

Wesley Memorial Methodist Chapel Epworth



The Methodist Church
High Street, Epworth
North Lincolnshire DN9 1EP
www.epworth-wesley-memorial-methodist-church.co.uk/



INTRODUCTION

The project to build a Wesleyan Chapel as a Memorial to John and Charles Wesley was commissioned by the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of 1884. This followed 'promptings' by the Epworth Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly meeting of 1882. An outline of the progress of the project is given at the end of this guide.

The foundation stones were laid on 20 September 1888. The Chapel was formally opened on 15 September 1889, work on the site was completed by June 1891 and the Wesleyan Congregation moved from its buildings in Chapel Street. The cost of the site was £500, the tender for the build was £2749 and the local (Epworth) Wesleyan Circuit contributed a total of £1500.

The history of the Methodist Church in Epworth and the Isle of Axholme is extensively documented elsewhere. It covers the establishment of a congregation closely linked to John Wesley (the Wesleyan Society) and then the later introduction of a Primitive Methodist Society and a Methodist New Connexion congregation. These latter congregations had substantial premises of their own. The visitor is guided to other resources. There is an interesting collection of documents from primary sources that have been collected by Revd David Leese under the heading "Revival and Reform Methodism in Epworth" which is not formally published, but available from the compiler and copies are in stock with other Wesley Memorabilia .

A very brief outline of the establishment of Methodist Congregations and the building of their premises in Epworth may provide interesting reading to the visitor, and prompt you to locate the various sites mentioned. A summary of this is included at the end of this guide. Please do not miss visiting the Old Rectory which is the childhood home of John and Charles Wesley which is open as a Museum with guided tours.

Following the Methodist Deed of Union in 1932 and the cessation of worship in various sets of premises, 1965 Wesley Memorial Church remains the single meeting place of the Methodist congregation in Epworth.

THE GARDENS

The gardens as they are now were landscaped in 2013. The design was a gift of Mr Steve Welsh who attended the Church regularly. The wide path and large circular space welcome the visitor.



The statue to the east side of the building reminds us of John Wesley's claim that "the world is my Parish"


The seats are there to be used by anyone who wishes to enjoy the sense of peace alongside the busyness of the High Street.

