

# A History of Tewkesbury Methodist Church



Tewkesbury Methodist Church  
built 1878



*The story so far..*

Based on the articles and papers of  
the late local historian and member of this church,  
David Willavoys

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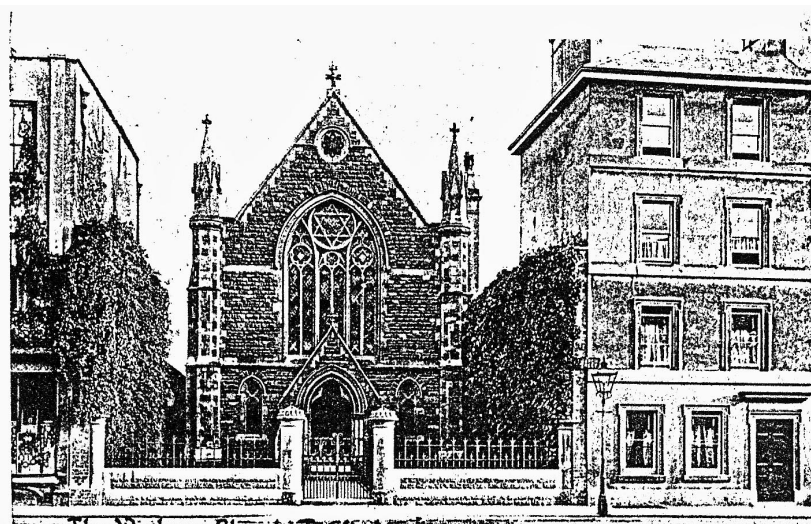
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[www.tewkesburymethodistchurch.org.uk](http://www.tewkesburymethodistchurch.org.uk)



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The church as it looked in the 1880's. The manse is on the right of the picture

## **INTRODUCTION**

***By the Revd Jayne Webb***

*As you will read in the following pages, there has been a Methodist presence in Tewkesbury since the mid 1700's.*

*As a church we consider it to be a privilege to stand right in the centre of town, here at the Cross and to be able to bear witness to God's amazing love for all people.*

*As you read our story you will see how God has blessed our mission and ministry here, and we pray that this ministry will continue for many more years.*

*We are thankful for all the information given us by the late David Willavoys, and also the more recent work done by Michael Jebson and Adrian Shelley.*

## **Tewkesbury Methodist Church - TODAY**



## **Friendship**



## **The Circuit**

A circuit is a group of local churches, served by a team of local preachers and ministers including the superintendent minister. We are part of the Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire

## **The District**

The district serves a geographical group of circuits and is led by the district chair. We are part of the Bristol Methodist District

## **The Conference**

The annual Methodist Conference meets in different places and is the supreme decision making body of the Church. At the start of Conference a new President and Vice-President are appointed to preside over that Conference and spend the year travelling around the Connexion, and abroad representing the Methodist Church.

(Adapted from the Methodist Church web site)

## **World-wide Methodism**

There are Methodist Churches all over the world and we have links with a Mission Partner in Zambia, Southern Africa

## **Tewkesbury's links to early American Methodism**

The portrait of John Wesley on page 4 is by an unknown Tewkesbury artist. It was given by John Wesley to John Cole (1750 -1808) of Tewkesbury, who emigrated to America in 1785 and settled near Baltimore. It is believed to be the first portrait of John Wesley ever seen in America and is now housed in the collection of Drew University, Madison, USA.

## **THE AUTHOR**



David Willavoys being introduced to Prince Phillip HRH Duke of Edinburgh at the Tewkesbury Museum in 2006 on the occasion of an exhibition on the life of Sir Raymond Priestley, Antarctic explorer. (See page 14) The Duke was a friend of Sir Raymond.

This history of Methodism in Tewkesbury uses the extensive research carried out by David Willavoys. David, a member of this church, was a very knowledgeable local historian.



He was a member of Tewkesbury Historical Society, its secretary for a number of years and was made a life member for his work.

He died aged 76 in 2015 and we dedicate this booklet to his memory.

David bearing the maces for Tewkesbury Borough Council

We are grateful to David's Widow, Marion, for donating David's documents about the history of church to us.

