
Revisiting the Baptist Chapel

I wrote a small article on the Hellifield Baptist chapel (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

"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



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.

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

BAPTIST CHAPEL.—Harvest services were held on Sunday at the Hellifield Baptist Chapel. In the afternoon, items were given by the following: Carol Robinson, Paula Wardman, Ruth Beresford, Doreen Outhwaite, Jill Angus, John Pearcy, Sally, Sarah and Brian Hardacre, Margaret Robinson, Vicky Robinson, Lesley Phillip, Jacqueline Spenceley and Dorothy Mills, assisted by other scholars. Soloist at the evening service was Mrs. J. Robinson, accompanied by Mr. J. Robinson, of Settle. Both services were conducted by Mrs. Donaldson, Bolton-by-Bowland. Mrs. Pearcy was organist. The Chapel had been tastefully decorated by lady members. The sale of fruit and flowers was conducted by Mr. D. Symonds and collections, for chapel funds, realised £10 12s. 6d.

Press cutting from the 1960s

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 Pearcy.



John's grandmother, Jane Pearcy on the left and Baptist chapel stalwart Belle Coates in the chapel.