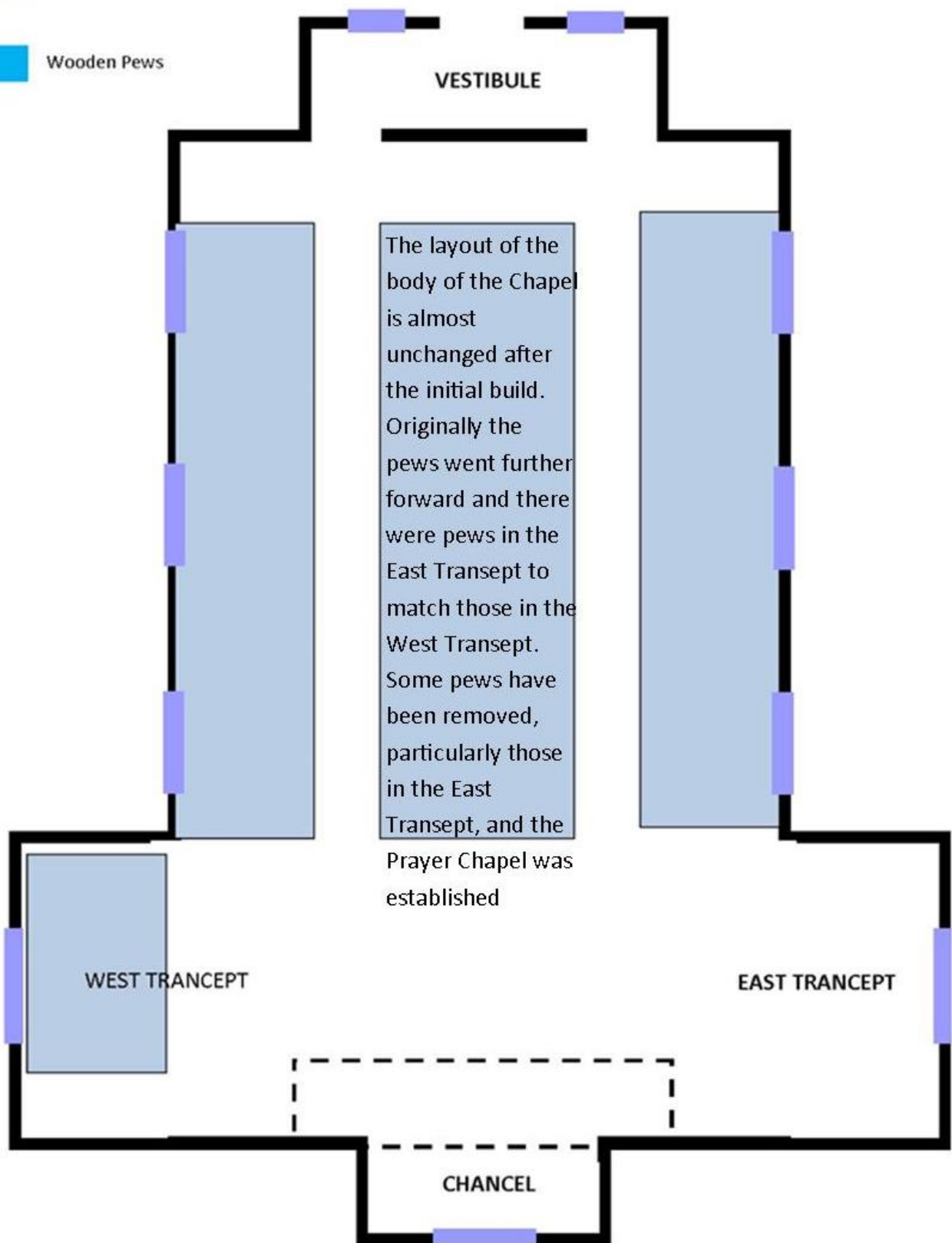


The raised beds down the west side were planned to be for community use.

THE SANCTUARY

 Windows

 Wooden Pews



PICTURE WINDOWS

THE CHANCEL WINDOW 1896

Donated by Emerson
Bainbridge and his brother
Thomas

The window consists of three lights, separated by stone mullions. Its subject is that of the Saviour's commission to his disciples with principal figure of Christ surrounded by the disciples. The text is from Matthew's gospel, where he commands them to go into all the world, making disciples of all people. It is a very appropriate window in a church dedicated as a memorial to John Wesley, because he regarded the whole world as his parish, and spent his life in preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ and in making disciples.