*David's papers have been edited and up-dated by  
Michael Jebson.*

*Layout and printing by Adrian Shelley.*

## Tewkesbury Methodist Church Gloucestershire

### A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

*The story so far...*

***It was a local man, George Whitefield,*** who first brought Methodist preaching to Tewkesbury. George came from a humble background in Gloucester, the son of the landlady of the Bell inn. But he had succeeded in going to Oxford University where he met the brothers, John and Charles Wesley. Whitefield came to Tewkesbury on 2 July 1739 but was prevented from preaching by the town constables. He bravely challenged them and returned two days later accompanied by 120 friends on horseback. He wrote of his visit: 'The streets were crowded with people from all parts. I rode immediately through the town and preached to about six thousand hearers in a field lent to us, but saw no constables either to molest or attend on me!'

### John Wesley comes to town

It was on 9 May 1744 that John Wesley first visited Tewkesbury and preached in a house in Longs Lane, located roughly on the site of the former police station in Barton Street. In his travels over the next forty-five years Wesley preached in Tewkesbury on many occasions, sometimes enduring hardship.



This portrait of John Wesley was painted by an unknown artist in Tewkesbury in 1771. It is housed in Drew University, USA. (Read on page 26 about the importance of this portrait)

By the end of the 19th century these two streams of Methodism realised they had more in common than they might have supposed. So conversations began which led to their being the two principal partners in the union to form the present-day Methodist Church in 1932. (Learn more from the Methodist Church web site.)

Before Union, Tewkesbury Methodist Church was known as a Wesleyan church.

### The Structure of the Methodist Church

The Methodist Church is still organised in a methodical way using many of the structures introduced by its founder, John Wesley. However, the Church is pragmatic, and is willing to make changes where they seem desirable.

Structures are there to enable decision making that takes account of all concerns and views within the Church. No one is given supreme authority - consultation is vital. At the same time, churches cannot simply arrange their own affairs, but have some shared disciplines and ways of working.

### The Connexion

Methodists are linked together in a 'Connexion' of churches, circuits and districts.

### The Local Church

The local church is the place of worship for the local congregation, where Methodist members and adherents are nurtured.





## An explanation of some Methodist words and phrases

### Society

As the movement moved away from the Church of England, John Wesley used the name 'The People called Methodists'. As time went by the word Society was used for an individual church and is still used today to a certain extent.

**The Primitive Methodists** were a major offshoot of the principal stream of Methodism - the Wesleyan Methodists - in 19th Century Britain.

In the early decades of the 19th century there was a growing body of opinion among the Wesleyans that their Connexion was moving in directions which were a distortion of, not to say a betrayal of, what John Wesley had brought to birth in the 18th century.

Eventually a Methodist preacher called Hugh Bourne became the catalyst for a breakaway, to form the Primitive Methodists. Probably 'primitive' was used to clarify their self-understanding that they were the true guardians of the original, or primitive, form of Methodism.



Hugh Bourne

In March 1769 Wesley records in his journal:

*'We rode to Tewkesbury...but the floods were so high...and we waded through water'*

(Nothing new there, then! We still suffer from floods in the town.)

Wesley always spoke well of his Tewkesbury congregations. In March 1775 he described Tewkesbury as being, *the liveliest place in the (Gloucester) Circuit*. His visits up to this time had involved preaching in the open air on Perry Hill, behind the Abbey, or in the Longs Lane house, but on 4 July 1777 he records, *I preached at six in the new house at Tewkesbury*. This new house (chapel) was in Tolzey Lane, opposite the present church, and is now an antiques centre.

In 1787 he preached *'to the largest congregation I have seen there for many years'*, and in 1788 he commented that *'the preaching house is far too small'*. Two years later, on what was to be his last visit to the town, he said that *'the house would not contain the congregation.'*

### A new Chapel in Tolzey Lane

Wesley had provided the Methodist Society in Tewkesbury with firm foundations and, by 1804, the membership was eighty people. Whilst the Society was not wealthy, it contributed funds for the building of chapels elsewhere.



The strength of the Society can be judged by the decision made in 1813 to demolish the preaching house in Tolzey Lane and use the site for the erection of a larger chapel. This new building was completed in October 1813 and was declared open by the Rev Dr Adam Clarke, a man who was to serve three terms as President of the Methodist Conference.

