

Primitive Methodism in
Hertfordshire
from 1838 to 1918:
A socio-economic and
demographic study

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Submitted to the University of Hertfordshire in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of PhD

October 2020

Abstract

This is a study of the history and development of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire from 1838 to 1918. It aims to discover and document, principally by means of socio-economic and demographic analysis, firstly, how Primitive Methodism became established in the county and how it grew and developed, secondly, the particular characteristics of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire, and, thirdly, the importance of the position of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire society that the movement had managed to create for itself by the early years of the twentieth century.

The study finds that, in the 94 years of its existence in Hertfordshire, Primitive Methodism spread across the whole of the county and was to be found both in villages and rural areas as well as in towns. It confirms that the chapel was central to the life of local societies and it also provides evidence that Primitive Methodism attracted a distinctive following mainly, but not exclusively, from the lower social classes. In the early twentieth century, rather later than in other parts of the country, there was a noticeable change in emphasis, with a marked shift from the labouring classes to the semi-skilled and the craftsmen. This occurred at the same time as societies became an increasingly accepted and important part of their local communities, as evidenced by the active support of local politicians and other dignitaries. In addition, there was often close collaboration between Primitive Methodists and other nonconformist denominations.

The life of the local society at Anstey is considered in detail. This case study demonstrates how the four themes of 'organisation', 'people', 'property' and 'finance' come together at the grassroots level and it illustrates the part that societies played in the growth and development of the Connexion. It also provides an insight into the lives of grassroots members of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, an aspect which is often overlooked since ordinary members rarely feature in the national record.

Whilst each local society offered its members a variety of leadership roles, status and responsibility, the pattern of circuit development in Hertfordshire demonstrates considerable flexibility and fluidity as the Connexion responded both to changes on the ground and to outside influences. The study also finds that finance underpinned the very existence of a local society. Although the main purposes of chapel building were to support a society's aspirations regarding its permanence and status in a particular locality, to function as a 'focus for group identity', and to be the heart of its religious and social activities, nevertheless chapel building meant that a society would be encumbered with a considerable burden of debt. However, the chapel was of central importance to the life of Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire, and the records show just how much money, time and effort was spent over the years by all societies in ensuring that it was looked after and remained fit for purpose.

This study addresses a missing element in the Connexional story not only by adding to research at the local level but also by advancing understanding of a previously neglected and under-researched area of Primitive Methodist history. It confirms that the Primitive Methodist story in Hertfordshire, whilst distinctive, is nevertheless generally consistent with the broader national picture of nonconformity in the journey from 'dissent' to 'free church'. This study provides further evidence of the extent to which nonconformity, and religion generally, was an important part of 19th and early 20th century society in England. It also adds to knowledge and understanding of the history and development of nonconformity from a national perspective.

Acknowledgments

In this research I have benefitted considerably from the guidance of my supervisors at the University of Hertfordshire. Particular thanks must go to Dr Katrina Navickas, whose encouragement, support and constant positivity has enabled me to persevere in this task, especially on those occasions when my self-confidence has been lacking. I am also grateful to Professor Owen Davies for his helpful insights and suggestions of different ways of approaching matters. I would also like to express my thanks to Professor Sarah Lloyd, not least because she is, in part, responsible for this study of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire coming into existence.

Thanks are also due to the staff of the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies and the Essex Record Office for their help and assistance, and to Dr Jill Barber, formerly Project Director at Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism, for her active support and encouragement, especially in the early days of my research. I should also like to record my appreciation to Jenny Goymour, curator of the history pages of the Anstey Parish Council web site, for permission to use the photograph of Primitive Methodists at Anstey (at Figure 6.2).

Finally, I must record my thanks to my family who have supported me in this endeavour, particularly my mother, who will no longer need to enquire repeatedly 'is it finished yet?', but especially my wife, Karen, who could not possibly have imagined that this was what retirement would entail.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This is a study of the history and development of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire. It aims to discover and document, principally by means of socio-economic and demographic analysis, three main issues: firstly, how Primitive Methodism became established in the county in the nineteenth century and how it grew and developed; secondly, the particular characteristics of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire; and, thirdly, the importance of the position of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire society that the movement had managed to create for itself by the early years of the twentieth century. This study will consider the key aspects that shaped the rise and growth and the subsequent 'coming of age' of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire. It will investigate the movement's structure and organization, its buildings, its finances and the social characteristics of its members. It will do this primarily from the perspective of the individual places and groups of locations where Primitive Methodism became established, using mainly unpublished archival material and records.

Primitive Methodism

Primitive Methodism was 'a religion of experience not of theology' and came into being in 1811, when the denomination was formed, at Tunstall in Staffordshire.¹ The principal founding fathers of the movement were Hugh Bourne and William Clowes, both of whom were Wesleyan Methodist preachers.² However, in the years prior to 1811 they became increasingly disillusioned by what they regarded as the failings of Wesleyan Methodism to live up to its founding ideals, particularly since John Wesley's death in 1791. They were also

¹ Priscilla Mary Truss, 'Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932' (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2016), p.122; H. B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I (London: Robert Bryant, c. 1905), pp.1-2 and 89.

² G. C. Boase, revised by W. J. Johnson, 'Bourne, Hugh (1772–1852)', ODNB <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3005>> and 'Clowes, William (1780–1851)', ODNB <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5719>>.

strongly influenced by the American style of 'camp meeting' which seemed to hark back to the earlier days of Methodism and John Wesley's open air preaching, the winning of converts and an appeal to the working classes. Originating from North America and introduced into England in 1805 by Lorenzo Dow, described by Werner as an 'eccentric American evangelist' and 'a not very decorous figure', such meetings were to become a hallmark of Primitive Methodism, as the first such meeting to be held in England, at Mow Cop, Staffordshire, in 1807 led ultimately to the formation of the denomination.³ In 1808, Bourne was expelled from the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion, not because of his 'complicity with camp meetings, or any breach of ordinary discipline, much less any allegation of immorality or wrong-doing, but the fact of infrequent attendance at his class'. Two years later, Clowes was also expelled, although in his case it was because of his attendance at camp meetings 'contrary to the Methodist discipline'.⁴ It was these expulsions of Bourne and Clowes that led directly to the founding of Primitive Methodism. Kendall records that 'the Primitive Methodists were established because the [Wesleyan] Conference, proving more conservative than Wesley himself, and forgetting the origin of their existence, set itself against the general practice of field preaching'.⁵ In McLeod's view, the new denomination was formed because 'the main concern of the Primitive pioneers was all-out evangelism, and no tradition, convention or law was allowed to stand in the way'.⁶ There were a number of other splits from Wesleyanism, such as the Bible Christians, the Wesleyan Reformers and the Methodist New Connexion. These were all the result of secession, but Primitive Methodism was different because it was 'the result of an expulsion'.⁷ Bourne and Clowes had never sought to leave Wesleyanism or to found a separate organisation, and there is an interesting parallel here between the formation of Primitive Methodism and John Wesley's declaration that 'I live and die a member of the

³ Julia S. Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion: its Background and Early History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), pp.xi, 15, 45-47 and 61-62; W. R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England 1790-1850* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1972), p.289; Kate Tiller, *English Local History - An introduction*, 2nd edn (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2002), p.198; *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1875, p.485.

⁴ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, pp.84-85 and 99-102.

⁵ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, p.79, quoting from Herbert S. Skeats, *A History of the Free Churches of England* (London: Arthur Miall, 1868), p.621.

⁶ Hugh McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996), pp.27 and 28.

⁷ John T. Wilkinson, 'The Rise of other Methodist Traditions', in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, ed. by Rupert Davies, A Raymond George and Gordon Rupp, Vol. 2 (London: Epworth Press, 1978), pp.276-329 (p.304).

Church of England'. Wesley had never wanted to found a movement separate from the Church of England, yet an autonomous Methodist body was subsequently created, albeit four years after John Wesley had died.⁸

Despite a number of similarities with Wesleyan Methodism, what distinguished Primitive Methodists was their greater emphasis on revival, as well as the evangelical zeal with which they sought new converts to the faith and their 'plain, pithy and pointed preaching'.⁹ As Tiller puts it, Primitive Methodism was a "distinctive and radical manifestation of dissent".¹⁰ It began as a movement of 'evangelistic enterprise', progressing, from 1843, into a 'transitional' middle phase which led finally, from 1876, to its emergence as a mature church, with well-developed corporate views on matters such as 'social policy, temperance and social justice [and] in religious questions'.¹¹ Young comments that 'Primitive Methodists believed in a God who answers prayer, and this belief was integral to the spirit and expectations of the movement'. The Connexion's legally binding doctrines, as set out in the Minutes of Conference for 1836 and 1849, included 'repentance', 'the justification by faith of the ungodly on their turning to God', 'the witness of the Spirit', 'the doctrines of the Trinity', 'the resurrection of the dead' and 'general redemption by Jesus Christ' (i.e. that Christ died for all). 'Any person who has an earnest desire to be saved and to lead a Christian life' could be admitted to membership of the Primitive Methodist Connexion.¹²

It would be more than 25 years after the founding of Primitive Methodism before the movement arrived in Hertfordshire; the first documentary record of a society being formed in Hertfordshire suggests that the mission at Hertford came into being around 1837 or 1838.¹³ By 1838 the Connexion had 67,666 members, 939 chapels, 470 travelling preachers

⁸ See The Methodist Church in Great Britain web site <<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/history/separation-from-the-church-of-england/>> [accessed 18 June 2020].

⁹ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, p.77; Obelkevich, J., *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825-1875* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp.223-4.

¹⁰ Kate Tiller, 'The desert begins to bloom - Oxfordshire and Primitive Methodism, 1824-1860', *Oxoniansia*, Vol. LXXI, Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society, 2006, 85-111, p.85.

¹¹ Robert Wearmouth, 'The Evolution of Primitive Methodism', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 27.6 (1950), 135-137, p.136.

¹² David M. Young, *Change and Decay: Primitive Methodism from late Victorian times till World War I* (Stoke-on-Trent: Tentmaker Publications, 2017), pp. 11 and 13-14.

¹³ H. B. Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1919), pp.28-49; *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1841, p.396.

and 6,892 local preachers.¹⁴ In his report on the 1851 Religious Census, Horace Mann described the Primitive Methodist Connexion as 'the community whose operations penetrate most deeply through the lower sections of the people', confirming, as Truss put it, that 'Primitive Methodism had a different constituency from Wesleyan Methodism'.¹⁵ Echoing these thoughts some twenty years later, in their 'Annual Address of the Conference to the Societies under its Care' in 1875, the President and the Secretary of the Conference said this:

Wesleyan Methodism has sprung from the bosom of the Church of England; the leading Nonconformists of our country have sprung from Puritan forefathers, who also came from the bosom of the same church. But Primitive Methodism has no ecclesiastical pedigree of which to boast. It has sprung from a root out of a dry ground, the lowly working classes of English society. The other churches of our country have been, and are, more or less identified with the upper or middle classes of society. Among the sons of toil we see the rock whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence we were digged. Such an origin is neither a matter of boasting nor of humiliation. It is simply a matter of fact. ... And so we think that Primitive Methodism being a distinct denomination, having sprung from a distinct and independent root, must have a separate existence if it is to answer the purpose for which God has brought it into being. As a distinct denomination, it has certain germs of power and possibilities of excellence, on the cultivation of which, not amalgamation with others, depends its usefulness and success. It has been from the beginning the people's church; it is now, and wherever and whenever it shall cease to sustain this peculiarity its career is ended and its glorious possibilities prevented.¹⁶

This study will test the extent to which the claims made by the Conference officers in 1875 have been made out in terms of the class origins and development of Primitive Methodism

¹⁴ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1838, p.272.

¹⁵ Truss, 'Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932', p.1; Horace Mann, *Census of Great Britain 1851: Religious Worship in England and Wales – Abridged from the Official Report* (London: George Routledge and Co., 1854), p.100.

¹⁶ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1875, p.485.

compared with other denominations. It will also demonstrate the importance of extending existing knowledge, from a regional perspective, of the social structure of the organisation.

The later decades of the nineteenth century were a time of 'maturing church life' which culminated in the Connexion's official designation as a 'church' in 1902.¹⁷ By now, as Truss put it, 'Primitive Methodism had developed a view of itself – a view which in many ways still persists - of a proudly working-class denomination, democratically organised and radical, but also loyal and thoroughly respectable'.¹⁸ It is also particularly interesting to note that McLeod chose Primitive Methodism to illustrate extensively his argument about the development of the relationship between religion and the working class in the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Hempton has argued that, although Methodists generally 'began as cultural outsiders', nevertheless, by the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Methodism 'had arrived' at a central position in middle-class culture and had 'built a culture of stubborn respectability'.²⁰ Hempton's view supports, and is in accord with, the observations of the Connexion's own historians on the Connexion's progress. In Ritson's assessment, 'Primitive Methodism has rendered immense service of a social and political kind', whilst Kendall was able to point to 'the remarkable change which had come about in the relations of Primitive Methodism to the larger life – political, social and especially ecclesiastical – around it', quoting in support of this view an 1885 article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which described the Primitive Methodists as having been 'a very successful body, aiming simply at doing evangelistic work, and [which] is now numerous and powerful'.²¹

Both Ritson and Kendall linked Primitive Methodism's growing 'respectability' with its contribution to the political and social life of Victorian Britain. However, as Huggins observes, Victorian culture was multi-faceted and complex, and, although it is clear that 'respectability' was a key aspect of this culture, the term itself had a number of different

¹⁷ Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, pp.112-133 and p.134.

¹⁸ Truss, 'Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932', p.6.

¹⁹ McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914*, pp.26-35.

²⁰ David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), pp.31, 179 and 199; David Hempton, 'Methodism', in *Nineteenth-Century English Religious Traditions – Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. by D. A. Paz (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1995), pp.117-142 (p.122).

²¹ Joseph Ritson, *The Romance of Primitive Methodism* (London: Edwin Dalton, Primitive Methodist Publishing House, 1909), p.287; Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, p.113.

meanings during the Victorian period.²² Hempton pairs ‘respectability’ with ‘cultural acceptance’; in his view, Methodism, which ‘thrived on the margins and frontiers of race and class’, was engaged in ‘a quest for social acceptance and respectability’. For Hempton, although Methodists may have originally been ‘cultural outsiders’, the key drivers in the move to respectability were social aspiration and achievement.²³ This is what Kendall means when he says that by 1885 Primitive Methodism had become ‘accepted’.²⁴ Parsons sees ‘respectability’ in the way in which ‘nonconformist social and political status reached new heights’ at the end of the Victorian period and into the Edwardian era, whilst Gunn considers that there was a clear relationship between nineteenth century middle class Victorian ‘respectability’ and the rites of civic culture.²⁵ Rodell also equates respectability with social aspirations. For him, it was social standing that ‘gave Methodism respectability’ and, ultimately, ‘status by association’. He also notes that ‘although the constituency of Primitive Methodism was drawn predominantly from poorer occupational groups it would be a mistake to imagine that they were somehow immune to the desire for respectability’. Rather, he considers that Primitive Methodists ‘were every bit as committed to respectability as the Wesleyan elite’.²⁶ For McLeod, the concept of respectability ‘summed up the ideal of good living held by many working-class Christians’. It was a culture of ‘an orderly and self-respecting way of life’ in which ‘temperance was the supreme embodiment of “respectability”’. Furthermore, he makes the important point that, for the working-classes, ‘respectability’ included ‘an assertion of their dignity as working-class people’, as well as their belief that they were entitled to the same respect as any other member of society.²⁷

²² Mike Huggins, ‘Exploring the Backstage of Victorian Respectability’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 22.1 (2017), 81-88 (p.81).

²³ Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, pp.31, 131, 181 and 199.

²⁴ Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, p.113.

²⁵ Gerald Parsons, ‘From Dissenters to Free Churchmen: The Transitions of Victorian Nonconformity’, in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by Gerald Parsons, Vol I Traditions (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp.67-116 (p.109); Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle-Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1840-1874* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2007), pp.163-186.

²⁶ Jonathan Rodell, *The Rise of Methodism – A Study of Bedfordshire 1736-1851* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Bedfordshire Historical Record Society and The Boydell Press, 2014), pp.118-120, 186, 195 and 220.

²⁷ McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914*, pp.34-35.

Thus, however lowly the Connexion's beginnings may have been, by the late nineteenth century and onward into the twentieth, Primitive Methodism had achieved 'respectability', in the sense of social acceptance, aspiration and achievement, and had become an accepted part of Victorian and Edwardian society. Moreover, the Church had come a long way since 1811 and, by the early twentieth century, it was a significant presence amongst the Free Churches. In 1932, the union of the Primitive Methodists with Wesleyan Methodists and the United Methodists created the Methodist Church in Britain. At that time the Primitive Methodist Church had a membership of 222,021, with 4,356 churches, 1,131 ministers and 12,896 local preachers. By membership, Primitive Methodists accounted for 28% of the uniting churches, with the Wesleyans constituting 55% and the United Methodists 17%.²⁸

In 2010, almost two hundred years after Primitive Methodism was born, the Methodist Church gave added emphasis to its history by establishing Methodist Heritage in order to support 'the work of the Methodist Church in Britain aimed at preserving its heritage and using it as a tool for contemporary mission'. The principal objective of Methodist Heritage is 'Telling the Story of the People Called Methodists'.²⁹ This study of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire is part of that story. Woolley has argued that the formation of Methodist Heritage 'has brought welcome recognition of the role of community stories in identity formation, and of the resource of historic chapels, places and artefacts as illustrations of those stories in support of the missiological task' and is an approach which 'builds upon earlier work of Methodist theologians such as Barbara Glasson' in relation to the role played by stories in Methodism. As Glasson puts it, stories are 'are one way in which people account for the experience of their individual lives or communities ... [and] provide a sense of connection to our history and to other people'.³⁰ Glasson noted the very significant role played by stories in Methodism and how 'in both rural and urban settings there is often a

²⁸ J. M. Turner, 'Methodism in England 1900-1932', in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, ed. by Rupert Davies, A Raymond George and Gordon Rupp, Vol. 3 (London: Epworth Press, 1983), pp.309-361 (p.333); Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1977), Table A3, pp.139-144.

²⁹ See <<http://www.methodistheritage.org.uk/about.htm>> [accessed 15 May 2020].

³⁰ Timothy R. Woolley, 'A new appearance on the face of things: Retelling the Primitive Methodist creation narrative' (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2013), pp.9 and 11; Barbara Glasson, 'Stories and Storytelling: The Use of Narrative Within Methodism', in *Methodist Theology Today: A Way Forward*, ed. by Clive Marsh, Brian Beck, Angela Shier-Jones and Helen Wareing (London & New York: Continuum, 2004), pp.99-108 (p.99).

local narrative that relates to small communities and families associated with a chapel'. However, she also stressed the importance of carefully considering whose experience it is that is being heard and who is being left out of account as a result of either the way the story is being told or because of the person telling it. These points are particularly germane to a consideration of Primitive Methodist historiography.³¹

Religion in the nineteenth century

As Rosman has observed, 'nineteenth century people had more religious choice than any previous generation'.³² A significant part of that choice was represented by nonconformity and, as Parsons has argued, 'in sheer numbers, in religious vitality, in its centrality to political debate, and in its contribution to the social, cultural and ethical mores of the era, Victorian Nonconformity was an integral and inescapable ingredient in national life'.³³ Primitive Methodism takes its place in this spectrum of choice as part of the panoply of Victorian nonconformity.

The nature of nonconformity has changed over time: it had its origins in seventeenth century 'dissent', made up of those who professed the Christian faith but who wished to disassociate themselves from the Established Church. By the early years of the twentieth century nonconformity had become a 'free church', a term that was favoured by many nonconformists, including the Primitive Methodists. As Parsons put it, this meant that nonconformists were '*Free* as opposed to *Established* but *Churchmen* nonetheless'. In Bebbington's view, this journey from dissent to free church also implied 'positive principles rather than negative protest against the Church of England'.³⁴

The 1851 Religious Census revealed for the first time, with statistical evidence, both the extent and diversity of nonconformity.³⁵ As to extent, overall, a minimum of 35% of the

³¹ Glasson, 'Stories and Storytelling', pp.102 and 107.

³² Doreen M. Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.178.

³³ Gerald Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen: the traditions of Victorian Nonconformity', p.68.

³⁴ Gerald Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen: the traditions of Victorian Nonconformity', pp.102 and 109; David W. Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2011), pp.2 and 6.

³⁵ Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen: the traditions of Victorian Nonconformity', p.69.

population, or, put another way, 'about half of those in a position to attend worship', did so on 30 March 1851, which by comparison with 21st century standards is a considerable proportion. Moreover, approximately half of those attending worship on the day of the census were recorded at a nonconformist place of worship.³⁶ In terms of diversity, dissent had always taken a number of different forms, but this was even more evident in the nineteenth century.³⁷ Horace Mann's report on the 1851 Census referred to thirty different forms of nonconformity.³⁸ Methodism was, by some margin, the largest nonconformist group, being three times larger than the Congregationalists who were the next largest group. Moreover, Methodist membership, in numerical terms, was 50% greater in 1900 than it was in 1850.³⁹ Primitive Methodism was recorded in the Census as having 5% of all worshippers.⁴⁰

Nonconformity grew in numerical terms throughout the Victorian period. Up to 1840 the membership of most nonconformist denominations had been growing at a faster rate than the population and, at this time, Gilbert found that the relative strength of Methodism in English society 'was greater than at any period before or since'.⁴¹ As McLeod points out, the population of England approximately doubled between 1791 (the year John Wesley died) and 1851 but in the same period 'the number of Methodists increased by nine times'.⁴² Over the next forty years nonconformist membership increased at about the same rate as the population but, during the last two decades of the nineteenth century membership began to decline as a proportion of the population and, from 1906, this decline in membership became absolute.⁴³

³⁶ Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000*, p.187.

³⁷ Alan D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England - Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740-1914* (London: Longman, 1976), p.33; Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000*, pp.202.

³⁸ Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen: the traditions of Victorian Nonconformity', p.71; Horace Mann, *Census of Great Britain 1851: Religious Worship in England and Wales*, pp.106-111.

³⁹ Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700*, pp.139-143 and 147-149.

⁴⁰ McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914*, p.28.

⁴¹ Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, p.30.

⁴² McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914*, p.21.

⁴³ Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, pp.18, 19, 52 and 59; Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, pp.30-39.

Gilbert also examined the social and religious cultural character of what he referred to as the 'Evangelical consensus', arguing that nonconformity was essentially homogenous, with the different forms being underpinned by common evangelical and conversionist values. He did, however, acknowledge that the 'connexionalism of Methodism' was far more suited to systematic growth than the independent approach of Congregationalists and Baptists.⁴⁴ Watts has argued that 'there is strong evidence to indicate that in the nineteenth century Evangelical Nonconformity had its widest appeal in the least educated parts of the country', and he has further suggested that there is significant evidence to suggest that it also thrived in 'communities in which superstitious beliefs were particularly prevalent'.⁴⁵ This was particularly true of Methodism, as Davies has observed.⁴⁶ Another important feature of nonconformity, and a clear outward sign of its presence in a locality, was the chapel. Many commentators have emphasised the salience of chapel building in the development and growth of nonconformist congregations, particularly in the more rural areas of the country.⁴⁷ However, chapel building meant consolidation and, for Gilbert, inflexibility, as well as resulting in substantial financial demands on small congregations.⁴⁸ However, for Wickham, the number of chapels being built was a measure of growth rather than stasis, albeit he was studying the industrial city of Sheffield.⁴⁹

For many Victorians, particularly those living outside of towns and cities, it was not simply a binary choice between the Established Church and nonconformity. Knight comments that 'in many rural areas Anglican church and Methodist chapel existed almost in parallel' with a 'double allegiance' to both.⁵⁰ Currie has suggested that sustained Methodist growth occurred in 'areas where the Church of England was weakest' and Hempton has followed

⁴⁴ Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, pp.51 and 53.

⁴⁵ Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II: The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), Table V, pp.100-103. Hertfordshire was the third highest out of 43 counties in England in terms of the mean proportion of men and women signing marriage registers with a mark in the period 1838-41.

⁴⁶ Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II*, p.105; Owen Davies, 'Methodism, the Clergy, and the Popular Belief in Witchcraft and Magic', *History*, Vol. 82, No. 266 (April 1997), pp. 252-265 (p.265).

⁴⁷ Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England, 1740-1914*, p.160; Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, pp.21 and 60; Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000*, pp.190-192.

⁴⁸ Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, p.170.

⁴⁹ Edward Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1957), pp.127, 131-134 and 149-150.

⁵⁰ Frances Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church and English Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.24-27, 32-34, 62 and 86-88.

Currie's analysis that early Methodism 'grew fastest in areas of Anglican weakness'.⁵¹ However, Everitt (whom Hempton cited in support of his proposition) thought that it was 'essential first of all to explore the smaller, more localized differences' at a county level and Knight also considered that Currie's thesis was too simple an explanation for a relationship that varied very much according to individual local circumstances.⁵² McLeod considers that the distinction between church and chapel was not always 'clear cut', citing Pelling in support of the suggestion that for some people the decision to attend a particular place of worship depended on who the preacher was or which place was the most convenient to attend.⁵³ Rosman also observes that 'there was a fluidity between Protestant denominations in Victorian England that is sometime ignored', and for her the practice of attending services of more than one denomination was a function of 'what each did best'. The Church of England was preferred for its rites of passage, whilst nonconformists offered a greater variety of services and preachers.⁵⁴

Bebbington saw the decline of Nonconformity as 'one of the most striking features of the social landscape in twentieth-century Britain'.⁵⁵ In his view, decline occurred because educational and philanthropic roles were taken over by state provided facilities, and more widely available alternative leisure activities such as sport and the music hall such that, overall, 'the social trends of the time were unpropitious for Nonconformity'.⁵⁶ Financial difficulties also played their part in the decline of nonconformity. Bebbington has suggested that chapel debts increased around the turn of the century as a result of a combination of increased costs (because of improved building standards) and declining generosity among its supporters.⁵⁷ Gilbert considered that industrialisation resulted in increased secularisation by hastening the breakdown of the old order and assisting in the growth of a pluralistic

⁵¹ Robert Currie, *Methodism Divided: A study in the sociology of ecumenicalism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p.68; David Hempton, 'Popular Religion 1800-1986', in *The British: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices 1800-1986*, ed. by Terence Thomas (London: Routledge, 1988), pp.181-210; David Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society 1750-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), pp.14-16.

⁵² Alan Everitt, *The Pattern of Rural Dissent: The Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1972); Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church and English Society*, p.25.

⁵³ McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914*, p.39; Henry Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1968).

⁵⁴ Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000*, pp.204-206.

⁵⁵ Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, p.59.

⁵⁶ Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, p.53.

⁵⁷ Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, p.57.

culture, although he also regarded the decline in both the Established Church and nonconformity as 'the inevitable consequence of basic changes in the mood of the wider society and in the role of religion within it'.⁵⁸ An alternative view has been put forward by Green who has argued that 'industrial urbanization characteristically stimulated nineteenth-century British ecclesiastical activity', citing in support Brown's view that 'late-Victorian society ... was arguably the point in British history when religion attained its greatest social significance.'⁵⁹ Indeed, Brown has gone further by arguing that Christianity was not only very much a part of people's lives in the nineteenth century but that it remained so until the 1960s.⁶⁰ Gilbert's conclusions about church decline in the third quarter of the nineteenth century have also been questioned by McLeod who considers that Gilbert has overstated the case. McLeod prefers Wickham's evidence regarding 'the continuing vitality of churches and chapels', particularly in urban areas, and his view that 'working class church attendance increased during this period'.⁶¹ Nevertheless, for McLeod, the years from 1890 to 1914 represented the period during which a general awareness of the decline of religion was becoming more widespread: this decline was not simply the product of one 'master' factor but was the result of 'the interaction of a whole series of factors, many of which were partly or wholly independent from one another'. These factors included increased leisure opportunities, a greater role for the state in social affairs and a growth in religious doubt. In McLeod's view, these new patterns of life meant that 'the social importance of the churches had greatly diminished' and that the 'many extrinsic factors' which had encouraged and sustained the growth in membership of and attendance at places of worship had all but disappeared. Consequently, in order to survive, churches were 'forced to rely on the intrinsic attractions of their message and of the fellowship they offered'.⁶²

It was not only nonconformity that was in a state of flux during the nineteenth century: the Church of England was also experiencing a period of considerable change. Knight has argued

⁵⁸ Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England, 1740-1914*, pp.205-207.

⁵⁹ S. J. D. Green, 'Religion in Industrial Societies: The North of England Since c. 1750', *Northern History*, 33:1 (1997), 238-258, p.254; Callum Brown, 'Did Urbanization Secularize Britain?', *Urban History Yearbook*, 1988, pp. 1-14 (p. 12).

⁶⁰ Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), pp.1-2.

⁶¹ McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914*, p.32.

⁶² McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914*, pp.9, 65-66 and 169-220.

that during the period from 1800 to 1870 the Church of England was in a transition from the 'Established Church' of the nation to the status of a 'competing denomination', although strong continuities with the past still remained. Whilst it remained the formally 'Established' church, nevertheless at the same time it became one of number of denominations, with many of the traditional parish flock being regarded by the clergy as having been 'abandoned to Nonconformity'.⁶³ Gilbert has suggested that the ninety years up to 1830 was 'an era of disaster' for the Church of England and that much of the ground lost during this period was never regained, although he does acknowledge that in the Victorian and Edwardian years 'the Church of England succeeded in improving its quantitative position within English society'.⁶⁴

As Rosman has noted, the Church of England was 'ill equipped' clerically and organisationally at the start of the nineteenth century to cope with the rapid rise in the country's population and the consequent expansion of urban areas, although by the 1840s the situation was changing.⁶⁵ These changes in the national picture also found expression in Hertfordshire: prior to 1845, the county was split between the dioceses of London and Lincoln, the latter being responsible for all the parishes lying to the west of an approximate line from Royston to Broxbourne. Rationalisation of diocesan boundaries in 1845 saw the whole of the county placed in the Archdeaconry of St Albans which then became part of the diocese of Rochester before the new diocese of St Albans was created in 1877.⁶⁶

Primitive Methodism and its historiography

Primitive Methodist historiography falls into two phases: firstly, those works written during the movement's existence and, secondly, those written after Methodist Union in 1932. The issues raised by Glasson are particularly relevant when examining the first phase of the Primitive Methodist story since, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that story has largely been told by the Connexion's own historians. These accounts were, for the most part, both commissioned and written for consumption by the Connexion itself and its

⁶³ Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church and English Society*, pp.1, 4, 17, 18 and 201-211.

⁶⁴ Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, pp.27 and 29.

⁶⁵ Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000*, pp.209-210.

⁶⁶ Henrietta L. E. Garratt, 'Ecclesiastical History After the Conquest' in *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 4*, ed. by William Page (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1914), pp.294-364 (pp.362-363).

members in order to show the good work that had been done and the progress that had been made, as well as extolling the virtues of 'the great and the good' of the movement.⁶⁷

The story thus presented is, frequently, one of a discourse of humble origins, hardship, heroic adversity, saving sinners and the triumph of the work of divine providence. Calder took the view that these 'insider accounts', which are described by Truss as 'generally uncritical', were written 'to a common agenda' which was based largely on the preservation of both the reputations of Primitive Methodism's founders, Hugh Bourne and William Clowes, and the movement's self-image. The result, he argues, was a 'denominational account [which] was deeply flawed'.⁶⁸ In addition, as Woolley has pointed out, the accounts given by Bourne and Clowes themselves offer differing perspectives on the Connexion's early history: these differences were largely the result of an uneasy relationship between the two men, a factor which ultimately led to 'attempts by Primitive Methodism's official historians to tell a denominational story of its venerable founders palatable for community consumption'.⁶⁹ In the event, as even Calder acknowledges in the case of the contributions made by Petty and Kendall, these later accounts can nevertheless be regarded as a reliable telling of the Primitive Methodist story, particularly to the extent that they contain many factual references to the movement's history, growth and development.⁷⁰

Primitive Methodism was relatively late arriving in Hertfordshire compared to other parts of the country. Missionary work did not commence in earnest in Hertfordshire until 1840, nearly thirty years after the founding of the movement in 1811, with the main development of local societies in Hertfordshire occurring in the second half of the nineteenth century and

⁶⁷ See, for example: George Herod, *Biographical Sketches of Some of those Preachers Whose Labours Contributed to the Origination and Early Extension of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: Thomas King, 1855) and *Historical and Biographical Sketches, Forming a Compendium of the Primitive Methodist Connexion Up to the Year 1823*, 2nd ed. (London: Thomas King, 1857); B. Aquila Barber, *A Methodist Pageant: A Souvenir of the Primitive Methodist Church* (London: The Holborn Publishing House, 1932).

⁶⁸ Truss, 'Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932', p.2; Sandy Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), pp.15-17 and 258-259.

⁶⁹ Tim Woolley, 'A community of selective memory? Hugh Bourne, William Clowes and Primitive Methodist historiography', *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, Vol. 2 (2010), 67-90, (p.68).

⁷⁰ Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, p.5; John Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion from its Origin to the Conference of 1859* (London: Richard Davies, 1860); H. B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vols. I & II (London: Robert Bryant, c. 1905).

the first two decades of the twentieth century.⁷¹ As a consequence, much of the early writings on the history of the Connexion, for example the contributions by the Bourne brothers, Clowes and Herod, have no direct relevance to Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire, save as a means of providing a context and a setting for the Connexion's work in the county.⁷²

Many of the key Primitive Methodist texts were written in commemoration of, or to celebrate, a particular anniversary and so it was with John Petty's contribution to Primitive Methodist historiography. *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, from its Origin to the Conference of 1859* was first published in 1860 and revised in 1864.⁷³ It was later further revised and enlarged by James Macpherson in 1880. As well as revising, and providing a supplement to, the third edition of *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, he also wrote *Life and Labours of John Petty*.⁷⁴ As Stephenson has pointed out, 'Petty's history is more significant for an understanding of early Primitive Methodism history since his work appears to have been intended as at least a quasi-official account'.⁷⁵ The importance which the Connexion attached to Petty's work can be seen from the fact that, to judge from the numerous quotes and references, it was relied on quite heavily by Kendall when, some fifty years later, he came to write his own history of the Primitive Methodist movement.

⁷¹ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, p.1; David Noble, 'Symbols of faith: the meeting places of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire, 1838 – 1932' (MA dissertation, University of Roehampton, 2012), pp.16 and 22-24.

⁷² Hugh Bourne, *History of the Primitive Methodists, Giving an Account of their Rise and Progress up to the year 1823* (Bemersley: Primitive Methodist Book Room, 1823); James Bourne, *A Nine Years Progress of the Primitive Methodist Connexion From the Conference Held in the Year 1824 to that of 1833* (Bemersley: Primitive Methodist Book Room, [n.d.]); William Clowes, *The Journals of William Clowes, a Primitive Methodist Preacher* (London: Hallam and Holliday, 1844); George Herod, *Biographical Sketches of Some of those Preachers Whose Labours Contributed to the Origination and Early Extension of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: Thomas King, 1855) and *Historical and Biographical Sketches, Forming a Compendium of the Primitive Methodist Connexion Up to the Year 1823*, 2nd edn. (London: Thomas King, 1857).

⁷³ John Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion from its Origin to the Conference of 1859* (London: Richard Davies, 1860).

⁷⁴ John Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, from its Origin to the Conference of 1860, the First Jubilee Year of the Connexion*, revised and enlarged by James Macpherson (London: John Dickenson, 1880); James Macpherson, *Life and Labours of John Petty* (London: George Lamb, 1870).

⁷⁵ John Stephenson, 'Primitive Methodists, Paulists, and Pentecostals' (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 2000), p.146.

Petty's account is based on the journals and papers of Hugh Bourne and William Clowes, the short *History of the Connexion* written by Bourne and 'all other published works casting light upon the origin and progress of the community'.⁷⁶ From his editorial involvement with the Book Room for six years and his Conference positions, Petty was clearly well placed to draw on the printed output of the Connexion in its first fifty years.⁷⁷ He also made use of information supplied by his ministerial colleagues 'respecting the missionary labours in which they have been engaged, or of which they have been witnesses'. Another principal source relied on heavily by Petty was the *Primitive Methodist Magazine*. This was a monthly magazine, published by the Connexion, within which can be found 'news of local and national events, chapel openings and anniversaries, extracts from preachers' journals and foreign mission reports'.⁷⁸ The magazine also contains first-hand accounts, as reported by those who were involved in the field, of the developments and difficulties experienced by local societies in their attempts to further the cause. Petty also makes the point that, whilst for some areas of the country he had an abundance of sources from which to select material for his history, 'in a few cases, however, his materials have been scanty, and therefore the information he has furnished respecting the commencement and progress of the denomination in certain districts is not so ample as might be desired'. He noted, in passing, that 'many important facts have irrecoverably perished through not being recorded in due time'.⁷⁹ Both these points are certainly true in the case of Hertfordshire. Nevertheless, from Petty's account, it is possible to trace the arrival of Primitive Methodism into Hertfordshire, initially through a tentative mission from Hull in 1838 to a more sustained and 'aggressive' missioning from Reading, backed by the southern power-house of the major Brinkworth District in Wiltshire.

William Antliff's contribution to Primitive Methodist historiography was the wonderfully entitled *A book of marvels: Or, incidents, original and selected, illustrative of Primitive*

⁷⁶ Hugh Bourne, *History of the Primitive Methodists*; Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.vi.

⁷⁷ As to the significance of the Book Room in Primitive Methodist historiography, see further below at footnote 121 and preceding text.

⁷⁸ Peter Forsaith, *Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist periodicals: an introduction to the British Online Archives edition* (2011), <<https://boa.microform.digital/collections/3/view>> Last updated: January 2012 [accessed 24 May 2020].

⁷⁹ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, pp.vi-vii.

Methodism, temperance, and other subjects.⁸⁰ As with other Connexional writers, Antliff's work adds to the background context in providing an understanding of the Primitive Methodist movement in its first fifty years or so. However, there is a particular significance so far as Hertfordshire is concerned, in that one of Antliff's 'numerous contributors' was George Grigg, a Primitive Methodist minister who served in St Albans and Watford in the early 1840s. Grigg's writings describe his experiences in developing the societies in these locations.⁸¹

Holliday Bickerstaffe Kendall (most often simply referred to as H. B. Kendall) is, without doubt, pre-eminent amongst the Primitive Methodist Connexion's historians. Kendall wrote three separate histories of the Primitive Methodist church. His first foray into Primitive Methodist history, the *History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, was published in about 1888.⁸² This is the shortest of his three histories and was written whilst Kendall was still a travelling preacher. Some 17 years later he was asked to write the Connexion's official history, which was commissioned by the Conference to mark the centenary of the first Primitive Methodist camp meeting on 31 May 1807. *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church* was, and remains, by far the most comprehensive history of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, comprising two volumes and over 1,100 pages, and it describes the growth and development of the Primitive Methodist Connexion in some considerable detail, particularly in the early years.⁸³ It is interesting to note, therefore, throughout both volumes the lack of references to Hertfordshire, which perhaps gives an idea of the relative importance of this part of the country so far as the Connexion was concerned. Because of the amount of detail it contains and because of the high pedigree of the author, *Origin and History* is generally regarded as the definitive history of this key period of Primitive Methodism.

⁸⁰ William Antliff, *A book of marvels: Or, incidents, original and selected, illustrative of Primitive Methodism, temperance, and other subjects* (London: George Lamb, 1873).

⁸¹ David Noble, 'Grigg, George in Hertfordshire', (2012) <https://www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk/content/people-2/primitive_methodist_ministers/g/george-grigg-in-hertfordshire> [accessed 24 May 2020].

⁸² H. B. Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: Joseph Toulson, c.1888).

⁸³ H. B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vols. I & II (London: Robert Bryant, c. 1905).

Kendall's third work, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, written in 1919, was effectively a very much shortened and updated version of his second history.⁸⁴ Much of this history was written during World War I, although Kendall notes that his final paragraphs were 'penned when the great [sic] War is over'.⁸⁵ It is also interesting to note that the title of this history refers to the Primitive Methodist Church, as Kendall considered that the movement had 'come of age' in 1902: 'We are officially designated a "Church" on the class tickets of 1902; and in the "Consolidated Minutes" of the same year, "Church" is substituted for "Connexion" whenever it can be done.'⁸⁶

Kendall places the founding of the Connexion in the social and political context of the early nineteenth century at a time when morals and manners were 'rough and rude'; following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, famine, unemployment, food scarcity and economic depression resulted in 'widespread misery'.⁸⁷ Such 'misery bred discontent; and discontent resorted to violent measures', exemplified by the Luddites, the "battle" of Peterloo and the Cato Street conspiracy.⁸⁸ There was a 'spirit of disaffection and lawlessness' which would not give way to a new order until 'after the Reform Bill and the opening years of Victoria's reign'.⁸⁹ Such was the political and social state of England in the first third of the nineteenth century into which the Primitive Methodist movement was born. For Kendall, 'England in the first third of the last century stood much in need of earnest evangelism', but he considered that the 'Churches' (by which he seems to mean both the Established Church and the nonconformists of the time) 'were either unequal to the task or unmindful of it'. Kendall's claim was that Primitive Methodism filled the void and 'supplied that lack by going down amongst the neglected'.⁹⁰

Joseph Ritson's principal contribution to Primitive Methodist historiography was *The Romance of Primitive Methodism*, published in 1909.⁹¹ Written only some three or four

⁸⁴ H. B. Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1919).