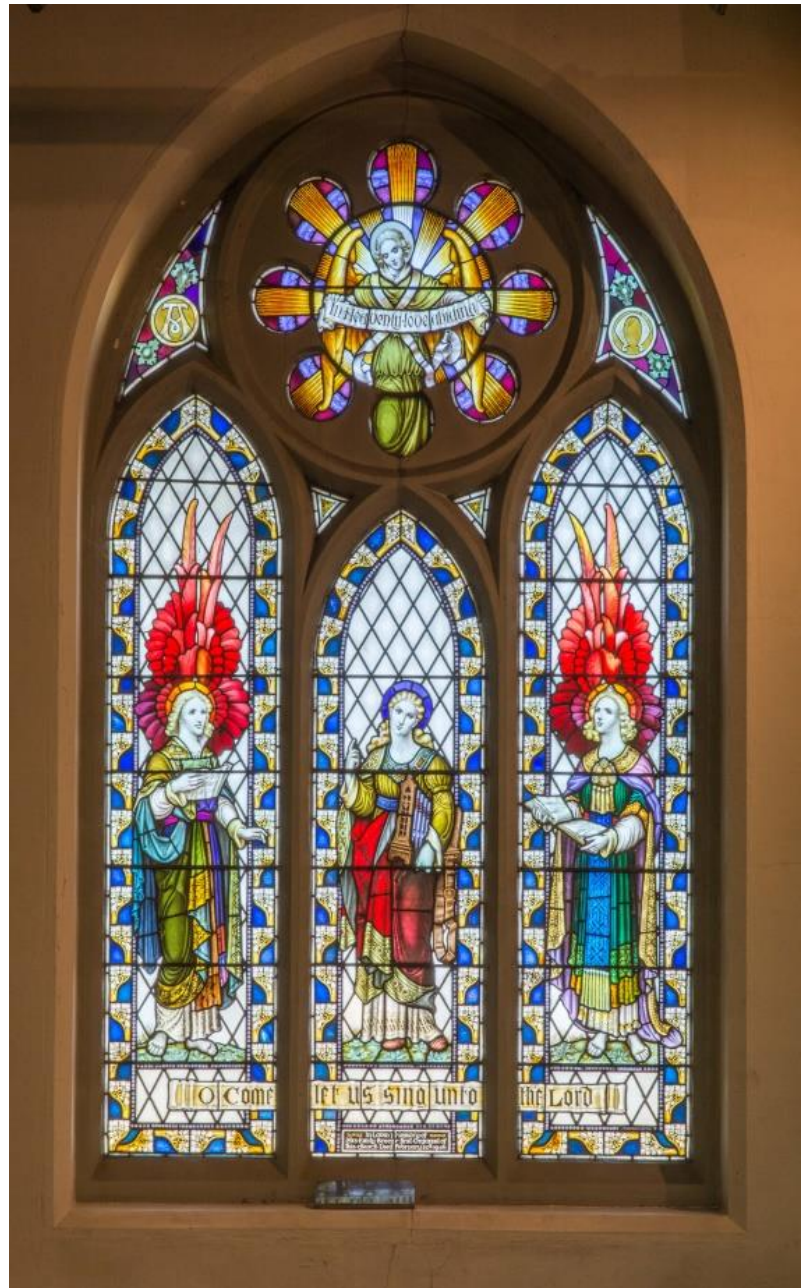
Above the window can be seen the life size portraits of John and Charles Wesley taken from the J. Adams Memorial in Westminster Abbey. They are looking towards the Old Rectory where they were born. Around them are what are reputed to be John's dying words: 'The best of all is, God is with us.'

THE WEST TRANCEPT WINDOW

A memorial to Mrs Emily Breeze donated by her husband, Mr WI Beeze (1946)

The centre light shows the figure of St. Cecilia, patron saint of organists. The two side lights have figures of angels holding music. Across the base there is a text 'Come let us sing to the Lord'. The text on the window reads: "O come let us sing to the Lord"

The window is appropriately placed above the choir stalls and adjacent to the organ. Mrs Breeze was an organist at the Church for many years.



The small round light at the top of the window is what we presume to be a memorial tribute to Mrs Breeze. It reads "In heavenly love abiding"

THE EAST TRANCEPT WINDOW

The brass plate below this window carries the inscription: "To the Glory of God and in loving memory of Thomas J Blaydes', the promoter of the building of this Church and 67 years a member; also of Wilfred and Kathleen, son and daughter of the above. This beautiful stained glass window was unveiled in 1925 by Rev. H. Graham Payn, an old friend of the family.

The window illustrates the presentation of Jesus in the Temple. In the centre is Mary with the Child. The right panel depicts Simeon and above are the Words: "Lord now lettest thy servant depart in peace". Hannah, the prophetess, is shown in the left panel and the words above are: "Mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation".



Angels and cherubs are in the top light, with the text: "Blessed are the pure in heart"

“Here are table, font and pulpit; here the cross has central place”

(From the hymn: “God is here” written by Frederick Pratt Green)



The cross is the symbol that universally identifies Christianity and the individual Christian.

Jesus Christ lived in Roman occupied Palestine some 2000 years ago. The stories recorded in the gospels are about healing and wholeness, about justice and peace, about care and compassion, about forgiveness and reconciliation and about generous

and selfless giving. They open our understanding to the mind of God. To live by the values that these things engender is a challenge to a person’s natural inclinations; to teach them is an uncomfortable challenge to those who listen. Jesus’s teaching provided this uncomfortable challenge, and those who opposed him manipulated the Roman authorities into crucifying him. After just three days the disciples of Jesus began to encounter him; the expression ‘risen from the dead’ was used to describe this experience.