### **The Sunday School is founded**

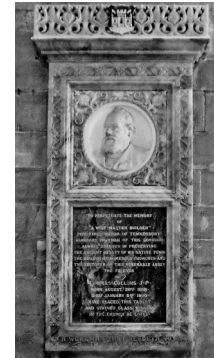
*The Sunday School movement began in the city of Gloucester, just down the road from Tewkesbury. Robert Raikes (1735-1811), a philanthropist and newspaper proprietor, started a Sunday school in the city for children from the slums who, at the time, worked long hours in poor conditions and had no access to education. The Bible was used as their text book and the movement spread rapidly eventually becoming the main means of Christian education for children in churches.*

In 1815 a Sunday School was formed and the children were taught in the back rows of the gallery in the new chapel. Shortly afterwards the School accepted the offer

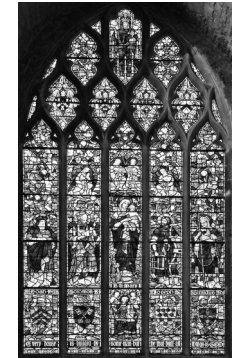


of more spacious accommodation in the upper rooms of Cross House, on the corner of Tolzey Lane with the High Street. (Cross House now houses a dental practice.) Unfortunately one of the Sunday School children fell down the stairs at Cross House and it

was decided to move to the British School in Barton Street (now Elizabeth Wyatt House.) This arrangement was unsatisfactory so in 1839 an additional room was built on to the Tolzey Lane chapel for the school.



The Memorial  
to  
Thomas Collins  
In Tewkesbury Abbey



**To perpetuate the  
memory of  
'A Wise Master Builder',  
five times mayor of Tewkesbury,  
honorary Freeman of the Borough.  
Always zealous in preserving the ancient beauty  
of his native town.  
The builder of numerous churches  
and the restorer of this venerable Abbey.**

**The friends of  
Thomas Collins, JP  
Born August 26, 1818  
Died January 3, 1900  
have placed this tablet  
and stained glass window  
in the church he loved.**

**'A workman that needeth not to be ashamed'  
2 Timothy Chapter 2 v.15 (KJV)**

Inscription on the stained glass window:  
**'Every house is builded by some man,  
but he that built all things is God.'**

## Ministers who have served the church since 1929 and changes to Circuit names

### Tewkesbury Methodist Circuit

1929	Rev'd E R Thompson
1932	Rev'd F Rabey
1935	Rev'd J R Rowe
1939	Rev'd W J T Small
1942	Rev'd G Spooner
1946	Rev'd H Bullough
1949	Rev'd A Truswell
1953	Rev'd C A Amey
1954	Rev'd A Bush
1955	Rev'd E Isherwood
1960	Rev'd E J Okell
1966	Rev'd J V Josey
1970	Rev'd J W Crofton
1975	Rev'd E C Nixon
1982	Rev'd C D Harbach
1987	Rev'd A Windsor

### Tewkesbury and Cheltenham Methodist Circuit

1991	Rev'd A Windsor
1992	Rev'd R Leathwood
1999	Rev'd C Seaton
2006	Rev'd O Da Silva

### The Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire

2008	Rev'd O Da Silva
2013	Rev'd C Cory
2017	Rev'd J Webb

We have a record of ministers who served in the Tewkesbury Circuit since its formation in 1838. This can be viewed on request.

This room now forms part of the YMCA building. The Sunday School was notable for the long service of a number of its Superintendents: Joseph Griffiths, who owned Cross House, served from 1823 to 1858; Thomas Collins from 1849 to 1879, jointly with John Willis, Senior from 1855 to 1876. John Willis Junior followed his father and served for over thirty years. The number of children who passed through the Sunday School is unknown but there are references to an attendance of over two hundred in Victorian times.

