form of service was used for the occasion. The front leaf was inscribed as follows,

"In memoriam. William Weatherhead. Born July 16th 1867, and died at sea on board the S.S. Morocco, in the Bay of Biscay, November 22nd 1906.

Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are;
While on His breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there.

He was buried in the sea he loved so well, on the morning of November 23rd, 1906, in latitude 45deg., 36 N., and longitude 7deg., 31 W."

As the congregation assembled, Miss Clarkson played Mendelssohn's "Funeral March" on the organ, and the service opened with the singing of "O God our help in ages past". The choir sang the anthems, "Vital spark" and "Blest are the departed" (Spohr), the quartet in the latter being given by the Misses E Green and P Fortune and Messrs J Murgatroyd and A. Newton. The portions of the Scripture suitable for such occasions were read by the Rev. W.J. Robson and Mr Tom Fletcher, and there were also read the fourteenth chapter of St John's Gospel, which the former explained had been read the last Sunday evening Mr Weatherhead spent at the home of his sister, at the Cringles (*this would have been Ann Cockshott*). The solo "Oh rest in the Lord" (Mendelssohn) was feelingly sung by Mrs H.B.Summerscales. In the course of a touching prayer the Rev. W.J. Robson expressed praise to God for the way in which their brother was in other days able to bring home to those who heard him what wondrous glories there were in this world which God had made; how the hearts of those who had listened were stirred and their souls touched as he, as a master musician, brought from the keys not only music, but what he put into it – the soul that lay behind. There were memories also which lingered in people's mind of one day especially in which time and materials things were forgotten, and all were uplifted and inspired by the holy that came forth. They thanked God for the influence of this brother in their district, in seeking to cultivate all the sensibilities of the soul and mind; for

the success which had met him in his efforts; and for the higher tone which characterised their district because of the work he did and the influence he exerted. They praised God for his life as a man. For his influence upon all with whom he came in contact. His beauty, the brightness, the buoyancy, the strictness, the honesty and the uprightness of his life; for those who have been helped and blessed and who would live a better life in the days which lay before them, because he lived in their midst, and touching them, helped them.

The service closed with the singing of the hymn, "There is a land of pure delight", and as the congregation dispersed Beethoven's "Funeral March" was played by the organists. The trustees at the first meeting held after his death resolved: "That we place on record our sense of the great loss this church has suffered by the decease of the late Mr William Weatherhead, and our appreciation of his services as choir master and honorary organists for over 20 years, he has filled these positions with conspicuous ability and success. His work having always been appreciated by the trustees and congregation."



In May 1907 a Primitive Methodist Centenary Plate was made available commemorating a large 14 hour open air prayer meeting, called a Camp Meeting, held on 31st May 1807 at the village of Mow Cop, Staffordshire, organised by Hugh Bourne and William Clowse. The 1807 event led to the founding of the Primitive Methodist Church in 1810.

The Tom Driver family have one of those plates and one wonders who purchased it or whether it was a gift a few months after the death of

Charles Weatherhead and in memory of such a staunch member of that church.

Bethesdians

Another Methodist group, which had split from the Wesleyan Methodist tradition in about 1830, had been meeting for worship in Peter Horne's Garret in what is now Nicholson Square. The garret was a former hand weaving room on the top floor, with better natural lighting.

Later they built and commissioned their own Bethesda Chapel in Keighley Road which was opened in 1871, the same year as both the Wesleyans and Primitives opened their new chapels.

The Bethesda Chapel became the centre of community life for villagers on the canal side of town.

United Methodists

Gradually the differences between the Primitive Methodists and the Wesleyans became smaller and, at the 1932 Methodist Conference, the two denominations decided to merge.

However, it was not until 1956 that the three Silsden Methodist churches did indeed merge. The Primitives vacated their Kirkgate chapel, the Bethesdians vacated the Keighley Road chapel and the Wesleyans moved out of the Wesley Place chapel. All joined together in using the Sunday School facilities that had been built by the Primitives in 1880 in Wesley Place.



The Primitives' chapel in Kirkgate was demolished in 1974 and the Bethesda Chapel is still standing, being used as commercial premises.

By 2009 the United Methodists came to the decision that they needed to build a modern multipurpose facility. The old Sunday School building was inadequate and costly to maintain. The new building was to be built on the same site. Later the following year the fine new chapel and meeting rooms in Kirkgate were ready for use and the old Sunday School was demolished.

Roman Catholics

Although Catholic worship became legal in 1791, there was no Catholic church in Silsden during the 1800s. However, from about 1880 Silsden was served by an Irish Catholic doctor, Dr John Purcell, who lived in and practised from 7, Wesley Place. As transport difficulties prevented him from taking his large family to Mass at St Anne's in Keighley, he sent his children to the Methodist Sunday School next door in Wesley Place. This ecumenical spirit has remained strong up to the present day.

In 1916 Sunday Mass was celebrated for the first time in Silsden since the Reformation and for this a classroom was hired at the Elliott Street Council School. This was celebrated by a priest from St Anne's in Keighley. Then in 1918, the old Oddfellows' Hall (sometimes found written as Odd Fellows Hall) was purchased and the upstairs room was converted into a Church. This was dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Two years later, in 1920, Silsden became an independent parish under its first Parish Priest, Father Claude B Warren O.B.E. In the late 19th century, and especially following the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1929, Catholics began to see an easing of restrictions. The upper floor of the Oddfellows Hall continued to be the Catholic church in Silsden until 1957 when, following criticism of the facility by a visiting bishop, the parish took a major step forward and purchased the redundant Wesleyan Methodist Church in Wesley Place for Catholic worship, renaming it Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The Oddfellows Hall was demolished in 1962.

Locations of Chapels and Churches in Silsden.

Disused chapels +

Top

- Left, Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Highfield Lane, built 1813.
- Right, Primitive Methodist Chapel, Chapel Street, built 1822.

Centre

- Left, St James Chapel of Ease, Kirkgate, consecrated 1712.
- Middle, Primitive Church, Kirkgate, built 1871
- Right, Wesleyan Church, Wesley Place built 1871

Bottom

- Upper, Bethesdan Chapel, Keighley Road.
- Lower, Lady of Mount Carmel,

Churches in 2020

- St James rebuilt 1816 and extended 1876.
- United Methodist built 2010.
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel from 1957