The Crucifix (a cross with a figure on it) is used as a reminder of the crucifixion, but the universal symbol is an ‘empty’ cross. This is the sign that Jesus is alive and active in the world. The central cross in this Church is an ‘empty cross’.



As you look around this church count how many crosses you have seen. Some are clearly intentional as crosses, but some are ‘hidden’.

Holy Communion and Baptism are the two Sacraments celebrated by the Methodist Church. The word 'sacrament' has often been simply defined as 'a visible sign of invisible grace'

The service of **baptism** begins with these words "Baptism is a gift of God, it declares to each of us the love and grace of God". The hands that receive a gift need to be empty and open.

The person to be baptised (or the parents of a child in the case of infant baptism) is asked the question 'Do you turn away from evil and all that denies God?' followed by the question 'Do you turn to God, trusting in Jesus Christ as

Lord and Saviour and in the Holy Spirit as helper and guide?' The 'yes' response to these questions is like emptying of hands of all that denies the goodness of God and opening them to receive the gift of grace in order to live in a way that celebrates love, justice, mercy and peace.



Water, with its properties of cleansing, refreshing and life-sustaining, is the symbol used in this grace-filled moment.

The font was donated by Mrs. Thomas Walker of Bolton. It is made of oak, and is beautifully carved to harmonise with the oak pulpit. It was given in memory of Susannah Wesley wife of Rev Samuel Wesley. Samuel was the Rector of Epworth 1697 to 1735 and Susannah bore nineteen children of whom ten survived.

While they were at Oxford University the two sons, John and Charles, were founder members of a study group which followed a particular methodology, hence the name Methodist. This name has been given to the movement in whose tradition this church stands.

NB: A Methodist publication "All this for you" explores the meaning and significance of baptism in the Methodist Church.

Holy Communion



The symbols of this sacrament are bread and red wine.

The story of Jesus' last meal with his friends includes the following "While they were still eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body' Then he took a cup and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'". (Matthew 26 26-26). This sacrament is regularly celebrated by this Church.

The symbolism is simple yet complex. This is because it does not have a single interpretation. It is:

Remembrance: in which we recall the broken-ness of Jesus' body and his blood during the crucifixion.

Thanksgiving: that in his challenging life and his dying with integrity, he revealed the mind and will of God.

Communion: where Christian people gather as friends who are sharing a meal.

Sustenance: just as bread and wine are food and drink for a physical life so to 'feed on Jesus' strengthens those who have committed themselves to God's values for living to hold fast to them even in difficult circumstances.

Converting: John Wesley held that Holy Communion renews that conversion from the 'evil and all that denies God' to 'trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and in the Holy Spirit as helper and guide'.

It is likely that the Communion table used here at the Wesley Memorial Chapel is the one at which John and Charles Wesley, and indeed the other Wesley children as well, were served their first communion by their father, Samuel. At one time, it was the Communion table at St Andrews Parish Church in Epworth, but following some work in that church, it became redundant and was sold. The story has it that it ended up in a public house, but when the Wesley

memorial Chapel was built in 1889, the then owner kindly donated it to this Church.

NB: A Methodist publication "Share this feast" explores the understanding of Holy Communion

The pulpit

Preaching is central to worship in the Methodist Church. John Wesley preached in the open air and appointed many lay preachers so that the good news of Christ could reach as many people as possible.

In many churches the pulpit stands centrally but here **the cross has central place.**

The pulpit fall carries a cross in which the Christogram IHS is present. This is interpreted in various ways:

It is seen as an abbreviation for the name of Jesus. It is an abbreviation for the Latin expression 'Jesu Salvator Hominem' which translated is 'Jesus Saviour of the world', or it is the abbreviation of 'In His Service'. You can take your pick!

The beautiful panels of this pulpit are made from oak, and carved in the Early English style. It rests on a stone base which was donated by the second architect to be appointed to the building project, Mr Bell.