### SCANDAL in the Sunday School!

*The Sunday School Register from the early 1800's records that in 1822 John Warren was appointed as a teacher and was promoted to be Superintendent the following year. The Register goes on to comment that 'This man put on a very glaring profession, but soon the parish authorities of Nottingham fetched him to his lawful wife and children.' But this was not the end of the story, since the register then records that Mrs Warren was also appointed as a teacher in 1821, but goes on to say that 'This woman professed to be John Warren's wife, but was not – Beware of Strangers'.*

### Rescued from debt

In the early to mid nineteenth century Tewkesbury was not a wealthy place being dependent on agriculture and stocking weaving for employment. Both industries were in decline and the church suffered in that there was a constant debt on the Society accounts which, by 1861, had reached £545.

In 1863 a new minister, the Rev John Knowles, arrived and, under his leadership an appeal was made to the people for the debt to be liquidated. After many meetings and money raising events the appeal was crowned with success, thanks in part to the generosity of Thomas Collins.

### Thomas Collins

Thomas Collins came from a strong Wesleyan Methodist family. His father and grandfather had served as stewards and Thomas had attended the Sunday School. He had been apprenticed as a stone mason in 1841 and had es-



tablished a business which was to continue for over 130 years. Collins specialised in the building and restoration of churches and medieval houses and he established a national reputation for the quality of his work. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Collins was the principal employer in Tewkesbury and was greatly revered by the people of the town. Collins recognised he owed a great

deal of his success to God and gave generously whenever the Wesleyans needed money.

For his services to the town there is a memorial to him in Tewkesbury Abbey. (See page 23 for details of the memorial in the Abbey.)

Martyn established the company bearing his name in 1888 and their work can be found all over the world. Familiar examples are the Speaker's chair and the despatch boxes in the House of Commons, the Cenotaph in Whitehall and the pulpit in St Paul's Cathedral.

Their work was in well over 100 ocean liners including the Cunard 'Queens'. The firm worked in wood, stone, marble and wrought iron and provided decorative plaster work, stained glass, bronze casting and furniture.



The Cenotaph

By the 1920's the firm employed over 1,000 craftsmen.

In 1934 the firm was acquired by London furnishers, Maples, but in 1971 declining demand compelled it to cease trading.



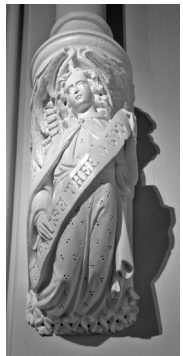
RMS Queen Mary



## THE ANGELS IN TEWKESBURY METHODIST CHURCH

**One of the most loved decorative features of the church are the two angels, Prayer and Praise, flying high in the apse at the front of the church.**

They are the personal work of H H Martyn. Herbert



Henry Martyn was born into poverty in Worcester in 1842 to teenage parents. After taking several low-paid jobs, attending art school and, at times, being homeless, he was given the opportunity to become a journeyman carver. In this craft he soon showed great talent and one of his earliest jobs was to help with

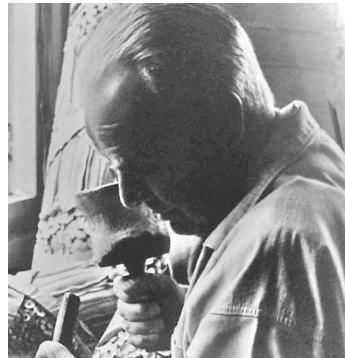


carvings in the Great Hall at Eastnor Castle in Herefordshire.

He eventually moved to Cheltenham and set up a business as a stone mason.

Our angels are one of the few examples of H H Martyn's own work before he became famous.

As his business grew, he shared his success in trade with others less fortunate than himself and established a mission working with the poor in a deprived area of Cheltenham.



## Planning the New Chapel

The Society had once again outgrown the premises in Tolzey Lane and began raising funds with the objective of building a better chapel. At the Cross in Tewkesbury stood a Market House which was built in 1787. Initially the shareholders investment in the Market house was lucrative, but by 1868 business had declined such that the shareholders decided to sell the building at auction. No bids were received and the building declined still further. Thomas Collins recognised that the site on which the Market House stood would be ideal for a new chapel. In 1872, with his partner William Cullis, also a Wesleyan, he bought the crumbling Market House. He held the property for two years using it as a store for timber for his building trade. During this time the Wesleyan Trustees raised £750 to buy the site, the amount that Collins had paid for it.