⁸⁵ Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, p.173.

⁸⁶ Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, p.134.

⁸⁷ Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, pp.3 and 9.

⁸⁸ Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, p.6.

⁸⁹ Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, pp.1 and 7.

⁹⁰ Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, p.9 and 10.

⁹¹ Ritson, *The Romance of Primitive Methodism*, Title page.

years after the publication of Kendall major two volume work, it presents a history of Primitive Methodism with a particular focus on Hugh Bourne and the Mow Cop camp meeting, recognizing the importance of both to the founding of the Connexion. The pretext for yet another 'history' of Primitive Methodism was the celebration of the centenary of the founding of the Primitive Methodist Church. Ritson considers the history of the denomination from the point of view of someone who was 'cradled, converted and educated' within it.⁹² He notes that the advent of the centenary 'naturally suggested that the story of this Church should once more be told, not from the historical point of view so much as from that of romance'.⁹³ Ritson justifies this approach, firstly, by arguing that, whilst 'history records the hard facts associated with the origin and growth of the Primitive Methodist Church', these facts formed simply a background that allowed him to focus on 'those elements which ... inspire us with wonder and surprise'. What Ritson sets out to do is to attempt 'an imaginative reconstruction of the facts of a remarkable story, ... done strictly within the limits of historical accuracy, and without having recourse to anything of the nature of fiction.' Secondly, Ritson likened this romance to 'the vision splendid' as experienced by the pioneers of Primitive Methodism, akin to knights of old, who 'without wealth, or learning, or social prestige transformed rural England and set in motion a thousand regenerative forces throughout the land.'⁹⁴ Ritson openly states that for the facts on which he relies he has 'freely availed' himself of the works of previous historians, both at a national and a local level. However, of all his sources, he reserves his fullest praise for Kendall's contributions, opining that the latter's two volume work 'must ever remain the standard work on the subject'.⁹⁵ With his 'romantic' take on the facts, what Ritson does is to give an account of the beginning of Primitive Methodism and its leaders (including the inevitable references to Mow Cop and camp meetings), its early growth (which he refers to as 'a great adventure'), its women ministers (whom he describes as 'picturesque features'), as well as local preachers and the Connexion's chapels and circuit life, amongst many other topics which are covered in the book's seventeen chapters. Again, however, it must be noted that there are no detailed references to Hertfordshire.

⁹² Ritson, *The Romance of Primitive Methodism*, p.iv.

⁹³ Ritson, *The Romance of Primitive Methodism*, p.iii.

⁹⁴ Ritson, *The Romance of Primitive Methodism*, pp.5 and 6.

⁹⁵ Ritson, *The Romance of Primitive Methodism*, p.iv.

Despite his 'romantic' take on Primitive Methodist history, or perhaps because of it, Ritson's account does add something to the straightforward recitation of historical facts. He places great emphasis on the 'people' aspects of the story, 'the men and women whose marvellous achievements were due in part to the influence of as sublime purpose which stirred their blood, and a vision which promised for them and for others the highest fulfilment of life'.⁹⁶ Ritson's book is still widely available today and, as Woolley points out, its popularity 'makes it both indicative of Primitive Methodist self-identity during the years of the Centenary celebrations and continually influential in Primitive Methodist studies after Methodist Union in 1932'.⁹⁷

Benjamin Aquila Barber's contribution to Primitive Methodist historiography, *A Methodist Pageant: A Souvenir of the Primitive Methodist Church*, was also the last published history of the Primitive Methodist Connexion by one of the denomination's own historians, having been published in 1932 as Methodist Union approached.⁹⁸ Woolley points out that 'the lavishly illustrated book's bibliography indicates that apart from Bourne's journal for 1808, all other references Barber used were from printed sources'.⁹⁹ That would explain why Barber makes no specific mention of Hertfordshire, since few such references are to be found in the works of the earlier writers on whom he relied. However, the aim of this publication, as Barber himself put it, was 'not to present an exhaustive historical record... [but] simply to serve as a souvenir ... of a distinctive ministry over a period of one hundred and twenty years'.¹⁰⁰ Its importance thus lies in extending the Primitive Methodist story beyond that told by Kendall and Ritson in the first two decades of the twentieth century and bringing it to a conclusion at the point where the movement (for the most part) ceased to exist.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Ritson, *The Romance of Primitive Methodism*, p.307.

⁹⁷ Woolley, 'A new appearance on the face of things', p.44.

⁹⁸ B. Aquila Barber, *A Methodist Pageant: A Souvenir of the Primitive Methodist Church* (London: The Holborn Publishing House, 1932).

⁹⁹ Woolley, 'A new appearance on the face of things', p.44 and Barber, *A Methodist Pageant: A Souvenir of the Primitive Methodist Church*, p.306.

¹⁰⁰ Barber, *A Methodist Pageant: A Souvenir of the Primitive Methodist Church*, p.xiii.

¹⁰¹ Not all parts of the Primitive Methodist Church agreed to the 'union' proposals. The Primitive Methodist (Continuing) Church, based largely in Hull and the East Riding of Yorkshire, came into existence on the same day as the reunited Methodist Church (2 July 1932) ('Hull', in *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* <<https://dmbi.online/index.php?do=app.entry&id=1431>> [accessed 26 May 2020]). The

As noted above, the principal histories of Primitive Methodism published before 1932 were written by important senior figures in the Connexion. However, there is one further writer of whom mention must be made. Thomas Russell, who was born in 1806, was introduced to early Primitive Methodism by his mother before he reached his teenage years and began preaching at the age of 18. Described by Ritson as possessing ‘fiery zeal and untiring devotion’ to the cause, Russell became a travelling preacher in 1829 and served the Connexion in that capacity until 1874.¹⁰² Russell never held any of the high offices of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, nor was he involved with the Book Room. His strengths lay elsewhere, in missionary activities and in securing converts to the cause. His early work in the field, particularly in the Brinkworth District, was not without its difficulties, including a period of time spent in Abingdon jail. His circuit appointments included two in Hertfordshire, at St Albans from 1865 to 1870, and at Berkhamsted from 1870 to 1872. Russell’s contribution to Primitive Methodist historiography consists of *Record of Events in Primitive Methodism*, which was published in 1869.¹⁰³ Russell explains that the book came to be written when Hugh Bourne suggested that he should ensure that he published a history of his life and labours. In fulfilling Hugh Bourne’s injunction, Russell points out that the primary purpose of his book was to ‘reach the eye of some pious, enterprising, vigorous youth, who ... may more efficiently carry out the great work, and do more good than ever I have seen.’¹⁰⁴ Recalling the fact that it was the reading of the Primitive Methodist Connexion’s Magazines and Lorenzo Dow’s Journals which made him a missionary, Russell hoped that his ‘writings’ would have a similar influence on others.

Unlike other works by the Connexion’s own historians, Russell’s contribution is autobiographical: the events he recalls are those in which he was personally involved in those circuits where he worked. He describes, frequently with great detail, aspects of his time in the St Albans circuit which, in 1869, covered a large part of west Hertfordshire and

Primitive Methodist (Continuing) Church at Bourne, near Driffield, is the only one now remaining (<<https://together.ourchurchweb.org.uk/driffield/churches/churches/>> [accessed 26 May 2020]).

¹⁰² Ritson, *The Romance of Primitive Methodism*, p.129; William Leary, *Ministers and Circuits in the Primitive Methodist Church – A Directory* (Loughborough: Teamprint, 1990), p.182.

¹⁰³ Thomas Russell, *Record of Events in Primitive Methodism* (London: William Lister, 1869).

¹⁰⁴ Russell, *Record of Events in Primitive Methodism*, p.7.

even extended across the county boundary into Buckinghamshire. Russell refers to events not only in the immediate area of St Albans but also in the wider area of the circuit. He also gives information about the nature and development of the Primitive Methodist cause in Watford and Hertford. Russell's contribution to Primitive Methodist historiography is thus very different compared to that of the Connexion's other historians. Firstly, he was part of the very history of the Connexion about which those other historians were writing, and he was therefore the living embodiment of what they were writing about. Secondly, he alone provides a level of local detail about the situation in Hertfordshire, and he does this by describing events as he saw them from his own first-hand experiences. Russell's contribution is particularly important, therefore, because of the different perspective it brings to the Primitive Methodist story.

The telling of the Primitive Methodist story thus far has been in the hands of the Connexion's own historians: naturally, the post-Union historiography has a different focus. Nonconformity 'came of age' during the nineteenth century in a transition from 'Dissent' at the turn of the century to becoming the 'Free Churches' by its close.¹⁰⁵ As Rosman has commented, 'dissent – or Nonconformity as it was increasingly called – no longer appealed just to a small minority of religious dissidents but represented a serious challenge to the Church of England.'¹⁰⁶ Methodism was 'the largest sector of Nonconformity' and within that sector Primitive Methodism was the second largest grouping after the Wesleyans.¹⁰⁷ David Hempton has written several books about Methodism,¹⁰⁸ although, for the most part, these focus on Wesleyan Methodism, with relatively few references specifically to Primitive Methodism. Hempton argues for a relationship between the culture of the organisation and the local environment in which it was working. In *The Religion of the People*, Hempton considers when and why Methodism grew in the British Isles between 1750 and 1900, with a particular emphasis on law, politics and gender which, he argues, lie at the heart of

¹⁰⁵ Dale A. Johnson, *The Changing Shape of English Nonconformity, 1825-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.3-4; Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, p.2.

¹⁰⁶ Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000*, p.192.

¹⁰⁷ Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, p.10; Robert Currie, *Methodism Divided*, pp.57 and 87; Turner, 'Methodism in England 1900-1932', p.328.

¹⁰⁸ David Hempton, *The Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion c.1750-1900* (London: Routledge, 1966); *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); *Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1984).

Methodist influence on individuals, communities and social structures. As Tiller comments, 'Hempton joins with earlier historians of Methodism in the 18th and nineteenth centuries in seeing social, economic and demographic change as one explanation for Methodism, its appeal and development'.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, this gives added credence to the story as told by Primitive Methodism's own historians.

Robert Currie's sociological study, *Methodism Divided: A study in the sociology of ecumenicalism*, was, in the view of both Ward and Kent, a controversial contribution to the history of British Methodism.¹¹⁰ In Ward's assessment, 'the title of Dr Currie's work is sociological; its substance is historical; and its manner polemical' and 'on too many occasions Dr Currie confidently advances opinions which are wrong, or open to discussion'. Kent considered that 'those who are familiar with Methodist history will enjoy *Methodism Divided* and profit from it, but others should treat it with caution'. The book contains a detailed analysis of Methodist membership figures focusing particularly on the period from the 1860s which is of historical importance and interest. However, the purpose of this analysis was to enable Currie to argue that the 1932 Union was little more than 'a response to decline in denominational numbers and influence'. He then applied a similar argument to present a case against the move towards a closer relationship between the Anglican and Methodist churches that was current in the 1960s, which Kent and Ward both considered was the main purpose of Currie's book.

Julia Stewart Werner is one of the few modern historians to have written specifically about Primitive Methodism, although her study was limited to a history of the very early years of the Connexion up to 1819 and only 120 of its 185 pages are actually devoted to the Connexion.¹¹¹ Werner places 'the rise of Primitive Methodism in relation to its Wesleyan Methodist background, and to the social circumstances of its time and locales', and the

¹⁰⁹ Tiller, 'The desert begins to bloom', p.86.

¹¹⁰ Robert Currie, *Methodism Divided: A study in the sociology of ecumenicalism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968); W. R. Ward, 'Review of *Methodism Divided: A Study in the Sociology of Ecumenicalism* by Robert Currie', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. LXXXV, Issue 335 (1970), 369-374, (pp.369-370); John Kent, 'Review of *Methodism Divided: A Study in the Sociology of Ecumenicalism* by Robert Currie', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 22 (1971), 84-85.

¹¹¹ Julia Stewart Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion: its Background and Early History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

main thrust of her argument is that Primitive Methodism exploited an opportunity to take advantage of ‘the social dislocations of the time’ that was missed by Wesleyan Methodism because of ‘Wesleyan inadequacies and misdemeanours’ and Wesleyan emphasis on ‘connexionalism and clericalism’ in contrast to ‘the localism and lay initiative of Primitive Methodism’.¹¹² Werner concluded that, as well as attracting a strong response particularly in rural areas, Primitive Methodism also succeeded in being ‘the vehicle by which its converts made the transition to a different mode of life’.¹¹³

Calder also studied the origins of Primitive Methodism, but from a rather different perspective.¹¹⁴ His main argument is that the ‘generally accepted’ Primitive Methodist discourse is a flawed account of the Connexion’s beginnings and original purposes. In Calder’s view, this discourse was ‘a template’ based on ‘disciples prepared – in principle at least – to suffer in order to take the Word to a biblical poor ignored by gentrifying churches’ and that this became ‘the source of the [Primitive Methodist Connexion’s] religious legitimacy’. As he put it, ‘stories that could be fitted into the template were cherished, but ... others were forgotten’ resulting in an ‘unbalanced record’ that ‘is all too easily read today as unwitting testimony of the struggles of an emergent working class’.¹¹⁵ As Wellings points out in the Foreword to the book, Calder concludes that although the Primitive Methodist Connexion ‘presented itself as a church of the poor’ it was in reality ‘a denomination led by a group of middle-class itinerant preachers and prosperous lay officials, and recruiting largely among the respectable working-class’.¹¹⁶

Unlike the nineteenth century historians of Primitive Methodism, most twentieth century contributors to Primitive Methodist historiography had no particular Methodist connections. The exception to this was Robert Wearmouth: not only was he a Methodist minister but he came from Primitive stock. Born into a mining family and going down the pit himself, he experienced first-hand the importance of Primitive Methodism to the mining

¹¹² Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion*, frontispiece; Wayne Johnson, ‘Review of *The Primitive Methodist Connexion: Its Background and Early History* by Julia Stewart Werner’, *Baptist Quarterly*, 32.6 (April 1988), 302.

¹¹³ Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.xiii.

¹¹⁴ Sandy Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2016).

¹¹⁵ Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, p.3.

¹¹⁶ Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, Foreword by Martin Wellings, p.xiv.

settlements of Durham, so it is not perhaps surprising that his writings should concentrate on the relationships between Methodism, trade unions and socialism.¹¹⁷ As Truss comments, his books show how 'the culture of the chapel – self-help, self-discipline, education – helped prepare working men for leadership in the world of trade unions and in local and national politics where they were able to transform the material conditions of their communities.'¹¹⁸ Wearmouth was also attracted, perhaps unavoidably, to the Primitive Methodist 'creation' story, which, like some Primitive Methodist historians before him, he retold with a 'romantic' emphasis. He described how 'the process begun by Hugh Bourne and William Clowes' subsequently 'became a community of two hundred and twenty two thousand souls' over the period from 1807 to 1932, although he did acknowledge that 'other personalities and complex activities were involved'.¹¹⁹

The works of Hempton, Currie, Werner, Calder and Wearmouth reveal five very different approaches to the study of Methodism in the second half of the twentieth century and the early 21st century. Hempton's focus generally has been the relationship between Methodism (mainly Wesleyan) and socio-economic factors, whereas Currie's contribution was an attempt to use history to argue against the move in the 1960s towards Anglican-Methodist union. Werner sought to demonstrate that Primitive Methodism worked where Wesleyan Methodism failed because of its greater focus on its grass roots and the involvement of its lay people. Calder's approach argues that the reality of the Primitive Methodist Connexion as a movement led by a relatively prosperous elite has been obscured by the image of 'a persecuted community of humble Christians' that was created principally by Hugh Bourne and accepted without question by subsequent historians.¹²⁰ Wearmouth also focused on socio-economic matters but from a specifically Primitive Methodist background.

¹¹⁷ Robert Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Working Class Movements of England 1800-1850* (London: Epworth Press, 1937); *Methodism and the Struggle of the Working Classes 1850-1900* (Leicester: E. Backus, 1954); *The Social and Political Influence of Methodism in the Twentieth Century* (London: Epworth Press, 1957).

¹¹⁸ Truss, 'Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932', p.11.

¹¹⁹ Robert Wearmouth, 'The Evolution of Primitive Methodism', p.135.

¹²⁰ Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, end matter.

Two particular aspects of the Primitive Methodist story are evident from a study of the Connexion's historiography. The first is the very significant place occupied by the Primitive Methodist Book Room; the second is the importance that the Connexion attached to the commemoration of anniversaries. The importance of the printed word to the Primitive Methodist cause, and in particular its dissemination, cannot be overstated. From the very beginning of the denomination's existence, the work in this field was entrusted to the Book Room, the name by which the Primitive Methodist Connexion's publishing arm was known, and the history of the Primitive Methodist Connexion is inextricably linked with the Book Room. Over the years, those that the Connexion placed in charge of the Book Room have comprised many of the well-known national figures of the Connexion, including several who also served at various times as the Secretary or the President of the Conference. Indeed, it is principally from this background that the Connexion's own historians were drawn. The significance of the Book Room to Primitive Methodism is well illustrated by the fact that Kendall devotes two whole chapters to its history and development, in Volume II of his *Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*. Kendall stresses the importance of the 'word' to the mission of the Connexion by emphasising the strong link between the work of the Book Room and that of the General Missionary Committee, describing the Book Room as both 'an institution' and 'the brain' of the organisation. Kendall also attributes the conversion of Hugh Bourne, one of the founders of Primitive Methodism, to 'books, rather than human voice or Church ordinances'. Moreover, as Bebbington has noted, 'education naturally fostered a demand for the printed word in the Nonconformist world', a demand that was fulfilled by the output from the Book Room.¹²¹

The importance of the printed word is not only evident in the works of the Connexion's own historians but has also featured in the writings of twentieth century historians. Hempton considers that, although the history of Methodism 'has been constructed mostly from written sources', its message was nevertheless largely an oral one. However, he also argues that it was Methodism's involvement with publishing, amongst other matters, that enabled the organization to move into the middle ground of the nation's culture.¹²² Acknowledging

¹²¹ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II, pp.1-14 and pp.380-400; Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, p.2; Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, p.28.

¹²² Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, pp.56, 199 and 206-207.

the importance that Hugh Bourne ascribed to the printed word, Werner argues that ‘to a great extent adult readers of Primitive Methodist publications had their literary diets chosen’ by Bourne himself (which was true, as Calder confirms), although her references to the Book Room seemingly reduce its role to little more than a means of providing the Connexion with an income stream (which it was not, as Kendall has shown).¹²³

As Broughton has noted, the Victorian ‘fashion for anniversaries and jubilees ... reached a crescendo toward the end of the nineteenth century’, and the tradition continued into the twentieth century and beyond.¹²⁴ In line with this national fashion, it is also clear, even from the most cursory of glances through the history of Primitive Methodism, that there can be no doubt about the emphasis that the Connexion placed on anniversaries. Whether this was manifested in the simple annual celebration of the opening of a chapel or the founding of a Sunday school or the larger scale of jubilees and centenaries, Primitive Methodists were always keen to remember their roots and where they came from, as can be seen particularly from the frequent references to the first Mow Cop Camp Meeting. It is perhaps no surprise therefore to find that many of the Connexion’s histories were commissioned and written in celebration of particular jubilees and centenaries or commemorating particular events or occasions which were of significance to Primitive Methodists.¹²⁵ Over the nineteenth century, as Chase has shown, the concept of ‘jubilee’ changed from a Biblical understanding (based on a passage in Leviticus, Chapter 25 vv8-22 which required the fiftieth year to be treated as ‘sacred’ (like the sabbath) and regarded as the ‘year of jubilee’) to one of ‘anniversary’. He points out that ‘the most fully worked-out spiritual concept of jubilee is to be found within early Primitive Methodism’ and that ‘just as it was Primitive Methodism that gave much prominence to the idea of jubilee, so it was the same sect that clung most tenaciously to the biblical origin of the word’. However, by the end of the nineteenth

¹²³ Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion*, pp.111 and 161; Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, pp.15 and 99-101; Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II, pp.1-14 and pp.380-400; Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, p.2.

¹²⁴ Trev Broughton, ‘Victoria’s Victorians, or How Contemporariness Strikes’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 24.4 (2019), 419–425 (p.421); T. G. Otte, ‘Centenaries, self-historicization and the mobilization of the masses’ and Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Paul Readman, ‘Commemoration through dramatic performance: historical pageants and the age of anniversaries, 1905–1920’ in *The Age of Anniversaries: The Cult of Commemoration, 1895-1925*, T. G. Otte (ed) (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), Chapters 1 and 10; William M. Johnston, *Celebrations: The Cult of Anniversaries in Europe and the United States Today* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1991), pp.21-38.

¹²⁵ See, for example, the contributions from Petty, Kendall (his two volume history) and Barber.

century, Chase argues that 'the by-now proliferating jubilee histories of Nonconformist sects and chapels also exhibited a new tone. What is obvious here is not any lingering biblical emphases, but rather such anniversaries' function as occasions for a collective affirmation of faith and purpose.'¹²⁶ Whilst the biblical emphasis may have been less to the fore by this time, nevertheless, for many Primitive Methodist societies, such a 'collective affirmation of faith and purpose' was still of critical importance, both for the continued well-being of the societies themselves and also as a means of drawing attention to the work that the Connexion was doing in a particular locality. In addition, anniversaries provided a very convenient means of raising much need financial resources. Sunday school and chapel anniversaries were the most commonly celebrated annual events in the nonconformist year and, so far as Primitive Methodists were concerned, these and other 'special services' were an important part of the staple diet of chapel services, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹²⁷ It is hardly surprising, therefore, that jubilees and anniversaries were not only the reason for, but also a significant part of the content of, the accounts of Primitive Methodism provided by the Connexion's own writers.

As has been seen, over the 120 years of its existence the Primitive Methodist Connexion produced a considerable number of historians from amongst its own ranks. Most of these were senior figures in the organisation and many of them had connections in one way or another with the Book Room. Moreover, the importance of 'anniversary' to the Primitive Methodist Connexion and its followers would have been well understood by these denominational writers, particularly the Biblical association with 'jubilee'. Since Methodist Union, very little has been written specifically about Primitive Methodism other than in the context of Methodism generally (which usually means Wesleyanism) or in speaking of nonconformity as a whole. The exception to this rule is usually to be found in local and regional studies, which only serves to demonstrate the importance of such studies in

¹²⁶ Malcolm Chase, 'From Millennium to Anniversary: The Concept of Jubilee in Late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century England', *Past & Present*, No. 129 (1990), 132-147 (pp.137, 145 and 146); Leviticus 25, vv.8-22.

¹²⁷ David Clark, *Between Pulpit and Pew: Folk Religion in a North Yorkshire Fishing Village* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.95; Rodney Ambler, 'Social Change and Religious Experience: aspects of rural society in south Lincolnshire with specific reference to Primitive Methodism, 1815-1875' (PhD thesis, University of Hull, 1984), pp.330 and 332; James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey, 1825-1875* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p.254.

understanding the history of Primitive Methodism. There have been, since the 1960s, a growing number of such local and regional studies of Primitive Methodism and they have, as Rosman noted, 'significantly enhanced understanding of nineteenth-century religious life'.¹²⁸ These studies have tended to be focused on places such as Shropshire, Lincolnshire, the North Midlands, Nottingham, Cheshire and South Lancashire whereas, in contrast, localities south of the midlands seem so far to have attracted only very limited attention. These studies include, for example, those by Garratt, Ambler, Obelkevich, Rodell and Truss, to which reference will be made in the chapters that follow. A yet more comprehensive list of local studies is provided by Truss.¹²⁹

Garratt's study looked at the history of the Primitive Methodist Connexion in Shropshire from 1820 to 1900, a part of the country where it enjoyed considerable success during the nineteenth century, and it aimed to advance understanding about the denomination in the local setting.¹³⁰ She examined the socio-economic profile of the movement's followers and the importance of chapel building to local societies, concluding that the chapel performed two vital roles: firstly, to enable the Connexion to maintain an effective presence in a particular locality, and, secondly, to provide the basis for further expansion of the movement. Garratt also stresses the financial consequences of chapel building for local societies, focusing in particular on the resulting burden of debt. Garratt also investigated the organisation and administration of the Connexion in the area, looking in particular at the structure and organisation of, and the changes in, the Primitive Methodist circuits at this local level, showing how this facilitated the change in the denomination's approach from early evangelism to a fully-fledged 'church'.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000*, p.367.

¹²⁹ Delia Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900' (PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2002); Rodney Ambler, 'Social change and religious experience: aspects of rural society in south Lincolnshire with specific reference to Primitive Methodism 1815-1875' (PhD thesis, University of Hull, 1984); James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey, 1825-1875* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976); Jonathan Rodell, *The Rise of Methodism – A Study of Bedfordshire 1736-1851* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Bedfordshire Historical Record Society and The Boydell Press, 2014); Truss, 'Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932', p.17.

¹³⁰ Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', pp.10 and 295.

¹³¹ Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', p.296.

Ambler considered the role of Primitive Methodism in the rural area of south Lincolnshire between 1815 and 1875 and looked in particular at the ways in which Primitive Methodism interacted with the considerable economic and social changes that occurred during this period.¹³² He found that the denomination's success was due to its ability to provide a religious experience that met the needs of the people and he showed how, by 1875, the Primitive Methodist Connexion had become an accepted part of the local community life of south Lincolnshire. Ambler examined the role that open and closed parishes played in the development of local Primitive Methodist societies and he also drew attention to the importance of the chapel, and its financial consequences, to a local society.¹³³

Obelkevich also looked at south Lincolnshire over the same time frame as Ambler, albeit that Obelkevich's work pre-dated Ambler's by some eight years. Moreover, his investigation into Primitive Methodism was part of a much larger study of religion and rural society in the area.¹³⁴ He considered the circuit structure of the movement and the way in which it used its travelling and local preachers, and also notes the importance of 'special services' to local societies. Obelkevich also considers the 'social bases' of the Primitive Methodists as well as the development of the Connexion and its relationships with wider village society, concluding that it provided 'a comprehensive counter-culture' to the traditional Anglican social and religious pattern.¹³⁵

Like Obelkevich, Rodell's work covers more than just Primitive Methodism, as it considers the rise of Methodism generally in Bedfordshire from 1736 until 1851. Nevertheless, his study is of interest as it is focused on an area of the country which, like Hertfordshire, is not readily acknowledged as being a stronghold of Methodism generally, let alone Primitive Methodism.¹³⁶ Rodell's references to Primitive Methodism included the movement's early missionary work in the creation of the first societies in Bedfordshire, the geographic expansion of these as well as the creation of circuits and their distribution compared to

¹³² Ambler, 'Social change and religious experience: aspects of rural society in south Lincolnshire', pp.301 and 363.

¹³³ Ambler, 'Social change and religious experience: aspects of rural society in south Lincolnshire', pp.330 and 336.

¹³⁴ Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey, 1825-1875*, pp.220-258.

¹³⁵ Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey, 1825-1875*, pp.221, 230, 256 and 258.

¹³⁶ Rodell, *The Rise of Methodism – A Study of Bedfordshire 1736-1851*, p.xix.

those of Wesleyan Methodism. Rodell also gives brief consideration to the socio-economic structure of Primitive Methodists based on a study of the occupation of fathers given in baptism records, and notes the importance attached by Primitive Methodists to special services and camp meetings. He also found that Primitive Methodism was successful in drawing recruits from other nonconformist backgrounds, most notably from Wesleyan Methodism.¹³⁷

Truss's study considered Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds from 1820 to 1932. She looked at the establishment of the early societies on the Wolds and the Connexional structure and organisation of Primitive Methodism in the area, focusing on conversion, evangelism and revival and the relationship between Primitive Methodism and village culture; she also considered the social composition of Primitive Methodist membership, finance and discipline.¹³⁸ Truss put forward the view that the enclosure process 'created a migrant population of artisans and farm labourers' who became highly receptive to the 'new religion' represented by Primitive Methodism, particularly as the Church of England in the area was in a 'relatively somnolent state'. In addition, for most local societies on the Wolds, there was little resistance from landlords to the building of chapels. She argued that, over time, Primitive Methodism developed a respectable public face thus allowing it to become part of the mainstream of Victorian life and an accepted part of village life. Truss concluded that, ultimately, the decline of Primitive Methodism on the Wolds was largely due to a failure of evangelistic drive and spirituality that was aggravated by financial problems.¹³⁹

There are several common threads running through these various local studies – structure, organisation, socio-economic, chapel building, finance – and these provide a useful foundation for considering the history of the Connexion in a local and regional setting. A similar structure has therefore been adopted in this study of Hertfordshire, and this also provides an opportunity to compare and contrast the position of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire with other parts of the country.

¹³⁷ Rodell, *The Rise of Methodism – A Study of Bedfordshire 1736-1851*, pp.162, 167 169 and 233.

¹³⁸ Truss, 'Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932', pp.22-23.

¹³⁹ Truss, 'Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932', pp.287, 289 and 292.

Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire – ‘a fine field for usefulness’

The Primitive Methodist Connexion was a national movement that spread across the whole of England (although less so in Wales and Scotland), as well as having a not inconsiderable presence overseas.¹⁴⁰ As a separate Methodist movement it existed for some 125 years and for 94 of those years it had a presence in Hertfordshire. However, the story of the Connexion’s existence in Hertfordshire has largely been overlooked, particularly at the local level, with often only passing mentions, if any, in accounts of the movement’s history which look at Primitive Methodism from a Connexional perspective. Today, on the surface, there is very little to indicate that Primitive Methodism even existed in Hertfordshire, and this has resulted in what Jeppesen has referred to as ‘historical amnesia’.¹⁴¹

By the time of the arrival of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire, the field was already well populated by nonconformity, chiefly represented by Independents, Wesleyan Methodists and Baptists.¹⁴² Yet, from a nil presence in 1840, the Primitive Methodists had risen, within a decade, to become the fourth largest nonconformist denomination in Hertfordshire, a position which the Connexion still held some twenty years later. Table 1.1 compares the relative strengths of nonconformist denominations in Hertfordshire in 1851 and 1874. In the 1851 Religious Census, there were a total of 136 places of worship recorded in Hertfordshire apart from those of the Established Church.¹⁴³ 106 of these (77.9%) belonged to Wesleyan Methodist, Independent, Baptist or Primitive Methodist congregations, the Primitive Methodist share being 8.8% overall. Of the remainder, the Congregationalists, the Society of Friends and the Catholics had the highest number of congregations. By 1874, there were 140 places of worship other than the Established Church. Not only had there been a slight

¹⁴⁰ John Wilkinson, ‘The Non-Wesleyan Traditions from 1849’, in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, ed. by Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp, Vol. 3 (London: Epworth Press, 1983), pp.167-181 (pp.175-177); H. B. Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1919).

¹⁴¹ Chris Jeppesen, ‘Growing up in a Company town: the East India Company presence in South Hertfordshire’, in *The East India Company at Home 1757-1857*, ed. by Margot Finn and Kate Smith (London: UCL Press, 2017), pp.251-271 (pp.252-253).

¹⁴² In 1829, there were 32 Independent congregations, 25 Wesleyan Methodist, 19 Baptist and 11 Society of Friends, as well as other denominations (see *An Historical Atlas of Hertfordshire*, ed. by David Short (Hatfield: Hertfordshire Publications, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2011), p.134).

¹⁴³ From an analysis of the figures given in *Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship, England and Wales, Report and Tables*, LXXXIX (1852-3) as referred to in Judith Burg, ed., *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851* (Hertfordshire Record Publications Vol. 11, Hertfordshire Record Society, 1995), pp.97-200.

increase in the number of congregations, from 136 to 140, but in addition the field had diversified somewhat with an increase, from 11 to 14, in the number of denominations represented. 115 of these (82.1%) belonged to Baptist, Wesleyan Methodist, Independent or Primitive Methodist congregations. Of these top four denominations, the Wesleyan Methodists and Independents both suffered a net loss in the number of congregations

Table 1.1: Nonconformist congregations in Hertfordshire in 1851 and 1874

Denomination	1851		1874	
	Number	%	Number	%
Wesleyan Methodists	35	25.7%	29	20.7%
Independents	32	23.5%	29	20.7%
Baptists	27	19.9%	35	25.0%
Primitive Methodists	12	8.8%	22	15.7%
Congregationalist	8	5.9%	3	2.1%
Society of Friends	7	5.1%	8	5.7%
Catholic	5	3.7%	5	3.6%
Calvinist	4	2.9%	2	1.4%
Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion	3	2.2%	1	0.7%
Latter Day Saints	2	1.5%	-	-
Unitarian	1	0.7%	1	0.7%
Plymouth Brethren	-	-	2	1.4%
Union Chapel	-	-	1	0.7%
Presbyterian	-	-	1	0.7%
Chapel used by various sects	-	-	1	0.7%
	136	100%	140	100%

Sources: Data from the 1851 Religious Census and *Kelly's Directory for Essex, Hertford and Middlesex*, 4th edition (London: Kelly and Co. Ltd, 1874).

between 1851 and 1874, whereas the Baptists and Primitive Methodists increased their numbers. The Baptists gained eight new congregations but the Primitive Methodists recorded ten additional societies and an overall share of 15.7%, almost double what it had been in 1851. It is clear, therefore, that from its arrival in Hertfordshire Primitive Methodism did not have the field to itself but existed alongside several other branches of nonconformity. Nevertheless, the Primitive Methodists not only grew their representation in Hertfordshire between 1851 and 1874, whereas some other nonconformist

denominations (including Wesleyan Methodism) declined, but they also succeeded in enlarging their share of nonconformist congregations.

In Primitive Methodism, as with Wesleyan Methodism, local societies did not operate in isolation. They were connected with each other by their links within the circuit and also beyond, through the district, to the whole Connexion. As a consequence, the ways in which Primitive Methodism as a national movement was able to engage with and influence different localities 'starts to emerge with greater clarity when rooted in specific contexts'.¹⁴⁴ Thus, an examination at the local level of how societies intersected with Connexional polity enables a much clearer appreciation of the numerous ways in which the Primitive Methodist movement entered into the daily lives of many different people in several diverse locations and also demonstrates the importance of the links between each local society and the wider Connexion. As Burton and Kennedy put it, the ways in which the *national* intersect with the *local* 'reveal the imprint of local space and place' in contributing towards the wider narrative.¹⁴⁵

In Hertfordshire, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the local space and place was formed largely by the county's villages. Kendall was clear that 'Primitive Methodism was rural in its origin' where 'it took kindly and naturally to the villages'; moreover, he argued, 'Primitive Methodism put its chief strength into village work, and had its reward in so doing'. Petty considered that, even though the Connexion had been in existence for nearly fifty years, 'many agricultural districts in [England] ... require additional efforts for their enlightenment and conversion'. Ritson also claimed that 'it was in rural England that the great work of Primitive Methodism was done', and, some seventy years later, Turner described the Connexion as 'largely rural in character'.¹⁴⁶ It would not be unexpected, therefore, to find examples of that 'great work' in Hertfordshire because, despite it being

¹⁴⁴ Jeppesen, 'Growing up in a Company town: the East India Company presence in South Hertfordshire', p.254.

¹⁴⁵ Antoinette Burton and Dane Kennedy, 'Introduction: The Autobiographical Pulse in British Imperial History', in *How Empire Shaped Us*, ed. by Antoinette Burton and Dane Kennedy (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp.1-12 (p.4).

¹⁴⁶ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, pp.298 and 301; John Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion from its origin to the Conference of 1859*, p.445; Ritson, *The Romance of Primitive Methodism*, p.283; Turner, 'Methodism in England 1900-1932', p.329.

described as ‘a county of small towns’, Hertfordshire was, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, essentially rural with a strong agricultural focus.¹⁴⁷ In the 1851 census only nine places in Hertfordshire were included in the list of urban areas, and the largest, St Albans, only had a population of 7,000.¹⁴⁸ Throughout the nineteenth century agriculture was the principal economic activity of the county and even by 1901 there were very few factories in Hertfordshire, with more people still employed in agriculture than in any other activity.¹⁴⁹ Thus, despite the absence of coal mines, potteries, fishing ports and factories, Hertfordshire, as a largely rural county with only small urban areas, was typical territory for Primitive Methodism, which tended to be more successful in villages and less so in larger towns.¹⁵⁰

However, it is clear that Hertfordshire has never been part of the traditional heartland of Primitive Methodism. Many of the county’s small settlements throughout the Victorian era were home to land-owning gentry and in the 1851 Religious Census Hertfordshire was ranked thirty-fourth out of forty-two English counties in terms of estimated Primitive Methodist chapel attendance as a percentage of the total population. In addition, the county was not one of the fifteen that Snell and Ell chose to examine for their parish-level analysis of the geography of religion.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, it did have a presence in the county for almost a hundred years, from the original missionary endeavours of 1838 until Methodist Union in 1932. Moreover, the 1851 Census revealed that, for the highest attended service, Hertfordshire’s Primitive Methodist chapels and meeting places were over 86% full, which was the highest figure of any denomination including the Church of England.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Terry Slater and Nigel Goose (eds.), *A county of small towns: the development of Hertfordshire’s urban landscape to 1800* (Hatfield: Hertfordshire Publications, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2008).

¹⁴⁸ British Parliamentary Papers, 1852-3, vol. LXXXV, *1851 Census Report, Population Tables I*, pp. cciv–ccvii.

¹⁴⁹ C. H. Lee, *British Regional Employment Statistics 1841-1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Nigel E. Agar, *Behind the plough: agrarian society in nineteenth-century Hertfordshire* (Hatfield: Hertfordshire Publications, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2005), pp.1-3.

¹⁵⁰ Turner, ‘Methodism in England 1900-1932’, p.329.

¹⁵¹ Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II*, Table XIV, pp.682-713; Keith Snell and Paul Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.201-231.

¹⁵² From an analysis of the figures given in *Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship, England and Wales, Report and Tables*, LXXXIX (1852-3) as referred to in Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851*, pp.97-200. Attendance for the Church of England was 78.2% of capacity, whilst the Wesleyans recorded 74.0%, the Independents 73.6% and the Baptists 72.4%.

Rodell notes how Methodism was particularly strong in Bedfordshire, referring to the county as 'the buckle on Victorian England's very own Bible Belt' which he saw as 'a string of counties that included Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire'.¹⁵³ However, Hertfordshire is notable by its absence from this list, although this was not for the want of persistent efforts by the Primitive Methodist Connexion to establish a presence. However, there was considerable opposition from many quarters and the first Primitive Methodist missionaries were not well received. In 1838, missionaries from Aylesbury in the west and Hull to the north arrived in different parts of the county. St Albans was visited by Henry Higginson from the Aylesbury circuit, where he 'preached in the market-place ... to a rude and disorderly congregation'.¹⁵⁴ Samuel Chapman, sent to Hertford from the Hull circuit, found it 'in darkness and ignorance'.¹⁵⁵ Petty notes that 'he laboured hard and zealously, extending his efforts to a considerable distance; but found the moral soil of the country [sic] to yield but little returns for the labour spent upon it'.¹⁵⁶ Petty records that, in 1839, missionaries from East Anglia found the borders of Essex and Hertfordshire to be devoid of Methodism: 'conceiving that a fine field for usefulness presented itself before them, they at once determined to begin to cultivate it' such that 'a considerable amount of good was effected by their zealous labours and persevering efforts', success being measured in terms of 'erecting places of worship and in bringing sinners into the fold of Christ'.¹⁵⁷

There clearly was considerable opposition to what the Primitive Methodists were trying to do, particularly from the clergy of the Church of England. Petty records that

The friends had suffered much in many places from bitter opposition of clergymen, who frequently got them turned out of their employment because of their connection

¹⁵³ Rodell, *The Rise of Methodism – A Study of Bedfordshire 1736-1851*, p.xix.

¹⁵⁴ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.453.

¹⁵⁵ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1841, p.396.

¹⁵⁶ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.452.

¹⁵⁷ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, pp.431-435 and 518; Jaqueline Cooper, 'A fine field for usefulness: Primitive Methodism in the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1839-1900', *Family & Community History*, 5.1 (2002) 45-57 (p.45).

with the societies, and the congregations had often been disturbed by the rude behaviour of ignorant and godless young men.¹⁵⁸

A Primitive Methodist minister active in Hertfordshire, Rev James Blades, used the columns of the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* to make clear the level of persecution suffered by his local societies in the Saffron Walden Mission. He reported that ‘powerful as the work is, we have considerable opposition from parties who ought rather to help us. The clergy—n have greatly exerted themselves to stop our progress, and prevent our access to the people’.¹⁵⁹ He also described how ‘an intolerant clergy seek our extirpation, and even boast when successful in causing our poor, industrious supporters to be deprived of employment’.¹⁶⁰ Blades clearly found it so surprising that Anglican ministers should behave in such a way that he was unable to refer to them as ‘clergymen’.