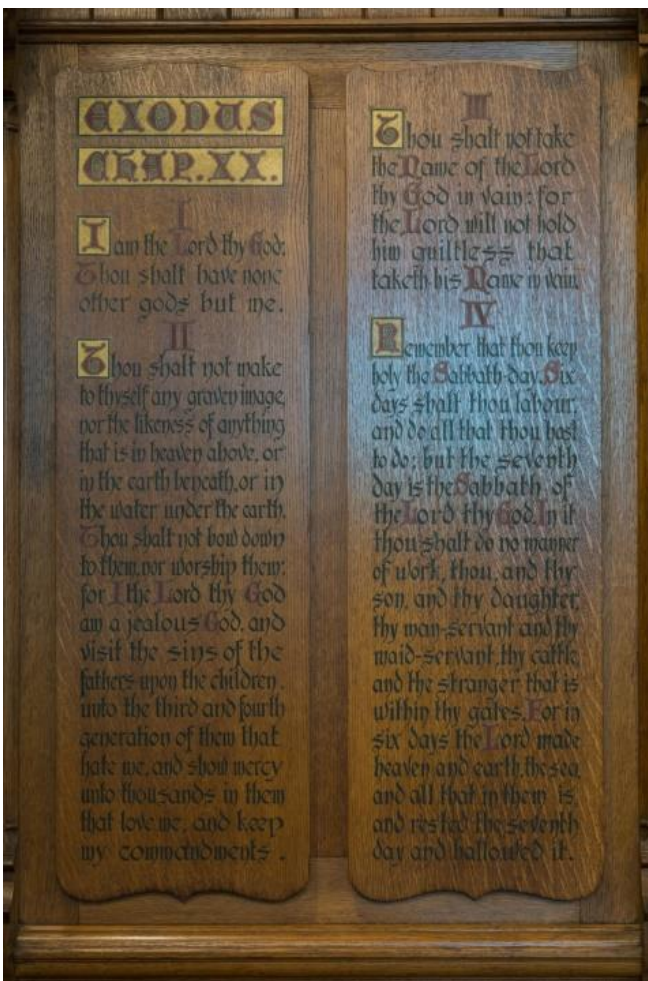
The Chancel Screen.



This is the oak panelling that is below the chancel window and behind the communion table.

When the window was unveiled in 1896, it was felt that the walls needed something to harmonise with it. The united efforts of the ladies raised £150 to pay for it.

There are three main divisions to the screen each bearing one of the words: Faith, Hope, Charity. The panels themselves bear the words of The Lord's Prayer and of the Ten Commandments.



THE WEST TRANSEPT

“Born in song, God’s people have always been singing.”

(From a hymn by Brain Hoare)

Music and singing are rich elements of the Methodist tradition. In this part of the church are the choir stalls, the organ and the Emily Breeze memorial window.

The organ was purchased at a cost of £350 and was dedicated in 1891. It was erected on the builder’s latest improved tubular pneumatic action which secures, by light wind pressure, an instantaneous repetition and silent action. In 2015 the organ was restored at a cost of £18-20,000.



A variety of music styles is used; the principle source of hymns and songs is Singing the Faith, the hymn book authorised by the Methodist Church in 2015. This is supplemented by choices from a number of other sources.

At all age worship services in particular, the singing is led by the worship band. You may notice some music stands and drums ‘peeping’ over the back pew of the choir stalls.