Dynamically led by Collins and the minister, the Rev William F Clarke, fund raising efforts were made towards the cost of building the new chapel. Concerts, sales of work, bazaars and many other methods were employed to achieve a target figure of £3,000.

A London architect, Charles Bell, was engaged to draw up plans and Collins and Cullis were to be the builders. Collins advised the New Chapel Committee that the proposed design would cost £3,350. The trustees were anxious for the work to start but found the estimated cost too great. Instructions were given for Collins to start work but *'... to leave out things at his discretion to keep the budget within £3,000.'*

## NEW WESLEYAN CHAPEL

TEWKESBURY.

The CENTENARY ANNIVERSARY of the opening of the first Methodist Preaching House in Tewkesbury, by the Rev. JOHN WESLEY,

**WEDNESDAY JULY 4, 1877.**

### MEMORIAL STONES

Will (n.v.) be laid by the following Gentlemen:—

T. DAVIS, Esq., of Bristol.	S. JEVONS, Esq., of Birmingham.
S. L. MILLINGTON, Esq., of Wolverhampton.	J. REDWOOD, Esq., of Bristol.

The following are the arrangements for the day:

**A BREAKFAST in the Town Hall, at 12.30.;**

Which will be attended by the Mayor and Corporation, the Borough Member (Capt. Price, M.P.), the Rev. T. Nightingale (Chairman of the District, and the Revs. F. Clark, W. Box, E. Gedye, and others. The Chair will be taken by Mr. THOS. COLLINS.

### At 2.15, A PROCESSION

Of Ministers and Gentlemen, headed by the Mayor and Corporation, will proceed to the site of the new Chapel, and the Ceremony of

**LAYING THE STONES will commence at 2.30 punctually;**

The Teachers and Scholars of the Sunday School will take part by laying Initialled Bricks. Addresses will be delivered by the Stone Layers, the Rev. T. Nightingale, and others. A public collection will then be made.

**TEA will be provided in the Corn Exchange at 5 o'clock;**

**And a PUBLIC LECTURE, by the Rev. E. Gedye, in the evening in the Music Hall, Subject: "MISSION LIFE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA."**

Chair will be taken by F. W. GEDYE, Esq., of Bristol, at 7. Mr. G. Watson, jun., has kindly consented to render musical assistance on this occasion.

*Tickets for the whole of the above may be obtained of the Rev. S. Vincent, and of Messrs. Lawler, North, Downwell, Poole, Compton, Edgwick, Hawley, or Mr. R. W. Ashley, Secretary.*  
**PRICES—Breakfast (including Reserved Seat Ticket to Lecture) 5s.; Tea (including Reserved Seat Ticket to Lecture) 2s. 6d.; Tea only, 1s.; Lecture only—Reserved Seats, 2s., Second Seats, 1s.**

**ENTRANCE TO STONE-LAYING WILL BE BY TICKET.**

**1914-18** Old chapel in Tolzey Lane used as a soldier's club for wounded men who were convalescing in hospitals at Mitton Manor and the Watson Hall.

**1923** - Electric light installed in church

**1940**—Schoolroom requisitioned by War Department for use by soldiers rescued from Dunkirk

**1977** – Tewkesbury United Reformed Church closed and members transferred to this church

**1989** - Organ rebuilt



**1991** – Tewkesbury Circuit merges with Cheltenham Circuit.

**1999 - 2000** - Major refurbishment of Chapel & Hall costing £416,000

**2003** – 125th year celebration including drama documentary about history of the church

**2005** - All loans for refurbishment paid off

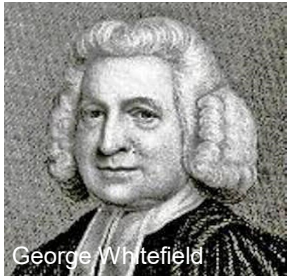
**2008** – Formation of the new Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire which includes the former Tewkesbury and Cheltenham Circuit.

**2010** – Part-time Family Outreach Worker appointed



## Tewkesbury Methodist Church

### *The Story so far...*



**1739** – George Whitefield of Gloucester first brought Methodist preaching to Tewkesbury

**1739** The Revd John Wesley began his life-long crusade of preaching the Gospel

**1744** - John Wesley's first visit to preach in the open air on Perry Hill.

**1777** - Wesley visits new Methodist

preaching house in Tolzey Lane.

