

## **BARTON TURF METHODIST CHAPEL**

The following is information I have obtained from Mrs. R. Canham, a native of Barton Turf, aged 96, concerning the beginning of Methodism in Barton Turf and the building of the chapel. Her father was present when the first chapel was opened.

Barton Turf is a small out-lying village, situate a few miles from the East Coast. Primitive Methodism first started when a few Christian Brothers and Sisters met in a small cottage in the centre of the village. The numbers gradually increased to such an extent that the cottage soon proved far too small to accommodate all those who were eager for the things of God. As many as 100 people were once counted leaving the cottage. The older ones were much concerned about this state of affairs and said "we must have a chapel".

So in the year 1845 these men and women set to work. One dear old brother, named Curtis, said "I'll give a piece of my garden to build upon". Another said, "I cannot give money, but I'll give some of my labour". So with his wherry he went over Barton Broad, bringing loads of stone into Barton Staithe. Neighbours and friends with their donkey-carts and boys with wheel-barrows carted the stone from the Staithe to Mr. Curtis's garden. A brother gave two North windows and a sister, the South window. A sister gave door and door jambs. The labourers in the village built the chapel. Mr. John Francis gave and built beams on the roof.

The bill for unpaid expenses was given to John Francis and by many little gifts and small collections, the debt on the chapel was paid off before he died.

When the chapel was eventually ready for opening, the whole village was at the door. The minister unlocked the door, but no one was allowed in until he had prayed in each seat on the left side, in the pulpit and down the right side. All were then invited in for prayer and praise. A small stove provided heat and lighting was by candles on each seat. As the candles smoked during the service, an old brother went round cutting the wicks. On one occasion, when he burnt his fingers, he threw it and it landed in an old lady's bonnet.

John Francis was Class Leader, never missing a prayer meeting. Before passing to higher service, he talked many times with John Wright for him to be Class Leader and to conduct the prayer meetings. Brother Wright was always at his post and during those years, the chapel was always filled to capacity and there were many conversions.

In 1914 the chapel was re-built, the old one being in a bad condition. Funds for the re-building were provided chiefly by the parishoners, the Circuit Fund helping in a small way. The renovation was due to Mr. F. W. Bailey, a local preacher and a power of strength in the chapel. A local firm did the building, which still stands to-day. Mrs. Canham treasures a piece of beam taken out during these repairs, for which she paid 1/- and which bears the name of "Francis - 1844".

Compared with the size of the village, there was a good Sunday School and the services well supported. Miss Woollard was a well-known Evangelist, giving her testimony and life story spent in E. London. Special evangelistic services were held usually once during each year with many conversions.

As in the case of all small village chapels, the attendance has gradually decreased during the past 20 years. At the present time, there is quite a good Sunday School and an Anniversary is held each year, the only Sunday when the chapel is full. Without the Sunday School, the chapel would probably be forced to close, but I trust this will never happen in view of the many sacrifices made and hours of hard toil spent in those days long ago, to provide a Methodist Chapel for Barton Turf. I pray too, that one day in the not too far distant future, we shall once more, see our village chapel filled to capacity with people, young and old, eager to praise God and to learn more about His wonderful love and power.