EAST TRANCEPT

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire uttered or unexpressed

From the hymn by James Montgomery 1771-1854

THE MEMORIAL CHAPEL



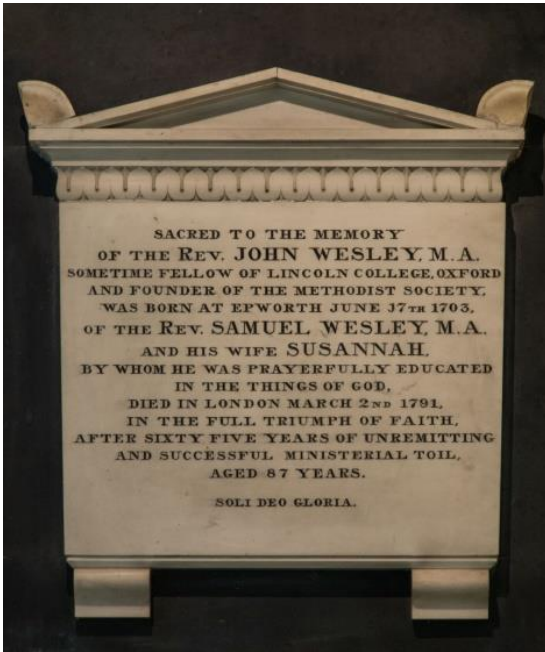
This area is in part the Prayer Chapel, which was furnished in memory of Gwendoline Johnson, a member of this church and given by her brother Stanley Johnson. The beautiful oak table was made by local craftsman Kevin Robinson based on the design of the Wesley communion table. The blue hanging and the table cover are a part of that gift. It is used as the meeting place for the prayer group which gathers every Wednesday.



The East Transept also houses the Book of Remembrance which was compiled locally and records the names of those from Epworth and the Isle of Axholme who were killed in the great war of 1914-18. The poppy is one of those created by the ceramic artists Paul Cummins and Tom Piper and commissioned to stand at the Tower of London in the autumn of 2014

This is a place for remembering and reflecting, please do feel that you can sit here and offer your prayers.

MEMORIALS TO THE WESLEYS

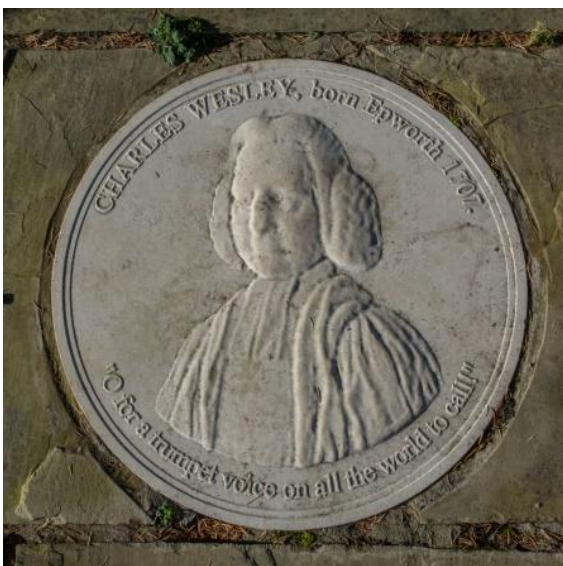


This Memorial Tablet is appropriately located in the Memorial Chapel. It was transferred here from the earlier Wesleyan Chapel and is dedicated to the memory of John Wesley.

This bust of John Wesley is a plaster copy of the original work of the French sculptor, Louis-Francois Roubillac.

He was born in Lyons in 1695 and studied mainly in Paris before settling in London around 1738, where he spelt his name Roubiliac. His more famous statues include those of Handel (Vauxhall Gardens, London), Newton (Cambridge), Shakespeare (British Museum), and another of Handel in Westminster Abbey.

The artist died in 1762, some 29 years earlier than John Wesley.



This bas-relief of Charles Wesley is located in the Garden quite close to the statue of John Wesley

AN OUTLINE OF THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE METHODIST PRESENCE IN EPWORTH

1745: Wesley preached in a house in Epworth

1758: Wesley recorded that he preached in the 'shell of the new house' (believed to be the first building on the Chapel Street site).

1803: Methodist New Connexion (MNC) Providence Chapel opened for the New (or Kilhamite) Methodists in Church Street

1819: Primitive Methodism comes to Lincolnshire

1821: Wesleyan Chapel built in Chapel Street

1821: Primitive Methodist Chapel and Schoolroom built. This was known as the Thurlow Chapel because of its particular location.

Ca. 1850: Evidence that there might have been a United Methodist free Church in Epworth

1860: The MNC opened a new building in High Street as a Memorial to Alexander Kilham. This was (and still is) known as the Kilham Chapel

1883: New Primitive Chapel built to replace the Schoolroom

1884: Project to build a Chapel as Memorial to John and Charles Wesley approved by the Wesleyan Conference.