The difficulties encountered by the early missionaries were evident throughout most of the 1840s. When the Reading circuit was missioning Rickmansworth in 1840 it reported of Hertfordshire that ‘in this county Methodism is scarcely known by name, and truly piety is little enjoyed. Antinomianism abounds, and sabbath-breaking is most awful. It is the hardest and darkest country [sic] in the annals of our missionary records’.¹⁶¹ The situation in Baldock and Hitchin was clearly very similar: of Baldock, the Primitive Methodist minister said that ‘the part of the town where we preach was formerly called Hell-end, on account of the depravity of its inhabitants’. Samuel Chapman tried missioning Hitchin but ‘the persecution which befell him and his colleague caused them to relinquish the place’. A fellow minister reported that ‘several brethren were roughly treated, being beaten with a dead cat, and abused with diverse missiles’.¹⁶² Clearly, there was much work to do in Hertfordshire: as late as 1862, when Primitive Methodism first reached the Braughing area, the missionaries ‘found its inhabitants living according to the course of this world, without God and without hope’.¹⁶³ As the above examples demonstrate, the weight and extent of opposition towards

¹⁵⁸ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.435.

¹⁵⁹ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1847, p.308.

¹⁶⁰ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1848, p.750.

¹⁶¹ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1841, p.396.

¹⁶² *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1845, p.160; *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1846, p.26.

¹⁶³ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1868, p.745.

the efforts of the various missionaries was to be found over several decades and right across the county. Whilst, to a degree, the language used to describe both the moral state of the people and their need of religious sustenance was consistent with the general Primitive Methodist discourse at this time, namely one of persecution, adversity and saving sinners, nevertheless it served to underline the extent of the work that these early missionaries were considered to be facing in seeking to win converts to the cause. In spite of all the difficulties, the Primitive Methodist Connexion persisted in its efforts. This study will consider the results of those efforts in order to assess the success of the movement in Hertfordshire, not only from the point of view of the spread and growth of Primitive Methodism across the county but also from the perspective of the position which the Primitive Methodist Church occupied in Hertfordshire society by the time of Methodist Union.

This study of the history and development of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire sets out to show that this is a significant local story and an important part of the larger history of Primitive Methodism in England. It is also a story that has, so far, not been told, as there has been no previous comprehensive study of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire. This study seeks to fill, at least partially, this gap in the history of the Connexion and, thereby, make a contribution to the understanding of the story of Primitive Methodism in the county. The story will be told with particular emphasis on the 'peculiarity [of] its career' as 'the people's church' by focusing on the local Primitive Methodist society and the part that the Primitive Methodists played in the life of those places where they became established. As already noted, many stories of Primitive Methodism have been told from a national standpoint; as a result, there is a danger that the emphasis is on the Connexional perspective and that local voices are not fully heard. It is important, therefore, that the history and development of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire is examined not by a 'top down' approach but from the perspective of the people who actually made up the body of the movement as represented by the individual local societies and circuits on the ground.

Methodology

This study considers the history and development of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire by examining the various factors which were of importance to local societies and the circuits

and the way in which they functioned. Thus, the main focus of this study is the local society and the circuit of which it was a part. The time frame covers a period of 80 years from 1838, when the first Primitive Methodist missionaries arrived in Hertfordshire, up to 1918, from which point on (up to the time of Methodist Union in 1932) there are few surviving records.

As Robson has observed, much social research inevitably generates at least some numerical data.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, Hudson comments that 'quantification has long been the hallmark of much economic history and is the foundation of most historical demography'; she further argues that in any study of the social and economic history of a population it is almost impossible to avoid making use of numerical analysis.¹⁶⁵ In the light of these observations, it is unsurprising that a study of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire with a particular focus on local societies should make extensive use of numerical data. Given the nature of many of the surviving Hertfordshire Primitive Methodist records, the main research questions previously outlined have been studied principally by means of socio-economic and demographic analysis. Consequently, many of the findings presented in this study rely on the statistical analysis of the numerical data in order to reveal socio-economic and demographic trends from which conclusions can be drawn. This approach has been guided by two major works, published at the end of the twentieth century, that relied very heavily on quantitative data and statistical analysis. The first of these, published in 1995, was an analysis by Michael Watts of registration district data regarding affiliation to the main Christian denominations, together with data on levels of illiteracy gleaned from Anglican marriage registers and an analysis, in decennial stages, of nonconformist baptism registers at county level.¹⁶⁶ The second, by Keith Snell and Paul Ell, was a major statistical analysis of the 1851 Religious Census and other religious surveys which demonstrated correlations in the data between denominations and a large number of socio-economic variables.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Colin Robson, *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p.391.

¹⁶⁵ Pat Hudson, *History by Numbers: An introduction to quantitative approaches* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p.3.

¹⁶⁶ Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II*.

¹⁶⁷ Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*.

In geographical terms, this study looks at the whole of the county rather than one particular locality within this area. In so doing, it follows the pattern established by several other regional and sub-regional studies of Primitive Methodism (see footnote 129 above). In particular, as already noted, the studies of Garratt, Ambler, Obelkevich and Truss all adopted a similar approach in respect of Shropshire, Lincolnshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire respectively. Moreover, as with Rodell's study of Bedfordshire, the aim has been to focus on the history of Primitive Methodism 'from the bottom up, rather than the top down', thus adding detail and local emphasis to the national picture of the Connexion's growth and development.¹⁶⁸ In addition, this approach facilitates the use of, and builds upon, the significant amount of local detail that is to be found in archival sources. It allows conclusions to be drawn as to how far Hertfordshire as a regional area was representative of, or differed from, what was happening to the denomination when viewed from a national perspective; it also enables a comparison to be made between the rural and more urban areas of the county when considering the presence and impact of Primitive Methodism in a particular local setting, as well as permitting parallels to be drawn with the findings of other regional studies.

However, whilst Hertfordshire is the focus of this study, any consideration of the history of Primitive Methodism in the county must, to a degree, look beyond the county boundary. The borders of the circuits into which local societies of Primitive Methodists were grouped did not follow any county, parish or other recognised boundaries; rather, their geography was very much an expression of the way the movement expanded from different centres of evangelism. Because a number of these centres of evangelism were located in counties adjacent to Hertfordshire, this study has inevitably had to involve a consideration of circuits that were centred in the neighbouring counties of Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Essex.

Sources

As noted above, there is relatively little in Primitive Methodist historiography that relates to the movement's activities in Hertfordshire. Crump has observed that 'general histories

¹⁶⁸ Rodell, *The Rise of Methodism – A Study of Bedfordshire 1736-1851*, Preface.

about the origins and growth of the movement take a national view, and local studies of the movement have concentrated on the territories of origin and early strength'. Whilst he was writing about London, his remarks certainly apply equally to Hertfordshire. Similarly, Rodell's observation about Bedfordshire as 'an agricultural county in southern England [which] is not the kind of district that has previously featured prominently in Methodist historiography' is also applicable to Hertfordshire.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, Hertfordshire has not so far been the focus of any local study of Primitive Methodism and an online search for journal articles in the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* revealed nothing about Hertfordshire.¹⁷⁰ Thus, the story of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire is not one that can be readily told: it must be assembled from small pieces of evidence which are to be found in a number of different sources. Moreover, the approach taken in the structure of this study has meant that much of the source material that has to be relied upon consists of factual information as opposed to academic opinions.

Since the time of John Wesley, Methodists have been recording a mass of detailed information about their activities.¹⁷¹ Although Primitive Methodist record keeping was as assiduous as that of Wesleyan Methodism, it is perhaps unfortunate that Primitive Methodist records for Hertfordshire have not survived as well as those of the Wesleys.¹⁷² Nevertheless, those that do still exist provide often a highly detailed insight into the endeavours of local societies, covering everything from the mundane and repetitive to the unusual and the exceptional. No membership lists of any local societies in Hertfordshire have survived. However, a number of baptismal registers do exist and these afford one of the few sources of information of the names of those who were associated with a local chapel, as well as providing a socio-economic link by reference to the recorded occupation of the father. These names are supplemented by the occasional reference to particular local members either on circuit plans or in the minutes of circuit quarterly meetings. The

¹⁶⁹ Jeremy Crump, "'Our Struggle in London": Primitive Methodists and the Metropolis', *The London Journal*, 43.2 (2018), 137-162, p.138; Rodell, *The Rise of Methodism – A Study of Bedfordshire 1736-1851*, p.xix.

¹⁷⁰ *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, at <https://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_whs_01.php> and <<http://www.wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk/proceedings.html>> [accessed June 2020].

¹⁷¹ Rodell, *The Rise of Methodism – A Study of Bedfordshire 1736-1851*, p.235; Clive Murray Norris, *The Financing of John Wesley's Methodism c.1740-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.9.

¹⁷² Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, *Guide to Sources: 3 – Nonconformist Registers* (Updated June 2010).

information from the available baptismal registers has enabled some consideration to be given to the social class of Primitive Methodists in Hertfordshire and the extent to which this varied both over time and between rural and more urban areas. Treasurers' accounts and chapel schedules give a clear indication of the sources of income available to local societies and the detailed lists of items on which this income was spent demonstrate their spending priorities. Occasionally, personal correspondence highlights a particular individual perspective on matters. Although Hempton has argued that Methodism was 'predominantly a movement of women, who formed the clear majority of society members almost everywhere Methodism took root', the surviving Primitive Methodist records relating to Hertfordshire contain very few references to women.¹⁷³ Consequently, this study necessarily focuses primarily on the men of these societies. Key records, such as baptismal registers, circuit plans and the minutes of quarterly meeting, only very occasionally mention women; most references to women are usually to be found in local newspaper reports of bazaars and other social events.¹⁷⁴

The minutes of circuit quarterly meetings often contain a fascinating level of detail and, thereby, 'provide insight into the rhythm of contemporary circuit organisational life'¹⁷⁵. These documents reveal the high level of regulation and oversight of the affairs of the local society, especially in relation to financial matters, that was exercised by the circuit; issues of discipline, particularly regarding standards of behaviour and the keeping of preaching appointments, also feature frequently in the records. There are also occasional references to Connexional matters and to the ways in which the demands of Conference decisions and the application of the official Rules impacted on the life of the circuit and its constituent societies. In addition, circuit preaching plans reveal key aspects of circuit organisation and the role that local societies played in the life of the circuit.

At a Connexional level, the histories of the Primitive Methodist movement by Petty and Kendall provide much useful statistical and background information. In addition, the

¹⁷³ Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, pp.30-31.

¹⁷⁴ The description of a bazaar at Queen's Road Chapel in Watford, referring to 25 women members of that society, which appeared in the *Watford Observer* on 16 November 1892 provides a typical example.

¹⁷⁵ Christine Pocock, 'The Origins, Development and Significance of the Circuit in Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism in England 1740 -1914' (PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2015), p.8.

examination of matters related to the organisation of the Connexion in Hertfordshire has drawn extensively on the minutes of the annual Conference, particularly in relation to the formation and amalgamation of circuits and the stationing of ministers. Other Connexional documents consulted include the Rules of the Primitive Methodist Connexion.

Any study of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire is aided by three nineteenth century religious surveys. The earliest of these was a survey of nonconformity in Hertfordshire carried out by William Upton, a Baptist minister in St Albans, in 1847 and 1848. Upton included (some quite scathing) comments on the ministers of various local churches, 'based on his conversations with local people, which adds an amusing personal touch to his survey'.¹⁷⁶ Upton's survey was followed three years later by the national 1851 Census of Religious Worship.¹⁷⁷ This census and the returns on which it is based contain a wealth of statistical data, although these must be used with care.¹⁷⁸ There has been considerable debate about the historical value, accuracy and usefulness of the census: a particular concern has centred around the numbers of attendances, which were recorded at services rather than at places of worship. As a result, the total number of individual attendances cannot be calculated as it is not possible to ascertain how many people attended more than one service, whether twice (or more) at the same place or at another location. In addition, it is clear that not all places where services were held have been included in the census. At least nine Primitive Methodist societies are missing, the most notable being that at Watford.¹⁷⁹ The most likely explanation for their omission is that, for the most part, these societies were meeting in houses rather than chapels and one of them (Aston) would probably have had outdoor preaching only. Transcriptions of the Upton survey and the 1851 Census have been published by the Hertfordshire Record Society, and this publication provided the opportunity to compare and contrast the findings of both surveys, given that

¹⁷⁶ William Upton's Survey 1847-48, as referred to in Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851*; Jill Barber, 'Religion in Hertfordshire - Two 19th century sources' <<https://www.hertsmemories.org.uk/content/herts-history/towns-and-villages/st-albans/religion-in-hertfordshire>> [accessed 6 October 2020].

¹⁷⁷ *Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship, England and Wales, Report and Tables*, LXXXIX (1852-3).

¹⁷⁸ Clive D. Field, 'The 1851 religious census of Great Britain: a bibliographical guide for local and regional historians', *The Local Historian* 27 (1997), 194-217. A very detailed discussion of the census is to be found in Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, especially pages 23-53.

¹⁷⁹ In addition to Watford, the societies not mentioned in the 1851 Census were at Aston, Bushey, Graveley, Hitchin, Norton, Roestock, Weston and Willian.

they were carried out within a very few years of each other.¹⁸⁰ The third religious survey in Hertfordshire was William Urwick's 1884 study of *Nonconformity in Herts*.¹⁸¹ Described by Ruston as 'the main historian of Nonconformity in Hertfordshire', Urwick was minister of the Independent chapel in Spicer Street, St Albans in the late nineteenth century.¹⁸² Urwick's study updates the information contained in Upton's survey and the 1851 Religious Census by including, as an appendix, a 'list of places of meeting for religious worship certified to the Registrar-General since 1st July 1852'. In total, thirty different places are mentioned where 'Places of Meeting for Religious Worship' had been certified to the Registrar-General. These include five of the places which are missing from the 1851 Religious Census.¹⁸³

Data from decennial census records have been used, particularly in conjunction with the information from baptismal records, in order to validate and expand the information about occupation recorded in these documents so that aspects of the socio-economic characteristics of Primitive Methodist households can be ascertained. In the detailed examination of the local society at Anstey, the decennial census records have also been used to build up a picture of the extent and location of households with links to Primitive Methodism.

Local newspapers provide another very useful source of information about the activities of Primitive Methodist societies, particularly in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Hertfordshire seven principal titles were in circulation over the time frame of this study, and these have now been scanned and made available online in the British Newspaper Archive covering the period principally from 1838 to 1909. A search of these online titles yielded over four hundred relevant articles, of which well over two hundred appeared in the *Herts Advertiser & St Albans Times* and its associated titles.¹⁸⁴ Very often these supply contemporary accounts of chapel building activities, special services (particularly camp meetings) and fund raising events. The newspaper reports provide a

¹⁸⁰ Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851*.

¹⁸¹ William Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts* (London: Hazell, Watson and Viney Limited, 1884).

¹⁸² Alan Ruston, *Unitarianism in Hertfordshire* (Watford: 1979), p.7.

¹⁸³ Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts*, Appendix XVIII, pp.854-877.

¹⁸⁴ The seven titles were: *Hemel Hempstead Gazette*, *Hertfordshire Mercury*, *Herts & Cambs Reporter & Royston Crow*, *Herts Advertiser & St Albans Times*, *Herts Express & General Advertiser*, *Herts Guardian*, *Agricultural Journal and General Advertiser*, and *Watford Observer*.

measure of understanding about the place, importance and standing of Primitive Methodists in various localities, albeit tempered by the particular viewpoints and values of the various writers, editors and proprietors.

In addition to local and regional newspapers, the Connexion's own publications, the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* (covering the whole of the period from 1838 to 1932) and the *Primitive Methodist Leader* (from 1905 up to 1932), give many detailed accounts of local society events. The information contained in these accounts was most usually supplied by the local travelling preacher so that, aside from the factual information they contained, they frequently present a highly positive image of the successes of a particular local society. Occasionally, however, there are direct references to persecution, losses in membership or financial difficulties, especially in connection with the funding of chapels, although even these instances would often be presented as hardships which were to be endured and would eventually be overcome by the faithful.¹⁸⁵

Manuscript documents and other printed archives were, in the main, consulted at the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, the Essex County Record Office and the Museum of Primitive Methodism at Englesea Brook, Cheshire. Information has also been sourced from the Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service. One consequence of the somewhat limited extent of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire is that it is not a county that is particularly rich in terms of the quantity of its archival records, particularly when compared to other parts of the country. For example, Garratt noted that there was 'an abundance of source material' and 'an extensive range of different circuit records' which provided 'much insight into the work of the Primitive Methodist circuits in Shropshire' and Truss found that a number of circuit records in the Yorkshire Wolds proved to be 'most fruitful'. Rodell also

¹⁸⁵ An example of the 'positive' approach is the report of Thomas Russell in 1870 about the St Albans Circuit that 'though Hertfordshire has never been of much note in Methodism, yet I am thankful to God to say that we have, during these five years not only kept our ground good, but have increased fully ten percent, each year' (*Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1870, p.380). As to hardship, John Guy reported in 1845 that at Wymondley the society was 'turned out of' a house that was being used for preaching but that services continued on the village green and a class of nine members was formed, commenting that 'thus holpen, we are encouraged amid opposition and are expecting a brightened hemisphere' (*Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1846, p.27). In 1868 Thomas Russell reported that at Croxley Green the total income for the year had been 'near £90' whilst expenditure had been 'about £220' but that did not seem to matter as 'precious souls have been converted to God' (*Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1868, p.369).

observed that 'Primitive Methodist records have not survived in Bedfordshire as well as those of the Wesleyans', suggesting that this 'probably because so many of the Primitive Methodist chapels in the county were closed before any organised attempt was made to preserve their history'. The same explanation could well apply equally in Hertfordshire.¹⁸⁶ However, as this study will show, it proved to be the case that although Hertfordshire Primitive Methodist records are limited in number this was more than offset by their content, as many of the records, especially those relating to circuit quarterly meetings, contain a wealth of fascinating detail which serves not only to illustrate well the issues with which societies were preoccupied on a day-to-day basis but also to give an insight into their regular diet of activities and annual pattern of events.

A number of sources of information are now widely available online. These include several editions (but not all) of the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* and the *Primitive Methodist Leader*, as well as copies of the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*. Also available online are *The General Minutes of the Conferences of the Primitive Methodist Connexion – Consolidated in the year 1849* and the *Primitive Methodist General Rules (Revised 1912)*.

Structure

This introduction to Primitive Methodism and its relevance to Hertfordshire has sought to set the scene and provide the focus for the chapters which follow. Chapter 2 looks at the governance of the Primitive Methodist Connexion by considering the constituent parts of its structure from the conference to the class meeting and how they relate to one another, with particular emphasis on the local society and the circuit. Circuit development in Hertfordshire is then examined, noting also the influence of centres of evangelism in neighbouring counties. Consideration is then given to the nature of the Primitive Methodist ministry in Hertfordshire, looking at the travelling preachers who were appointed to circuits in the county and how they were deployed in the pursuit of evangelism and the growth of the Connexion. The importance of local preachers in the furtherance of the cause is explored as well as the particular nature of the Primitive Methodist offering.

¹⁸⁶ Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', p.10; Truss, 'Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932', p.20. Rodell, *The Rise of Methodism – A Study of Bedfordshire 1736-1851*, p.236.

Chapter 3 examines the nature and geography of the Primitive Methodist estate in Hertfordshire, with particular reference to the importance of a place of worship to a local society. The question of land ownership and open and closed parishes in Hertfordshire is discussed particularly so far as the relationship with nonconformity in general and Primitive Methodism in particular is concerned: a comparison is also drawn between the presence of Wesleyan Methodism and Primitive Methodism congregations in different locations. The chapter then considers the nature of the Primitive Methodist estate in Hertfordshire: it looks at the development of chapel building and the growth in the number of local societies as well as the typology of the chapels that were built, their locations, propinquity and density.

Chapter 4 looks at the social structure of local societies in Hertfordshire by a largely statistical analysis of occupational data from baptismal records. It examines the social class of Primitive Methodist households in circuits based around the city of St Albans, the smaller market town of Baldock and the scattered villages of east Hertfordshire and compares the findings of the analysis with results obtained from other studies of Primitive Methodist occupations elsewhere in the country. Consideration is given to the social structure and social mobility of the Primitive Methodist households in these three Hertfordshire locations, looking at changes over time and by location.

In Chapter 5, attention turns to financial matters. The sources of income available to a local society are considered as well as the various ways in which this money was spent. Patterns of expenditure give a clear picture of spending priorities which in turn indicates what was of particular importance in the life of a local society. Chapel building was a major expense and the chapter considers the various ways in which this was financed, the consequences for a local society of dealing with the inevitable level of debt and the emphasis that was placed on debt reduction. The chapter also examines the financial implications for local societies of acquiring their own premises in terms of the funding of both regular maintenance and further improvements. Attention is then given to the financial needs of the circuit, particularly paying for and housing its travelling preachers, before concluding with a brief look at the financial demands of the wider Connexion.

Chapter 6 is a case study of the Primitive Methodist society at Anstey. It traces its rise and demise primarily by using the extant records left by the society and the circuit to which it belonged. The case study aims to examine the extent to which, at the grass roots level of the Connexion, the issues raised in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 applied to an individual local society. The case study considers the demographic and social structure of the society and also looks in some detail into its financial affairs, particularly those related to its responsibilities in looking after the chapel building. The relationship between the local society and the circuit is examined, especially in terms of the level of support provided by the circuit, as well as the amount of control the circuit exercised over the local society, particularly in disciplinary matters. The case study concludes that the local society of Primitive Methodists at Anstey was a strongly supportive group of people. However, they were not well off, and many members experienced hardship, particularly in the light of the poor economic conditions that prevailed in this part of Hertfordshire in the later decades of the nineteenth century. Low social and economic status and an inability to maintain a core membership over time meant that the local society became increasingly financially unsustainable, even with circuit support, and ultimately this was the reason for its demise.

By way of a conclusion, Chapter 7 offers a reflection on the story of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire. It looks at the what the Connexion achieved in the county and the role that Primitive Methodists played in Hertfordshire society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Inevitably, however, there are gaps in the narrative, and there are two particular gaps that are worthy of note at this stage. The first concerns Watford, where it has not proved possible in this study to understand the reasons for the marked concentration of Primitive Methodists in Watford. This was a location which, by the early 20th century, was home to three sizeable Primitive Methodist societies each of which was served by a large chapel, so there is clearly more to be discovered here. The second 'gap' relates to St Albans. As will be seen from Chapter 2, in the early days of the Connexion's existence in Hertfordshire the Primitive Methodist congregation at St Albans was a leading missionary society that was responsible for the successful missioning of many different areas across the county. Nevertheless, in the second half of the nineteenth century there were clearly serious problems at St Albans which ultimately resulted in the decline and subsequent loss

of this once important Primitive Methodist society. However, the reasons for this have not come to light during the course of this study and remain, as yet, unclear.

Whilst the history of Primitive Methodism has been explored widely from a national perspective and some areas of the country have also been the subject of local studies, nevertheless this is an aspect of nonconformist religion in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which has so far not received any attention in Hertfordshire. The main purpose of this research is thus to address this neglected aspect of the Connexion's history and it does so by means of a detailed examination of the history of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire, drawing extensively on previously unpublished sources. It seeks both to highlight the importance of the Connexion's ninety four years of existence in Hertfordshire and to advance overall understanding of Primitive Methodism in this region.

Chapter 2

Organisation

Introduction

Methodism, since John Wesley's time, has always been organized, and that is still a feature of the denomination today. Indeed, the name "Methodist" was originally a term of ridicule bestowed by their fellow students on John and Charles Wesley and the other members of the 'Holy Club' (which the Wesleys had founded at the University of Oxford) because of the way they used 'rule' and 'method' to go about their religious affairs. However, John Wesley re-appropriated the term as a 'badge of honour'. Because organization and governance have been such central features of Methodism since the 18th century, a knowledge of how it was structured in particular areas enables an understanding to be gained of where and how it flourished and, in some cases, declined. Whatever differences there may have been between Primitive Methodists and their Wesleyan counterparts, there was one great similarity: the Primitive Methodists adopted essentially the same organisational structure as the Wesleys. However, the key distinctive features of Primitive Methodism were, firstly, its greater focus on its grass roots membership, in particular the extent of involvement of, and the authority and responsibility given to, lay people, and, secondly, the importance of the role played by women.¹ Nevertheless, as noted in Chapter 1, because very few Hertfordshire records identify the women members of local societies, references to women in this study are necessarily limited.

This chapter focuses on the structure of governance of the Primitive Methodist Connexion in Hertfordshire, particularly in relation to the development and arrangement of circuits, and looks at how these changed between 1838 and 1932, as the various societies were

¹ Keith Snell and Paul Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.136; Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1977), pp.70 and 82.

formed, developed and, in some cases, declined. It will also consider how the Connexion responded both to these changes and to the demands arising elsewhere in the Connexion, in terms of its deployment and use of its ministerial and lay resources.

Governance

Petty provides a detailed description of what he terms ‘the constitution and government’ of the Connexion.² His description can be relied upon for its accuracy not only because he wrote with the authority of the Connexion’s Conference (having been asked to compile a history of the Connexion which would be published to mark its Golden Jubilee in 1860) but because what he describes is, in essence, the same structure that exists in the Methodist Church today.

Classes

At grass-roots level, the members were formed into small groups called classes, one of whom would be appointed the class leader. The duties of the class leader were conducting the weekly meetings of the class, administering instruction, counsel, advice or reproof to members as required. The class members would have their names entered in the class-book and would be given a class ticket, renewed quarterly, to signify their continuing membership. Initially, members would be admitted to class meetings ‘on trial’ and for a period of at least three months they were required to demonstrate ‘their earnest desires, penitential emotions, or proofs of sound conversion’ before they could be received into full membership. Once entered on the class role, every member was expected at all times to live up to his or her high calling. As the rules of the Connexion put it:

No person must be admitted as a member, nor allowed to remain one, who attends vain and worldly amusements, wastes his time at public-houses, buys and sells unaccustomed, contraband, or smuggled goods, vends or sells obscene books or pictures, fortune-telling books and ballads, or any others of an immoral tendency, or

² John Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, from its Origin to the Conference of 1860, the First Jubilee Year of the Connexion*, revised and enlarged by James Macpherson (London: John Dickenson, 1880), pp.567-571.

who is dishonest in his dealings, or is otherwise an impostor, according to the description of such a person, given in the foot-note on this page.³

Societies

A number of these individual classes constituted 'a society'. The class leaders, together with the society steward and a travelling preacher (or preachers), met regularly to transact the society's business.

Circuits

Several societies were grouped together to form 'a circuit'. The various societies in the circuit shared the same preachers, both 'travelling' and 'local'. Travelling preachers were 'regular ministers' who were wholly devoted to ministerial and pastoral duties and who were paid a 'modest' stipend for their work. They were so named because their duties required them to travel not only throughout the circuit but also to move to another circuit after a period of time. On the other hand, 'local preachers' lived locally and were attached to a particular society until they chose to move. They were not subject to removal to a different circuit by decisions of the Connexion, as were the travelling preachers. Local preachers were not paid for their labours and usually, therefore, followed 'some worldly callings for a maintenance' and preached 'on the Sabbath as opportunities permit'. They were chosen to their office by the societies in the circuit, and 'should their preaching prove unacceptable to the people generally, their services are discontinued'.⁴

The grouping of local societies into circuits and the deployment of travelling preachers to those circuits would have been very familiar territory for Hugh Bourne and William Clowes, coming as they did from Wesleyan roots. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that Primitive Methodism was organised along very similar connexional lines to the Wesleyan Methodists. The circuit was the most important part of the structure – not only did it work as a very flexible means of organising members and preachers at the grass roots level, but it also provided the ideal base from which to evangelise, mission and expand the movement.

³ *General Minutes of the Conferences of the Primitive Methodist Conferences consolidated in the year 1849* (London: Thomas Holliday, 1850), pp.61-62.

⁴ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, pp.568-569.

As the key element of the denomination's organisation, the circuit possessed considerable autonomy and authority. Kendall, in a section of his history of the Connexion entitled 'The period of circuit predominance and enterprise' which deals with the years from 1811 to 1843, comments that 'the chief outstanding feature of the period – that which gives it its distinctive character, is the part played by leading circuits in the life and work of the Connexion'.⁵ Writing in 1909, Ritson believed that the circuit was 'an essential institution of Methodism' and that 'it would have been impossible for Primitive Methodism to have evangelised rural England on any other system'.⁶ A more recent commentator, Armstrong in 1973, expressed the view that 'the single-mindedness of the Primitives in planning and executing missionary activity was extraordinary. The whole organization was geared to spreading the gospel. As circuits were formed, so they became missionary agencies.'⁷ It is clear, therefore, that the circuit was the driving force behind the growth and expansion of the Primitive Methodist Connexion. More than this, it was also the way in which its grass roots membership was organized which, in turn, provided lay people with the opportunity to play an important part in the running of the organisation and the means by which a significant proportion of the Connexion could be funded (as will be seen in more detail in Chapter 5).⁸

Every quarter, a circuit meeting was held, attended by society leaders, stewards and preachers. The purpose of the meeting was to transact the business of the various societies within the circuit. Between the quarterly meetings, the general business of the circuit was dealt with by the circuit committee, consisting of all the travelling preachers appointed to the circuit together with representative local preachers, class leaders, stewards and others chosen by the quarterly meeting to represent the various societies in the circuit.

⁵ H. B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I (London: Robert Bryant, c. 1905), p.159.

⁶ Joseph Ritson, *The Romance of Primitive Methodism* (London: Primitive Methodist Publishing House, 1909), pp.205-206.

⁷ Anthony Armstrong, *The Church of England, the Methodists and Society 1700-1850* (London: University of London Press, 1973), p.205.

⁸ Every society had its trustees, a steward, a treasurer and a secretary; others were members of local chapel and Sunday school committees as well as their circuit counterparts and the circuit meeting.

The quarterly meeting was an important vehicle for upholding internal discipline and the standard of conduct required of both officials and members of the Connexion. Crime and punishment were matters which would have been relatively commonplace in Victorian times, and many column inches of newspapers were devoted to reporting on the activities of the criminal courts. Yet it was not only the justice system that was the focus of such regulation. As McLeod has noted, many nonconformist denominations 'had strict systems of internal discipline', although these tended to become 'relaxed somewhat' towards the end of the nineteenth century.⁹ These systems frequently went much further than the criminal courts because they also included codes of behaviour. Hillis found (albeit in a Scottish study) that, whilst the Established Church focused on sexual offences, nonconformists exercised supervision over wider aspects of social life, including drunkenness, poor Sabbath observance and failure to attend.¹⁰ This was particularly true of the Primitive Methodism Connexion, as the records of quarterly meetings amply demonstrate that the Connexion exercised considerable disciplinary control over its members. The power of the Connexion in this regard relied for its legitimacy on the control of social status of its members within the movement. There were various levels of admonishment, all of which had visible consequences in a local society and circuit for the social standing of the member concerned, whether this be suspension from class or from an office or, for a local preacher, demotion in rank on the quarterly plan or removal from the plan either permanently or for a specified period. The ultimate sanction was expulsion from the movement, although the District did have powers of re-instatement.

As Ambler comments, 'the fact that this discipline could be maintained was an indication of the strength of members' commitment to Primitive Methodism', since this was an entirely voluntary code with expulsion from membership being the ultimate sanction.¹¹ For a local preacher, fulfilling his appointments on the circuit plan was of particular importance and on many occasions the quarterly meeting admonished preachers by name in the written record for not doing so. In some cases, it was decreed that preachers 'be spoken to' about their

⁹ Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1984), p.60.

¹⁰ Peter Hillis, 'Presbyterianism and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Glasgow: a Study of Nine Churches', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 32 (1981), 47-64 (pp.57-64).

¹¹ Rodney Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists & Reformers* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1989), p.70.

‘neglect of an appointment’, although in more serious cases a written warning would be given.¹² A far more serious sanction was to deprive preachers of appointments on the circuit plan for the next quarter; ultimately, removal from the plan altogether was a much more public admonition which could affect the personal standing of the individual in the eyes of his fellow members.¹³

The discipline of the quarterly meeting also extended to maintaining the standards of behaviour expected from ordinary members of the Connexion which, as Ambler has commented, might relate to ‘matters which were not always regarded as being worthy of condemnation by those outside it’.¹⁴ As with local preachers, the quarterly meeting records pulled no punches when it came to naming and shaming those members who were found guilty of unacceptable lapses of behaviour. Events such as David Wilson being ‘found by one of his sons, in his own house having Mrs Andrews of Dassells on his knees’, Brother Bentley being ‘the worse for liquor’ and Brother Bysouth’s drunkenness, Mrs Bysouth’s assault of a man and her ‘having four drunken men in her house ... and allowing two of them to remain there till 4 o’clock on Sunday morning, her husband at the same time being from home’ or ‘the imprudence of Brother Prior in visiting a married female until a late hour of the night’ are all recorded with stark frankness. As is made clear in the case of Brother Prior, the Connexion’s concern was not only with the spiritual well-being and good conduct of its individual members but also because of ‘the reproach brought on the cause’ by such imprudence.¹⁵

¹² Meetings held on 18 March and 7 June 1861 and 5 September 1881, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1, Essex Record Office (ERO).

¹³ Meeting held on 8 March 1869, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5; Meeting held on 8 June 1929, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1925-1931, D/NM 3/1/4, ERO.

¹⁴ Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists & Reformers*, p.70.

¹⁵ Meeting held on 15 June 1863, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1; meeting held on 19 January 1929, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1925-1931, D/NM 3/1/4; meetings held on 7 March 1864, 6 March 1865, 26 September 1866 and 6 September 1867, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO. Rodell found a similar frankness in the Bedfordshire records (Jonathan Rodell, *The Rise of Methodism – A Study of Bedfordshire 1736-1851* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Bedfordshire Historical Record Society and The Boydell Press, 2014), p.196).

In the early days of the Connexion there was no comprehensive plan for growth or missionary activity and it was left to individual circuits to decide when and where new ground should be “opened up”. However, a change in approach (which Kendall dates from the reorganisation by the 1843 Conference of the General Missionary Committee) saw the Connexion ‘somewhat timidly feeling its way towards the effective control of the Home Missions by a central authority’.¹⁶ As can be seen from Appendix 1, much of the growth and development of circuits in Hertfordshire post-dates this 1843 reorganisation, from which it must be concluded that it was rather more the General Missionary Committee than a local circuit that was dictating how the Connexion spread its missionary activities throughout Hertfordshire.

Nevertheless, even with the central direction of the General Missionary Committee, it was still the responsibility of the circuit to drive the expansion of the movement locally. Petty explains how the process worked:

When the places in a circuit become too numerous or important to be conveniently managed at one quarterly meeting, a number of the places are frequently formed into a ‘branch’, which is a portion of a circuit, having its own office-bearers and regular meetings for business, but subordinate to the authorities of the home part of the circuit. So soon as branches are capable of supporting their own ministers, and of transacting the business of their respective societies, they are usually, but not always, formed into new circuits or independent stations.¹⁷

Although, as Hempton considered, the itinerant nature of the Connexion’s travelling preachers was ‘the engine of the movement’s expansion’, it was ultimately, in Bebbington’s view, the flexible nature of the circuit that gave it ‘the means to establish a presence in the

¹⁶ H. B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II (London: Robert Bryant, c. 1905), p.407.

¹⁷ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.569.

villages'.¹⁸ This was particularly important in Hertfordshire, where there were few towns and most of the population lived in villages and hamlets.¹⁹

Missions

Those places where societies had been formed as a result of 'missionary labours' were grouped together as 'a mission'. Some of these missions were under the supervision of a circuit, but most were managed from the centre by the General Missionary Committee of the Connexion. Missions had the same structure of leaders' meetings, quarterly meetings and committees as did societies and circuits generally. Petty adds that 'when a sufficient number of leading men are raised upon a mission to be entrusted with its management, and the station is able to support two or more travelling preachers, it is usually made into a circuit'.²⁰ As Pocock has noted, 'in Primitive Methodism, the whole process of establishing new centres of activity was referred to in terms of mission, thus "mission stations" were infant circuits and the preachers sent to establish new societies were referred to as "missionaries"'.²¹ As will be seen below, this is a process that occurred on numerous occasions in Hertfordshire.

Districts

Several circuits, branches and missions were grouped together to form 'a district'. Every district held a meeting once a year which was attended by representatives from the constituent circuits, branches and missions. The delegates were to be selected so that a travelling preacher would be selected in one year followed by a lay person in each of the following two years, so as to secure, so far as practicable overall, a balance in the meeting of two laymen to one travelling preacher. Petty notes that the meeting was chaired by 'a member of the General or Connexional Committee, who is usually a senior or influential minister'. The business of the district meeting consisted of receiving reports from all the

¹⁸ David Hempton, *Methodism – Empire of the spirit* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), p.99; David Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2011), p.19.

¹⁹ In the 1851 census only nine places in Hertfordshire were included in the list of 'cities, boroughs and principal towns in England and Wales', and the largest, St Albans, only had a population of 7,000. 76% of the population lived outside these nine places. British Parliamentary Papers, 1852-3, vol. LXXXV, *1851 Census Report, Population Tables I*, pp. cciv–ccvii.

²⁰ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.570.

²¹ Christine Pocock, 'The Origins, Development and Significance of the Circuit in Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism in England 1740 - 1914' (PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2015), p.95.

stations within it, whether circuits, branches or missions, as to 'the number of its members, preachers, leaders, scholars and teachers, chapels and other preaching places'. The meeting was also tasked with stationing the travelling preachers within the district,' subject, however, to appeals from the stations or preachers, and to alterations at Conference'.²²

Conference

Overseeing the whole organisation was the Conference. This was 'a yearly meeting of delegates from all the districts in the connexion' plus other appointed members and representatives, chosen so that, overall, there were as close to two laymen to every travelling preacher as circumstances would allow. The purpose of the annual Conference was to deal with all affairs connected with the Connexion, to receive reports of all the stations, to appoint the travelling preachers for the following year and 'to make such regulations for the welfare of the community as may seem necessary'. As Petty noted, 'the Conference is the highest court in the Connexion, from whose decisions there is no appeal.' Between the yearly meetings of the Conference, 'a General Committee, composed of ministers and laymen in about equal numbers, is appointed to transact the most important business of the Connexion'.²³

From this outline of the governance of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, three things are immediately apparent: firstly, the importance given to lay people in the organisation; secondly, the Connexion's insistence on record-keeping and regular reporting on the state of the organisation and its constituent parts; and, thirdly, the significance of the organisation's structures, particularly that of the circuit. As to the first, this demonstrates the importance of the grass roots membership to the Connexion even if, as Calder has argued, the Connexion was not a particularly democratic organisation and those in leadership roles 'were significantly more prosperous than the followers'.²⁴ However, whilst this might have been true of those in Connexional roles, it was the grass roots members meeting in their classes who were the fundamental building blocks of their local societies

²² Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.570.

²³ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, pp.570-571.

²⁴ Alexander J. Calder, 'The Primitive Methodist Connexion - Tackling the Myth' (PhD thesis, Open University, 2012), pp.116 and 267; Sandy Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2016), p.254.

which, ultimately, were responsible for the growth of the Connexion. Consequently, their importance to the organisation cannot be underestimated. As Knight put it, a lay nonconformist was not only spiritually, but 'usually also financially and practically' committed to the cause.²⁵ Gilbert also refers to nonconformity's 'heavy reliance on lay workers', particularly in connection with Sunday schools and local preaching.²⁶ McLeod has noted that Primitive Methodism in particular 'had important implications for the self-image' of its members as it provided 'a formula for self-respect' no matter what their position in society might be.²⁷ The second aspect is particularly useful in shedding light on the development of individual societies and circuits, but this is heavily dependent on the survival of those local records. Relevant records for Hertfordshire are not particularly numerous and are most often seen reported simply as Connexional aggregates, for example in the *Minutes of Conference*. With regard to the third, as was also the case with the Wesleyan Methodists, the local nature of the society and its constituent classes meant that the Primitive Methodists were able to respond quickly and flexibly to perceived areas of spiritual need, establishing new societies as necessary. Once established, those societies themselves became the missionary agents of change in the movement's expansion. Hempton, referring to Methodism's 'characteristic fusion of zeal and organization', has commented that 'above all [it] grew because it wanted to and because those who carried out the missions regarded themselves as sacred emissaries in the spread of scriptural holiness across the land.' This was certainly true of the Primitive Methodists not only at a national level but also locally in Hertfordshire, as the evidence of circuit development in the ninety years from 1842 demonstrates.²⁸

Circuit development in Hertfordshire

As Rodell found in his study of Methodism in Bedfordshire, circuit boundaries do not follow county, parish or any other recognised boundaries; instead, they reflect the geography of the centres of evangelism from which the movement expanded.²⁹ Some of these centres

²⁵ Frances Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church and English Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.22.

²⁶ Alan D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England - Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740-1914* (London: Longman, 1976), p.57.

²⁷ McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, pp.28-29.

²⁸ Hempton, *Methodism – Empire of the spirit*, p.153.

²⁹ Rodell, *The Rise of Methodism*, p.xxiii.

were located in adjacent counties: Primitive Methodist societies in the eastern fringe of Hertfordshire were part of the circuit based on Saffron Walden in Essex and, towards the north-west of the county, the Primitive Methodists in Luton exercised some considerable influence on villages in Hertfordshire. In similar fashion, the Primitive Methodist circuits based on Baldock and Berkhamsted contained societies located in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, respectively.