**1790** – Wesley, aged 87, makes his 23rd and final visit:  
Died 1791

**1813** - Preaching house in Tolzey Lane demolished

**1814** - Larger preaching house in Tolzey Lane opened

**1838** - Tewkesbury Methodist Circuit established

**1866** - First Manse purchased

**1878** - Present church built by Thomas Collins

**1881** - School Room, Organ added and Manse next door purchased

**1891** - Two Alms Houses built at rear of Chapel in memory of Honor Collins, wife of Thomas Collins, the builder.

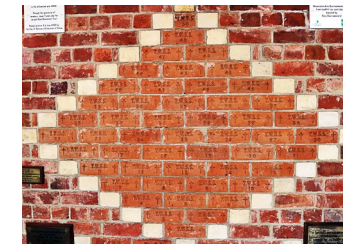
**1907** - Raymond Priestley, member of the Chapel, joins Shackleton's exploration of Antarctica



Raymond Priestley

## Building work begins

Work on the chapel started in 1877 and, on 4 July, the memorial stones were laid. This date had been chosen since it was exactly 100 years since John Wesley had opened the preaching house in Tolzey Lane. To quote from the newspaper, the *Tewkesbury Register*, 'the day was treated as quite a high day and holiday.' The day started with a public breakfast in the Corn Exchange at the Town Hall, attended by the mayor, J H Boughton and the member of parliament, Captain W E Price, and a section of the great and good of the town. After several speeches of thanks, the gathering processed to the building site, which was decorated with a banner reading, 'Success to the new Wesleyan Chapel'. Four foundation stones were laid by four amateur masons who had given substantial sums of money for the privilege. Unfortunately the proceedings were interrupted by heavy rain, so the gathering adjourned to the chapel in Tolzey Lane, to listen to addresses by several visiting ministers. By six o'clock the weather cleared and a return was made to the site for the laying of forty bricks by representatives of the Sunday School. The days events had raised over £500 towards the building costs.



***The bricks laid by Sunday School scholars in 1877 were moved from their original site during the renovations made to the church premises in 1999-2000, and are now on a wall in the Link, near the rear door.***



### Opening date announced

Work on the new chapel proceeded rapidly and at Easter 1878 it was announced that the premises would be opened on Wednesday 5 June. At nine o'clock on that day Communion was administered to a large congregation and at eleven o'clock the first morning service was attended by the mayor with the town councillors in civic regalia. The chapel was dedicated by the Rev Dr William Burt Pope, the president of the Wesleyan Conference.



An invited gathering of 130 people then proceeded to the Corn Exchange for lunch, followed by speeches. Dr Pope described the chapel as '*one of the prettiest Methodist chapels he knew.*' The secretary of the New Chapel committee, R.W. Ashley, gave a detailed account of the efforts to raise the money for the building and compliments were paid to the builder, Thomas Collins. No sooner had the lunch concluded than the tables were re-laid for tea at five o'clock, attended by over 300 people. At seven o'clock the first evening service was held at which the preacher was the Rev Benjamin Gregory, the Connexional editor. The offerings at the days services amounted to the staggering total of £231.3s 6d.

### The organ is installed

Unfortunately Joseph Priestley, headmaster of the Abbey School and a member of the New Chapel committee died suddenly in 1876. In his memory £172 was raised to provide an organ specially built by Sweetland of Bath.

### The fruits are seen of all the work

The success of the refurbishment can be measured by the increased use of the premises by community organisations. Over fifteen different groups and organisations use the church hall or Guild room during a typical week and the church is popular for concerts and meetings.

Most of all the priority of the church is to provide a place of witness to the love of God as we reach out to the people of Tewkesbury and beyond.

*Your hand, O God, had guided  
your flock from age to age;  
the wondrous tale is written,  
full clear on every page;  
our forebears owned your goodness,  
and we their deeds record;  
and both of this bear witness:  
one Church, one faith, one Lord*

Edward Hayes Plumptre (1821-1891)  
From Singing the Faith no 692

Following many meetings, the decision was reached to adopt the refurbishment plans and fund raising began. Work commenced in October 1999 and went on until Easter 2000, during which time the congregation shared the Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Oldbury Road.

