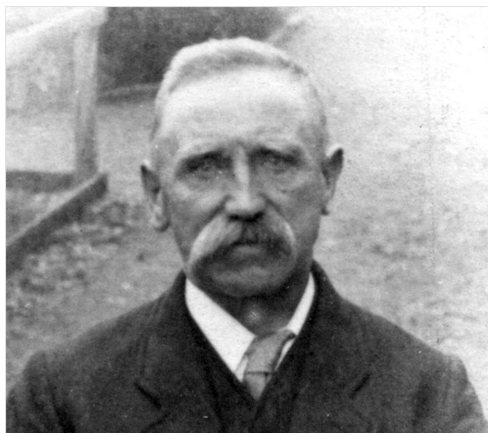

A brief history of Hellifield Methodist Chapel

Prior to the opening of the present building in Haw Grove services from 1886 were held at the home of Mr. Robert Parker at 33 Midland Terrace. With the opening of the Temperance Hotel in the main street services moved to the hotel dining room from around 1891.

Towards the end of 1891 a piece of land was secured and this was donated to the circuit by the Hellifield Auction Mart Company and by 1893 the chapel was opened by the Rev. Thomas Champness of Rochdale, the first serving minister was Mr. John Woolerton. In 1913 stones were laid to form an extension at the rear of the building which was to become the Sunday school.

A licence to hold weddings was granted in 1924, the first couple to be married in the June of that year was Miss Lydia Edmondson of Pendle View, Hellifield and Mr. Roland Preston of Liverpool.

Three members of the chapel went on to serve in the ministry, Harold Bird (who served for 24 years in India),



Robert Parker



Haw Grove

Richard Hailwood (China, 1932-40) and John T. Thompson.

A plaque in the chapel commemorates four members of the congregation who lost their lives during the first world war, Harley Bentham, Michael Curtis, Albert Hailwood, Walker Parker (son of Robert Parker).

Members of my family have been associated with the Methodist movement in Hellifield since its beginnings, My Great Grandfather was Mr. Robert Parker, one of the founding members, his daughter, Jane Parker (later Percy), my grandmother, laid one of the foundation stones of the Sunday school and went on to become an organist and member of the chapel for over 50 years.

John Percy, June 2019

Revisiting Hellifield Baptist Chapel

I wrote a small article on the Baptist chapel (which is located on Gisburn Road and now a private residence) in an earlier edition of the Herald (June 2019 - Ed). However, I recently came across an old book which provides some more information on the chapel which I thought may be of interest.

The book is titled "The Baptists of Yorkshire" being a centenary volume of the Yorkshire Baptist Association and was published in 1912. As the book was published before 1923 it is now in the public domain, so I have reproduced the text and photograph as it was originally published. I have also included a local press cutting from the 1960s at the time that I attended the Sunday school at the chapel, some familiar Hellifield names can be seen in the cutting! The other photograph which may have been taken around the same time shows my grandmother,

Jane Percy on the left and Baptist chapel stalwart Belle Coates in the chapel.

"The cause at Hellifield appears to have had its rise in the year 1808, when a parcel of ground, in a certain field called Cross Close, was conveyed to trustees for the purpose of erecting a Particular Baptist chapel. An Association report for 1842 says that Hellifield had its origin, in part, from the Church at Cowling Hill. It is difficult to give a clear account of the history of the Hellifield Church owing to its



changing relationship to the Church at Long Preston. Sometimes the two Churches appear on the records as Long Preston-cum-Hellifield, at other times they are entered separately, and in some years Hellifield is not included in the returns. In 1816, Mr. Hardacre was ordained pastor of Long Preston, at Hellifield, but the Churches afterwards separated. In 1842, Hellifield numbered twelve members. The Rev. W. Giddings became pastor at Long Preston in 1871, and in 1882 Hellifield united itself with its sister Church under his pastorate. An Association Report for that year says: "Hellifield, for years past, has owed its existence as a Church to the self-denial of one brother, who has walked from Airton, four miles away, in order to keep open the house of prayer and maintain the worship of God. He was taken ill at the recognition service of Mr. Giddings, and died after a few days suffering, leaving an example of

faithfulness to great principles rarely seen. The future prosperity of the Church will always be identified with the name of Hargraves of Airton."

Mr. Giddings died in 1887. He was greatly beloved by his people: "An earnest preacher and a devoted pastor, his sincere piety and gentle spirit were manifest in every action. For years to come his influence will be felt in the homes of Long Preston and Hellifield, and his name will be a household word in the dales of Craven." In 1889, Rev. J. Davis settled as pastor, but terminated his engagement in 1892, to be followed by Rev. J. Russell, who remained for a very brief period. Rev. Geo. Armitt undertook the work in 1897; under him the Churches were again united. Mr. Armitt removed in 1904. The Church is at present supplied by lay brethren."

John Percy. June 2022