Because of the characteristics of Connexional records and the often aggregated nature of the statistics that they contain, it can sometimes be impossible or, worse, misleading, to include references to circuits whose significant spheres of influence lie outside Hertfordshire. Consequently, this analysis of Primitive Methodist circuit development in Hertfordshire focuses very largely, although not exclusively, on those circuits that were centred on societies which were located in the county. The role of the circuit in the overall governance of the Connexion and its importance in the expansion of the organisation in the nineteenth century has already been noted. Circuit boundaries were not static, but, as the number of societies grew, they exhibited considerably fluidity and often extensive change. As Hempton has noted, 'Methodist expansion was sometimes 'more rapid than it was deep. In the founding of new Methodist congregations, there are any number of accounts of false starts, premature ends, and bitter recriminations in between'.³⁰

Hertfordshire circuits

Hempton's words certainly find an echo in the Primitive Methodist Connexion's activities in Hertfordshire, as the diagram at Appendix 1 clearly illustrates. The pattern of circuit development in the county demonstrates considerable flexibility and fluidity between 1838 and 1932. Growth in the nineteenth century was manifested by an embryonic pattern of development which Kendall described as 'multiplication by division' and 'by analogies with organic chemistry'.³¹ However, circuits could also be lost by amalgamation, as happened in the twentieth century.

³⁰ Hempton, *Methodism – Empire of the spirit*, p.153.

³¹ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, p.478; Kendall, H B, *History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: Joseph Toulson, c.1888), p.20.

The first reference to a formal group of Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire is to be found in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* for 1841. A report from the Reading Circuit (part of the Brinkworth District) noted that Hertford Mission had been 'received ... from Hull circuit, in September 1840, with thirty-nine members' some three years after it had been opened.³² A similar account is given by Petty, who records that Samuel Chapman was sent from the Hull Circuit in 1835 to commence a mission at Hertford and that the mission was transferred to the Reading Circuit in September 1840, with about forty members, two years after its commencement. Petty also notes that the Reading Circuit had also 'commenced missionary operations in the southern part of the county, at Rickmansworth and in the vicinity'.³³

Those missionary operations in the vicinity of Rickmansworth soon came to be based at Watford, and, in the *Minutes of the 23rd Annual Conference* of 1842, both Hertford Mission and Watford Mission are listed under the Reading Circuit.³⁴ The following year, there were still two missions in Hertfordshire but the centre of activities in the south-west of the county had moved again, from Watford to St Albans. The Luton Circuit appears for the first time in 1843, also under the care of the Brinkworth District.³⁵

1844 sees the first reference to the General Missionary Committee, a body which will feature considerably in the history of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire later in the nineteenth century. A committee of that name was originally established by the Primitive Methodist Conference in 1825 as a response to 'the rapid spread of the Connexion through most parts of England'.³⁶ However, this missionary activity was carried out by individual circuits independently of each other and in an uncoordinated way. The Conference considered that it would be a more effective and efficient use of resources if the growth of the Connexion were planned more systematically; moreover, from a purely financial point of view, a central committee would be able to provide Connexional financial support for the commencement of new missions, until they could be supported from their own resources,

³² *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1841, p.396.

³³ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.452.

³⁴ *Minutes of the 23rd Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1842), p.12.

³⁵ *Minutes of the 24th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1843), p.12.

³⁶ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.248.

without compromising the ability of existing circuits to survive. Whilst the idea might have been sound in principle and well-intentioned, it was 'destined to be unsuccessful' and proved in practice to be 'a dead letter' and 'comparatively useless', with only one mission in Pembrokeshire (which was considerably in debt) coming under its care.³⁷ Two decades later the Connexion itself was undergoing a major transition: following the superannuation of Hugh Bourne and William Clowes, a 'devolution and distribution of power' took place which included the placing of the leadership of the Connexion into 'younger hands', the consequential appointment of Hugh Bourne's replacement as editor of the Connexion's magazines and chairman of the Book Committee, and the removal of the Connexion's centre of operations from Bemersley (Hugh Bourne's home in Staffordshire) to offices in London. A major part of this transition involved the revival of the General Missionary Committee, itself now also based in London in the same premises as the Book Room.³⁸ The 1843 Conference concluded that the practice of 'numerous circuits having continued to carry on missionary exertions under their own management' was no longer tenable or practicable on a large scale. As a consequence, the General Missionary Committee, reconstituted by that Conference, became responsible for 'the supervision and extension of missions' and ensuring that missionary operations were conducted 'in a more efficient manner'.³⁹ In 1844, the General Missionary Committee took over responsibility for the St Albans and Hertford Missions from the Reading Circuit: this remained the position until, in 1847, a further mission society at Baldock was added.

A further major reorganisation in the structure of the Connexion's stations took place in 1853, with the creation of the London District. This District extended into Hertfordshire and took over the Reading and Luton Circuits, previously under the care of Brinkworth District, and the Saffron Walden Circuit, which had been part of the Hull District. It also became responsible for the missions in these circuits which had previously been under the care of

³⁷ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II, p.295; Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.22; Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.248.

³⁸ H. B. Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1919), pp.80-83; Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, pp.456-458.

³⁹ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.457.

the General Missionary Committee. That meant that St Albans, Hertford and Baldock Missions now became part of the London District.⁴⁰

In the mid-1840s, the membership of the Hertford Mission numbered between 140 and 184. In 1848, this dropped dramatically to 46, and the explanation for this sudden decline lies in the formation of the Baldock Mission in that year. Baldock was missioned from Hertford and in 1848 recorded a membership of 198, most of whom had been counted the previous year as members of the Hertford station.⁴¹ The mission at Hertford struggled on with similarly low levels of membership for another nine years, but finally, in 1858, the decision was made to amalgamate the society with the St Albans Mission, which at that time had over two hundred members of its own.⁴² By 1861, recognition of Hertford as a separate location ceases and the town disappears from the record, for the time being, with only St Albans Mission and Baldock Mission being referred to as under the care of the General Missionary Committee.⁴³

By 1865, Baldock was clearly able to manage its own affairs and support its own travelling preachers without assistance from the General Missionary Committee, as in this year the Conference raised the Mission to the status of a full Circuit, along with Luton and Saffron Walden, as part of the London District. This left only St Albans Mission, part of the newly titled Home Missions District.⁴⁴ Two years later, in 1867, there were clearly signs of a resurgence of growth in the Hertford area as the mission station was reconstituted with in excess of fifty members, along with St Albans Mission, both under the Home Missions

⁴⁰ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.515.

⁴¹ *Minutes of the 26th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1845), pp.30-32; *Minutes of the 28th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1847), pp.26-28; *Minutes of the 29th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1848), p.26-28.

⁴² *Minutes of the 38th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1857), p.40; *Minutes of the 39th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1858), p.13.

⁴³ *Minutes of the 42nd Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1861), pp.15-16.

⁴⁴ *Minutes of the 46th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1865), p.18-19. In 1864 the post of secretary of the General Missionary Committee was separated from that of the secretary of the General Committee (the two posts had been combined since 1843). From that point the General Missionary Secretary also became known as the 'Superintendent of the Home Missions' and the mission stations under the care of the General Missionary Committee were thenceforward referred to as the Home Missions (see Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, p.176).

Committee.⁴⁵ Something of a Primitive Methodist revival appears to have been taking place in Hertfordshire in the later 1860s as, in 1868, Watford Mission also reappears in the record as a separate station, with societies at Watford, Bushey and Croxley Green, together with St Albans Mission and Hertford Mission, all under the care of the Home Missions.⁴⁶

The growth in membership in the south and west of the county was such that, in 1870, Berkhamsted was created a Mission station by the sub-division of the St Albans Mission, consisting of the societies at Redbourn, Hemel Hempstead and Boxmoor, as well as Berkhamsted itself. However, the formation of the Berkhamsted Mission would have resulted in the loss of about 75% of the membership of the St Albans Mission, which probably accounts for the fact that, from the Conference of 1870, the mission at St Albans was combined with that at Watford. Unfortunately, Hertford Mission's continued increase in membership was short-lived; this station does not appear in the record after 1873 and the chapel's closure and sale were reported in the *Hertfordshire Mercury* in January 1874.⁴⁷

By 1877, growth in the Watford area led to the re-formation of the Watford Mission, separating from the St Albans Mission. This growth clearly continued as, three years later, Watford was created a Circuit in the London District. Two years after that, in 1882, Berkhamsted achieved the same Circuit status as part of the London District, leaving only St Albans Mission under the care of the Home Missions.⁴⁸

As a mission station, St Albans had clearly been struggling for some time, and the main problem appears to have been a financial one as a direct result of the unwise decision that led to the building of 'a commodious chapel' in 1844. Petty, writing in 1860, comments that

⁴⁵ *Minutes of the 48th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1867), pp.27-30; Thomas Russell, *Record of Events in Primitive Methodism* (London: William Lister, 1869), pp.146 and 153.

⁴⁶ *Minutes of the 49th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1868), pp.24-27; Russell, *Record of Events in Primitive Methodism*, p.148.

⁴⁷ *Minutes of the 51st Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1870), pp.28-29 and 47; *Minutes of the 55th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1874), pp.21-23; *Hertfordshire Mercury*, 24 January 1874.

⁴⁸ *Minutes of the 58th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1877), pp.26, 27 and 29; *Minutes of the 61st Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1880), pp.25 and 28; *Minutes of the 63rd Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1882), pp.25, 26 and 29.

This was an imprudent step, and unhappily involved the trustees and the society in serious difficulties. A succession of disasters ensued, which rendered this chapel case one of the most painful and distressing which the Connexion ever experienced, and which greatly impeded the progress of the mission.⁴⁹

In 1862, attendance at the camp meeting was reported in the *Hertfordshire Express* to have been 'not so numerous as could be desired' and in 1864, the *St Albans Times and Herts Advertiser* urged the wealthier members of the community to assist the Primitive Methodists of the town in reducing their chapel debt, arguing that

this section of Christians is doing a good work amongst our poorer neighbours, and those who are blessed with this world's goods will do well to aid them in their endeavours to extricate themselves from difficulties with which they have long been struggling.⁵⁰

The Rev Thomas Russell, who was appointed to the St Albans circuit in 1865, noted that the chapel 'though twenty years built ... was not yet finished'. It seems, however, that a solution to the 'chapel' problem could not be found as, ten years later, in September 1875, the society moved to the former Independent chapel in Dagnall Street, and advertisements for the sale of the Sopwell Lane chapel appeared in the *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times* in December 1875 and January 1876.⁵¹

In September 1886, at a fund-raising bazaar in aid of Mission funds, a Mr W Westell (one of the town's straw hat manufacturers who was supporting the Mayor in the formal opening of the bazaar) was reported as saying that

⁴⁹ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, pp.461-462.

⁵⁰ *Hertfordshire Express*, 26 July 1862; *St Albans Times and Herts Advertiser*, 21 May 1864.

⁵¹ Russell, 'Record of Events in Primitive Methodism', p.146; St Albans Primitive Methodist Circuit baptism register, December 1846 - January 1887, NM5/43, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS); William Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts* (London: Hazell, Watson and Viney Limited, 1884), p.206; *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 25 September 1875, p.5; 25 December 1875; and 1 January 1876.

the Primitive Methodists in St Albans had been struggling for many years against poverty and other difficulties. It was a noble thing to be engaged in any work having for its object the bringing up of men and women to a higher standard, and he thought therefore that Primitive Methodism deserved all support.⁵²

Unfortunately, so far as the society at St Albans was concerned, this was not to be; the last nineteenth century reference to St Albans in the list of stations occurs in 1887, when it is enigmatically noted that the Mission was 'left to GMC' with no minister appointed to serve this station.⁵³

The remaining years of the nineteenth century saw no further changes in the pattern of Primitive Methodist circuits in Hertfordshire. Around the start of the twentieth century, the society at Baldock made some 'really aggressive work in connection with our Church' focused on Hitchin, then with a population of 11,000, and Stevenage, with a population of 5,000. In 1899 it was reported in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* that 'in neither of these towns has Primitive Methodism had any position, though there was both room and need for it'; a further report the following year noted that 'the present minister, Rev T Wallis, has been bold enough to move the minister's place of residence from Baldock to Hitchin.'⁵⁴ From 1902, the circuit was renamed as Hitchin and, together with the circuits at Watford and Berkhamsted, this remained the position until 1913, when Letchworth was created a Mission station on its own account, under the care of the Missions District. The Conference of 1913 approved of 'the attempt of the General Missionary Committee to cope with the new ... developments in ... Letchworth' and noted that 'there were already seventeen Primitive Methodist families in the town'. Within the year, this had risen to over forty.⁵⁵ The reasons for the Connexion's focus on Letchworth are very clear: founded by the social reformer, Ebenezer Howard, construction had begun here in 1903 on the First Garden City, a settlement which was planned to grow to a population of 32,000 people. The first church building had been constructed in 1905 jointly by the Baptists, Presbyterians,

⁵² *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 18 September 1886, p.6.

⁵³ *Minutes of the 68th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1887), p.36.

⁵⁴ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1899, pp.154-155; *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1900, p.395.

⁵⁵ *Minutes of the 83rd Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1902), p.40; *Primitive Methodist Leader*, 26 June 1913, p.450; *Primitive Methodist Leader*, 2 July 1914, p.465.

Congregationalists and others, which demonstrated ‘a strong community spirit, religious freedom and integration’.⁵⁶ The boundaries of the First Garden City extended across three ancient parishes: the old parish of Letchworth to the south-west, Norton to the north, and Willian to the south-east, but there was no Anglican place of worship in the new settlement until 1924. Clearly, the Primitive Methodist Connexion was determined to be a part of this primarily nonconformist community.⁵⁷ The Connexion may also have been attracted by the approach of Howard and the First Garden City Limited with regard to temperance, since no alcohol was permitted in the Garden City apart from the existing public houses in Norton and Willian.⁵⁸

Whilst progress was continuing at Letchworth, all was clearly not well with the Hitchin Circuit. The chapel at Baldock was closed in 1916, and at the Conference that year the Hitchin Circuit was amalgamated with the Letchworth Mission and the Biggleswade Branch (in Bedfordshire) to form the Herts and Beds Mission, under the Missions District. Elsewhere in the county, the circuits at Watford and Berkhamsted were still in existence. An article in the Primitive Methodist Leader in July 1916 commented that ‘when the Connexional Mission was established at Letchworth it was hoped that eventually Letchworth would become a strong strategic centre for the surrounding district’ and that considerable progress had been made towards that goal by the creation of the Herts and Beds Mission. The article referred in glowing terms to the enthusiasm and splendid spirit of unity that had marked the coming together of these different societies and concluded with the ‘hope that this new Mission will bring about a gracious revival of religion around the countryside Herts and Beds’. Elsewhere in the same edition, it was noted that

The daring venture at Letchworth has not been altogether free from anxious thought, but the policy of making it the driving centre of an extensive work comprising the

⁵⁶ Hall, Peter, *Cities of Tomorrow – An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design Since 1880* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), p.101; Garden City Collection, <<http://www.gardencitycollection.com/themes/spirituality-and-belief>> [accessed October 2020].

⁵⁷ Pevsner, Nikolaus, *The Buildings of England: Hertfordshire*, 2nd edn. revised by Bridget Cherry (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), p.229.

⁵⁸ Miller, Mervyn, *English Garden Cities: An Introduction* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2010), p.71.

station at Hitchin and Biggleswade will commend itself to all who know the three centres now joined up into one station.⁵⁹

At first glance, these two articles appear to leave the reader with the impression of an encouraging revival of Primitive Methodist fortunes in northern Hertfordshire and southern Bedfordshire. However, an altogether more pragmatic reading would see the setting up of the Herts and Beds Mission as a way of trying to save the situation in this locality after the Baldock society over-extended itself in setting up societies in Hitchin in 1900 and Letchworth in 1914 before, itself, collapsing and closing in 1916. Indeed, Baldock was not listed as one of the three Hertfordshire chapels in the new circuit, those being Hitchin, Letchworth and Benington.

In the event, the Herts and Beds Mission and the circuits at Watford and Berkhamsted all survived until Methodist Union in 1932.

Luton

Primitive Methodism was strong in Luton. First missioned in 1839 from Aylesbury, the society at Luton had only been in existence for four years before it was made a circuit in 1843, when it was recorded as having 183 members. It was given charge of the society at Trowley Bottom, Flamstead in 1845 (which had also been missioned from Aylesbury, a year earlier than Luton).⁶⁰

In the 1850s, Primitive Methodists from Luton began to mission areas in Hertfordshire to the south and east of the town. Societies were formed in Harpenden, Bendish, Breachwood Green and Whitwell; chapels were subsequently built at Harpenden and Bendish, but Breachwood Green and Whitwell had disappeared from the record by 1879. The society at

⁵⁹ Hitchin Station - missionary accounts 1910 - 1927 (after 1916 includes Herts and Beds Mission), NM4/7, HALS; *Primitive Methodist Leader*, 29 June 1916, pp.432-433; *Primitive Methodist Leader*, 27 July 1916, pp.500 and 501.

⁶⁰ Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service, Overview of Primitive Methodism in Luton, <<http://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityArchives/Luton/NonconformityinLuton/OverviewOfPrimitiveMethodismInLuton.aspx>> [accessed 26 January 2018]; Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.454; *Minutes of the 24th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1843), pp.12 and 29.

Markyate was added to the Luton Circuit in 1868. Further growth at Luton over the following decade resulted in the decision, in 1879, to split the circuit into two, referred to as Luton I and Luton II. The Luton II Circuit included the Hertfordshire societies of Harpenden, Bendish, Trowley Bottom and Markyate; in 1887, when the St Albans Mission circuit ceased to exist, the still-thriving society at Redbourn was transferred from that circuit to Luton II. In 1903, the Luton III Circuit was created, to which Markyate was transferred from Luton II Circuit. However, the society at Markyate ceased to exist in 1907 and the chapel was subsequently sold.⁶¹ The other Hertfordshire locations remained in the Luton II Circuit. In the early years of the twentieth century a revival of Primitive Methodist fortunes in St Albans resulted in the formation of a new society there and the opening of a new chapel to the north of the city in 1909. This society was placed under the care of the Luton II Circuit.

Saffron Walden

There have been passing references above to the Saffron Walden Circuit, which was established as a mission in 1844. The town was first visited by Primitive Methodist missionaries in 1838; a society was formed and a chapel, previously occupied by Wesleyan Methodists, was opened 1839. In 1845 the membership of the society was 170; this had risen to 516 in 1850 when Saffron Walden was made a circuit.⁶² Although the growth in numbers was encouraging, this was not always easily achieved, as Petty points out:

The friends had suffered much in many places from bitter opposition of clergymen, who frequently got them turned out of their employment because of their connection with the societies, and the congregations had often been disturbed by the rude behaviour of ignorant and godless young men ...⁶³

⁶¹ Richard and Geraldine Hogg, *The Book of Markyate – The Parish & Its People*, Markyate Local History Society (Tiverton: Halsgrove, 2002), p.39.

⁶² *Minutes of the 25th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1844), p.8; Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, pp.431-435; *Minutes of the 26th Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1845), pp.30-32; *Minutes of the 31st Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1850), pp.7-8 and 24-26.

⁶³ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.435.

Here, Petty is clearly relying on the first-hand evidence supplied by the Rev James Blades, the minister at Saffron Walden, that appeared in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* in 1847 and 1848 (as noted in Chapter 1):

Powerful as the work is, we have considerable opposition from parties who ought rather to help us. The clergy—n have greatly exerted themselves to stop our progress, and prevent our access to the people.⁶⁴

An intolerant clergy seek our extirpation, and even boast when successful in causing our poor, industrious supporters to be deprived of employment.⁶⁵

Once it was made a circuit in 1850, Saffron Walden was able to embark on new missionary activities itself. In Hertfordshire, the Saffron Walden circuit had gained two new societies at Anstey and Furneux Pelham by 1851, but it was to be another eleven years before the society at Dassells, near Braughing appears in the record, when missionaries from the Stanstead Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit ‘visited this place, and found its inhabitants living according to the course of this world, without God and without hope’.⁶⁶ Chapels were eventually built in all three locations; Furneux Pelham and Dassells were still in existence in 1932 but Anstey did not survive that long. It was still on the Saffron Walden circuit plan in 1889, but the last recorded baptism at Anstey was in March 1891.⁶⁷

The Primitive Methodist ministry in Hertfordshire

One of the most important factors for a circuit and its constituent local societies was the person who was stationed as a travelling preacher, because of the influence, drive and enthusiasm, or lack of these attributes, that a minister could bring to his (or, occasionally,

⁶⁴ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1847, p.308.

⁶⁵ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1848, p.750.

⁶⁶ *Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship, England and Wales, Report and Tables*, LXXXIX (1852-3) as referred to in Judith Burg (ed.), *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851* (Hertfordshire Record Publications Vol. 11, Hertfordshire Record Society, 1995), pp.118 and 121-122; *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1868, p.745.

⁶⁷ Department for Chapel Affairs, Methodist Church, *Methodist Church Buildings, Statistical Returns including seating accommodation as at July 1st, 1940* (Manchester: The Methodist Church, 1947), p.13; Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register, 1866 – 1908, NM9/11 and Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit Plan, October-December 1889, NM9/13, HALS. See Chapter 6 for a fuller discussion of the society at Anstey.

her) appointment. For example, in March 1869, the Saffron Walden Circuit sought to send a special report to the District Meeting and the Conference 'earnestly requesting the re-stationing of J Knipe', who was expected to be moved by Conference in July, because of the good work he was doing in expanding the cause in a number of new locations.⁶⁸

It is necessary, therefore, to look in some detail at the nature of the Primitive Methodist ministry in Hertfordshire as it affected the circuits. The first Primitive Methodist ministers in Hertfordshire to be included in the list of stations were appointed by the 1842 conference.⁶⁹ Over the following 91 years, a total of 181 different ministers served in Hertfordshire, fulfilling 218 appointments. The itinerant nature of this ministry is demonstrated by the fact that 153 ministers (84.5%) served only once in Hertfordshire and 94 of the appointments (51.9%) were for one year only. 23 ministers (12.7%) served twice and two (1.1%) served three times. More than one appointment in the same circuit was rare, occurring in only three circuits (Baldock, St Albans and Watford) during the 91 year period and involving only six ministers (3.3%). No minister served consecutive appointments in the same circuit. Three ministers (1.7%) had four appointments in the county: William Holland served at Hertford, twice at Watford and at St Albans between 1867 and 1884; John Rackham was appointed to Hertford, St Albans and twice at Baldock between 1849 and 1894; and William Widdowson was at St Albans, Watford and Berkhamsted before returning to St Albans, in the period from 1870 to 1886.

Itinerancy also provides a means of assessing the experience of a minister, as expressed in the number of years of 'travel' since their first appointment in the Connexion. By this measure, Hertfordshire seems to have been served by less experienced ministers, with over 56% having 10 or fewer years of travel on appointment. In the case of six circuits, the

⁶⁸ Meeting held on 8 March 1869, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stanstead Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

⁶⁹ As already noted, there is a mis-match between circuit boundaries and the Hertfordshire county boundary. Since the connexion's records are circuit based, any consideration of the Primitive Methodist ministry in Hertfordshire must therefore seek to exclude those circuits whose significant spheres of influence lie outside Hertfordshire. Consequently, this section (and, in particular, the metrics and statistical analysis it contains) is restricted to the eight circuits that were centred on societies which were located in the county. Those eight circuits are: Hertford, St Albans, Baldock, Watford, Berkhamsted, Hitchin, Letchworth and the Herts and Beds Mission. The metrics and statistical analysis are derived principally from the published Minutes of the various Annual Conferences and from William Leary, *Ministers & Circuits in the Primitive Methodist Church, a Directory* (Loughborough: Teamprint, in association with the World Methodist Historical Society, 1990).

highest percentage of ministers fell into this category; the circuits at Hertford and Baldock had the least experienced ministers, with 70% and 79% respectively having 10 or fewer years of travel on appointment. On the other hand, the majority of ministers appointed to the Berkhamsted circuit (32%) had between 11 and 20 years of travel on appointment. The average number of years of travel on appointment was 12 years, but for Berkhamsted it was more than 18 years and for Watford it was more than 17. For 34 ministers (18.8%), their appointment to a Hertfordshire circuit was their first experience of itinerant ministry, although such appointments were not evenly distributed across all circuits. 26% of Baldock's ministers were first appointments, as were more than 27% of the ministers at the Herts and Beds Mission, whereas Hitchin, Berkhamsted and Watford all had 10% or fewer. All first appointments in Hertfordshire were for one year only, except in the case of Willie Dunham who was at Baldock for two years from 1863 to 1864 and Henry Fletcher who was at Watford from 1902 to 1905. John Rackham was Hertfordshire's most experienced Primitive Methodist minister, having accumulated 43 years of travel when he was appointed for the second time to the Baldock circuit in 1890.

The average length of a Hertfordshire appointment was two years, although, as already noted above, more than half of all appointments were for only one year. In particular, almost four fifths of ministers with first appointments in the county served for only one year, although seven of the 34 (21%) stayed for longer. Four ministers at Baldock served for two years whilst the Watford circuit had ministers with three and four year first terms. Harry Rhead was given his first appointment, at the age of 36, to the Herts and Beds Mission in 1919 and, unusually, stayed for six years.

Of the 181 ministers appointed to Hertfordshire circuits, Leary gives the dates of birth of 153 (84.5%). The average age on appointment of these ministers was 39 and, for most circuits, the average age varied only very slightly from 35 to 39. There were two exceptions: Watford recorded an average age on appointment of 43 and for Berkhamsted it was 45, which is consistent with the appointment of more experienced and well 'travelled' ministers. Indeed, over 95% of Berkhamsted's ministers and 84% of Watford's were aged 30 or over on appointment. As for the 35 ministers whose first appointment was in Hertfordshire, 17 of the 18 (94.4%) whose age is given by Leary were under 30 at the time of

their appointment, which is certainly in keeping with the resolution recorded in the Minutes of Conference for 1820 where, in answer to the question 'To what age shall the admission of travelling preachers be limited?' the answer was given: 'None shall be taken in above forty five.'⁷⁰

From the information given by Leary it is possible to identify 39 ministers who were married at some point in their ministry. Fourteen of these (35.9%) were unmarried when they were first appointed to a station in Hertfordshire. In the 1840s and 1850s, unmarried ministers outnumbered married ones by two to one but by 1869 married ministers accounted for half of those appointed. The last unmarried preacher began his ministry in Hertfordshire in 1884. Interestingly, the Baldock Circuit (between 1847 and 1901) employed more unmarried preachers than any of the other Hertfordshire circuits and, overall, had more unmarried preachers (53%) than married ones. As will be seen in Chapter 5, itinerant ministers who were married cost a circuit considerably more than an unmarried one, and this would have significant financial implications for local societies.

Dorothy Graham has shown that, from the beginning, the Primitive Methodist Connexion recognised that women 'could be chosen by God equally with men to work in and for his Kingdom', although, as McLeod has noted, this was a source of much controversy at the time.⁷¹ As a result, the female travelling preacher was frequently to be found in early Primitive Methodism, certainly for the first fifty years or so of its existence, although by the latter part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century women became increasingly excluded from all positions of any importance, including preaching. As to itinerant women preachers, from 1821 the numbers reported to the annual conferences varied between 11 and a maximum of 26 in 1834. In the following decade, the number of itinerant women preachers steadily declined, with a sudden drop after 1843.⁷² Graham looked at the stationing of itinerant women preachers in the south of England, which area included the Brinkworth District within which the Reading circuit was situated. She

⁷⁰ *Minutes of the 1st Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (Bemmersley: 1820), p.4.

⁷¹ Dorothy Graham, 'Chosen by God - the Female Itinerants of Early Primitive Methodism' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1986), p.200; McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, p.27.

⁷² Graham, 'Chosen by God', pp. 13, 30, 198 and 201; Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, p.25.

concluded that the Connexion showed ‘a trend towards the placing of the women in rural or missionary situations particularly later in the 1840s’, suggesting that ‘the pioneering spirit of Primitive Methodism still relied upon the novelty value and attraction of the female preacher to present an impact on the area to be ‘opened’.’ From 1837 to 1843 the superintendent minister of the Reading circuit was John Ride, a ‘veteran’ missionary well used to opening up new areas. Graham notes that, during his time in the Brinkworth District (from 1828 to 1843), ‘there were a total of ninety stationings of women in that District and its missions’. One of those ‘stationings’ was Elizabeth Starr, who, in 1842, was stationed at the Watford Mission, then part of the Reading Circuit, just as Hertfordshire was beginning to be ‘opened up’.⁷³

Starr’s appointment at Watford was her first stationing as an itinerant preacher. The following years saw her at Brentford, Essex Mission and Pickering. She left the itinerant ministry in 1846 on her marriage to Thomas Green, who was also an itinerant preacher. He was subsequently stationed to the Hertford Circuit in 1854 for two years, but his wife retained the distinction of having been the only itinerant woman preacher in Hertfordshire. She was also one of only eleven female preachers referred to by Graham as having married a Primitive Methodist minister. Nevertheless, as Graham points out, it is highly likely that, following her marriage, she ‘continued [her] work in another guise’ as the Connexion offered ‘considerable scope’ for women to take up positions of leadership in local societies.⁷⁴

The deployment of ministers to circuits

As has been shown above, the circuit was one of the primary agents of change as regards growth and evangelism for the Primitive Methodists. However, the flexibility of the circuit system was not simply related to geography and the circuit structure but also extended to the deployment of the Connexion’s ministers. This was a task that was overseen by the annual Conference and District Meetings when the travelling preachers were appointed to the various ‘stations’ for the following year. The number of ministers appointed to a particular circuit was not fixed and immutable but could be, and was, changed from time to

⁷³ Graham, ‘Chosen by God’, pp.177 and 178.

⁷⁴ Graham, ‘Chosen by God’, p.63; Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, p.25.

time, both to encourage new growth and to support existing societies, in accordance with the priorities set by the Conference and the Districts.

Over the 90 years from 1842 to 1932, there were on average a total of five travelling preachers appointed to work in Hertfordshire. For most circuits, the usual number of ministers was two, although for Berkhamsted, Hitchin and Letchworth it was only ever one.⁷⁵ At various times, however, Baldock, St Albans and Watford all supported three ministers. As the fortunes of the various societies in Hertfordshire waxed and waned, so the number of ministers and membership levels both varied over time; moreover, it is possible to detect a relationship between both these variables, as Figure 2.1 below illustrates.⁷⁶

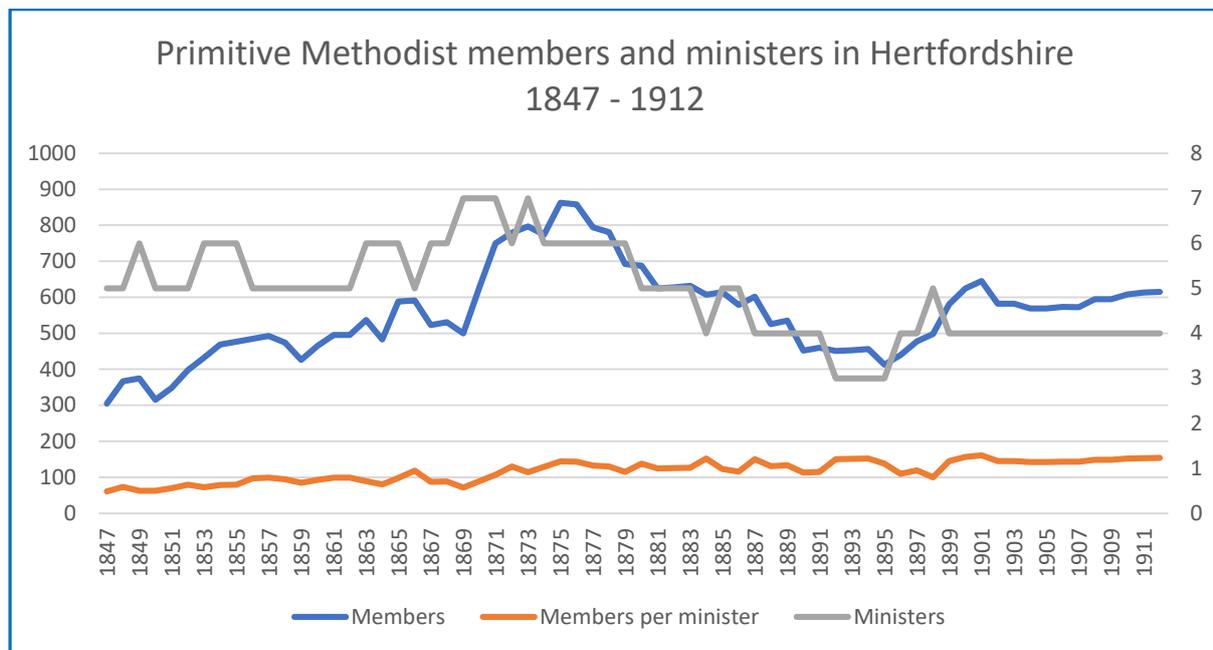


Figure 2.1: Primitive Methodist members and ministers in Hertfordshire – 1847 to 1912

⁷⁵ The Primitive Methodist Annual Conference in 1836 (Consolidated Minutes, p. 22) determined that each new circuit should be able to support two travelling preachers, although from 1850 an increasing number of new circuits throughout the Connexion were formed with only a single itinerant minister. See also Delia Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900' (PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2002), p.237.

⁷⁶ Membership figures for Hertfordshire societies in the first five years or so from 1842 are very patchy; reliable figures only become available from 1847.

In the early days of the Connexion's history in Hertfordshire, between 1842 and 1848, there were three ministers stationed at Watford and St Albans, and a similar number were appointed to Baldock in 1849, two years after it was created. This was the Conference's response to, and a clear reflection of, the strong growth of Primitive Methodism in Baldock at this time, as it took over the role of expansion in the east of Hertfordshire from Hertford itself. As Figure 2.1 shows, an injection of ministerial resources between 1849 and 1855 was matched by steady growth in membership levels. Again, an increase in ministers between 1866 and 1871 was followed, between 1869 and 1875, by a rise in membership. During the period from 1876 to 1896, membership levels fell steadily, as did the number of ministers stationed to Hertfordshire circuits, with reductions in minister numbers in 1880 and 1887 being followed by falls in the number of members. Conversely, an increase in ministers between 1895 and 1898 resulted in a resurgence in membership between 1896 and 1901. Overall, the ratio of ministers to members rose from 61 members per minister in 1847 to around 150 in the early years of the 20th century. The corresponding Connexional figures were 502 members to ministers in 1847 and 183 in 1905. These figures, particularly in 1847 further demonstrate that the Connexion was prepared to station a higher proportion of ministers in areas of active evangelism (such as Hertfordshire) than elsewhere.⁷⁷

Looking in more detail at the Baldock circuit, the membership figures here reduced between 1849 and 1851, and this led to the decision of the Conference in 1850 to reduce the number of ministers from three to two. However, in the early 1860s, the Baldock society experienced something of a revival, its membership rising from 220 in 1859 to 280 in 1863, an increase of some 27%. Conference responded by increasing the number of ministers to three, and membership continued to grow, reaching 324 in 1865. However, in 1866, one minister was withdrawn from the Baldock circuit, possibly due to other more pressing demands elsewhere in the Connexion, and this resulted in a fall in membership over the next three years, albeit that the lost ground was subsequently made up by 1870.

The Hertford circuit provides further evidence of the need for ministers to support the growth of the Connexion. Writing in November 1845, John Guy (one of the two ministers

⁷⁷ Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.486; *Primitive Methodist Leader*, 29 June 1905, p.58.

appointed to the Hertford Mission) advised that 'I have just had an invitation to open Bishop's Stortford, fourteen miles to the east of Hertford; but I fear we cannot supply it, unless the General Missionary Committee could allow us a third preacher'.⁷⁸

When the Berkhamsted Mission was formed in 1870, Conference appointed two travelling preachers to serve here. The pattern of growth that had led to the creation of the new circuit continued, with membership rising by 34% from 160 in 1871 to 214 in 1874. Thereafter, membership numbers began to dwindle year on year and a sharp fall from 184 in 1878 to 124 the following year saw the Conference of 1879 reduce the number of ministers to one, at which level it remained until 1932, despite a subsequent rise in membership to maximum levels of 189 in 1881 and 188 in 1891.

The Watford circuit also provides an example of the flexible deployment of ministerial resources. On its re-formation in 1877, only one minister was appointed to the circuit. Membership grew steadily from 127 in 1878 to 180 in 1895 but the following year it rose sharply, by 14%, to 205. Conference responded by increasing the number of ministers to two in 1896. The following two years saw a further increase of 50 members, prompting the 1898 Conference to add a further minister to this circuit. Unfortunately, this third minister was unable to fulfil his appointment due to a prolonged period of ill health; however, in spite of his enforced absence, the circuit's membership continued to grow, so the following year the Conference of 1899 reduced the number of ministers back to two, at which level it remained until 1932, apart from a temporary drop to one minister between 1917 and 1919.

Looking at the deployment of travelling preachers in Hertfordshire from 1842 to 1932, overall there have been numerous small, but often significant, changes in the numbers of ministers appointed to particular circuits. Equally, it is clear that it was the circuit system that gave the annual Conference the flexibility it needed in making the most efficient and effective use of its ministerial resources, as it enabled the number of ministers appointed to a particular circuit to be varied from time to time either in response to local circumstances

⁷⁸ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1846, p.26.

of growth or retrenchment or because of some factor external to Hertfordshire which required resources to be redirected elsewhere.

Local preachers

In the Primitive Methodist Connexion, ordained travelling preachers represented only part of the ministerial resources available. The large number of chapels and other preaching places combined with the fact that there were often at least two, if not three, services on a Sunday at most places meant that there were a great many pulpit appointments to fill, far more indeed than the number of travelling preachers available to fill them. As a consequence, the Primitive Methodists, like their Wesleyan counterparts, relied very heavily on 'local preachers' to fill many of these pulpit appointments on a regular basis. In the Primitive Methodist Connexion local preachers were 'members of our churches who possess suitable gifts and graces for such service, and who, while following secular employments, are properly authorised to conduct public worship and preach the Gospel as time and opportunity may permit'.⁷⁹ In 1848, it was reported to the Conference that there were 518 itinerant preachers and 8,056 local preachers, a ratio of 1:15.6. This was a proportion which remained remarkably constant throughout the Connexion's existence.⁸⁰

Gilbert has regarded the difference between ministers and lay preachers in the early history of Methodism as being 'simply the functional differentiation between full-time and part-time workers'.⁸¹ However, that is not an adequate description of the differences between the two categories of preachers, because the itinerant ministers were stationed to their appointments by the Connexion and the District, whereas lay preachers were local appointments. In the light of this distinction, the circuit system was of particular importance to local preachers, because, although such preachers were members of local societies, they were authorised, appointed and monitored by the circuit. Moreover, their preaching

⁷⁹ Paragraph 438, *The General Rules of the Primitive Methodist Church: revised by order of the ninety-third Annual Conference*, held at Norwich, June 12-20 1912 (London: W. A. Hammond, 1912), p.104.

⁸⁰ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1848, p.499. In 1870, there were 961 travelling preachers and 14,322 local preachers, giving a ratio of 1:14.9 (*Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1870, p.509) and in 1905 there were 1,124 travelling preachers as against 16,262 local preachers, a ratio of 1:14.5 (*Primitive Methodist Leader* 29 June 1905, p58).

⁸¹ Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, p.150.

appointments could be at any local church within the circuit.⁸² However, because such preachers were locally based, there is no central record of who they were; so far as circuit records are concerned, there appears to have been no local register of local preachers and the only reliable source of information is the circuit preaching plan.

Pocock has noted the significant role of the circuit plan in relation to local preachers, commenting that

for the local preacher, to have one's name listed on the plan meant acceptance and authorisation by the circuit as exhorter or preacher 'on trial' or fully accredited local preacher. Final acceptance as a fully authorised local preacher was often referred to as being put onto 'full plan' (and it still is).⁸³

Very few circuit plans for Hertfordshire's Primitive Methodist circuits are known to have survived. The earliest such document at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS) is the plan for the April-June quarter of 1875 for the Baldock Circuit. HALS also has Baldock plans covering various quarters in the years from 1898 to 1902), a single quarter Saffron Walden plan for 1889, and single quarter plans for Hitchin in 1903 and 1923 and Enfield (covering the chapel at Goff's Oak) for 1930. The Essex Record Office has a single quarter plan for 1850 for the Saffron Walden circuit, and Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism holds copies of single quarter plans for the Saffron Walden Circuit for 1868, 1905 and 1909. A plan for the July-September quarter of 1892 for the Baldock Circuit is also in existence.⁸⁴

An analysis of the Baldock circuit plans reveals that its supply of local preachers was very much in line with the Connexional average, at a ratio of 1:15.2. At the higher end of the

⁸² Pocock, 'The Origins, Development and Significance of the Circuit', p.6.