In June 2000 the premises were officially re-opened by the Rev Dr Baroness Richardson of Calow, the first woman President of the Methodist Conference.

The alterations had provided new heating systems, a spacious vestibule incorporating kitchen and toilet, full facilities for the disabled, a fully carpeted chapel, a new worship area and the replacement of the pews with chairs. The hall was re-decorated and provided with a fully equipped kitchen. The courtyard between the two buildings, church and hall, was covered to form a link area.



### Raising the money

Generous grants towards the work were received from the Joseph Rank Trust, various Methodist property funds and the Gloucestershire Environmental Trust. The church community was involved in many fund raising events and schemes and they responded to a call for donations and interest free loans which meant it was not necessary to borrow from commercial sources.

The organ was installed in August 1878 and special services were held when recitals were given by a local organist, Charles Frost who *'had attained great celebrity in the musical world'*.

### Opened debt free

The final meeting of the New Chapel committee took place on 29 August 1878 when Mr Ashley was able to report that every penny due for the project had been paid and that *'Methodism in Tewkesbury and the Circuit was debt free'*. In fact there was a surplus of just over £11 which was presented to the minister, the Rev Samuel Vincent as a token of appreciation for his part in the project.

### Building the Schoolroom

One would have thought that after the effort to obtain money for the new chapel that the Society would have taken a



rest from fund raising, but instead a target was set to build a room for the Sunday School. The opportunity arose for the Trustees to purchase for use as a manse, the adjacent property, comprising the house now occupied by an estate agent, together with a cottage in Swilgate Road.

In June 1881 the foundation bricks of the schoolroom were laid. Over the next six months the schoolroom (now used as the church hall) was completed, the house was converted to be the Minister's manse and the cottage became the home of the caretaker.

## New organ chamber and windows

The chapel was further beautified by the opening of an organ chamber and the installation of two stained glass windows to supplement those in the apse. Both windows were gifts, the one on the left was given by Thomas Collins in memory of his grandfather and family, the one on the right by R W Ashley in memory of his late wife.

At the end of these building projects the Wesleyan Society in Tewkesbury owned what was described by the Rev G Bowden, the Chairman of the District as *'a property the like of which, for its completeness and beauty he did not know.'*

## Service to the Community

The generosity and foresight of the Victorian builders of the premises enabled the church by the Town Cross to minister to the people of the town. Members of the church contributed to the life of the town in many roles. To name a few, Thomas Collins, the builder, became mayor for five terms; William Boughton, the church organist for over fifty years, was mayor on seven occasions, both of them were given the rare honour of the Freedom of the Borough. John Willis and his like named son, both served terms as mayor. On the world stage, Raymond Priestley, grandson of Joseph, went to the Antarctic with both Shackleton and Scott before becoming a distinguished academic as Vice Chancellor of both Melbourne, Australia and Birmingham Universities. Priestley became President of the Royal Geographical Society and was knighted in 1949.



Raymond Priestley

## Time moves on and brings problems

Over the first hundred years at the Cross the premises needed few major repairs and most of the maintenance was carried out by members of the church who gave freely of their time and skills. But, as time went by, major problems required heavy expenditure.

The church organ needed a complete rebuilding in the 1980's at a cost of about £8,000 which was raised by a special appeal. The stone frontage of the church had become blackened and the pinnacles had become dangerous through the ravages of the climate. The contract for cleaning and repairing the stonework cost about £30,000 towards which generous grant aid was forthcoming from the Borough Council and English Heritage.

## Challenges and solutions

In 1995 the quinquennial inspection of the premises revealed that major repairs were needed which would require expenditure of about £123,000. The Property Committee and the Church Council spent many hours discussing the problem.

If the repairs alone were carried out the church would be in good repair but still a Victorian chapel. Alan Bristow, an architect specialising in the refurbishment of Methodist premises, was employed to devise a plan to carry out the repairs and refurbish the premises to modern standards. His plans were costed at £416,000 but, if the refurbishment went ahead, substantial grants would be available from sources which supported the Methodist Church. These grants would not be available for repair work.