1889: Wesley Memorial Chapel opened

1890: Wesleyan Chapel, Schoolroom and dwelling house sold by auction

1910: Original Primitive Chapel replaced by a schoolroom

1912: Kilham Chapel re-opened as the United Methodist Church, Kilham memorial, after some renovations.

1944: Kilham Chapel held its last service

1965: Thurlow (Primitive Chapel) closed for Public worship

All of the sites mentioned above are still identifiable in Epworth the one in Church Street and those in Chapel Street by blue plaques. The buildings of the Thurlow Chapel are still in existence in Station Road, adjacent to the Thurlow Community Hall, and the Kilham Chapel is now owned by the Local Authority used as the Community Hub.

WESLEY MEMORIAL CHURCH EPWORTH FROM THE START OF THE PROJECT TO ITS OPENING

In **1877**, an article in the Sheffield Independent reported that the Wesleyans in Epworth had no memorial of John Wesley.

In **1882** - the quarterly meeting of the Epworth Circuit sent the following resolution *'It was unanimously agreed that a memorial be sent from the Quarterly Meeting to the Conference having for its subject a Connexional effort to erect a memorial chapel with schoolroom, classroom and minister's house in the birthplace of John and Charles Wesley.'*

In **1884** The Wesleyan Conference appointed a Committee to deal with all matters concerning the erection of the Church and Revd Charles Garrett, a former President of Conference was appointed to raise funds from the home connexion and from abroad. He took a personal interest in leading the project.

In **1886** - A site (originally belonging to Mr. Blaydes) was bought at public auction for £500. An architect, Mr. Hicks, was appointed.

In **1887** - The circuit was still being asked to raise money, making its contribution £1,500 in all.

In **1888** - Mr. Hicks, the architect, was asked to resign, and was paid £75 in discharge of his claim. Mr. Bell was appointed in his place. He provided the pulpit with a stone base for £15. The tender of £2,749 by Mr. H. Kelsey of Epworth to build the Church was accepted.

In **1888** - On Thursday 20th September at 2 p.m. the Memorial Stones were laid in memory of John and Charles Wesley,

In **1889** - on 5th September the Church was opened by Rev. Charles Garrett. The residential buildings were completed by June **1891**.



LIST OF MINISTERS AT WESLEY MEMORIAL CHURCH

1888 ----- Joshua Duffil
1888 / 89 ---- William A. Templar
1889 / 91 ---- Robert Lickes
1891 / 94 ---- Henry Parkes
1894 / 97 ---- Henry R. Burto
1897 / 98 ---- Samuel Sheard
1898 / 1900 - Joseph B. Alger
1900 / 03 ---- Samuel Adcock
1903 / 04 ---- S. Birt Coley
1904 / 07 ---- Frederick H. Naylor
1907 / 10 ---- George B. Glover
1910 / 13 ---- Jn. Edward Jones
1913 / 17 ---- W. Allen Phillips
1917 / 18 ---- Jn. S. Elmont
1918 / 19 ---- Wm. Taggart
1919 / 21 ---- J. Warren Milward
1921 / 24 ---- Jn. Keddie
1924 / 27 ---- J. R. Ellis
1927 / 28 ---- H. C. Sidnall
1928 / 31 ---- J. W. Marsden
1931 / 34 ---- S. F. Hubbard
1934 / 38 ---- J. G. Radford
1938 / 42 ---- W. M. P. Wilkes
1942 / 46 ---- S. H. Bullough
1946 / 51 ---- C. Povah Bardsley
1951 / 54 ---- J. Goldsbrough
1954 / 58 ---- W. Le Cato Edwards
1958 / 64 ---- Geo. B. Fish
1964 / 70 ---- Thomas Russell
1970 / 76 ---- Fred C. Bond
1976 / 81 ---- Thomas Soulsby
1981 / 86 ---- Paul T. Waterfield
1986 / 94 ---- Gordon J. Gatward
1994 / 2000 - Norman Smith
2000 / 05 ---- Barbara Walls
2005 / 16 ---- David Leese
2016 ---- Angela Long