⁸³ Pocock, 'The Origins, Development and Significance of the Circuit', p.230.

⁸⁴ Baldock Circuit Plan 1875 (Apr-Jun), NM6/47; Baldock Circuit Plans 1898 (Oct-Dec), 1899 (Jul-Sep), 1900 (Jul-Sep), 1901 (Apr-Jun) and 1902 (Apr-Jun), NM6/48; Saffron Walden Circuit Plans 1889 (Oct-Dec), NM9/13; Hitchin Circuit Plans 1903 (Oct-Dec), NM6/48; 1923 (Jan-Apr) and 1923 (Jul-Sep), NM4/12, HALS; Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1850 (Apr-Jul), Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels in the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1846-1859, D/NM 3/5/1, ERO; Saffron Walden Circuit Plans 1868 (Jul-Sep), 1905 (Jan-Mar) and 1909 (Apr-Jun), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism. A copy of a plan for the Baldock Circuit in 1892 (Jul-Sep) is in the possession of the author.

scale, the Saffron Walden circuit enjoyed rather more in the way of local preachers, with an average ratio to travelling preachers of 1:19.9. The Enfield circuit was at the other end of the scale, with a ratio to travelling preachers of 1:8.5. However, the ratio of travelling preachers to local preachers is only one measure of the importance of local preachers to the Connexion. Perhaps of more significance, certainly in terms of the week by week preaching appointments throughout the circuit, is the proportion of those appointments that were taken by local preachers. Almost all chapels had at least two services on a Sunday and many chapels provided three. Thus, in the Saffron Walden circuit in 1889, there were generally 32 services planned every Sunday. Even if the two travelling preachers appointed to the circuit covered three services each, this would still mean that over 81% of these services would have been led by local preachers. Moreover, it is clear from a study of the circuit plans that the appointments of the travelling preachers were not evenly spread across all the circuit chapels. For example, the 'head' chapel of the circuit and those in some other key locations received a disproportionately high number of visits by travelling preachers, leaving a higher proportion of services in the other chapels being covered by local preachers. Many of the Connexion's chapels in Hertfordshire fall into this latter category with the result that, on average, over 85% of the Sunday services were conducted by local preachers. In the Hertfordshire chapels of the Saffron Walden circuit this figure rose to 92% although in the Hitchin circuit it was only 77%.⁸⁵ This lower figure is almost certainly accounted for by the fact that, in 1903, Hitchin was still a growing 'new station', having been missioned in 1898, and that, as a consequence, more ministerial resources were being expended here in order to further this growth. Indeed, the circuit plan for the last quarter of 1903 shows that almost 54% of services at the Hitchin chapel were conducted by travelling preachers. By comparison, in this same quarter at Ashwell, a small village chapel in the former Baldock circuit, only one service out of 26 (i.e. less than 4% of all appointments) was conducted by a travelling preacher.

It is evident from an analysis of the extant circuit plans that, in general, the same local preacher would take the morning and afternoon Sunday services at the same chapel, with a

⁸⁵ Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1889 (Oct-Dec), NM9/13; Hitchin Circuit Plan 1903 (Oct-Dec), NM6/48, HALS. Saffron Walden Circuit Plans 1868 (Jul-Sep), 1905 (Jan-Mar) and 1909 (Apr-Jun), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism.

different local preacher being appointed to take the evening service. Very occasionally, one local preacher would conduct all three services. It is also interesting to note that it was very unusual for a local preacher to take more than one service a quarter at any one chapel. This is a reflection of the fact that local preachers were appointed by, and to be of service to, the circuit as a whole. The system also ensured that all local societies in the circuit could benefit not only from the variety of preachers and types of worship but also the widest possible spectrum of Primitive Methodist preaching styles and personalities. It was also entirely in keeping with the 'travelling preacher' ethos of the Connexion's ordained ministry.⁸⁶

The demands placed on local preachers were considerable. Alongside their preaching responsibilities, many of them undertook other roles and duties in their local societies. Kendall refers to 'the amount of toil, voluntarily and cheerfully undergone in the past by the local preachers', and the Stansted Branch report to the London District meeting in March 1872, in a reference to the loss of both teachers and scholars from the Sunday Schools at Furneux Pelham, Dassell and Bishop's Stortford, gave as one of the reasons for these losses the fact that 'some who were engaged as teachers were also Local Preachers and employed nearly every Sabbath'.⁸⁷ Clearly, their roles as local preachers commanded more priority than as Sunday School teachers.

The importance of local preachers to the maintenance of circuit life should not, therefore, be underestimated. Equally, it is not hard to see why the lay members of the Connexion who were called to this important work were given particular recognition by being "named" on the circuit plan. Such an exalted status in chapel and circuit life was not open to everyone, however. As the Saffron Walden circuit plan for the first quarter of 1905 reminded its readers, all 'candidates for the Plan' had to 'undergo a *viva voce* examination in English, Elementary Theology, Holy Scriptures and Connexionalism, to pass two *written* examinations in English, Wesley's Sermons, New Testament Introduction, and Homiletics, to preach two trial sermons and to be publicly ordained to the Lay Ministry of the Primitive

⁸⁶ Julia Stewart Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion: Its Background and Early History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p.141.

⁸⁷ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II, p.125; Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, 1870-1879, D/NM 3/5/3, ERO.

Methodist Church'.⁸⁸ It was not unreasonable, therefore, that those who had applied themselves successfully to these tasks and been appointed to the office of local preacher should be afforded some recognition for their efforts. Equally, the grass roots membership could be assured that they were not being 'sold short' if worship in their chapel was almost always conducted by a local preacher rather than a fully ordained travelling preacher.

The nature of the Primitive Methodist offering

The circuit plans are also a useful means of identifying the extent of activities taking place throughout the year in the various chapel locations. Clearly, Sunday services are of prime importance but it is also instructive to note that every chapel had a regular weekday evening appointment. These were not simply gatherings of the women's group, the Band of Hope or a prayer meeting (although such events did also take place) but were full services of worship and were, in some instances, specifically identified as such on the circuit plan. Indeed, the Saffron Walden circuit plan for the Winter quarter of 1889 went so far as to quote from the Minutes of the 1873 Conference in reminding everyone that 'all our officials, as well as private members, are strongly recommended to attend the various means of grace, as diligently as possible, as well on week-days as Sundays'.⁸⁹ It was usual for the head chapel of the circuit to have one week night meeting every week, although most of the other circuit chapels would hold these services every two or three weeks. The day of the week was determined by the quarterly circuit meeting and they were particularly arranged so that the travelling preachers could make the most of this additional opportunity of visiting the smaller locations in the circuit.⁹⁰ Indeed, it is striking to compare the proportion of weekday services that were taken by the travelling preachers with those for Sunday services (referred to above). On average, travelling preachers conducted 60% of the weekday services (compared to less than 15% of Sunday services). In some cases, the weekday service was the only occasion in a quarter when a chapel was visited by a travelling preacher.⁹¹ The Hitchin circuit plan for the Spring quarter of 1902 shows a particularly

⁸⁸ Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1905 (Jan-Mar), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism.

⁸⁹ Baldock Circuit Plan 1898 (Oct-Dec), NM6/48; Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1889 (Oct-Dec), NM9/13, HALS.

⁹⁰ See, for example, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1, ERO.

⁹¹ In the Spring quarter of 1875, at Barley chapel in the Baldock Circuit all 39 Sunday services were taken by local preachers, whereas four of the five weekday services were conducted by the travelling preacher. In the Autumn quarter of 1899, Ashwell chapel, also in the Baldock Circuit, had local preachers for all of its 26

interesting use of ministerial resources. Hitchin had been newly 'missioned' from Baldock only some three years earlier, and the chapel had been not even been open two years. Of the 18 appointments fulfilled that quarter by the travelling preacher (there being only one appointed by Conference to this circuit), 10 of them (56%) were at Hitchin. He went six times to Benington, a long standing (and prosperous) chapel, and twice to Baldock (the former circuit 'head' chapel). Ashwell did not receive a single Sunday visit. However, as for the 33 weekday services in this quarter, 29 of them (88%) were led by the travelling preacher; he conducted all the services at Benington (7), Baldock (7) and Ashwell (6) and nine of the 13 services at Hitchin. He was clearly focussing his Sunday efforts on building up the society at Hitchin but without neglecting the other important chapels at Benington and Baldock, yet he was also making maximum use of his mid-week time to visit these other places whilst still maintaining a significant presence at Hitchin.⁹²

The circuit plan also draws attention to various special events and occasions, such as harvest festival celebrations, anniversaries and missionary meetings. the dates of which were set by the circuit's quarterly meeting. Chapel and Sunday School Anniversaries are noted, as are tea meetings, revival meetings, protracted meetings and camp meetings. Chapel anniversaries were often extended affairs, with a meeting on Saturday (often with some form of 'entertainment') followed by three services on the Sunday, ending with a 'public meeting' on Monday. Harvest festivals (similarly usually accompanied by a Monday meeting after the Sunday services), love feasts, sacrament services (Holy Communion) and mission events also merit mention, as do the occasional lecture given by visiting preachers.⁹³ The quarterly meeting also determined when local societies should hold revival meetings, protracted meetings and camp meetings. There were two main reasons for holding these meetings: firstly, they were intended 'to revive the zeal of existing members' and, secondly, they were used as a means 'to create new converts'.⁹⁴ As Ambler notes, revival meetings 'sustained existing structures' and 'became increasingly inward-looking as the need to bring

Sunday services, but a travelling preacher visited them for each of the three weekday services planned that quarter. Baldock Circuit Plan 1875 (Apr-Jun), NM6/47; Baldock Circuit Plan 1899 (Jul-Sep), NM6/48, HALS.

⁹² Baldock Circuit Plan 1902 (Apr-Jun), NM6/48, HALS.

⁹³ See, for example, Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1889 (Oct-Dec), NM9/13; Baldock Circuit Plan 1875 (Apr-Jun), NM6/47; Baldock Circuit Plan 1902 (Apr-Jun), NM6/48, HALS.

⁹⁴ Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', p.231.

into membership children and grand-children of the early converts, together with the rising generations of Sunday scholars, became apparent'.⁹⁵ These revival meetings were planned Sunday services, when 'various travelling or local preachers were engaged to give a short address to the gathered congregation'.⁹⁶ The concept of revival meetings was also very much in tune with the itinerant nature of the Connexion's travelling preachers. In a sense, each time a new minister was appointed to a circuit, which in Hertfordshire occurred approximately every two years, was regarded as an opportunity to inject new life into local societies. Protracted meetings followed a similar format but, as the name suggests, involved a series of meetings that took place over consecutive nights, often lasting a week or more.⁹⁷ Revival meetings and protracted meetings took place in the chapel; in contrast, the camp meeting was an open air gathering. Typically the camp meeting would be a whole day affair involving singing, praying, preaching, exhortation and testimony, and was an effective means of winning more converts to the cause.⁹⁸ However, it would seem that the efficacy of the camp meeting was in decline as early as 1835, when there were 'loud complaints from societies' about the deteriorating state of such events, and by 1860 a number of Hertfordshire villages in the Saffron Walden Circuit were holding only one such meeting a year. Nevertheless, as well as being of benefit to existing members, camp meetings did also serve the purpose of drawing public attention to the Connexion and its activities. Because they were frequently reported by the local press, they also acted as a 'recruitment' opportunity. Many other special events and services also merited mention in the local press which similarly enabled the activities of local Primitive Methodist societies to be given wider publicity.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists & Reformers*, p.7.

⁹⁶ Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', p.231.

⁹⁷ John E. Minor, 'The Mantle of Elijah: Nineteenth-century Primitive Methodism and Twentieth-century Pentecostalism', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 43.6(i) (December 1982), 141-149 (p.144); Thomas Church, *Popular Sketches of Primitive Methodism: Being a Link in the Chain of British Ecclesiastical History* (London: Thomas Church, 1850), p.134. The protracted meeting held at Markyate in 1894 merited a mention in the local newspaper (*Hertfordshire Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 3 November 1894, p.7).

⁹⁸ Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, pp.22-28; Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, pp.62-69.; David M. Young, *Change and Decay: Primitive Methodism from late Victorian times till World War I* (Stoke-on-Trent: Tentmaker Publications, 2017), p.9. The preaching and praying services at camp meetings was expected to be 'short and lively' and, in particular, 'the preaching should be pointed and practical'. One sermon at each camp-meeting was required to be specially addressed to children. (*The General Rules of the Primitive Methodist Church 1912*, Rule 306.)

⁹⁹ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, p.197; Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1889 (Oct-Dec), NM9/13, HALS; Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1; Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM

Conclusion

An appreciation of the governance of the Primitive Methodist Connexion and how it was structured is key to understanding how the movement grew and developed in Hertfordshire. Of particular importance is the role of the circuit, both as a driver of growth through missionary activities and as a stabilising influence on newly formed societies. The circuit, and its constituent local societies, also provided the means by which the grass roots membership was organized and which provided those lay people with the opportunity to fulfil various roles in the running of the organisation. The patterns of circuit development in Hertfordshire, which are not dissimilar to those found elsewhere across the Connexion, demonstrate the organisation's response to change, whether as a result of growth or decline. The number and geographical extent of the circuits in the county was never fixed but changed over time as new areas were missioned and other locations were 'given up'. There is also evidence in the early twentieth century of retrenchment in the face of decline in membership.¹⁰⁰

The circuit was also the basis of the way in which the Connexion organised and used its ministerial resources both to facilitate growth and to support existing congregations. Most travelling preachers only spent a short time in Hertfordshire, with more than half of all appointments being for only one year. In the case of ministers whose first appointment was in Hertfordshire, this figure rose to nearly 80%. Overall, Hertfordshire was served by less experienced ministers, with over 56% having 10 or fewer years of travel on appointment. The number of ministers appointed to circuits in Hertfordshire also varied from year to year, and this was a reflection of the fact that the circuit system enabled the Connexion's annual Conference to make the most efficient and effective use of its ministerial resources by

3/1/5, ERO. Obelkevich noted a similar pattern in South Lindsey (see James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society – South Lindsey 1825-1875* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p.227). Local press reports include: *Hertfordshire Express*, 6 July 1861; *Hertford Mercury*, 8 February 1862; *Hemel Hempstead Gazette*, 3 April 1875; *Herts and Cambs Reporter and Royston Crow*, 29 July 1881; *Watford Observer*, 15 March 1902. Even in 1910 camp meetings were still taking place but, as the *Herts and Cambs Reporter and Royston Crow* for 26 August 1910 (p.8) reported, 'whereas in former years good congregations used to assemble the meetings on Sunday last were very thinly attended'.

¹⁰⁰ The phrase 'given up' was frequently used by the Connexion's historians where, for one reason or another, missionary resources were withdrawn because local societies had failed to become established. See, for example, Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, p.529 and Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.366.

varying the number of ministers appointed to a particular circuit either in response to local circumstances (whether of growth or retrenchment) or because of some factor elsewhere in the Connexion which had a greater priority than Hertfordshire.

The work of these travelling ministers was greatly assisted by the circuit's local preachers; indeed, given the number of Sunday and weekday services that were planned at all chapels, it is clear that the Connexion would simply have failed to operate without them. It is difficult, therefore, to underestimate the importance of local preachers to the maintenance of circuit life.

In addition to the Sunday and weekday services, all chapels were involved in promoting special events, both for their own benefit and as a means of seeking new followers. Camp meetings were the primary public event for achieving this objective, but the publicity given by local press coverage to wider activities such as chapel and other anniversaries, special services and other events also served to draw the public's attention to what the Primitive Methodists were engaged in doing in a particular locality.

Chapter 3

Property matters

Introduction

In theological terms a church in any given place is often understood as being represented by its people. However, as the essence of a religious society is a gathering together of its people, it can be argued that a church's meeting places are the focus of its identity in a particular location. This was certainly true of the Primitive Methodist chapel; this building was the physical manifestation of the Primitive Methodist Connexion on the ground, demonstrating to the outside world the fact that the movement was present in a particular place.¹ Indeed, as the Connexion's records demonstrate, by 1896, nearly three quarters of all Primitive Methodist chapels and a 'large proportion' of preaching places were in villages.²

A meeting place for the local society was critically important: not only was it essential for the initial formation of a society but it was also necessary if that society was to develop and grow. Moreover, it was equally necessary in order to provide a basis for evangelising new locations and, thereby, growing the Connexion.³ The case of Bishop's Stortford demonstrates the importance to the Connexion of a meeting place. Although it first came onto the circuit plan in March 1861, the mere survival of the society here was a precarious one for much of its existence. In June 1865, it lost its meeting place (see footnotes 41 and 54 below); in 1866, the Quarterly Meeting decided 'that Bishop Stortford be planned next quarter, that we preach in Mrs Coote's room offered at a small rental weekly'. Matters seemed hardly more settled the following year when the Quarterly Meeting resolved 'that preaching services be appointed at Bp Stortford next quarter at 10 1/2, 2 1/2 and 6 o'clock,

¹ Rodney Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists and Reformers: Primitive Methodism and Rural Society, South Lincolnshire, 1817-1875* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1989), p.4.

² Minutes of the Primitive Methodist Conference 1896, pp.183-184.

³ A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740-1914* (London and New York: Longman, 1976), pp.160-161; H. B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II (London: Robert Bryant, c. 1905), p.275.

providing we succeed in getting the Friends Meeting House', and ten years later, in 1877, the Quarterly Meeting was forced to conclude 'that Bishops Stortford come off the plan, because we have no place to preach in and no congregation to preach to'. The same Meeting also requested a Mr Sleight to 'enquire of Mr Gill, the Wesleyan preacher at Bishops Stortford respecting Berdew Chapel and its possible conveyance to us' but it appears that nothing came of this. Finally, the Quarterly Meeting decided in 1894 'that after due consideration we decide not to re-open a Prim. Meth. Society in Bishop's Stortford'.⁴

Nuthampstead provides a further example, not only of a lack of accommodation but also competition from another nonconformist denomination. In this case, the December 1880 Quarterly Meeting resolved that the society here should come off the plan 'as there is no longer a room to preach in because the preachers have neglected five Sundays out of six. This is a small place and the Independents preach there'.⁵ In neighbouring Barkway, considerable efforts were made to establish a presence but 'for want of a preaching room [we] have not been able to form a society'.⁶ Nuthampstead, Barkway and Bishops Stortford clearly demonstrate the fact that a failure to acquire a meeting place meant, essentially, a failure of the Connexion's mission to that location. As Ambler found, after 1851 the success of a particular Primitive Methodism cause 'became increasingly tied to the maintenance and development of secure institutional structures'.⁷

Primitive Methodist chapel building generally had very humble antecedents. Kendall explains that the 'usual order of development' in the missioning of a locality would be outdoor preaching followed by 'the offer of a cottage or room from some kindly disposed person' in which regular services would then be held, such that 'the cottage would become

⁴ Meetings held on 18 March 1861, 10 September 1877 and 5 June 1894, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1; meetings held on 6 June 1865, 3 December 1866 and 6 September 1867, Stanstead Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, Essex Record Office (ERO).

⁵ Meeting held on 7 December 1880, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1, ERO.

⁶ Saffron Walden Circuit Report 15 March 1875, Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1870-1879, D/NM 3/5/3, ERO.

⁷ Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists and Reformers*, p.57.

the recognised preaching-house'.⁸ The acquisition of a chapel was the next step, but many Primitive Methodist preaching places, particularly in newly evangelised rural areas such as Hertfordshire, were small and simple structures, in line with its more evangelical approach in appealing directly to the lower classes of society in a particular locality, and in contrast to the Wesleyans who by the middle of the 19th century were increasingly turning to the use of the 'Gothic' style, as was the Established Church. In such rural areas, with fewer actual and potential members, who were often of lower social status compared to urban areas, the cost of property (both acquisition and subsequent maintenance) was almost always a major factor.⁹

Kendall, aware of the potential criticism that too much attention could be paid to bricks and mortar at the expense of the spiritual needs of the people, argued that there were three principal reasons for the emphasis on chapel building: for 'the housing of the new converts, the making provision for their needs, and the creation of the plant needful for future working', quoting with approval from the General Chapel Fund Report to the Conference of 1853:

The most casual observer of the Connexion's interests must have remarked that suitable chapels, on good sites, and in workable circumstances, are among the most effective secondary agencies for promoting the welfare of old societies and congregations, and for giving permanence and extension to new ones. Hence the

⁸ H. B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I (London: Robert Bryant, c. 1905), pp.121-122; see also George W. Dolbey, *The Architectural Expression of Methodism - The First Hundred Years* (London: The Epworth Press, 1964), p.23.

⁹ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, p.110; Stephen Hatcher, *The Stone which the Builders Rejected – the Primitive Methodist Chapel 1811-1932* (Manchester: Methodist Property Office, 2001), p.9; David A. Barton, *Discovering Chapels and Meeting Houses* (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications Limited, 1990), pp.24-25; James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825-1875* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p.222; Dolbey, *The Architectural Expression of Methodism*, p.17 and p.118; Doreen Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.191 and 261; Edward Royle, 'From Philistines to Goths - Nonconformist chapel styles in Victorian England', in *New Directions in Local History since Hoskins*, ed. by Christopher Dyer, Andrew Hopper, Evelyn Lord and Nigel Tringham (Hatfield: Hertfordshire Publications, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2011), p.187. The issue of the costs associated with the acquisition and maintenance of chapels is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

importance of both building such places and of attending wisely and diligently to their affairs when erected.¹⁰

Fowler, a Primitive Methodist minister, offered three reasons why societies would want to build chapels, namely for public oral instruction, for worship and for fellowship and Hatcher has suggested four different purposes: (i) the chapel gave some standing in society to many who in other ways had been dispossessed; (ii) it removed the pressure from those who lived in 'tied cottages' (because of the threat of eviction from landlords opposed to the New Dissent); (iii) it offered the possibility for greater numbers to attend than could be accommodated in one room of a cottage; and (iv) it offered a quality public alternative to the public house.¹¹

Kendall gives numerous examples of 'persecution', often referring to 'places much under aristocratic or clerical influence' and to 'clerical persecution' and mentions in some detail the events that took place at Shelford, a village near Nottingham, which he describes as 'another aristocratic preserve'. Here, 'one after another of our adherents was evicted for allowing services to be held in his house'. Moreover, it appears that 'a determined effort was made to oust the Primitives from the village in which they had succeeded in establishing a vigorous society. The persecution in the last resort took the cruel form of evicting and then levelling the cottages of those who had had the temerity to lend them for preaching services'.¹² Petty records that, in the Saffron Walden circuit in 1850, 'the friends had suffered much in many places from bitter opposition of clergymen, who frequently got them turned out of their employment because of their connection with the societies'.¹³ The minister of the Hertford Mission reported that in 1844 'at Wymondley, two miles from Hitchin, we effected an opening last summer, when a house was obtained, and a society formed in a short time. Alas! However, we were soon turned out of doors and dispersed'.¹⁴

¹⁰ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II, p.455.

¹¹ G. Hodgson Fowler, *A Manual on Chapel Architecture for the Use of the Methodist Churches* (London: Primitive Methodist Book Room, 1873), p.7; Hatcher, *The Stone which the Builders Rejected*, pp.19-20.

¹² Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, pp.225 to 506, and pp.238 and 480. Shelford references are at pp.240 and 270-271.

¹³ John Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, from its Origin to the Conference of 1860, the First Jubilee Year of the Connexion*, revised and enlarged by James Macpherson (London: John Dickenson, 1880), p.435.

¹⁴ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1846, p.27.

Ambler has also argued that it was through the acquisition of a chapel that Primitive Methodists were able to establish 'a more central place in village life' such that 'the outward characteristics of a chapel were seen as a reflection of the status of the community who worshipped in it'.¹⁵ E. E. Kellett, a Methodist historian, regarded it as 'almost impossible to exaggerate the part [the chapel] played in the lives of its adherents' and Currie comments that the chapel was a 'rallying point for the people'.¹⁶ More generally, Curl noted the increased social and political influence of nonconformity in daily Victorian life and Currie agreed that the chapel filled a social void and gave a sense of standing in the community to those who attended.¹⁷ Moreover, as the use of the chapel expanded beyond the merely religious, so the building became a significant focus for the wider social activities of the local community. In his study of south Lincolnshire Ambler found that, by the middle of the second half of the nineteenth century, the Primitive Methodist Connexion had become 'an accepted part of the lives of the local communities'.¹⁸

What is clear from these different perspectives is that the chapel was essential both to enable new societies to become established and for them to develop as a key part of the local community. Not only were chapels an 'expression of enduring vitality' but, in addition, and importantly for an evangelical movement such as the Primitive Methodists, the chapel was very important as a means of growing the Connexion. As Currie points out, 'the chapel is the central fact of Methodism' and it is certainly the case that a cause without a chapel would very soon find it difficult to exist, let alone flourish and develop. Chapel building was therefore essential to the growth and spread of Primitive Methodism. In addition, the importance of local societies owning their own buildings is demonstrated by the case of the Primitive Methodist cause at Hertford, which was given up in 1874 after 35 years' work because the building where the society worshipped had been sold and the members had

¹⁵ Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists and Reformers*, p.59.

¹⁶ E. E. Kellett, *As I Remember* (London: Gollancz, 1936), p.121; Robert Currie, *Methodism Divided: A study in the sociology of ecumenicalism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p.45.

¹⁷ James Stevens Curl, *Victorian Churches* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1995), pp.117-118; Currie, *Methodism Divided*, pp.44 and 46.

¹⁸ Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists and Reformers*, pp.63 and 77.

experienced 'great difficulty ... in raising the necessary funds for the purchase of land and the erection of a place of worship'.¹⁹

Kendall refers to the 'material expansion of Primitive Methodism' that occurred during the period from 1847 to 1879, which he calls the 'Chapel Building Era', when the greatest activity in chapel building in the Connexion's history took place. He notes that 'in 1847, the rented rooms outnumbered the Connexional chapels by more than two to one; in twenty-one years the ratio was reversed' and by 1868, the number of chapels (3,235) had become greater than the number of rented rooms used by the Connexion for worship (3,034). He comments that 'this activity reached its height during the decade 1863-72 when no less than 1191 chapels are reported to have been built, giving an average of two chapels for every week of the decade'.²⁰ Whilst Kendall notes that, initially, the Connexion put its main efforts into 'village evangelism', by 1870 the focus had shifted towards 'the needs and possibilities of large towns'. In particular, he instances the chapel building that took place in many towns and cities in the midlands and the north of England, with extensive reference to chapels seating not only several hundred people but also many more than a thousand.²¹

The history of Primitive Methodism is thus reflected in the buildings which its people erected and the places where they erected them. Consequently, in any study of the movement, it is necessary to have regard to what was built and where. This chapter covers the geographic location of the Primitive Methodist estate in Hertfordshire, including the influences of landownership, propinquity and density. The financial aspects of chapel building are considered in Chapter 5. However, it is necessary to begin by considering more generally the geography of nonconformity as a whole, and more specifically Methodism, in Hertfordshire and to do so in the context of the debate about open and closed parishes.²²

¹⁹ Currie, *Methodism Divided*, p.44; Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000*, p.191; Christopher Wakeling, *Chapels of England – Buildings of Protestant Nonconformity* (Swindon: Historic England, 2017), p.135; see also A. H. Patterson, *From Hayloft to Temple. The Story of Primitive Methodism in Yarmouth* (London: Robert Bryant, 1903), p.31, and Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists and Reformers*, p.59; Hertfordshire Mercury, 24 January 1874, p.2.

²⁰ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II, pp.455-458.

²¹ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, p.293; Vol. II, p.464 and pp.458-479.

²² See, for example, Keith Snell and Paul Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.364-394; Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, pp.8-14; and Rodney W. Ambler, 'Social change and religious experience: aspects of rural society in south

Land ownership and the open and closed parish debate

The geographic location of the chapels of local Primitive Methodist societies, and nonconformity generally, was not a simple function of where the congregations were situated: many other variables were at play, notably the patterns of landownership, especially the control that powerful landowners could exercise on the availability of land, together with other socio-economic factors many of which had little to do with the Primitive Methodists or other nonconformists themselves. The next sections explore the geographical patterns of the Hertfordshire locations of nonconformity generally, Methodism in particular, and more specifically Primitive Methodist chapels in relation to landownership and take a statistical and methodological approach to examining and understanding the extent of the correlation between land ownership and Primitive Methodist societies.

Historians have long been interested in the relationship between land ownership and local religious geography. The argument is often made that nonconformity was more likely to be found in parishes where there were many landowners and that, conversely, the Established Church would be predominant in those parishes where land was in the hands of only one or a very few owners. For example, in Kesteven, Lincolnshire, in 1851 there were 28 locations which had Primitive Methodist places of worship and 22 of these were in open villages.²³ As Ambler put it, 'this relationship between religious life and the type of village community in which it flourished or otherwise provides a basis for understanding the role of the churches and chapels'.²⁴

The terms 'open' and 'closed' are most frequently employed as a means of classifying parishes according to the extent of sub-division of land ownership. As Snell and Ell comment, these terms 'have a troubled and sometimes contradictory historical record, firing controversy in the nineteenth century (and probably earlier), as well as between scholars from geography and history who have often used separate disciplinary terminology

Lincolnshire, with specific reference to Primitive Methodism 1815-1875' (PhD thesis, University of Hull, 1984), pp.46-64.

²³ Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, pp.373-394; Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists and Reformers*, p.57.

²⁴ Ambler, 'Social change and religious experience', p.135.

and concepts'.²⁵ The concept has usually been deployed in order to develop a causal model which enables predictions to be made about village characteristics, including religious matters, but this approach has fuelled considerable debate because of the large number of variables involved, particularly in terms of socio-economic and regional differences, for example. Here, the terms 'open' and 'closed' are used simply for the narrow purpose of classifying parishes in terms of land ownership in order to explore the relationship in Hertfordshire between land ownership and the geography of religion in the county.

Data sources

There are two principal sources of land ownership and nonconformist chapel data for Hertfordshire, both dating from the 1870s. These two data sources, *Kelly's Directory* and the *Imperial Gazetteer*, are compared in detail in Appendix 2 where it is concluded that not only can *Kelly's* be treated as a reliable source for land ownership data in Hertfordshire but it is also similarly to be preferred for data on nonconformist chapels.²⁶

Parish classifications

Several historians have sought to classify parishes in terms of land ownership, although with slightly different approaches depending upon their particular purposes. Four systems, those devised by Mills, Everitt, Obelkevich and Ambler, are compared in Appendix 3.²⁷ For the reasons discussed in Appendix 3, the system that has been adopted here is to classify parishes into one of four categories, based on the category descriptions summarised below in Table 3.1. Those parishes within category I and category II are classified as 'closed' parishes, whereas those in category III and category IV are 'open'.

Kelly's directory identifies 134 parishes in Hertfordshire and land ownership data is provided for 125 of these. In addition, although no such data is provided for Hertford,

²⁵ Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, p.366.

²⁶ *Kelly's Directory for Essex, Hertford and Middlesex*, 4th edition (London: Kelly and Co. Ltd, 1874); John M. Wilson, *The Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales* (Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, Dublin and New York: A. Fullerton and Co., n.d., c. 1870-2).

²⁷ Dennis Mills, 'English Villages in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries; a Sociological Approach. Part 1: The concept of a sociological classification', *Amateur Historian*, 6.8 (1965), 271-278 (p.272); Alan Everitt, *The Pattern of Rural Dissent: the nineteenth century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1972), pp.20-21; Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, p.12; Ambler, 'Social change and religious experience', pp.46-64.

Rickmansworth, Royston, St Albans, Stevenage, Ware and Watford, it may safely be assumed that the land in these parishes was in many hands. No information is provided about Chipping Barnet or Layston. Of the 132 parishes that can be classified, 59.1% were closed and 40.9% were open, as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.1: Parish classification system for Hertfordshire

<i>Category I</i> In one hand	<i>Category II</i> In few hands	<i>Category III</i> Divided	<i>Category IV</i> Much divided
A parish where the land is in the hands of one resident proprietor	A parish where the land is in the hands of one or two proprietors who may be non-resident, or as many as three proprietors if one of the three is resident	A parish which may have as many as three non-resident owners	A parish having many owners and occupiers where the directory usually refers to other small owners, apart from the families which it lists by name, as owners in the general description of the village

Table 3.2: Open and closed parishes in Hertfordshire

<i>Category</i>	<i>Number of parishes</i>	<i>% of parishes</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Closed</i>
I	12	9.1%		78
II	66	50.0%		59.1%
III	10	7.6%	54	
IV	44	33.3%	40.9%	
	132			

Only 12 parishes in Hertfordshire had one landowner who was also resident in the parish. There are a further 24 parishes which *Kelly's* records as having only one landowner. However, as *Kelly's* does not indicate that the landowner is resident in the parish, those parishes cannot be placed in category I and must, therefore, be assigned to category II, amounting to some 36% of this category. Bygrave is one of these parishes, because the sole owner, the Marquis of Salisbury, was not resident in the parish; however, it is likely that the control exercised by the landowner here would have been much the same as it was in Hatfield, which was in category I. Ten parishes had three landowners where at least one of

them was resident in the parish. Accordingly, these parishes were assigned to category II, amounting to 15.2% of this category, as they fell within the second part of the definition of this category. All 10 parishes in category III had three landowners; however, none of these was resident in the parish where they owned land. There are 198 separately identified landowners in parishes in category IV, almost a quarter of whom (48 or 24.2%) lived in the parish where they owned land. Of the 37 parishes in category IV for which land ownership details are provided, 26 had at least one resident landowner. Five owners were recorded for St Paul's Walden, only one of whom did not live in the parish, whilst in Hitchin there were nine owners of whom five were resident in the parish.

Nonconformity in Hertfordshire parishes

As noted in Chapter 1, *Kelly's* records a total of 140 places of worship other than the Established Church. 115 of these (82.1%) belonged to Baptist, Wesleyan Methodist, Primitive Methodist or Independent congregations. Of the remainder, the Society of Friends and the Catholics had the highest number of congregations, as summarised in Table 3.3 below (for all data, see Table 1.1).²⁸

<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Congregations</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Baptists	35	25.0%
Independents	29	20.7%
Wesleyan Methodists	29	20.7%
Primitive Methodists	22	15.7%
Society of Friends	8	5.7%
Catholic	5	3.6%
Eight other denominations	12	8.4%
	140	100%

Overall, 58 (44%) of the 132 parishes in *Kelly's* that could be classified had a nonconformist presence, which is considerably less than half of the number of parishes. Of these 58 parishes, 28 were closed and 30 were open. Only 36% of the closed parishes had a

²⁸ *Kelly's Directory*, 1874.

nonconformist congregation, as opposed to 56% of the open parishes. Further analysis of the distribution of the nonconformist places of worship listed in Table 3.3 shows that 87 of them (62%) were located in open parishes with only 53 (38%) in closed parishes. Thus, half as many more chapels were located in open rather than closed parishes despite that fact that there were almost half as many more closed parishes than open ones. These figures provide clear evidence that open parishes in Hertfordshire were more likely to be receptive to the establishment of nonconformist congregations.

Table 3.4: Land ownership and total dissenting index of sittings in Hertfordshire

<i>Landownership Category</i>	<i>Total dissenting index of sittings</i>	<i>Median dissenting index of sittings</i>	<i>Mean dissenting index of sittings</i>
I	21.07	17.61	15.70
II	23.05	6.07	15.64
III	24.36	19.93	18.85
IV	22.45	18.10	17.09
Closed parishes	22.67	10.16	15.65
Open parishes	22.60	18.10	17.37
All categories	22.63	14.42	16.37

Source data from the 1851 Religious Census.

Snell and Ell found that their four parish types, based on the classification used in the *Imperial Gazetteer*, ‘contrasted markedly in their receptivity to dissent’ as ‘the total dissenting index of sittings rose very markedly as one moved from close to open parishes’.²⁹ However, the situation in Hertfordshire was by no means as clear cut as this. Table 3.4 shows the relationship between landownership and the total dissenting index, from which it can be seen that the total index does increase, albeit slightly, from category I through to category III, although it then drops for category IV. In addition, because of the drop in the index for category IV open parishes, the index for all closed parishes is higher than the index for all open parishes, albeit only very slightly. However, both the median index and mean

²⁹ Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, p.375. The total dissenting index of sittings is found from the following formula: $((ts - CEts)/tpop51) \times 100$, where ts = total sittings for all denominations, CEts = Church of England total sittings and tpop51 = total parish population. The data is sourced from the 1851 religious census.

index are higher for open parishes than for closed ones. An index of sittings is used here in order to relate the physical presence of dissent to the size of the population in a particular parish. Overall therefore, this index does show that there is some evidence of a relationship between the presence of nonconformity and categories of landownership, with open parishes tending to show a greater presence of dissent than closed parishes.

Table 3.5: Land ownership and religious diversity in Hertfordshire

<i>Landownership category</i>	<i>Index of religious diversity</i>	<i>Median index of religious diversity</i>	<i>Mean index of religious diversity</i>
I	0.53	0.32	0.28
II	0.55	0.05	0.21
III	0.63	0.34	0.30
IV	0.65	0.48	0.38
Closed parishes	0.55	0.10	0.22
Open parishes	0.65	0.48	0.37
All categories	0.61	0.33	0.28

Source data from the 1851 Religious Census.

An alternative way of looking at the relationship between land ownership and nonconformity is to consider whether there was greater religious diversity, or ‘pluralism’, in open parishes as opposed to closed ones. This can be done by using an index of religious diversity.³⁰ This measures diversity in terms of the size and number of denominations present in a parish. Where only one denomination is present (whether that be the Church of England or Wesleyan Methodists, for example), the index would be zero, and the higher the index the greater can be said to be the religious diversity of the parish. The index of religious diversity in Hertfordshire is set out in Table 3.5.

The figures in Table 3.5 reinforce those in Table 3.4. Although the spread of values is not large, the index of religious diversity shows that there is a clear increase in diversity from category I right through to category IV. The median index rises from 0.10 for closed parishes

³⁰ See Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, p.376 and pp.436-7. The index used here is based on the total attendance of the highest attended service rather than the total attendance at all services. As with the index of sittings, the data is sourced from the 1851 Religious Census.

to 0.48 for the open ones and, similarly, the mean index also increases for open parishes, as opposed to closed ones. Kruskal-Wallis and ANOVA tests show that these results are statistically highly significant.³¹

It is clear, therefore, that in Hertfordshire there was a relationship between land ownership and the geography of religion. Closed parishes were less receptive to nonconformity than open ones, and the diversity of religion was greater in open parishes than in closed ones. As Ambler has commented

In an open village the source of authority was less clear than in one dominated by a landed estate. There was no single arbiter of behaviour so that although the inhabitants lacked the supportive patronage of the large landlord they were not bound by ties of deference. The people of the open villages were free to develop independent ways of life and in the course of the nineteenth century a range of new institutions took root in them, including Primitive Methodism.³²

Thus, attention now turns to considering in more detail the religious geography of Methodist congregations in Hertfordshire, comparing their locations and distribution in relation to parish land ownership.

Methodism in Hertfordshire parishes

Methodists had 51 chapels in 38 different parishes.³³ 16 of these parishes (42%) were classified as closed, 22 (58%) being open, once again demonstrating that, of those parishes that had Methodist chapels, almost half as many more were open parishes than closed parishes. Overall in the county, 21% of closed parishes had a Methodist chapel, compared to 41% of open parishes, so that the proportion of Methodist chapels in open parishes was almost double that for closed parishes. Compared to the 36% of closed parishes that had a nonconformist presence, these figures show that, for Methodism, the propensity for

³¹ Kruskal-Wallis chi-square = 11.76 (corrected for ties), with $p = 0.008$; the F ratio from the ANOVA test was 3.8, with $p = 0.01$.

³² Ambler, 'Social change and religious experience', p.81.

³³ *Kelly's Directory*, 1874.

chapels to be located in closed parishes was much weaker than it was for nonconformist denominations generally.

Wesleyan Methodists made up a fifth of all nonconformist congregations in Hertfordshire and had 29 chapels. The Primitive Methodists accounted for just over 15% of nonconformist congregations, with 22 chapels. Twelve chapels were located in settlements with a population of around 2,000 people or fewer and there were a further five in places where the population ranged from about 3,000 to 7,500. Only five were located in the larger urban areas of St Albans (1844), Hemel Hempstead (1861), Watford (1865), Berkhamsted (1867) and Tring (1870). Apart from the chapel in St Albans which was an early foundation (1844), the chapels in all of the other locations were built in the decade from 1861, which coincided with the main chapel building era in Hertfordshire and the Connexion generally. It is clear, therefore, that in Hertfordshire the more urban or heavily populated areas were not the main initial focus of the Primitive Methodist mission effort and that, in the early days of this effort, chapels were more likely to be built in the more rural and least populated parts of the county.

