

Mehodist Chapel

Extracted from John Yaxley's, *A Jam Round Barton Turf*, 2006

The next building is the Methodist Chapel, funded and built by local labour in 1845 on land bought off Robert Curtis, a shoemaker of Barton Turf, for £3, as a Primitive Methodist Chapel, and is now part of the North Walsham and Aylsham circuit since around 1950.

Much rebuilding was carried out in 1914 when two gable ends and larger windows were fitted. One of the four foundation stones in the front porch was laid on behalf of the Trustees by Mr Fred Bailey, a staunch Methodist who owned the local shop and Post Office at Providence House. Open for Sunday services at 2.30 pm every week, there is seating for 60, but 120 have been known to attend on an Easter Sunday morning off Broads holiday cruisers.

For over 100 years there was a good attendance at the Sunday School here and at the annual Sunday School Anniversary, when the children said their 'pieces', recitations and dialogues and sung solos, the event had to be held in the barn at nearby Home Farm to accommodate the congregation of both the afternoon and evening services. In preparation for this the preceding Saturday afternoon was a busy one.

The barn having already been cleared and swept out by the farmer, who took this as an opportunity to have a tidy up, teachers and children were busy decorating it out. In the 1930s teachers were the aforementioned Gladys Yaxley (nee Chapman) and her husband Jack who, being one of the four Yaxley brothers, builders of Toad's Green, Smallburgh, was able to supply deals and trestles for the necessary platform.

Flowers and bracken were used as decoration, and a two-foot high curtain was erected in front of the children's knees, although they were always dressed in their best clothes for this, their big occasion. After the harmonium had been carried down to the barn by Jack, everything was then ready for the Sunday. But even then many of the congregation had to stand outside.

Children were expected to learn two long recitations, one for the afternoon and one for the evening service. Proceeds at that time paying for an outing to Mundesley beach. The days of the horsedrawn transport were past, when Starling's Coaches of North Walsham provided the means of travel and on one occasion an old open top coach turned up in the rain.