In nine parishes (6.8%), the Wesleyan Methodist chapel was the only religious competition for the Church of England, whereas the Primitive Methodists were the only alternative in just three parishes (2.3%). There were 13 parishes in Hertfordshire which had both a Wesleyan Methodist and Primitive Methodist presence: five of these (38.5%) were closed parishes but eight (61.5%) were open. As with the distribution of nonconformist congregations in general and Methodist chapels in particular, such a double presence was found in half as many more open parishes than closed ones.³⁴

68% (15 chapels) of the Primitive Methodist chapels in Hertfordshire were in open parishes and only 32% (7 chapels) were in closed parishes, whereas Wesleyan Methodist chapels were almost equally divided between open parishes (15 chapels) and closed parishes (14

³⁴ Snell and Ell's work on correlations between major denominations (*Rival Jerusalems*, p.190) has also shown that, in 1851, Wesleyan Methodism and Primitive Methodism were the most strongly correlated pair of religious movements in England (with a correlation coefficient of 0.427). Any differences in representation between the two major branches of Methodism is not, therefore, due to competition between them.

chapels). In Hertfordshire as a whole, 28% of open parishes had a Primitive Methodist chapel compared to only 9% of closed parishes. The Primitive Methodists had a presence in only two category I closed parishes, Baldock and Hatfield. In Baldock, where Thomas Pryor was the sole landowner, lord of the manor and local benefactor (although not, it would seem, for the Primitive Methodists), it took the local society over eight years to find a site for a chapel, despite their existing premises, a pair of converted cottages, being described in 1857 as 'low, unhealthy, and dilapidated, and not likely to serve for any length of time'.³⁵ In Hatfield, too, where the Marquess of Salisbury was the sole landowner (and whose family had held the advowson of Hatfield Parish Church since 1607), nonconformist congregations were clearly finding it difficult to become established, as it was reported that the parish clergy were 'rigidly high church' and 'very active, in every practicable way imitating and neutralizing the movements of Dissenters'. As a result, the Primitive Methodist chapel in this parish was located some eight miles south east of Hatfield, on the edge of the parish.³⁶

Berkhamsted was a closed category II parish largely in the hands of one non-resident proprietor, Earl Brownlow (who, from 1862, held the patronage of the living of St Peter's, Berkhamsted), and where the influence of the Church of England was described in 1847 as being 'powerful'.³⁷ In a similar way to Baldock and Hatfield, the Primitive Methodist society in this location had sought for some time, unsuccessfully, to acquire a site for a chapel. In 1867 Rev Thomas Russell, the local Primitive Methodist minister, recorded that 'the trial had often been made to get land, but all of no avail; until Mr Norris, of Rickmansworth, had decided to sell, and at once I applied, and we secured an eligible site'.³⁸

³⁵ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1857, pp.552-553; *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 3*, ed. William Page (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1912), *British History Online* <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol3>> [accessed 12 September 2019]; History of Baldock, Baldock Museum and Local History Society, <<http://www.baldockhistory.org.uk/history-of-baldock.htm>> [accessed 12 September 2019].

³⁶ William Upton's Survey 1847-48, as referred to in Judith Burg (ed.), *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851* (Hertfordshire Record Publications Vol. 11, Hertfordshire Record Society, 1995), p.35; 'Parishes: Hatfield', in *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 3*, ed. William Page (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1912), pp. 91-111. *British History Online* <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol3/pp91-111>> [accessed 12 September 2019].

³⁷ *Kelly's Directory*, 1874; Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851*, p.16. From 1381 to 1861, the installation of rectors of St Peter's was a royal patronage (see the web site of St Peter's Church, Berkhamsted at <<https://www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk/heritage/history/>> [accessed 9 October 2020]).

³⁸ Thomas Russell, *Record of Events in Primitive Methodism* (London: William Lister, 1869), p.147.

As noted earlier, of the 49 places where societies were established, there were 19 cases (38.8%) where no chapel was ever built. Nine (47.4%) of these societies were in closed category I and II parishes, three (15.8%) being in open category III parishes and seven (36.8%) in open category IV parishes. This demonstrates that land ownership issues added to the difficulties faced by fledgling Primitive Methodist societies in establishing a permanent presence.

Although it is clear that the Primitive Methodists had a greater propensity to establish a presence in open rather than closed parishes, it should not be assumed that finding a site for a chapel in such parishes was an easy matter. In Great Wymondley, an open category IV parish with four landowners, there was no nonconformist presence of any denomination at all. Moreover, the small Primitive Methodist society that had formed in the parish was 'turned out of doors, and the members were dispersed'.³⁹ In 1851 the Primitive Methodists at Anstey were meeting in a 'preaching room' that had a capacity of 100. The afternoon attendance figure showed that it was full on census Sunday and also regularly enjoyed congregations of 100 people, yet only three years earlier Anstey was one of the parishes where Upton recorded only the presence of the Church of England. However, despite the growth and apparent strength of this local society, the Primitive Methodists were never able to build a chapel here, relying instead on the use of a converted barn for the whole of the society's existence, even though Anstey was an open parish with five major landowners.⁴⁰

Bishops Stortford was a category IV parish with four major landowners and with nonconformity well represented by the presence of Wesleyan Methodists, Baptists, Independents and Quakers. The Primitive Methodists' presence in this parish was decidedly precarious over much of its existence (see footnote 4 above) mainly due to problems in establishing a permanent base. A particular case in point occurred in June 1865, when the Circuit Quarterly Meeting resolved 'that Bro. Wallis try to procure another room to preach

³⁹ *Kelly's Directory*, 1874; Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p.464.

⁴⁰ *Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship in England and Wales*, p.121; Upton's Survey 1847-48, as referred to in Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851*, p.6; *Kelly's Directory*, 1874. The Primitive Methodist society at Anstey is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

in at Stortford the hearers and members refusing to attend on account of the incivility of the mistress of the house'.⁴¹

Aldenham is another example of a category IV open parish where, as Upton commented, 'the efforts of Dissenters are much opposed'.⁴² This would explain why it took until 1887 before this society was able to build a chapel. Here, there were four principal landowners, although only one of them, Henry Gibbs, lived in the parish. Gibbs held the advowson of the parish church, was High Sheriff of Hertfordshire, a director and governor of the Bank of England and was subsequently created Lord Aldenham. He also funded the restoration of high altar screen at St Albans Abbey. Captain Phillimore had been lord of the neighbouring manor of Elstree since 1846, where he lived, and the third major landholding in Aldenham belonged to the trustees of the late Rev Douglas Cartwright Timins, to whom there is a memorial in the parish church.⁴³ In the event, the local Primitive Methodist society had to rely on the benevolence of the fourth principal landowner, Frederick William Thellusson, 5th Baron Rendlesham (who lived in Suffolk), to secure an out-of-the-way small plot of land, which was some distance not only from the main village but also its outlying hamlets, on which to build their chapel.⁴⁴ More than one Primitive Methodist society had to rely on such benevolence in order to build a chapel. The first Primitive Methodist chapel in Watford, a category IV open parish, was acquired with the assistance of a local man of means, one Caleb Vines, Esq. The same man also 'secured to the Connexion a valuable chapel ... free of debt' at Bushey, which was also a category IV open parish, with four recorded principal landowners.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Meeting held on 6 June 1865, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

⁴² Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851*, p.5.

⁴³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hucks_Gibbs,_1st_Baron_Aldenham> [accessed 12 September 2019]; *Herts Advertiser*, 10 October 1891, page 6; 'Parishes: Elstree', in *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 2*, ed. William Page (London, 1908), pp. 349-351. *British History Online* <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol2/>> pp349-351 [accessed 12 September 2019]; 'Parishes: Aldenham', in *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 2*, ed. William Page (London: Archibald Constable and Company Limited, 1908), pp. 149-161. *British History Online* <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol2/pp149-161>> [accessed 12 September 2019].

⁴⁴ Typed copy lease of land at Four Want Ways by Lord Rendlesham to trustees, 1 Feb 1886, NM7P/4, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS).

⁴⁵ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1865, pp.121-122; Russell, *Record of Events*, p.147.

It is clear, therefore, that the pattern of distribution of Methodist societies in Hertfordshire demonstrates a significant relationship with land ownership. In particular, the evidence shows that the Primitive Methodists found it much harder to establish congregations in closed parishes than did the Wesleyan Methodists or nonconformist congregations generally and that they were much more likely to establish a presence in open rather than closed parishes. Because of their generally lower social status (as to which, see the fuller discussion of this topic in Chapter 4) and being less 'visible' than their Wesleyan counterparts or other mainstream nonconformist denominations, Primitive Methodists were less well placed to be able to find somewhere to hold their meetings. Major landowners were likely to be strong supporters of the Established Church and less likely to be tolerant of Primitive Methodists, let alone provide any land to enable them to establish a meeting place.⁴⁶ Moreover, in closed parishes, it was much more difficult to persuade those of the local population who were most likely to be sympathetic to the Primitive Methodist cause to lend their homes for the holding of meetings for fear of being evicted, as Kendall and Petty have instanced.⁴⁷

The Primitive Methodist estate in Hertfordshire

The identification of Primitive Methodist preaching places in Hertfordshire is aided by four nineteenth century surveys. In 1847 and 1848, the Rev William Upton, a Baptist minister in St Albans, carried out a survey of nonconformity in Hertfordshire.⁴⁸ Upton's survey was followed by the national Census of Religious Worship of 1851 and in 1882 the House of Commons published a 'return of the churches, chapels, and buildings registered for religious worship'.⁴⁹ Finally, in 1884, William Urwick, minister of the Independent chapel in Spicer Street, St Albans in the late 19th century and described as 'the main historian of Nonconformity in Hertfordshire', published his study of *Nonconformity in Herts*.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ See footnotes 35-37, 42 and 43.

⁴⁷ See footnotes 11-14 and 39.

⁴⁸ William Upton's Survey 1847-48, as referred to in Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851*, pp.3-93.

⁴⁹ *Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship, England and Wales, Report and Tables*, LXXXIX (1852-3); *Return of the churches, chapels, and buildings registered for religious worship in the registration districts of Great Britain, showing the religious denomination to which such churches, chapels, and buildings belong*, 401 (1882). Census day was 30 March 1851.

⁵⁰ William Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts* (London: Hazell, Watson and Viney Limited, 1884); Alan Ruston, *Unitarianism in Hertfordshire* (Watford: 1979), p.7.

By comparison with what was happening in the midlands and the north, the Primitive Methodist estate in Hertfordshire was small, whether measured numerically or by the size and capacity of its chapels. In the principal sources there are references to a total of only 49 places in Hertfordshire where local Primitive Methodist societies had been formed (see Appendix 4).⁵¹ The evidence clearly shows that these gatherings of Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire, as elsewhere in the Connexion, initially took place either in the open air or in a variety of 'meeting places'. The various sources demonstrate that not only dwellinghouses but also barns or rented rooms were used. Indeed, in villages and rural areas, a variety of meeting places would always remain the venue not of choice but of necessity, having regard to the small size of these local societies and the impecuniosity of their members.⁵²

The fortunes of these local societies were very varied and not all survived. However, as the cause faded in one location it would spring up in another. Kendall noted that, in the early years of the Connexion, 'there were villages and hamlets missioned in these years, and had societies established in them, which were afterwards abandoned'; Tiller found a similar pattern of what she described as the 'vulnerability and discontinuity' of the Primitive Methodist movement in Oxfordshire.⁵³ Undoubtedly, this vulnerability and discontinuity was due in large measure to the inability of very small societies to provide any form of meeting place, let alone the building of a chapel. Without a meeting place, there was no focus for the establishment and nurturing of the society, both of which were essential if further missioning activities were to be undertaken. The failures at Barkway and Bishop Stortford have already been noted (see footnotes 6 and 41 above). Even before Bishops Stortford was given up there were problems; in 1865, the Stansted Branch Quarterly

⁵¹ Kendall, Petty, Upton, *Census of Religious Worship in England and Wales*, Urwick, HALS, *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, and directories of Hertfordshire.

⁵² *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1845, pp.220-221; 1846 pp.94-95; 1847, p.437; 1864, p.116; 1900, p.395; *Census of Religious Worship 1851*, as referred to in Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851*, pp.111, 119, 139; societies at Baldock (AHH18/1/32), Benington (NM4E), Croxley Green (NM7M) and Aldenham (NM7P), HALS; *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1864, p.116; Urwick, p.363; William Upton's Survey 1847-48, as referred to in Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851*, p.41. W. R. Ward, 'Church and Society in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Vol. 2, ed. by Rupert E. Davies, A. Raymond George and E. Gordon Rupp (London: The Epworth Press, 1978), pp.11-96 (p.46).

⁵³ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, p.301; Kate Tiller, 'The desert begins to bloom - Oxfordshire and Primitive Methodism, 1824-1860', *Oxoniensia*, Vol. LXXI, Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society, 2006, p.89.

Meeting asked one of their number to 'try to procure another room to preach in at Stortford' because 'the hearers and members [were] refusing to attend on account of the incivility of the mistress of the house'.⁵⁴

As Appendix 4 shows, of the 49 places where societies were established, there were 19 instances (38.8%) where there is no record of a chapel ever being built. In all, in the period from 1843 to 1932, Primitive Methodist chapels were constructed in only 30 places in Hertfordshire. In total, however, there were 34 chapels; Croxley Green had two chapels on the same site, whilst at Bushey there were three chapels on three different sites. There were also, at different times, a total of four chapels in Watford and two in St Albans. Details of all the known Primitive Methodist chapels in Hertfordshire are in Appendix 5.

As already noted, the focus of chapel building from a Connexional perspective was on the period from 1847 to 1879. In Hertfordshire, the first two chapels were built in 1844, some six years after Primitive Methodism first arrived in the county, and both these chapels were in urban areas, in Hertford and St Albans. The next eight years saw only four new chapels completed, and all were in village locations. After this somewhat cautious start, there was a concentrated period of chapel building from 1853 to 1872, a period which coincided with the Connexional 'chapel building era', during which time more than half of Hertfordshire's Primitive Methodist chapels (17) were erected. Six of these were in towns and 11 in villages. In the following decade (1873-1882) there was a complete dearth of chapel building, although, in contrast, the next fifteen years from 1883 to 1902 saw a small revival of building activity, when eight chapels were built, three in towns and five in villages. Even in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, the Primitive Methodists were still building more chapels in Hertfordshire villages than in the towns. However, into the 20th century the picture changed completely: not only were there just three chapels built in Hertfordshire in the 30 years from 1902 until Methodist Union in 1932, but all of them were in towns. The last chapel to be constructed was Letchworth, in 1914. Thus, no chapel building took place

⁵⁴ Annual Report of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 15 March 1875, Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1870-1879, D/NM 3/5/3, ERO; meeting held on 6 June 1865, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO; meeting held on 10 September 1877, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1, ERO.

in Hertfordshire during the last 18 years of the Connexion’s existence. Moreover, of the 21 chapels in use at the time of Methodist Union, one third of them had been built since Urwick’s 1884 study. Figure 3.1 illustrates the frequency of Primitive Methodist chapel openings in Hertfordshire.

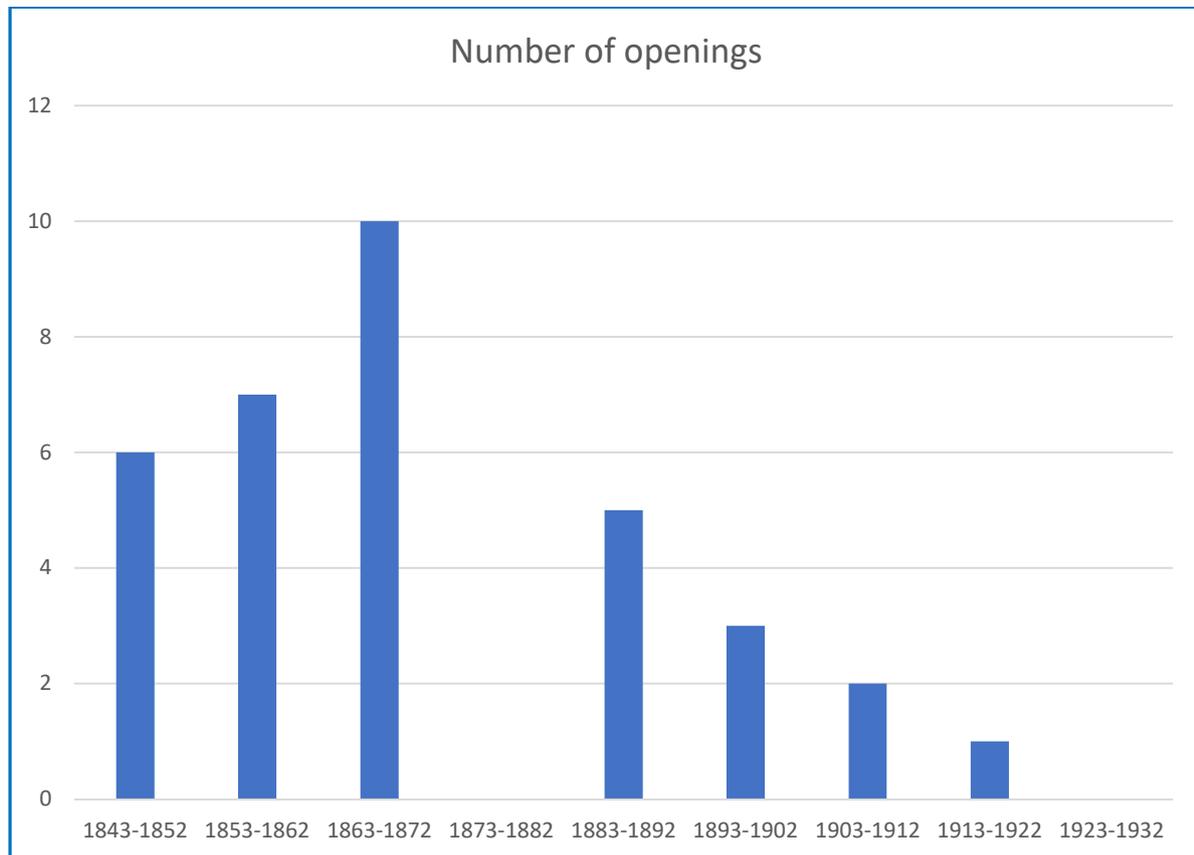


Figure 3.1: Primitive Methodist chapel openings in Hertfordshire – 1843 to 1932

Only five Primitive Methodist preaching places can be clearly established in Upton’s survey, namely Baldock, Trowley Bottom, Hertford, St Albans and Newgate Street, near Hatfield.⁵⁵ At this time (1847-48), there were chapels in only four of these locations as the Primitive Methodists at Baldock were still meeting in a converted dwellinghouse. Table 3.6 gives details of the information recorded by Upton about these places, including his comments on the ‘character of the ministry’. Upton also noted that, at Hitchin, the Primitive Methodists ‘preach in room’ and that in Norton there was ‘cottage preaching occasionally by Primitive

⁵⁵ Upton’s Survey 1847-48, as referred to in Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851*, pp.3-93.

Methodists'. He also recorded that at St Albans there was a Primitive Methodist Sunday School with an attendance of 40.⁵⁶

The five locations for Primitive Methodism that Upton noted are also referred to in the 1851 Census together with a further nine that had become established in the intervening three years. Table 3.7 gives details of the information recorded in the Census about them.

Although the Census refers to a total of 14 Primitive Methodist societies, the only chapels that it has been possible to identify positively as having been in existence at the time of the 1851 Census were those at Trowley Bottom, Hertford, St Albans and Newgate Street.

Table 3.6: Primitive Methodist preaching places in Hertfordshire in Upton's Survey

<i>Location</i>	<i>Capacity</i>	<i>Services</i>	<i>Attendance at fullest</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Baldock	80	3 Sunday services and weekly	50	
Trowley Bottom	80	2 Sunday services and weekly	50	Character of ministry described as earnest
Hertford	60	3 Sunday services	20	Character of ministry described as inefficient
St Albans	200	3 Sunday services	100	Character of ministry described as energetic but wild
Newgate Street	No details given			Occupied occasionally

Source: William Upton's Survey 1847-48

At Great Munden it was noted that part of a dwellinghouse had been used as a preaching place since 1844, although no service took place there on census day. The Primitive Methodists in Stevenage were also using a dwellinghouse; in Furneux Pelham they met in a barn, whilst the society at Anstey held its gatherings in a 'preaching room'. The nature of the meeting place is not specified in the case of Brickendon, Essendon and Great Amwell (where chapels were never built) nor is it specified at Benington (where the chapel was not built until 1862) or Boxmoor, Hemel Hempstead (where the chapel was built in 1869).

⁵⁶ Upton's Survey 1847-48, as referred to in Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851*: Hitchin, p.41; Norton, p.53; St Albans, p.63.

Table 3.7: Primitive Methodist preaching places in Hertfordshire in the 1851 Census of Religious Worship

<i>Location</i>	<i>Parish population</i>	<i>Date of opening</i>	<i>Sittings</i>	<i>Attendance (excluding scholars): Actual and (average)</i>	<i>Sunday scholars attendance</i>
Baldock	1,920	1847	Free: 68 Other: 38	Morning: 50 Afternoon: 80 Evening: 110	Morning: 30 Afternoon: 37
Trowley Bottom	1,852 ⁵⁷	1845	Free: 60 Other: 40	Morning: 15 Afternoon: 50 Evening: 80	Morning: 35 Afternoon: 35
Hertford	2,282 ⁵⁸		Free: 40 Other: 48	Morning: 30 (30) Afternoon: 50 (60) Evening: 55 (65)	Morning: 18 Afternoon: 18
St Albans	8,208 ⁵⁹	1845	Free: 1033 Other: 200	Morning: 22 Afternoon: 34 Evening: 60	Morning: 6 Afternoon: 7
Newgate Street	3,862 ⁶⁰		Free: 60	Afternoon: (40 to 50)	
Great Amwell	1,652		Free: 45 Other: 25	Afternoon: 27 (40) Evening: 33 (50)	
Brickendon	2,481 ⁶¹		Free: 30	Evening: 30 (30)	
Essendon	739		Free: 100 Other: 50	Afternoon: 15 (30) Evening: 90 (90)	
Great Munden	554	1844	Free: 30 Other: 20	Afternoon: (20) Evening: (25)	
Furneux Pelham	688		Free: 70 Other: 90	Morning: 80 Afternoon: 110	
Anstey	465		Free: 40 Other: 60	Morning: 50 (50) Afternoon: 100 (100)	
Stevenage	2,118		Free: 40	Morning: 21 (10) Afternoon: 60 (30) Evening: 40 (50)	
Benington	676		Free: 40 Other: 18	Morning: 15 (30) Afternoon: 50 (50) Evening: 84 (70)	
Boxmoor	8,508 ⁶²		Free: All	Morning: 20 Afternoon: 40 Evening: 60	

Source: Census of Religious Worship of 1851

⁵⁷ Trowley Bottom is in the parish of Flamstead.

⁵⁸ The chapel was in the parish of Hertford St John's.

⁵⁹ The chapel was in the parish of St Albans Abbey.

⁶⁰ Newgate Street was in the parish of Hatfield and was a separate hamlet with a very much smaller population.

⁶¹ Brickendon was in the parish of Hertford All Saints.

⁶² Boxmoor was in the parish of Hemel Hempstead.

It is surprising that there is no mention in the Census of a Primitive Methodist presence in Watford, since it is known that a society in this location had been formed by 1840.⁶³ Moreover, the Primitive Methodist Watford Circuit had been established by 1842, which at this time had three Primitive Methodist ministers appointed to it.⁶⁴ In addition to Watford, there are eight other societies which are known to have existed in 1851 that are not mentioned in the Census: these were at Aston, Bushey, Graveley, Hitchin, Norton, Roestock, Weston and Willian.⁶⁵

The 1882 return identified 21 Primitive Methodist meeting places as against 40 for Wesleyan Methodists. 19 were described as chapels and two were noted as being cottages. These were in Ashwell and Sandon where, curiously, there were also Primitive Methodist chapels in both villages. Three of the places referred to in Upton's survey and the 1851 census had disappeared by the time of the 1882 return and Urwick's 1884 study (Hertford, St Albans and Newgate Street) although 17 new chapels had been built in the intervening three decades.⁶⁶ It is clear, therefore, that the Primitive Methodist movement in Hertfordshire was displaying the same 'vulnerability and discontinuity' that Tiller found in Oxfordshire.⁶⁷

In 1838 there were only two Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire; by 1870 there were 25, although by 1932 there were 22. Similarly, the number of chapels rose from one in 1843 to 23 in 1903, again reducing by 1932 to 21. From a Connexional perspective, in 1847 rented rooms and other accommodation used by Primitive Methodists for worship outnumbered chapels by two to one but in 1868 the number of chapels exceeded for the first time the total of other accommodation used for worship.⁶⁸ However, as Figure 3.2 illustrates, the picture in Hertfordshire was rather different. In 1847 the number of societies

⁶³ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1866, p.122; Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts*, p.363; Watford Primitive Methodist Circuit records, NM7, HALS.

⁶⁴ William Leary, *Ministers & Circuits in the Primitive Methodist Church - A Directory*, (Loughborough: Teamprint, 1990), p.365.

⁶⁵ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1844, p.101; *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1845, p.160; Dissenters Meeting House certificates, AHH18/1/3 (1841), AHH18/1/4 (1840), AHH18/1/16 (1846), AHH18/1/23 (1846), HALS.

⁶⁶ *Return of the churches, chapels, and buildings registered for religious worship*, pp.38-364.

⁶⁷ Tiller, 'The desert begins to bloom', p.89, and acknowledged by Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, p.301.

⁶⁸ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II, pp.455-458.

(15) outnumbered chapels (5) by three to one, and the number of chapels did not reach parity with the number of societies until 1887, nearly twenty years after this position had been reached in the Connexion as a whole. That position was maintained for the next ten years; the period from 1914 to 1929 also demonstrated parity between the number of societies and the number of chapels.

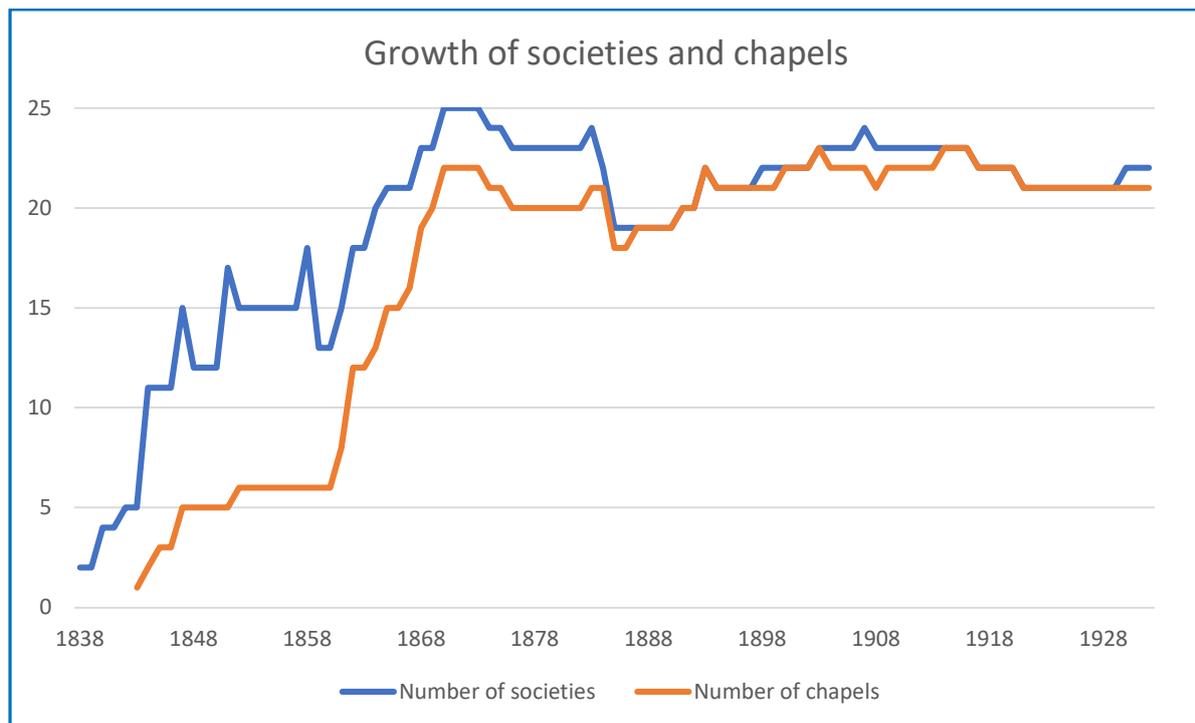


Figure 3.2: Primitive Methodist societies and chapels in Hertfordshire – 1838 to 1932

As Figure 3.2 illustrates, the period from 1838 up to about 1860 was exemplified by mission and evangelisation, during which time the growth in the number of societies far exceeded the number of chapels. By 1860 it is clear that the more stable of these societies had reached the point where a permanent meeting place was required, and chapel building began in earnest. The number of chapels in Hertfordshire reached its nineteenth century peak in the period from 1870 to 1873 (22), coinciding with the peak in the number of societies (25). From 1874 to 1886, the number of chapels in use fell from 22 to 18 as the number of societies also fell from its high watermark of 25 to 19. This evidence demonstrates that in Hertfordshire, as in other parts of the country, chapel building was not

only the result of growth but it was also the means by which the Connexion could continue to expand.⁶⁹

Figure 3.2 also shows the work carried out by the Baldock society at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century in missioning Hitchin (1898) and Letchworth (1907) followed, in each case, by the building of a chapel. The last Primitive Methodist society to be formed in Hertfordshire was Knebworth, in 1930, although no chapel was built here before Methodist Union in 1932. However, for the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century up to 1932, it is clear that Primitive Methodist growth, measured in terms of societies and chapels, had reached a plateau, and that this plateau was at a level slightly below the maximum numbers recorded for both societies and chapels.

The nature of chapel building in Hertfordshire

In the fifty years from 1844, thirty Primitive Methodist chapels were constructed in Hertfordshire. The early buildings were small, plain and simple rectangular structures, particularly when compared to the chapels of other denominations. In Calder's view, this was not due to the poverty of the movement's supporters but was a reflection of Primitive Methodism's 'persistent priority for the work of mission over building or social aspiration'.⁷⁰ However, as the century progressed, chapels tended to be increasingly constructed in the Gothic style and were larger in both appearance and capacity, especially in the more urban areas.⁷¹ The average village chapel had a capacity of around 115 sittings, although Benington (200) and the second chapel at Croxley Green (225) were considerably larger. In the county's smaller towns, the chapels tended to be more than twice the size of their village counterparts, with an average capacity of about 250 sittings, albeit the chapels at Tring and Hemel Hempstead could only accommodate 120 sittings each.

⁶⁹ Alexander J. Calder, 'The Primitive Methodist Connexion: Tackling the Myth' (PhD thesis, Open University, 1984), p.81.

⁷⁰ Sandy Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2016), pp.174-178; Kate Tiller, 'Patterns of Dissent: The Social and Religious Geography of Nonconformity in Three Counties', *International Journal of Regional and Local History*, 13.1 (2018), 4-31 (p.13).

⁷¹ Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000*, pp.260-261.

In the last 35 years of the Connexion's existence only five chapels were built, but, in contrast to the previously prevailing pattern of chapel building in villages and smaller towns, they were all situated in the county's larger towns. Two were built in Watford, one each in Hitchin and Letchworth, and a new chapel was built for the re-formed society in St Albans. All of these chapels were large buildings: the Watford chapels had provision for 850 sittings between them, whilst Letchworth had a capacity of 500 sittings, making it the largest Primitive Methodist chapel built in Hertfordshire and reflecting its location in the 'new' Garden City. Hitchin could accommodate 180 sittings whilst the new chapel in St Albans had 200.⁷²

The geography of the Primitive Methodist estate in Hertfordshire

So far, attention has focused on the relationship between Methodist societies in Hertfordshire in relation to parish land ownership. Consideration must now be given to other factors affecting the geography of the Primitive Methodist estate in particular, since the Connexion's presence should reflect the way in which it became established in Hertfordshire and subsequently sought to evangelise other locations. As Map 1 shows, Primitive Methodist societies were spread across virtually the whole of Hertfordshire. In general terms, the preponderance of societies was greatest in the south west and the north east of the county, whereas the south east appears least populated. The same was also largely true of the locations of those societies where chapels were built. Although no obvious pattern is evident from the map itself, nevertheless the geographic relationship between the various locations offers some insights into the way in which Primitive Methodism developed and expanded throughout Hertfordshire between 1843 and 1938.

Chapel propinquity

Calder used data on chapel locations from the 1851 census to consider the geographic relationship, and specifically the closeness, of Primitive Methodist chapels, using what he termed 'propinquity calculations'.⁷³ In Derbyshire, for example, Calder calculated that,

⁷² For a fuller discussion of the buildings of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire see David Noble, 'Symbols of faith: the meeting places of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire, 1838 – 1932' (MA dissertation, University of Roehampton, 2012).

⁷³ Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, pp.174-178.

based on a random distribution of locations, the theoretical mean distance between one society and its nearest neighbouring society should have been 3.17 miles, which would have meant that the average travel distance to the nearest place of worship would have been 1.59 miles. In reality, he found that the actual mean distance of each Primitive Methodist chapel or other preaching location (be it a house or a barn, for example) from its nearest neighbour was only 1.33 miles, resulting in a typical travel distance to the nearest location of 0.67 miles. Calder found similar results in Lincolnshire (mean distance of 1.93 miles and travel distance of 0.97 miles) and Shropshire (mean distance of 1.25 miles and travel distance of 0.63 miles) and he concluded that these results could only be achieved by clustering of locations. He argued that this clustering was not driven by a requirement for further capacity but, rather, was a response to local demand for local provision, even if this did result in more capacity than was actually needed in a particular location.⁷⁴

A direct comparison with Calder's data is not particularly useful in Hertfordshire as there were only 14 societies listed in the 1851 census (see Table 3.7 above). Nevertheless, using these locations produces a nearest neighbour mean distance of 6.0 miles and a typical travel distance to the nearest location of 3.0 miles. Assuming a random distribution of these 14 locations, the theoretical mean distance between one society and its nearest neighbouring society should have been 7.2 miles, which would have meant that the average travel distance to the nearest place of worship would have been 3.6 miles. Because the actual distances are less than the theoretical distances, this might suggest that the early locations of Primitive Methodist chapels in Hertfordshire did exhibit some evidence of clustering similar to that found by Calder.

On closer inspection, however, taking into account the relationship between the various locations and the dates (where known) of the founding of the societies, it would appear that the pattern exhibited by the early societies in Hertfordshire is merely the geographical manifestation of the growth of Primitive Methodism in the county as a result of the Connexion's normal activities of 'village evangelism' (see Figure 3.3).⁷⁵ For the whole of the Primitive Methodist estate in Hertfordshire, the mean distance between one society and its

⁷⁴ Calder, 'The Primitive Methodist Connexion: Tackling the Myth', pp.176-177.

⁷⁵ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, p.298 and Vol. II, p.464.

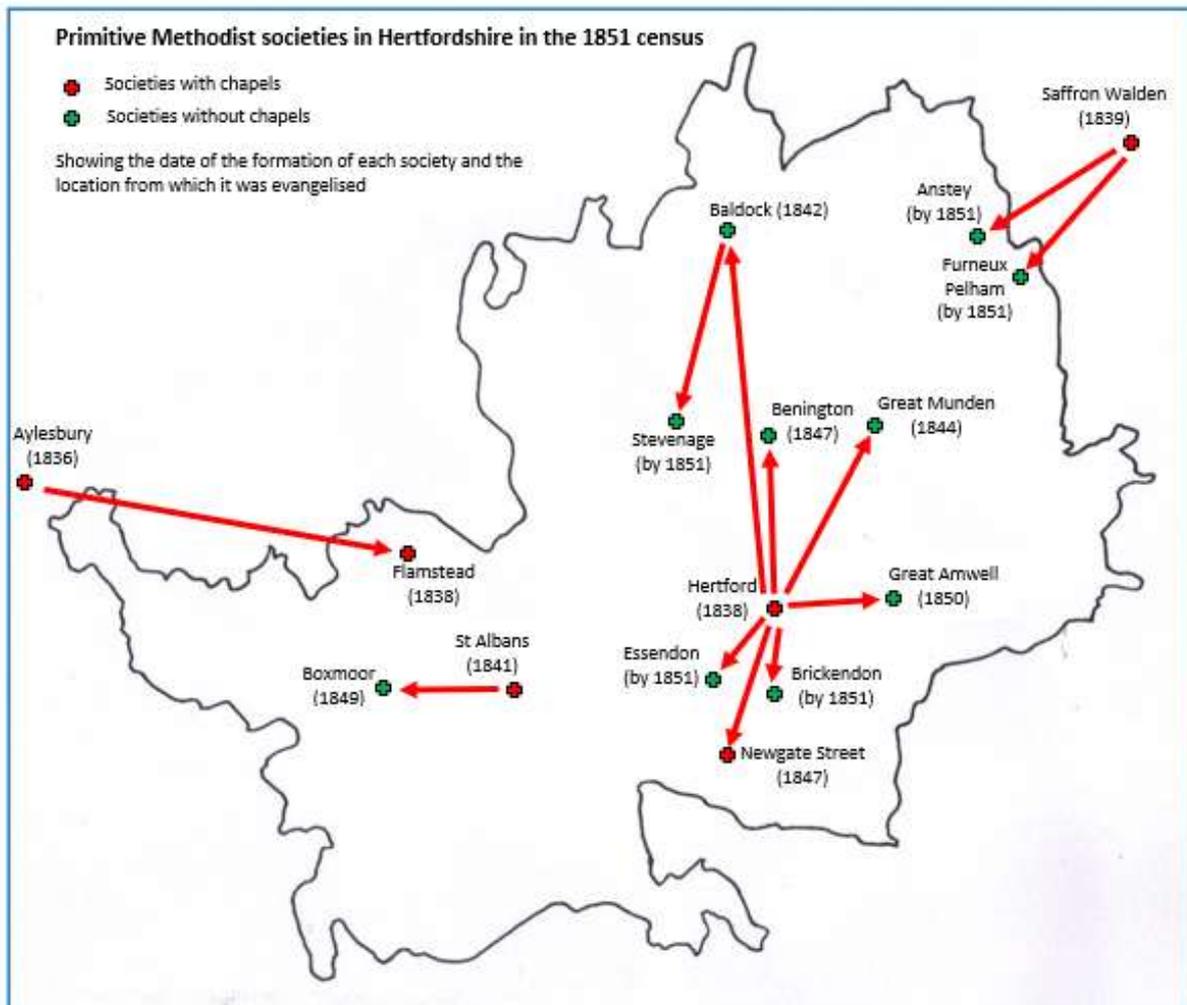


Figure 3.3: Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire in the 1851 census

nearest neighbouring society was 2.8 miles, which equates to a travel distance to the nearest chapel of 1.4 miles. Assuming a random distribution of these 49 locations, the theoretical mean distance between one society and its nearest neighbouring society should have been 4.0 miles, which would have meant that the average travel distance to the nearest place of worship would have been 2.0 miles. Again, Calder's theory would suggest that this later pattern of distribution of Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire was also a function of clustering. However, it is equally the case that the distribution of societies mirrors the locations of the various separate settlements in Hertfordshire. It can be argued, therefore, that the observed pattern perfectly demonstrates the Connexion's desire to have

a presence in every location where there was fruitful ground for evangelism and ‘the possibilities they offered for Connexional extension’.⁷⁶

Further evidence of the distance that the faithful had to travel to their nearest chapel may be gleaned from the Primitive Methodist baptismal registers, which indicate where the family lived at the time. Assuming that baptisms were held in the locations referred to in the registers that had Primitive Methodist chapels, it is possible to calculate how far away from their nearest chapel the family members were living (see Table 3.8).

Table 3.8: Distances to chapels

<i>Baptismal register</i>	<i>Mean distance to closest chapel</i>	<i>Median distance to closest chapel</i>	<i>Number of chapels</i>	<i>Number of families living within two miles of nearest chapel</i>	<i>% of families living within two miles of nearest chapel</i>
St Albans	4.4 miles	1.3 miles	5	109	91.60%
Baldock	3.3 miles	2.2 miles	4	110	88.71%
East Herts	3.0 miles	2.4 miles	3	202	93.53%
All registers	3.6 miles	2.2 miles	12	421	91.72%

Data from baptismal registers for St Albans, Baldock and East Hertfordshire

The shortest median distance of 1.3 miles was recorded in St Albans, which is perhaps not surprising, given its more urban location, and with the highest number of alternative chapels to attend. In contrast, the most rural location in East Hertfordshire returned the longest median distance of 2.2 miles with the fewest number of alternative chapel locations. In St Albans, nearly 92% of families lived within two miles of their nearest chapel, although in East Hertfordshire, this figure rose to nearly 94%. Overall, for Hertfordshire as a whole, nearly 92% of families were living within two miles of their nearest chapel; the mean distance a family would have had to travel to their nearest chapel was 3.6 miles and the median distance was 2.2 miles. Although Calder refers to a ‘contemporary imagined ideal of the faithful having no more than only mile to travel for worship’, a two mile distance is likely

⁷⁶ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II, p.464.

to have been easily manageable, certainly on the occasion of a family baptism if not more generally.⁷⁷

Chapel density

Watts has calculated the worship density of various denominations in England and Wales, based on the estimates of attendance in the 1851 census expressed as a percentage of the total population. His figures for the Church of England, Primitive Methodists and Wesleyan Methodists in Hertfordshire are set out in Table 3.9.⁷⁸ Unsurprisingly, at this relatively early date in terms of the Primitive Methodist mission in the county, these figures show that the

Table 3.9: Hertfordshire worship density in 1851 (measured by attendance as a proportion of population)

<i>Registration district</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Church of England %</i>	<i>Primitive Methodists %</i>	<i>Wesleyan Methodists %</i>
Ware	16,482	26.9	0.3	6.6
Bishops Stortford	20,356	34.5	0.7	1.9
Royston	26,355	33.9	0.5	5.9
Hitchin	24,729	25.5	1.1	7.8
Hertford	15,090	33.6	1.5	1.9
Hatfield	8,499	32.8	1.3	1.1
St Albans	18,004	25.5	0.5	8.4
Watford	18,800	25.2		3.7
Hemel Hempstead	13,120	19.3	1.0	9.1
Berkhamsted	12,527	28.4		2.2
Hertfordshire	173,962	28.7	0.7	5.2

Source: Watts, Michael, *The Dissenters: Volume II: The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), Table XIV, pp.688-689.

Connexion's presence was somewhat tenuous, at 0.7%. Indeed, in terms of worship density for Primitive Methodists, Hertfordshire is ranked 34th out of 42 counties by Watts. It may be

⁷⁷ Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, p.175.

⁷⁸ Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II: The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), Table XIV, pp.688-716.

noted, however, that the registration districts of Hitchin, Hertford, Hatfield and Hemel Hempstead all recorded figures of 1.0% or more, so that they compare not unfavourably with the national average in England of 1.95%. It must also be remembered that the figure for Hertfordshire given by Watts is skewed by the fact that the 1851 census does not record the society at Watford, which is known to have existed since 1840, or the eight other missing societies. Also evident from these figures is the fact that the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion's presence in Hertfordshire in 1851 was some seven and a half times larger than that of the Primitive Methodists.

Table 3.10: Hertfordshire worship density in 1851 (measured by highest attended service as a proportion of population)

<i>Location</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Capacity</i>	<i>Total attendance of highest attended service</i>	<i>Total attendance of highest attended service as a % of capacity</i>	<i>Total attendance of highest attended service as a % of population</i>
Anstey	465	100	100	100.0%	21.5%
Furneaux Pelham	688	160	110	68.8%	16.0%
Benington	676	88	84	95.5%	12.4%
Essendon	739	150	90	60.0%	12.2%
Baldock	1,920	106	117	110.4%	6.1%
Flamstead	1,852	100	85	85.0%	4.6%
Great Munden	554	50	25	50.0%	4.5%
Hertford	2,282	118	88	74.6%	3.9%
Stevenage	2,118	87	60	69.0%	2.8%
Great Amwell	1,652	70	33	47.1%	2.0%
Hatfield	3,862	60	46	76.7%	1.2%
Hemel Hempstead	8,508	<i>Unknown</i>	100	-	1.2%
St. Albans	8,208	1233	60	4.9%	0.8%
Total for all locations	33,524	2,322	998	38.7%	3.0%

Source: Census of Religious Worship of 1851

However, the figures in Table 3.9 mask a considerable variation across the county. For those parishes where there was a Primitive Methodist presence, and, using the 1851 census figures for the highest attended service, attendance as a proportion of the population

exhibits a range from 21.5% in Anstey in rural east Hertfordshire to 0.8% in the more urban St Albans (see Table 4.10). Moreover, it is evident that Anstey was full to capacity and Baldock apparently exceeded its capacity, and every other venue was at least half full, except for Great Amwell and St Albans.

Snell and Ell have shown that Primitive Methodism was the seventh most rural based denomination in 1851, based on population growth rates from 1811 to 1851 (using Spearman rank correlation coefficients). However, they also point out that a very large majority of the twenty-one denominations they studied 'were usually slow to adapt to urbanisation and population growth'. This correlation was measured at registration district level for the whole of England and Wales; at parish level for Snell and Ell's sample of fifteen counties (which did not include Hertfordshire), the Connexion was the ninth most responsive nonconformist denomination to urbanisation as measured by population density and the sixth most responsive in relation to population growth.⁷⁹

Watts has argued that 'there is strong evidence to indicate that in the nineteenth century Evangelical Nonconformity had its widest appeal in the least educated parts of the country'. His figures showed that, between 1838 and 1841, Hertfordshire had the second highest illiteracy rate in England (after Bedfordshire), at 54%. Watts also compared the illiteracy rate by registration district in 1851 with the extent of support for nonconformity as revealed in the 1851 census, from which he found that 'in many counties there was a significant correlation between districts with a high level of illiteracy and districts with a high level of Nonconformist support'. In 1851, the illiteracy rate in Hertfordshire was 50.6%, the third highest rate after Bedfordshire and Staffordshire.⁸⁰ There are no readily available figures for the level of illiteracy amongst Primitive Methodists, but Watts notes that 'sixty-nine per cent of the parents who had their children baptized by the Ruddington Primitive Methodist society in Nottinghamshire between 1828 and 1838 could not sign their names' and that in 1851 'nearly half' of the trustees of the Old Hill Primitive Methodist chapel in the Black

⁷⁹ Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, pp.396-398.

⁸⁰ Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II*, pp.100-103 and Tables V and XIV. His measure of education was the rate of illiteracy in the population, measured by the proportion of men and women who signed the marriage register with a mark instead of writing their names.

Country had to approve the trust deed by making their mark rather than signing their names. In addition, Calder provides a figure of a 52.2% incidence of illiteracy amongst Primitive Methodists in the Potteries in 1851.⁸¹

The figures given by Watts for the Hertfordshire registration districts are set out in Table 3.11 alongside the Primitive Methodist attendance figures, as calculated by Watts from the 1851 census, expressed as a percentage of the total population of each district.⁸² Overall, for England and Wales, Watts' data produced a correlation coefficient between the percentage of nonconformist attendance (across all denominations) and the illiteracy rate of 0.74, which is highly significant. However, a comparison between the Primitive Methodist attendance figures and levels of illiteracy in Hertfordshire (see Table 3.11) produces a Spearman rank correlation of only 0.095. This strongly indicates that there is no relationship between these two variables so far as Hertfordshire is concerned.

Table 3.11: Correlation of Hertfordshire worship density in 1851 with illiteracy and unskilled employment

<i>Registration District</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Primitive Methodist attendance as a % of population</i>	<i>Level of illiteracy</i>	<i>% of unskilled employment</i>
Ware	16,482	0.3%	41.7%	2.92%
Bishops Stortford	20,356	0.7%	61.5%	2.73%
Royston	26,355	0.5%	46.6%	0.37%
Hitchin	24,729	1.1%	57.6%	1.56%
Hertford	15,090	1.5%	45.9%	2.38%
Hatfield	8,499	1.3%	43.1%	1.19%
St Albans	18,004	0.5%	52.8%	0.74%
Watford	18,800		41.8%	2.40%
Hemel Hempstead	13,120	1.0%	57.1%	1.85%
Berkhamsted	12,527		50.0%	1.47%
Hertfordshire	173,962	0.7%	50.6%	1.72%

Source: Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II*, Table XIV, pp.688-689; 1851 census.

⁸¹ Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II*, p.103, citing G. M. Morris, 'Primitive Methodism in Nottinghamshire' (PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 1967), p.204; Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, p.148.

⁸² Watts used the totals given in the 1851 census for the best attended service to which he added a third of the total attendance at other services, arguing that 'this formula can be justified by what is known about the frequency of church attendance in the nineteenth century, and produces results which are consonant with what information we have about church membership.'

The view is commonly expressed that the Primitive Methodist Connexion had most appeal to the working class and the poorer members of society and that the Connexion prospered in response to economic hardship.⁸³ As Calder points out, if this 'hardship' hypothesis is valid then the worship density of the Connexion should have a strong correlation with the rate of unskilled workers.⁸⁴ Table 3.11 gives a figure for unskilled workers in each of the registration districts in Hertfordshire in 1851, expressed as a percentage of the total population.⁸⁵ A comparison between the Primitive Methodist attendance figures and the number of unskilled workers produces a correlation of only 0.06. Once again, so far as Hertfordshire is concerned, this clearly indicates that there is no clear relationship between these two variables.

Conclusion

There is a relationship between land ownership and the geography of religion. Closed parishes, generally under the control of one landowner, were much more likely to demonstrate clear allegiance to the Church of England whilst open parishes, with many landowners, were more likely to be receptive to the establishment of nonconformist congregations. Whilst Snell and Ell found that 'there were many other influences operating alongside or ancillary to landownership' their work has nevertheless shown that there can be little doubt that there is a strong relationship between land ownership and the presence of nonconformity.⁸⁶ The evidence shows that, in Hertfordshire, similar relationships to those found by Snell and Ell existed in the second half of the nineteenth century. There were 64% more nonconformist chapels in open parishes than in closed parishes even though there were 44% more closed parishes than open ones. The index of dissent shows that open parishes tend to display a greater presence of dissent than closed parishes, and the index of religious diversity provides evidence that there was greater religious pluralism in open

⁸³ See, for example, David W. Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2011), p.12; Robert Currie, 'A micro-theory of Methodist Growth', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 36 (1967) 65-73, p.70; Joseph Ritson, *The Romance of Primitive Methodism* (London: Edward Dalton, 1909); and Anthony Armstrong, *The Church of England, the Methodists and Society 1700-1850* (London: University of London Press, 1973), pp.192 and 199.

⁸⁴ Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, p.166.

⁸⁵ Unskilled workers are those employed as labourers in the Registrar General's Class XV.

⁸⁶ Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, pp.392-393.

parishes than closed ones. The position of Methodism in Hertfordshire was even more marked than for nonconformity generally, since the propensity for Methodist chapels to be located in closed parishes was much weaker than it was for nonconformist denominations generally. It is also clear from the evidence that the Primitive Methodists found it much harder to establish congregations in closed parishes than did their Wesleyan counterparts or nonconformist congregations generally.

In the case of Primitive Methodism, it is clear that the Connexion's presence in Hertfordshire was not related to either levels of illiteracy or unskilled workers. The 'hardship' hypothesis does not, therefore, hold good so far as Hertfordshire is concerned. Moreover, a comparison between the Primitive Methodist attendance figures and the population of the registration districts results indicates that the Connexion's presence was strongest in the more rural parts of the county and weakest in the more urban areas. As previously noted in relation to Calder's 'clustering' hypothesis, this is further evidence that the driving force behind the observed pattern of Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire is indeed the geographical manifestation of the Connexion's normal activities of 'village evangelism', and that this pattern perfectly demonstrates the Connexion's desire to have a presence in every location where there was fruitful ground for evangelism.

However, local societies were not just names on a circuit plan or a schedule of chapels. These societies consisted of real people whose lives had been changed in some way by the advent of Primitive Methodism in the place where they lived. Thus, attention must now turn to consider in more detail who it was in Hertfordshire that became attracted to membership of the Primitive Methodist Connexion. The next chapter therefore looks at the social structure of ordinary Primitive Methodist members in a number of Hertfordshire societies, focusing on data from local baptismal registers.

Chapter 4

The social structure of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire

Introduction

For historians of Primitive Methodism, an examination of the social background of the Connexion's members has always been an important consideration, most usually as a means of distinguishing its membership from that of Wesleyan Methodism. Field has suggested that there is a widespread unanimity of view that Primitive Methodists inherited the Wesleyans' influence over the proletariat as Wesleyan Methodism became 'increasingly bourgeois, both in outlook and composition' as the nineteenth century progressed, whilst Ambler considers that, because of 'the importance of nonconformity in the social, economic and political life of nineteenth-century Britain', social composition is an important indicator of the influence of Primitive Methodism on particular sections of society.¹ However, as Ambler found, there are few written sources that shed any light on the people who chose to become members of the Primitive Methodist denomination.² Werner comments that 'many of the first converts were illiterate, but, perhaps more important, even those who could write did not often enjoy the leisure in which to maintain diaries or to develop the habit of corresponding'.³ Nevertheless, a consideration of social class is a means of understanding something about those who chose to become Primitive Methodists. Consequently, any

¹ Clive Field, 'The Social Structure of English Methodism - Eighteenth-Twentieth Centuries', *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (June 1977), 199-225 (p.199) and Rodney Ambler, 'The social composition of church leadership - nonconformist trustees in Lincolnshire, 1800-1870', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 75 (1993), 133-56 (p.133).

² Rodney Ambler, 'Social change and religious experience: aspects of rural society in south Lincolnshire, with specific reference to Primitive Methodism 1815-1875' (PhD thesis, University of Hull, 1984), p.313.

³ Julia Stewart Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion: Its Background and Early History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p.ix.

study of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire must include an investigation of the social class of those who were members of Primitive Methodist local societies in the county.

This chapter sets out to discover the social characteristics of Primitive Methodists in Hertfordshire through an analysis of their occupations. The issue of classification is briefly considered before attention is turned to the evidence that can be derived from three sets of baptismal registers relating to St Albans, Baldock and East Hertfordshire. The results of the analysis based on these local sources are then compared with the findings from a series of studies of the social composition of Primitive Methodist societies in England, in order to set the position in Hertfordshire in a wider context. This enables some final conclusions to be drawn about the position in society that the Primitive Methodists in Hertfordshire enjoyed between 1846 and 1917.

Classification

In order to discover the social composition of the denomination's members and adherents in Hertfordshire, it is necessary to devise a means of establishing and classifying their social class. Occupational data is widely used as a surrogate for social class in order to derive a measure of people's position in society and, as Woollard has pointed out, 'almost all local and national studies of the economy have used ... occupational data ... to assist in the description of ... society'.⁴ Occupations can be grouped together into different social classes in order to arrive at a social classification of the Connexional membership. Such data can also be used to make comparisons between the social structure of Primitive Methodists and their Wesleyan counterparts, as it has been argued that there are distinct social differences between the two Connexions. Nevertheless, by whatever means information on

⁴ London Electoral History: Steps Towards Democracy - 7.12 Problems in classifying social class by occupation <<http://leh.ncl.ac.uk/PDF's/LEH-Classification/LEH-CLASSIFICATION7.12SOCIAL-CLASS.pdf>> [accessed December 2014]. Lambert and Bihagen cite a number of reasons why occupational data are important: people's occupations are central to their position within society; occupations generally are also very good markers of social experience; occupational data are relatively easy to obtain and are widely used in studies of social stratification (see Paul Lambert and Erik Bihagen, 'Stratification research and occupation-based social classifications', *DAMES Node Technical Paper*, Economic and Social Research Council, January 2011, p.4); Matthew Woollard, 'The Classification of Occupations in the 1881 Census of England and Wales', *Historical Censuses and Social Surveys Research Group Occasional Paper No. 1* (Colchester: Department of History, University of Essex, 1999), p.4.

occupations is obtained, it is necessary to employ ‘some generalising and aggregative concepts’ in order to analyse the data.⁵

Various classification systems have been devised by sociologists, geographers and historians for the study of social class in different populations and these are considered in more detail in Appendix 8. For the reasons discussed in Appendix 8, it has been concluded that the Registrar General’s five-class scheme of 1951, as modified by Armstrong, is the preferred method of analysis of the occupational characteristics of Primitive Methodists in Hertfordshire.⁶ The five classes, with examples of 1951 occupations assigned by the Registrar General to each class, are set out in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: The Registrar General’s 1951 classification of occupational data		
Class		Examples of 1951 occupations in each class
Class I	Professional	Accountant, architect, chemist, doctor, clergyman, judge, lawyer, optician, solicitor
Class II	Intermediate	Farmer, laboratory technician, M.P. nurse, police officer, teacher
Class III	Skilled non-manual	Cashier, clerical worker, estate agent, sales rep. secretary, shop assistant, waiter
	Skilled manual	Baker, bus driver, bricklayer, carpenter, electrician, hairdresser, policeman, train driver
Class IV	Semi-skilled	Agricultural worker, barman, fisherman, hospital orderly, packer
Class V	Unskilled	Road sweeper, labourer, car park attendant, refuse collector, window cleaner

⁵ Clive Field, ‘The social composition of English Methodism to 1830: a membership analysis’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (Spring 1994), pp.153-78; Field, ‘The Social Structure of English Methodism’, pp.199-225; London Electoral History: Steps Towards Democracy - 7.11 Classification by occupation <<http://leh.ncl.ac.uk/PDF's/LEH-Classification/LEH-CLASSIFICATION7.11OCCUPATIONS.pdf>> [accessed December 2014].

⁶ W. A. Armstrong, ‘The use of information about occupations’, in *Nineteenth-century society. Essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data*, ed. by E. A. Wrigley (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 191–310; W. A. Armstrong, *Stability and change in an English county town: a social study of York, 1801-1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 13-4; W. A. Armstrong, ‘The census enumerators’ books: a commentary’, in *The census and social structure: and interpretative guide to 19th century censuses for England and Wales*, ed. by Richard Lawton (Frank Cass and Company Ltd, London, 1978), pp.28-70 (pp.55-57).

Occupations of Primitive Methodists in Hertfordshire

There are few sources of information for the occupations of Primitive Methodists in Hertfordshire. Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS) does not have any membership lists amongst its Primitive Methodist records and it has only one pre-1932 Primitive Methodist marriage register; this is for the St Albans Road Primitive Methodist chapel in Watford, although it only covers the period from 1 July 1927. However, there are a few surviving baptismal registers: one for the St Albans area covers the period from 1846 to 1886; a register for the Baldock circuit runs from 1876 to 1901 and from 1905 to 1917; and there are three registers from the Saffron Walden circuit (covering parts of East Hertfordshire) for 1846 to 1861, 1860 to 1876 and 1866 to 1908.⁷ Between them, these baptismal registers span a period of 72 years and contain 717 entries relating to Primitive Methodist baptisms in Hertfordshire, of which 684 relate to those living in the county.

The occupational data from the baptismal registers (particularly where linked with similar data from census information) can be used to derive a social classification of those who presented their children for baptism. However, as Field has identified, baptismal registers do have their limitations and they are certainly not a complete substitute for membership rolls; one significant drawback is that, generally, they only identify the male membership, which, as other investigations by Field have shown, can make up less than half of the Connexion's membership.⁸ Watts also refers to the reliability of baptismal registers as a guide to the occupational structure of nonconformist congregations, focusing in particular on the 'major question ... [of] ... the extent to which parents who took their children to Nonconformist chapels to be baptized were in fact committed to those chapels'. Nevertheless, after a very detailed survey and analysis of nonconformist congregations, Watts was able to conclude that 'we can therefore be confident that the occupations listed in the Nonconformist baptismal registers are a reasonably accurate guide to the social

⁷ Marriage register for St Albans Road, Watford, Jul 1927-Dec 1935, NM71/1; baptismal register for St Albans Primitive Methodist Circuit, Dec 1846-Jan 1887, NM5/43; baptismal register for Baldock Primitive Methodist Circuit, Aug 1876-Oct 1901 and Dec 1905-Jul 1917, NM4/11; baptismal registers for Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit, 1846-1861, 1860-1876, 1866-1908, NM9/9-11, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS).

⁸ Field, 'The Social Structure of English Methodism', p.200; Field, 'The social composition of English Methodism to 1830', p.158.

structure of those congregations'.⁹ Moreover, Snell and Ell also have drawn attention to a number of studies that have used baptism registers to highlight the social and occupational differences between Primitive and Wesleyan Methodists.¹⁰ Thus, the Hertfordshire baptismal registers can safely be assumed to identify those households who had at least espoused the cause of Primitive Methodism.

It would be possible to look at the whole of the 72 years covered by the various baptismal register books in order to arrive at a social classification of the Primitive Methodist membership in Hertfordshire. However, it is of more interest to see whether the social class of the membership changed over time. The register books span eight decades, so it is logical to consider the data in each of these ten year periods, in order that the occupations of the parents given in the registers can be compared (for accuracy and consistency) with the information contained in the decennial censuses.

The data contain a number of instances where children of the same parents were presented for baptism. Such 'repeat' entries in the register for the same family need to be eliminated in order to avoid multiple counting, which would have a distorting effect on the results of a classification based upon the father's occupation.¹¹ Using ten year sub-sets of the data make this task easier through record linkage with the census information. However, repeat entries in different decades have not been removed, in order that the data can be classified by occupation for each decade and analysed to see if there are any changes in classification over time. In addition, there a number of entries which are incomplete and where information about occupation is missing: these entries have not been included in the analysis where it has not proved possible to fill the gaps by using census data.

St Albans

The single baptismal register book from the St Albans Primitive Methodist Circuit covers a period of 42 years, from 1846 to 1887, and contains a total of 180 entries relating to

⁹ Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II: The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), Appendix II, pp.676-681.

¹⁰ Keith Snell and Paul Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.141-142 and especially footnote 52.

¹¹ Ambler, 'Social change and religious experience: aspects of rural society in south Lincolnshire', p.323.

Hertfordshire locations. When incomplete and repeat entries were removed, this total reduced to 120 (see Appendix 6, Table A6(1)). St Albans is clearly the main focus of baptisms, with nearly 41% of the total. Redbourn (nearly 20%), Hemel Hempstead (12.5%) and Watford (nearly 11%) are the only other locations to record above 10% of the total. The fourteen other locations mentioned in the register account for only 20 baptisms between them (16.7%). However, it must be borne in mind that the locations referred to in the St Albans baptismal register reflect the somewhat complicated history of this circuit. As seen in Chapter 2, at various times St Albans has been joined with Watford (and Hertford, which would probably explain the Hoddesdon entry) and, in 1870, a separate circuit covering north-west Hertfordshire was created out of the St Albans Circuit, based on Berkhamsted. Nevertheless, Table A6(1) illustrates well the rise and fall of the St Albans society over five decades. The numbers of baptisms recorded in the register reach their peak in the 1860s but fall away quite rapidly thereafter. Interestingly, Redbourn records more baptisms than St Albans in the 1870s and the 1880s, which would help to explain why this society was transferred to one of the several thriving Primitive Methodist circuits in Luton when the St Albans circuit was disbanded in 1887.

The 120 entries reveal a total of fifty different occupations, ranging from a gentleman to a rag and bone merchant. Over the full period covered by the baptismal register book, there were four occupations (3.3%) in Class I of the Registrar General's (RG) scheme of classification. 5 occupations (4.2%) were in RG Class II, 46 (38.3%) were in RG Class III, 38 (31.7%) were in RG Class IV and 27 (22.5%) were in RG Class V. A summary of occupations by RG Class is given in Table 4.2 and illustrated in Figure 4.1, and all fifty occupations are listed in Appendix 6 Table A6(2), in both cases for each of the decennial periods.

In RG Class I, in addition to the gentleman there were two Primitive Methodist ministers and a doctor. There were only five occupations in RG Class II: they were a grocer, a poulterer, a general dealer and two silk factors. There were 33 occupations in RG Class III, the greatest number in any of the RG Classes. Eleven of these occupations, involving 19 people, related to the straw hat industry and cloth making. The railways were represented by two signalmen, an engine driver, three railway policemen and an engine fitter. There were three carpenters, and other trades were represented by a brick maker, two shoemakers, a

blacksmith, a whitesmith, a baker and a tailor. There were only six occupations included in RG Class IV: 71% (27) of the 38 people in this class were agricultural labourers. There were also six gardeners and two carmen, along with a rat catcher and a shepherd. Of the 27 people whose occupations fell in RG Class V, nearly 93% (25) were labourers. The remaining occupations in this class comprised a railway navvy and the rag and bone merchant.

Table 4.2: Summary of the number of occupations by RG Class for Hertfordshire entries in the St Albans Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

	1840s	1850s	1860s	1870s	1880s	Total	%
RG Class I	0	2	1	1	0	4	3.3%
RG Class II	0	1	4	0	0	5	4.2%
RG Class III	2	14	19	9	2	46	38.3%
RG Class IV	0	12	13	6	7	38	31.7%
RG Class V	2	7	8	8	2	27	22.5%
TOTAL	4	36	45	24	11	120	

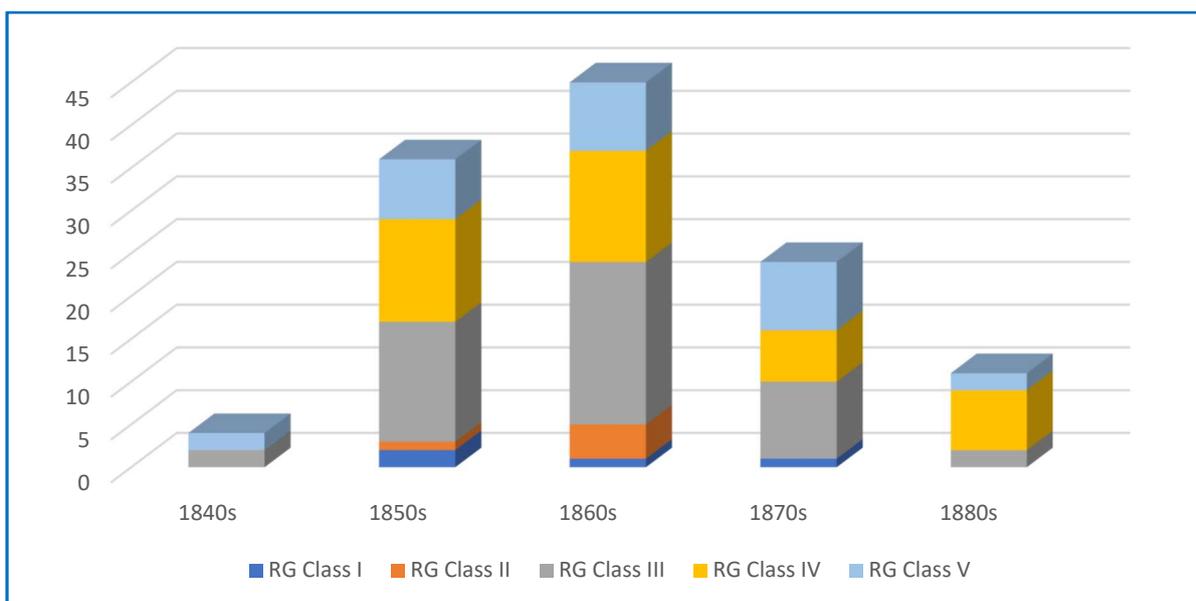


Figure 4.1: Summary of the number of occupations by RG Class for Hertfordshire entries in the St Albans Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

As Table 4.2 shows, across the whole of the period covered by the register from 1846 to 1887, most occupations (38.3%) were in RG Class III, although RG Class IV was not far behind at 31.7%. The next largest was RG Class V, with 22.5%, nearly a quarter of all occupations, with RG Class II contributing only 4.2% and RG Class I 3.3%. However, a different picture of

the strengths and weaknesses of the various classes emerges when the figures are examined decade by decade, as shown by Table 4.3. Firstly, RG Classes I and II are totally absent in the 1840s and the 1880s, and, as far as RG Class II is concerned its only significant decade was the 1860s. Between them, these two classes accounted for only 8.4% of occupations in the 1850s and 11.1% in the 1860s, with occupations in RG Class II disappearing completely after the 1860s. Secondly, there is a steady decline evident in the number of occupations in RG Class III, from 50% in the 1840s to only 18.2% in the 1880s.

Table 4.3: Summary of the percentage of occupations by RG Class for Hertfordshire entries in the St Albans Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

	<i>1840s</i>	<i>1850s</i>	<i>1860s</i>	<i>1870s</i>	<i>1880s</i>	<i>Total</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
RG Class I	0	5.6	2.2	4.2	0	3.3
RG Class II	0	2.8	8.9	0	0	4.2
RG Class III	50.0	38.9	42.2	37.5	18.2	38.3
RG Class IV	0	33.3	28.9	25.0	63.6	31.7
RG Class V	50.0	19.4	17.8	33.3	18.2	22.5

Nevertheless, in each of the decennial periods from the 1840s to the 1870s, the largest group of occupations was in RG Class III. RG Class IV shows a steady decline from 33.3% in the 1850s to 25.0% in the 1870s, although this is followed by a sudden rise to 63.6% in the 1880s. The number of occupations in RG Class V varies from 50.0% in the 1840s down to 17.8% in the 1860s, and this fall is also then followed by a sudden rise to 33.3% in the 1870s. However, in the 1880s, only 18.2% of occupations were in RG Class V.

The figures from Table 4.3 are illustrated graphically in Figure 4.2. The weak contributions from RG Classes I and II are immediately obvious. Equally clear is the overall decline in occupations in RG Classes III and V, contrasted with the growth in occupations in RG Class IV. This evidence appears to suggest that the social class of the rank and file members of the Primitive Methodist Connexion in St Albans was generally falling in the second half of the nineteenth century. In particular, from the 1870s onwards there was a significant growth in occupations in RG Class IV, with an equally significant decline in occupations in RG Classes III and V.

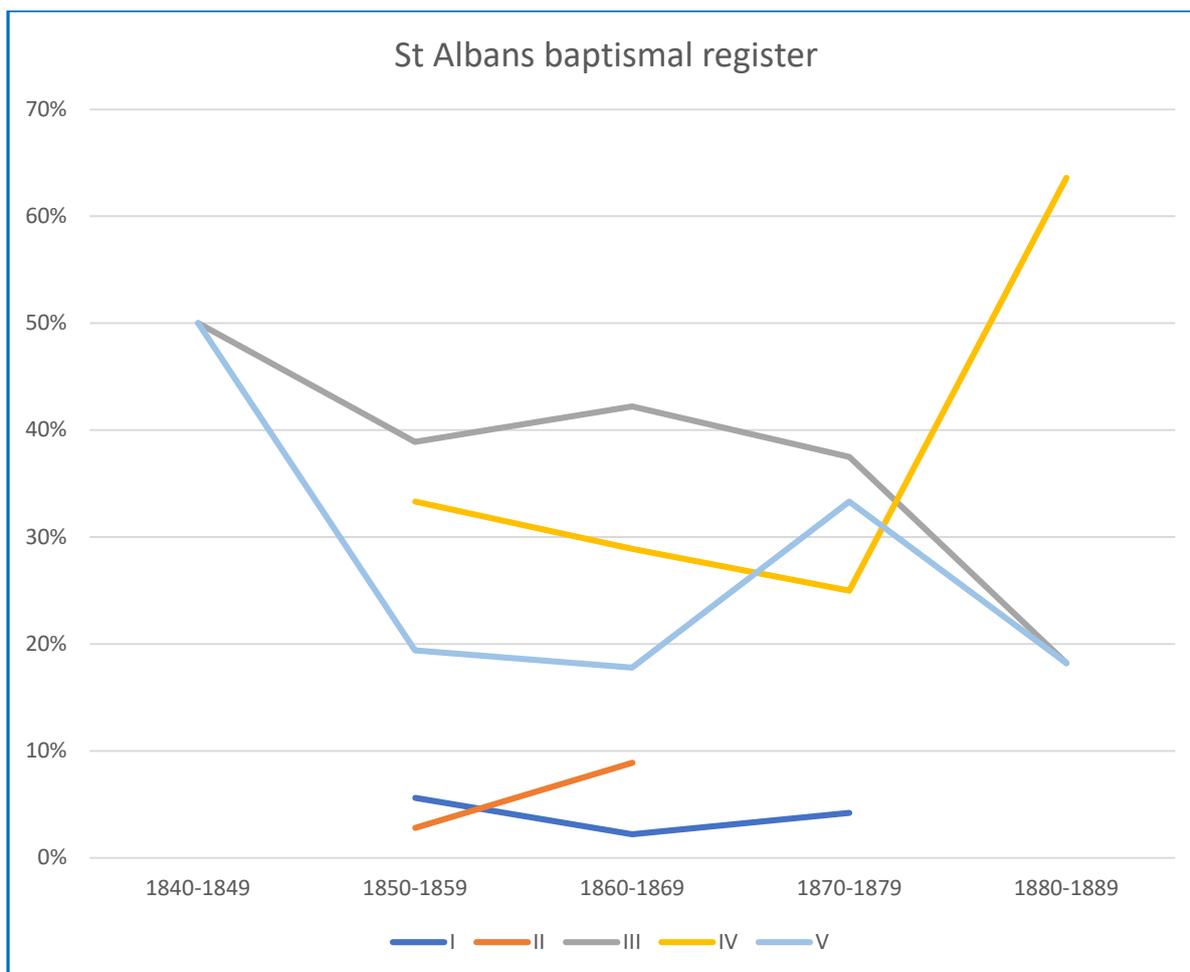


Figure 4.2: Percentage of occupations by RG Class for Hertfordshire entries in the St Albans Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

Figure 4.3 presents the same data as in Figure 4.2, but with the percentage of occupations in RG Classes II and III combined and with the percentage of occupations in RG Classes IV and V combined, following a similar approach to analysis of twentieth century data by Field.¹² Not only does this approach enable comparisons to be made with the data from the studies referred to by Field, but it also serves to highlight the decline in overall social class of Primitive Methodist members in the St Albans Circuit in the 1870s and 1880s. In turn, this might help to shed some light on the ‘serious difficulties’ which beset this society and which ultimately led to its demise in 1887. One important consequence of a fall in social class of the membership would be a reduction in income. Since it would appear that the society was already overstretched financially as a result of its over-ambitious chapel-building

¹² Field, ‘The Social Structure of English Methodism’, p.211.

programme, any further loss of financial support brought about by the change in social structure of the chapel's membership would only serve to make matters worse.¹³

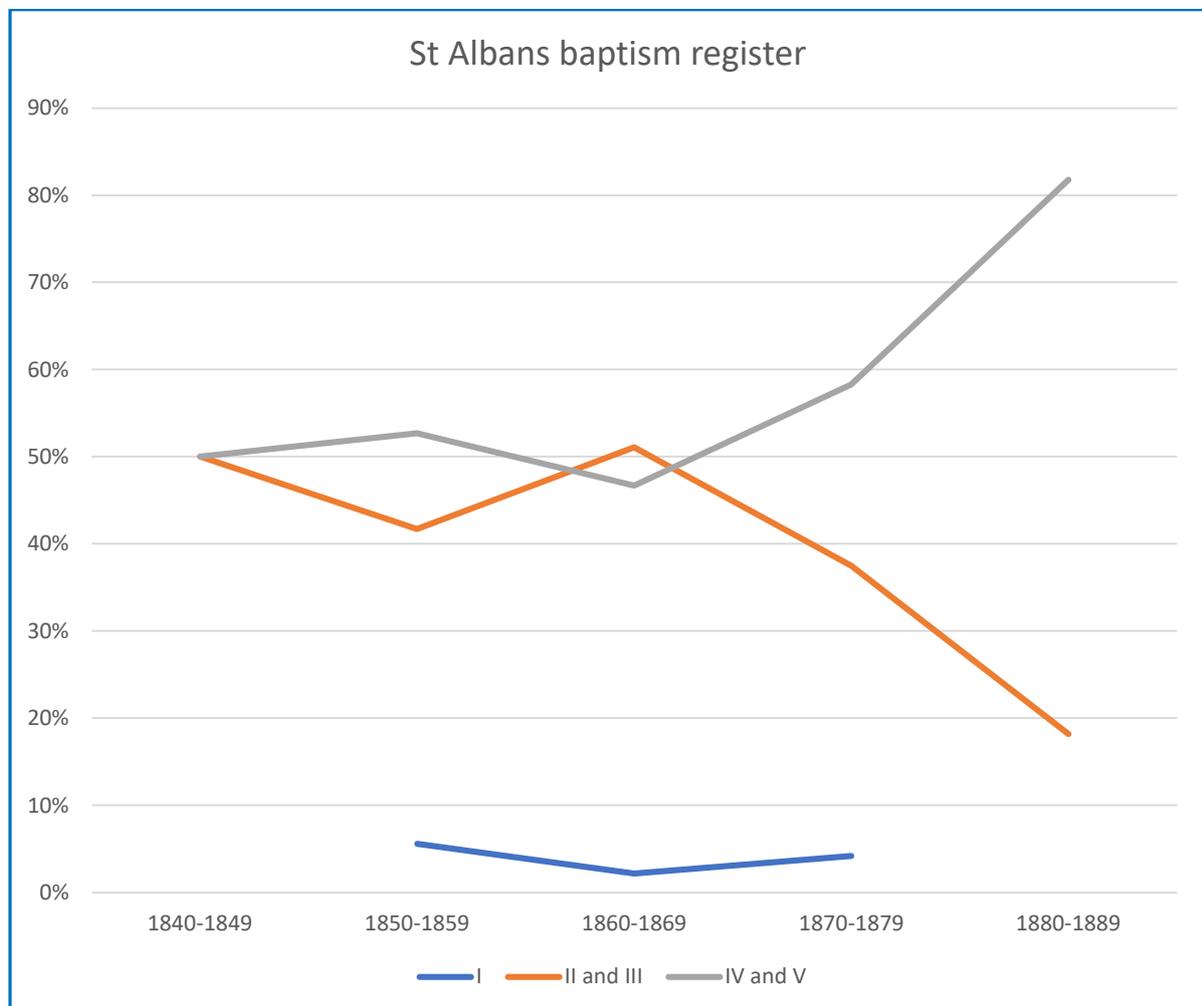


Figure 4.3: Percentage of occupations by RG Class I and RG Classes II and III and RG Classes IV and V combined for Hertfordshire entries in the St Albans Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

Baldock

There is one baptismal register held at HALS for the Baldock Primitive Methodist Circuit. It spans two separate periods, from August 1876 to Oct 1901, and from December 1905 to July 1917. Within these five decennial periods there are a total of 181 entries relating to Hertfordshire locations, but the removal of repeat entries and those with missing

¹³ See Chapter 2, footnotes 49 to 53.

information reduced this total to 113. These are listed in Appendix 6 Table A6(4). Repeat entries accounted for a very high proportion (over 35%) of the original 181 entries in the Baldock register, particularly in Baldock and Ashwell. The entries for Baldock reduced from 74 to 45 and Ashwell fell from 42 to 26 (down by some 40% in both locations). This would suggest that the local societies in this circuit were made up of a strong and supportive membership which engendered a high degree of faithfulness and commitment over time.

The locations of the remaining 113 entries are listed in Appendix 6 Table A6(3). Baldock, the head of the circuit and the largest settlement in the locality, records the highest number of baptisms, with nearly 40% of the total. Ashwell (23%) and Norton (just over 12%) were the only other locations to record more than 10% of the total. Also evident from Table A6(3) is the decline in baptismal numbers over the five decennial periods. This decline began quite slowly at first but became very marked in the early twentieth century. It was during this time that the influence of Baldock as a major centre for Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire began to reduce substantially; not only was Baldock one of the poorest stations in the Connexion but its membership was also on the decline as a result of a movement of population from this largely agricultural area towards the growing urban areas of Hitchin, Stevenage and Letchworth. The chapel closed in 1916 (although the last entry in the baptism register was dated 22 July 1917) and the society and its remaining circuit chapels were amalgamated into the newly formed 'Herts & Beds Mission'.¹⁴

Table 4.4: Summary of the number of occupations by RG Class for Hertfordshire entries in the Baldock Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

	1870s	1880s	1890s	1900s	1910s	Total	%
RG Class I	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.9%
RG Class II	1	5	4	3	5	18	15.9%
RG Class III	6	4	6	2	0	18	15.9%
RG Class IV	21	12	13	2	2	50	44.2%
RG Class V	8	12	6	0	0	26	23.0%
TOTAL	36	34	29	7	7	113	

¹⁴ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1899, pp.154-155 and 1900, p.395; *Primitive Methodist Leader*, 29 June 1916, pp.432-433; *Primitive Methodist Leader*, 27 July 1916, pp.500 and 501.

From Figure 4.4 the slow decline in baptisms from the 1870s to the 1890s is clearly evident; however, the very sudden fall in numbers in the early 20th century is even more marked. This fall also in numbers also resulted in the disappearance of occupations in RG Class V (in the 1900s and the 1910s) and RG Class III (in the 1910s).

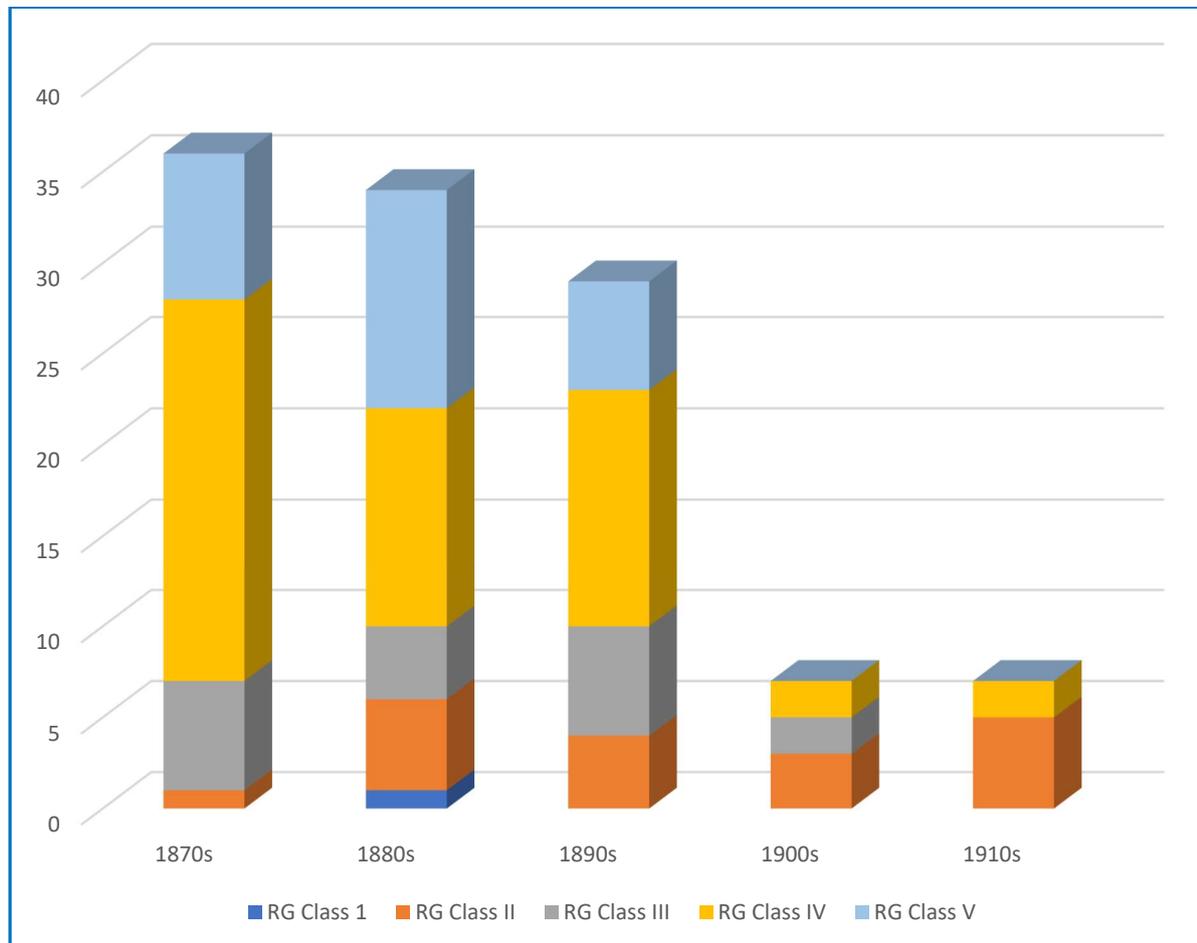


Figure 4.4: Summary of the number of occupations by RG Class for Hertfordshire entries in the Baldock Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

The 113 entries covered 42 different occupations. Their distribution over the five RG Classes is shown in Table 4.4 and illustrated in Figure 4.4. The only occupation in RG Class I was a Primitive Methodist minister (0.9% of the total). RG Classes II and III both recorded 18 entries (15.9%); in RG Class II there were five occupations, with 14 of the 18 entries being farmers. In RG Class III the most prominent occupations were blacksmiths (four) and bakers (two). The fifty entries in RG Class IV (44.2%) were spread over twelve occupations. Over half of them (26) were agricultural labourers, with another six occupations related to agriculture. A further eight entries were involved with the brewing and malting industries in

the town. Of the 26 people in RG Class V (23.0%), 20 (77%) were labourers of one sort or another, nine of them (35%) in the brewing and malting industries.

The extent to which members of the Primitive Methodist society at Baldock were involved with the brewing and malting industries is particularly interesting, given the Connexion's stance on alcohol and temperance. Kendall notes that, as a result of Hugh Bourne bringing 'the subject of Temperance' before the Conference in 1831, it was decided that the editor of the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* (i.e. Hugh Bourne) should be 'instructed to devote a portion of the *Magazine* to articles on the Temperance Question'. Kendall also records that, ten years later, the General Committee sent a circular to all circuits stating that 'it is well known that our Connexion approves of Teetotalism, and recommends the prudent advocacy of it'.¹⁵ Nevertheless, a request in 1850 to use a Primitive Methodist chapel in Luton for a temperance meeting was declined on the grounds of being contrary to the Connexion's rules.¹⁶ However, so far as Baldock was concerned, brewing and malting had been a significant part of the local economy since the 17th century and these activities continued to be 'the chief industries of the town' even into the early years of the 20th century.¹⁷ Over the years between 1876 and 1898, twelve members of the Baldock society who presented their children for baptism were directly involved in brewing and malting industries. Overall, this represented 15.4% of all the fathers whose children were baptised during this period; in the 1870s this figure was as high as 19%.¹⁸ It is also likely that several more were indirectly involved as agricultural workers employed on the farms around Baldock which grew the barley that the brewing and malting industries required. Thus, it would appear that, notwithstanding the Connexion's stance on temperance, the rank and file membership at least were prepared to work in such industries, particularly if it was a choice between that and being unemployed.

¹⁵ H. B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I (London: Robert Bryant, c. 1905), pp.470-472.

¹⁶ Jonathan Rodell, *The Rise of Methodism – A Study of Bedfordshire 1736-1851* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Bedfordshire Historical Record Society and The Boydell Press, 2014), p.196.

¹⁷ *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 3*, ed. William Page (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1912), *British History Online* <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol3>> [accessed 12 September 2019], pp.65-73.

¹⁸ Figures derived from Table A(6)4 in Appendix 6.

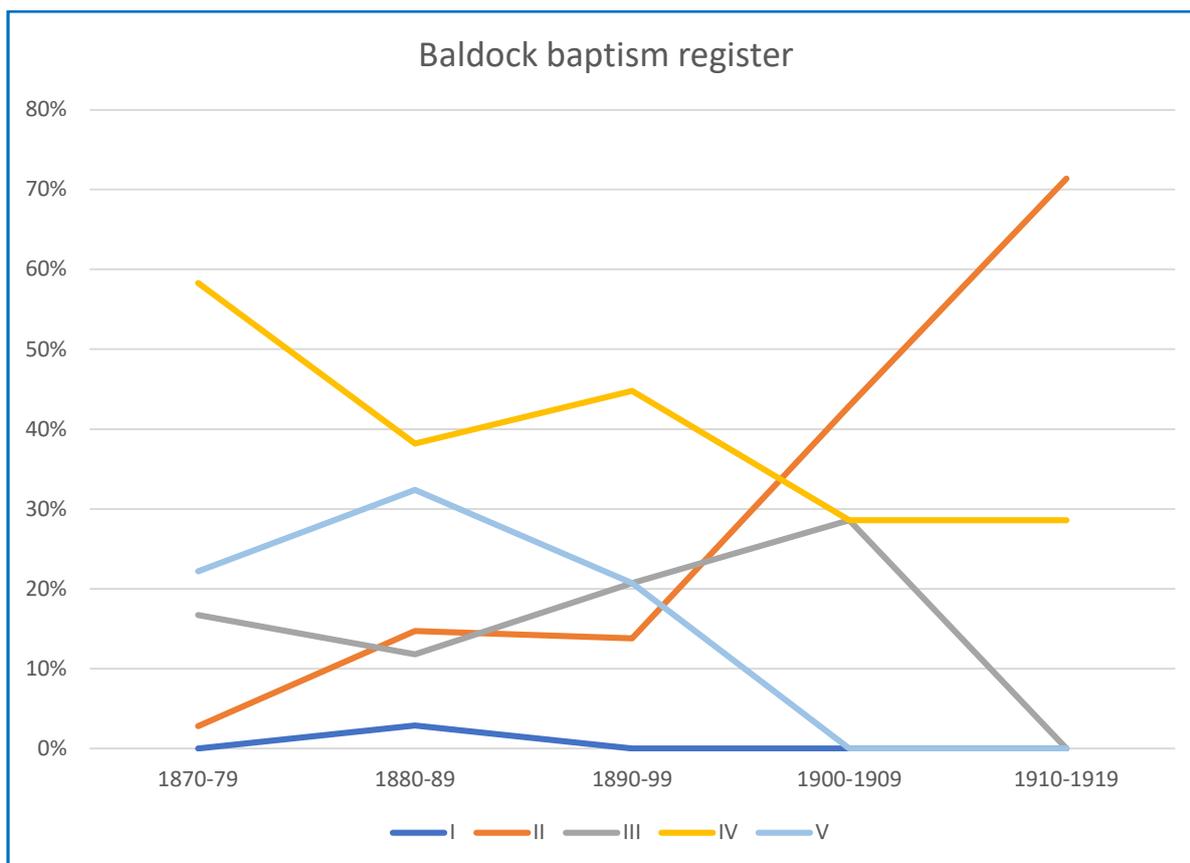


Figure 4.5: Percentage of occupations by RG Class for Hertfordshire entries in the Baldock Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

Table 4.5 summarises the percentage of occupations within each RG Class by decennial period. This shows a steady rise in the percentage of occupations in RG Class II, from a mere 2.8% in the 1870s to 71.4% in the 1910s. Similarly, RG Class III occupations rise from 11.8% in the 1880s to 28.6% in the 1900s, before disappearing altogether in the 1910s. Alongside the rises in occupations falling within RG Classes II and III, those in RG Class IV experienced a steady decline, from 58.3% in the 1870s to 28.6% in the 1900s and 1910s. At the same time, occupations in RG Class V fell from a high of 32.4% in the 1880s to 20.7% in the 1890s, before disappearing completely in the 20th century. RG Class 1 may effectively be discounted, as it has only the one entry for the whole of the period covered by the register book.

Table 4.5: Summary of the percentage of occupations by RG Class for Hertfordshire entries in the Baldock Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

	1870s	1880s	1890s	1900s	1910s	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
RG Class I	0	2.9%	0%	0%	0%	0.9%
RG Class II	2.8	14.7%	13.8%	42.9%	71.4%	15.9%
RG Class III	16.7	11.8%	20.7%	28.6%	0.0%	15.9%
RG Class IV	58.3	38.2%	44.8%	28.6%	28.6%	44.2%
RG Class V	22.2	32.4%	20.7%	0%	0%	23.0%

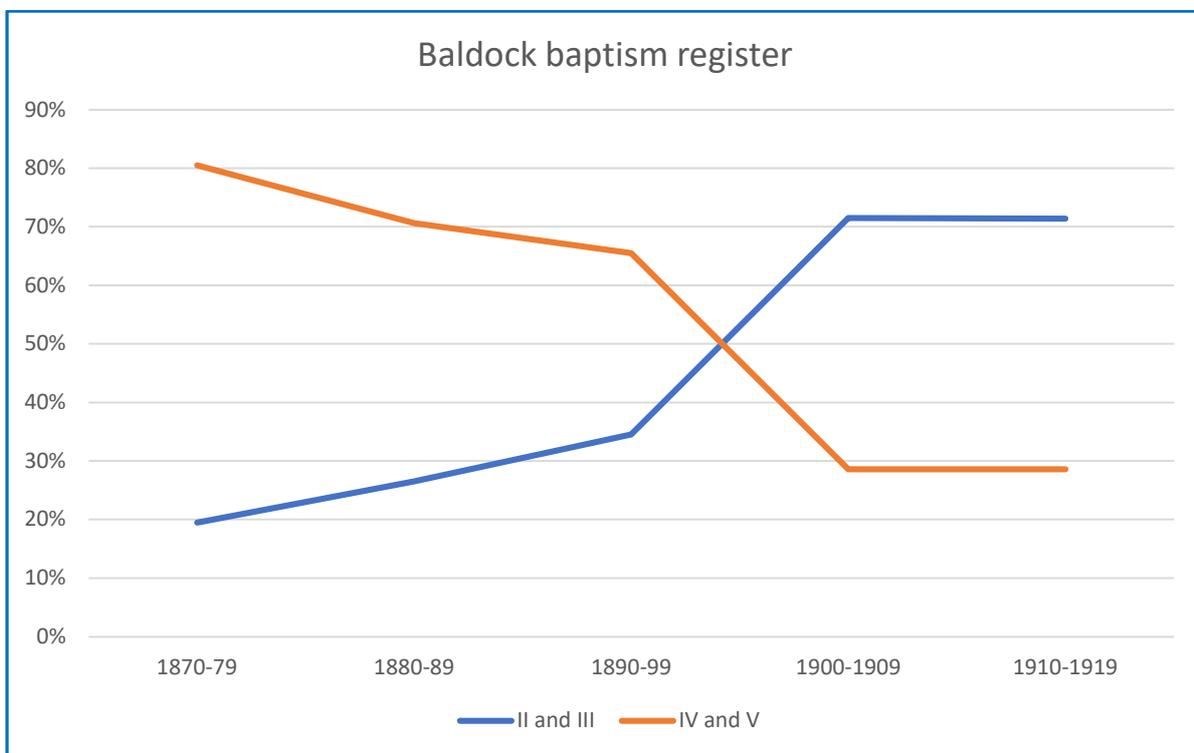


Figure 4.6: Percentage of occupations by RG Class I and RG Classes II and III and RG Classes IV and V combined for Hertfordshire entries in the Baldock Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

The figures in Table 4.5 are also illustrated in Figure 4.5. This shows the strong growth in RG Class II over the fifty years from 1870 with equally strong declines in RG Classes III and V and an overall decline in RG Class IV. An even clearer picture emerges from Figure 4.6, which shows the percentage of occupations in RG Classes II and III combined compared to the combined figures for RG Classes IV and V.

The evidence from the Baldock baptismal registers therefore suggests that the social class of the Primitive Methodist societies in this part of Hertfordshire was rising over the last thirty years of the 19th century and through the first two decades of the 20th century.

East Hertfordshire

The three baptismal register books from the Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit cover a period of 63 years, from 1846 to 1908, and they contain a total of 320 entries relating to Hertfordshire locations dating from 1850 to 1907. After taking account of repeat family entries and those with missing occupational and other data, the original total of entries in the three baptismal registers has been reduced to 200 the locations of which are listed in Appendix 6 Table A6(5).¹⁹ These entries focus primarily on the settlements of Anstey and Furneux Pelham, but they also include entries from several other locations in East Hertfordshire. Anstey and Furneux Pelham together account for 66% of the baptismal entries in the three registers. The only other significant contributions are from Dassells, Hare Street and Nuthampstead, amounting collectively to another 22%, with the remaining 12% of entries covering 15 different places.

It is worthy of note that there were Primitive Methodist chapels in only four of these locations, and three of these locations occupy the first three places in Table A6(5).²⁰ Moreover, although the primary purpose of arranging the baptismal data by decades was to facilitate an analysis of change in the social composition of the membership over time, this method of displaying the data reveals some interesting trends about the overall numbers of baptisms recorded over the 63 year period particularly so far as these three chapel locations are concerned. At Anstey, where the society had benefited from the provision of a meeting place since its inception, the high number of baptisms in the 1850s was more than sustained in the following decade. However, the 1870s and 1880s showed a marked decline: only two baptisms were recorded in the 1890s, the society having disbanded in 1892.²¹ In contrast to

¹⁹ There was one additional entry, simply given in the register as '5 Wilson Street', which, to judge from surrounding entries, ought to have been a Hertfordshire location. However, it has not proved possible either to identify it or to locate the father in the census record and, consequently, this entry has not been included in the following analysis.

²⁰ The fourth, Barley, only features once in the Saffron Walden baptism register, almost certainly because Barley was in the adjoining Baldock Primitive Methodist circuit.

²¹ For a fuller discussion of Anstey, see Chapter 6.

Anstey, baptisms involving families from Furneux Pelham feature consistently in all the decades in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, unlike Anstey, the construction of the chapel at Furneux Pelham in 1870 did not result in an increase in baptisms. Nevertheless, Furneux Pelham did record the highest number of baptisms in the twentieth century, albeit significantly below the figures recorded in the previous five decades. At Dassells, four of the five baptisms in the 1860s took place after the opening of the chapel in 1868. There was little change in the 1870s but a sudden increase, almost three-fold, in the 1880s. However, this increase was not sustained into the 1890s, although baptisms here did just continue into the twentieth century.

There are several factors which could provide an explanation for some of these figures. Firstly, the late 1870s and early 1880s saw an agricultural depression in Hertfordshire, because of both poor harvests and lower prices resulting from the increasing importation of cheaper grain. Lower prices for farmers meant lower wages for agricultural workers. It was in the 1860s that concern began to be expressed at the extent to which workers in towns could earn more than rural workers; by the early 1870s local unions of agricultural labourers

Table 4.6: Parish populations of rural chapel locations compared to Bishops Stortford

<i>Locations</i>	<i>1851</i>	<i>1861</i>	<i>1871</i>	<i>1881</i>	<i>1891</i>	<i>1901</i>	<i>Total % growth/decline</i>
Anstey	465	473	412	391	396	364	-21.7%
Furneux Pelham	688	620	618	571	540	449	-34.7%
Braughing (Dassells)	1,246	1,180	1,076	1,022	974	930	-25.4%
Bishops Stortford	5,280	5,390	6,250	6,704	6,595	7,143	35.3%

Source: William Page (ed.), 'Table of Population', *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 4* (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1914), pp.235-238.²²

had started to form, primarily as a protest against low wages, and in 1872 the National Agricultural Labourers' Union was formed. The Union's first president was Joseph Arch, an

²² See also Julie Moore, 'The impact of agricultural depression and land ownership change on the county of Hertfordshire, c.1870-1914' (PhD thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2010).

agricultural worker himself and a Primitive Methodist local preacher.²³ Secondly, the agricultural and economic situations led to a move of population from rural to urban areas. Between 1851 and 1901, the population of the parish of Anstey fell by 22%, Braughing (within which parish Dassells is located) fell by 25% and Furneux Pelham by 35%. In contrast, the population of Bishops Stortford rose during the same period by 35% (see Table 4.6).

What is perhaps less easy to explain is the marked increase in the numbers of baptisms at Dassells in the 1880s, at a time of falling population. It also seems to be at odds with the fact that, in September 1889, the Saffron Walden Circuit Quarterly Meeting was considering proposals to sell the Dassells chapel (although the reasoning behind this consideration is not made clear in the minutes).²⁴ It may have something to do with the fact that nine of the eleven baptisms recorded in the 1880s occurred during the first half of the decade, with only one in 1887 and one in 1888. In the event, the chapel at Dassells lasted well beyond the 1932 Union, closing in the 1950s.²⁵

Table 4.7: Summary of the number of occupations by RG Class for Hertfordshire entries in the Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal registers

	1850s	1860s	1870s	1880s	1890s	1900s	Total	%
RG Class II	2	3	3	2	4	4	18	9.0%
RG Class III	4	6	11	2	2	2	27	13.5%
RG Class IV	41	43	23	24	14	3	148	74.0%
RG Class V	2	1	2	1	1	0	7	3.5%
TOTAL	49	53	39	29	21	9	200	

The 200 entries in the Saffron Walden baptismal registers reveal a total of thirty different occupations, ranging from farmers and shopkeepers to labourers and gardeners. There were no occupations in RG Class I. Over the full period covered by the baptismal register books, 18 occupations (9.0%) were in RG Class II, 27 (13.5%) were in RG Class III, 148 (74.0%) were

²³ Nigel Agar, 'The Hertfordshire Farmer in the Age of Industrial Revolution' in *Hertfordshire in History: Papers Presented to Lionel Munby*, ed. by Doris Jones-Baker (Hertford: The Hertfordshire Local History Council, 1991); J. P. D. Dunbabin, 'The Incidence and Organization of Agricultural Trades Unionism in the 1870's', *The Agricultural History Review*, 16.2 (1968), 114-141; Alun Howkins, Alun, 'Arch, Joseph (1826–1919)', ODNB <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30433>>.

²⁴ Meeting held on 5 September 1889, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, Essex Record Office.

²⁵ Dassells trust treasurer's accounts, 1877 - 1950, NM9G/1, HALS.

in RG Class IV and 7 (3.5%) were in RG Class V. A summary of the number of occupations by RG Class is given in Table 4.7 and illustrated in Figure 4.7 and all thirty occupations are listed in Appendix 6 Table A6(6), in both cases for each of the decennial periods.

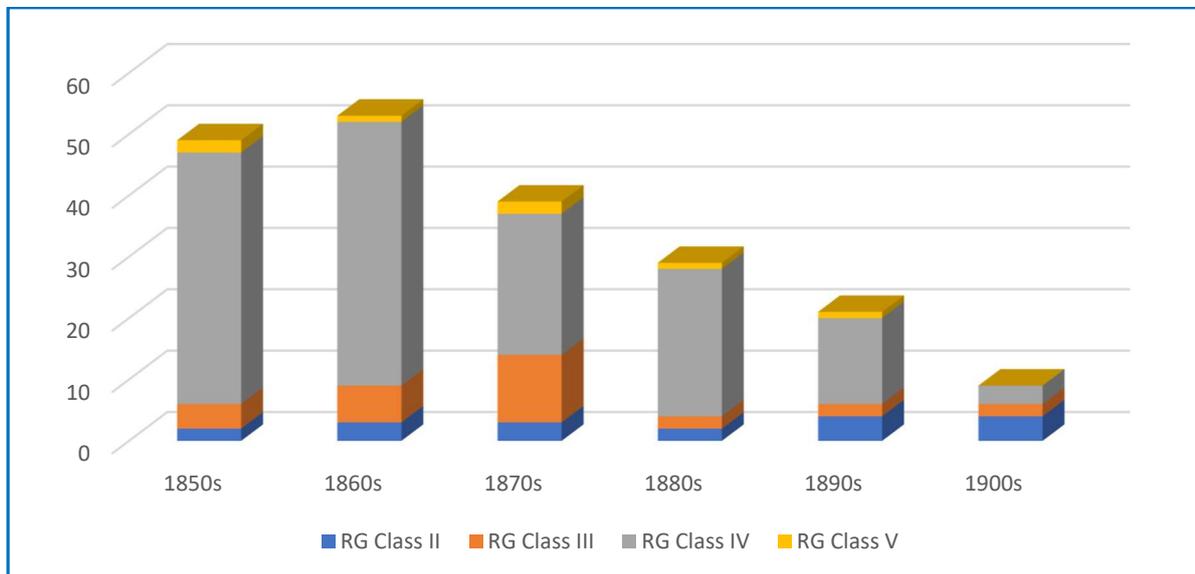


Figure 4.7: Summary of the number of occupations by RG Class for Hertfordshire entries in the Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal registers

In RG Class II, there were three farmers, two agricultural foremen and two farm bailiffs, as well as two millers and six thatchers. Two grocers and one shopkeeper (essentially the same occupation) complete the occupations in this class. The principal occupation in RG Class III was brick maker (nine of these, with two bricklayers). There were seven carpenters, and other trades were represented by three shoemakers, one brewer, a foreman, a blacksmith, a groom, a baker and a tailor. Of the ten different occupations included in RG Class IV, 61% (122) were agricultural labourers. Other significant occupations comprised nine horse keepers or horsemen, six carmen, and five shepherds. In RG Class V there were four labourers, two railway labourers and one roadman.

Although, as Table 4.7 identifies, across the whole of the period covered by the registers 74.0% of all occupations were RG Class IV, with 9.0% in RG Class II, 13.5% in RG Class III and only 3.5% in RG Class V, these figures mask some interesting changes that took place over the decades. The percentage figures for each decennial period are given in Table 4.8 and

this shows that, in the 1850s, 87.8% of all occupations were in RG Classes IV and V; RG Class III accounted for 8.2% and only 4.0% were in RG Class II. However, by the 1900s, the position was rather different (although it must be noted that there was a total of only nine occupations in the latter period compared to 49 in the former). In the last decennial period, 33.3% of occupations were in RG Classes IV and V, with 22.2% in RG Class III and 44.4% in RG Class II.

Table 4.8: Summary of the percentage of occupations by RG Class for Hertfordshire entries in the Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal registers

	1850s	1860s	1870s	1880s	1890s	1900s	1850-1907
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
RG Class I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
RG Class II	4.0	5.7	7.7	6.9	19.0	44.4	9.0
RG Class III	8.2	11.3	28.2	6.9	9.5	22.2	13.5
RG Class IV	83.7	81.1	59.0	82.8	66.7	33.3	74.0
RG Class V	4.1	1.9	5.1	3.4	4.8	0	3.5

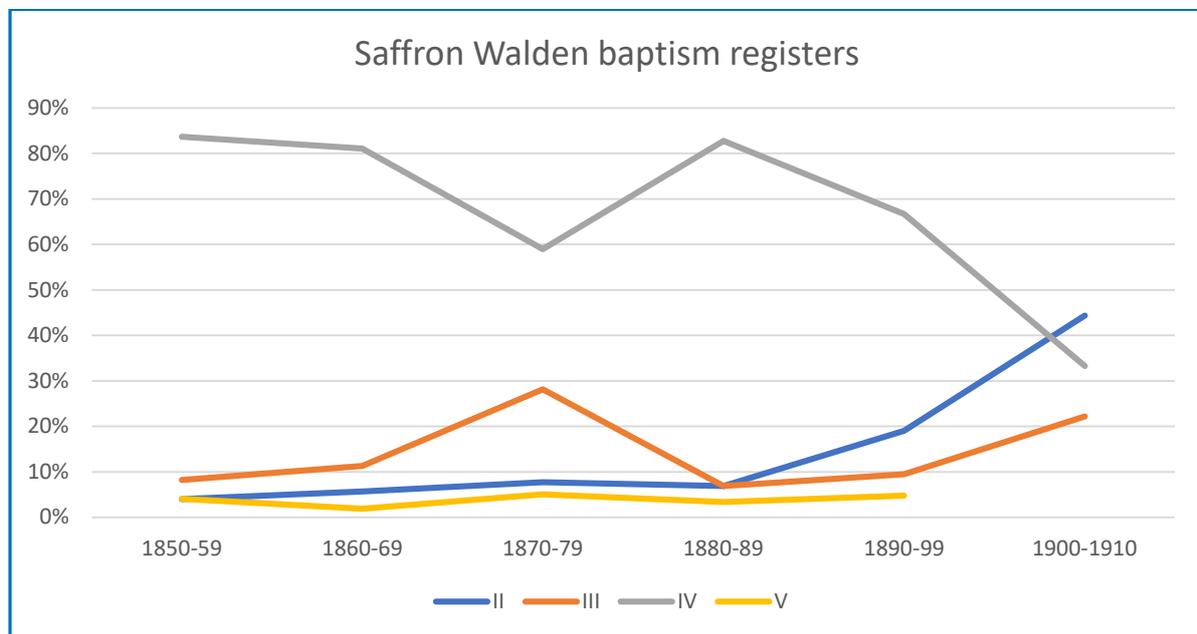


Figure 4.8: Percentage of occupations by RG Class for Hertfordshire entries in the Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal registers

Despite the relatively small numbers, it is still possible to see these figures as evidence that, generally, the social class of the membership of the Primitive Methodist Connexion in East Hertfordshire was rising over the second half of the nineteenth century. Figure 4.8 illustrates these changes over the six decennial periods for each of the RG Classes II, III, IV and V, whilst Figure 4.9 compares the occupations in RG Classes II and III combined with those in RG Classes IV and V combined. As Figure 4.8 shows, from the 1880s onwards the growth in occupations in RG Class II was greater than for those in RG Class III, at the expense of occupations in RG Class IV, and, as can be seen from Figure 4.9, by the 1900s there were more occupations in RG Classes II and III combined than there were in RG Classes IV and V. Taken together, this is further evidence of the rise in social class of Primitive Methodists in East Hertfordshire as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth.

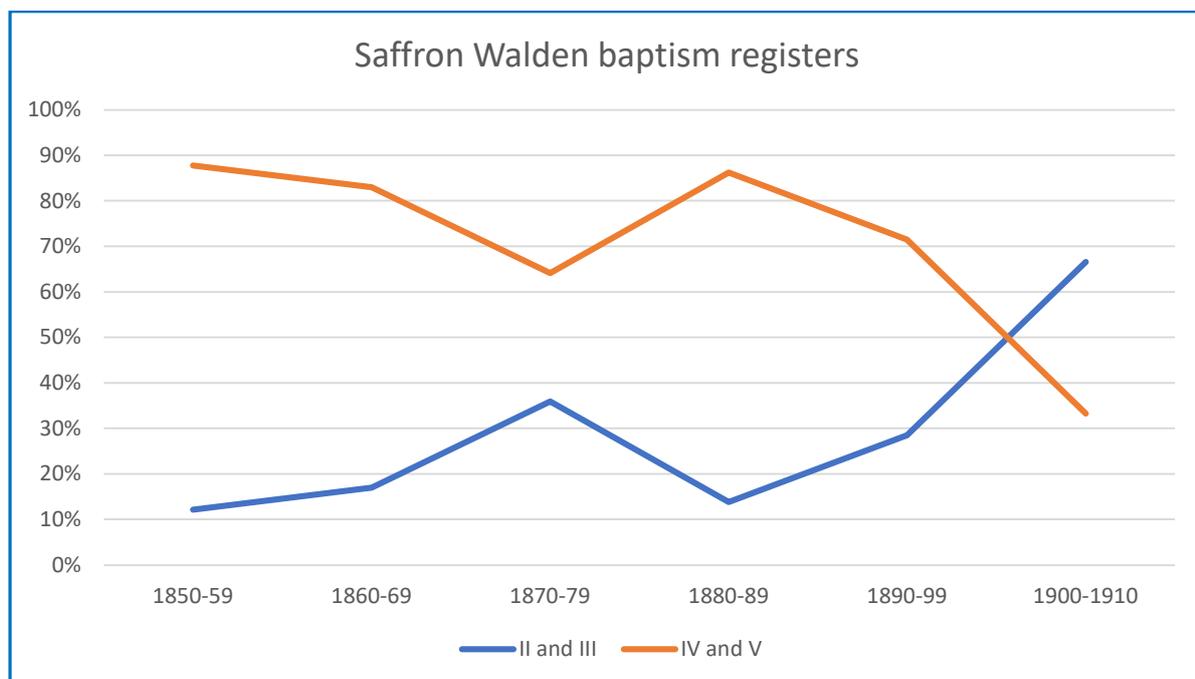


Figure 4.9: Percentage of occupations by RG Classes II and III and RG Classes IV and V combined for Hertfordshire entries in the Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal registers

The general trends over the six decades outlined above were interrupted somewhat in the 1870s; in this decade, the total number of baptisms fell to 39 from the 53 recorded in the previous decade. As the numbers of occupations in RG Classes II and III rose, from 9 to 14, and in RG Class V rose from 1 to 2, the whole of this overall fall is accounted for by a

reduction in the number of occupations in RG Class IV, from 43 to 23. Analysis of the occupations in RG Class IV shows that in the 1860s there were 39 agricultural labourers and four other occupations. By the 1870s, these other occupations had risen to five, but the number of agricultural labourers had fallen dramatically to 18. Thus, the fall in occupations in RG Class IV in the 1870s is wholly accounted for by this large drop in the number of agricultural labourers. These changes in total numbers had the effect of reducing the percentage of occupations in RG Class IV from 81.1% in the 1860s to 59.0% in the 1870s whilst considerably more than doubling the percentage of occupations in RG Class III from 11.3% in the 1860s to 28.2% in the 1870s. At the same time, the percentage of occupations in RG Class II rose from 5.7% in the 1860s to 7.7% in the 1870s. After the 1880s, the number of agricultural labourers dwindles to four in the 1890s and only one in the 1900s. At the same time, however, the first farmers appear in the registers (one in the 1890s and two in the 1900s) along with two farm bailiffs and two agricultural foremen. Given the strongly agricultural nature of the area covered by the Saffron Walden baptismal registers in East Hertfordshire, this provides further evidence of the upward social mobility of the Primitive Methodists in this part of the county.

In contrast, however, between the 1870s and the 1880s, the picture was reversed. Overall, the total number of occupations fell from 39 to 29, but this time this fall is accounted for entirely by a drop in the number of occupations in RG Classes II and III, from 3 and 11 to 2 and 2, respectively. This resulted in the percentage of RG Class IV occupations rising from 59.0% in the 1870s to 82.8% in the 1880s, although the number of occupations only rose from 23 to 24, whilst the percentage of occupations in RG Class II fell from 7.7% to 6.9% and those in RG Class III fell from 28.20% to 6.9%.

Whilst the change in total numbers in each of the three decennial periods from the 1860s to the 1880s has clearly affected the percentages of occupations falling within different RG Classes, nevertheless, as can be seen from Figures 4.8 and 4.9, the steady growth in RG Class III occupations throughout the first three decennial periods came to an abrupt halt in the 1880s. As Table A6(6) in Appendix 6 shows, this was principally as a result of the loss of the skilled artisan occupations (carpenter, shoemaker, brickmaker and blacksmith). The largest of these artisan groups represented in the Saffron Walden baptismal registers was

brickmakers. There were three in the 1860s, rising to five in the 1870s, but falling to one in the 1880s and none in the final two decades. The disappearance of the brick makers may be accounted for by the decline, from the mid-1870s onwards, of brick making in Hertfordshire as larger and more easily worked supplies of clay were being discovered in neighbouring Bedfordshire.²⁶

Other studies of Primitive Methodist occupations

There have been a number of studies of the social composition of Primitive Methodist societies. Ambler has studied the social composition of trustees in Lincolnshire and Field has looked at the social structure of what he termed the 'leadership' and the 'rank and file' membership of English Methodism.²⁷ In his studies of the social structure of English Methodism from the 18th to the 20th centuries Field has noted that 'although much of the historiography of Methodism has been surrounded by controversy, scholars seem to have achieved a remarkable degree of unanimity in their judgments on the movement's social background'. He identified in particular four propositions of Methodist orthodoxy which appeared 'to command widespread acceptance', the third of which was that Methodism's 'early influence over the proletariat was not entirely lost in the Victorian period but rather inherited by some of the newer off-shoots from the main body, notably by the Primitive Methodists who constituted a real religious democracy'.²⁸

Field based his work on statistical evidence from a number of local studies based on 108 Methodist membership lists, almost wholly from locations across England. He used the occupational status of members as an indicator of social structure in order to investigate the movement's social composition. All of these studies used the Registrar General's five class schema which makes it possible to compare their results with those obtained from the Hertfordshire baptismal registers.²⁹ The tables in Appendix 7 list the results of all the Primitive Methodist studies referred to by Field. Most of these studies used baptismal

²⁶ Eileen Wallace, *Children of the Labouring Poor: The Working Lives of Children in Nineteenth-century Hertfordshire* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2010), p.152.

²⁷ Ambler, 'The social composition of church leadership', p.143; Field, 'The social composition of English Methodism to 1830', pp. 153-78; Field, 'The Social Structure of English Methodism', pp.199-200.

²⁸ Field, 'The Social Structure of English Methodism', p.199.

²⁹ Field, 'The social composition of English Methodism to 1830', pp. 153-78; Field, 'The Social Structure of English Methodism', pp.199-200 and 204-211.

records as their data source, although a small number (for example, Lancaster and Preston) were based on marriage registers. Table A7(1) contains all the studies related to the 19th century. However, as Figures 4.8 and 4.9 (see above) illustrate, the data from the Hertfordshire entries in the Saffron Walden baptismal registers have revealed changes in the distribution of occupations between the RG classes from the 1870s onwards. In order to set these changes within a broader context, the studies referred to by Field that relate to the late 19th century, from 1875, have been identified separately in Table A7(2). Lastly, Table A7(3) lists the studies that were based on 20th century data.

Social structure

Looking first at the available data for the whole of the 19th century, there are thirteen studies within this timeframe. In only five cases were any occupations recorded in RG Class I, generally recording either 1% or 2%, although Boston and Lincoln returned a figure of 4%. In every instance, the majority of occupations fall within RG Classes IV and V, although, in percentage terms, this ranges quite widely from 36% to 77%. Generally speaking, there appears to be little difference between urban and rural areas (for example, 'rural north Nottinghamshire' and 'Boston and Lincoln' both at 67% and the largely rural area in and around Hexham at 69%, and the Oxford circuit varying from 51% to 55% compared to Reading at 57%). RG Class III ranges from 14% (Hexham) to 46% (London), the lower end of the range tending to be rural areas, with towns generally above 30%.

Unfortunately, there is relatively little data from other studies that relates specifically to the later nineteenth century. Only three have been identified, covering the years from the 1870s to 1900, and the resulting figures appear to be unduly distorted by the influence of London. In Oxford and Hexham the largest group was RG Classes IV and V (55% and 69%), whereas London's largest was RG Class IV at 46%. However, the percentage in RG Class II was the same for all three locations (17%) and only London recorded anything (and then only a small percentage (2%)) in RG Class I.

As with the late 19th century, relatively little data is available for the 20th century (a total of five studies). For all except Oxford in the first two decades, RG Class III predominates over RG Classes IV and V. The spread in RG Class II is more marked than it was in the late 19th

century, varying from 15% in Lincoln to 29% in London, but, once again, representation in RG Class I remains sparse. Two studies fail to register any occupations in this class and, unsurprisingly, London tops the list (at 3%).

Field concluded that, in the early nineteenth century, 'Primitive Methodism achieved its greatest successes in Classes III, IV and V'. For the later nineteenth century, his view was that 'Primitive Methodism generally remained faithful to its humble origins', again with a predominance in RG Classes III, IV and V. In the early twentieth century, the class base achieved a greater spread, with 12.5% in RG Class I, a third in both RG Class II and RG Class III, with a fifth in RG Classes IV and V. Field argued that 80-100% of nineteenth century Primitive Methodists 'were certainly engaged in the manual sector' but 'by no means all of them belonged to the poorest grade', as 'they were often far less likely to be labourers than semi-skilled persons or craftsmen'. Field also concluded that, by 1932, 'the social gulf between the various branches of the Church had narrowed considerably, and most adherents were recruited from RG categories II-III'.³⁰ Gilbert's study of the occupational structure of evangelical nonconformity in England between 1800 and 1837 found that Primitive Methodism drew its greatest support from 'artisans' and 'labourers'.³¹ However, McLeod has suggested that 'Gilbert's category of "artisan" is too broad and imprecise' and this would appear to be supported by Field's conclusions. However, there is broad agreement that Primitive Methodists generally occupied the lower classes of society, albeit not the lowest.³²

Social mobility

In addition to considering the social structure of Methodism, Field has also looked briefly at the question of social mobility. He noted that a study of marriage registers of mainly urban areas (London, Lincoln, Lancaster and Preston) showed that 'Methodists were rather more mobile, upwardly and downwardly, than their countrymen as a whole, but that the degree of movement in either direction was small, invariably confined to one rank on the Registrar

³⁰ Field, 'Social Structure of English Methodism', pp.205-216.

³¹ Alan D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740-1914* (London and New York: Longman, 1976), p.63.

³² Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1984), pp.24 and 26.

General's scale'. The data given by Field for Primitive Methodism indicates that, for the period from 1901 to 1930, 28% were upwardly mobile, 27% were downwardly mobile with 45% showing no change. For Methodists generally (no separate figures are given for Primitive Methodists), 71% of upward movers rose by only one RG class, with 24% rising by two classes.³³

In his conclusions, Field commented that 'a definitive judgment about the historical social structure of Methodism must obviously await the results of more detailed research at the grass-roots level' although he was of the view that there was sufficient evidence 'to warrant some modification of the orthodoxy' that he had previously postulated. So far as his third proposition was required, he noted that

whilst 80-100 per cent of nineteenth century Primitive Methodists were certainly engaged in the manual sector, by no means all of them belonged to the poorest grade. In point of fact, they were often far less likely to be labourers than semi-skilled persons or craftsmen.

Overall, Field concluded that

it remains to be seen whether these tentative conclusions will successfully survive the test of further empirical investigation. But they do at least represent a departure from the vague and superficial approach which has bedevilled so much Methodist historiography to date. Halevy, Hobsbawm, Thompson or similar theses may have their place, yet, without the factual verification which has been so habitually lacking they can never be regarded as anything more than unfounded speculation.³⁴

Bebbington agrees with Field that 'the trend towards rising in the social scale' was evident among Primitive Methodists, despite their 'slightly lower average class position', particularly after about 1880, although the reason he gave for concluding that 'the tendency over time was upward social mobility' was because 'manual workers wanted their sons to rise into the

³³ Field, 'Social Structure of English Methodism', pp.216-217.

³⁴ Field, 'Social Structure of English Methodism', p.216.

expanding ranks of the lower middle classes of clerks, shopkeepers and teachers.’³⁵ Hempton has commented that the work of Field and others has confirmed that most Methodists came from ‘the upper echelons of the lower orders and lower income groups within the middle ranks, rather than from the lowest and most desperate’ but he also agrees that there is clear evidence of ‘the upward social mobility of mainstream Methodism in the Victorian period’.³⁶

Comparison of Hertfordshire results with those of other studies

Analysis of the Hertfordshire Primitive Methodist baptismal records has enabled some conclusions to be drawn about the social structure and characteristics of Primitive Methodists in the county. It is also important, however, to examine the extent to which the pattern in Hertfordshire accords with the broader context of Primitive Methodism generally, by comparing the results from St Albans, Baldock and East Hertfordshire with those from the studies referred to by Field.

Comparisons can be drawn between the data for the nineteenth century as a whole, as well as for the early twentieth century. However, as Figures 4.2 and 4.3 (for St Albans), Figures 4.5 and 4.6 (for Baldock) and Figures 4.8 and 4.9 (for East Hertfordshire) show, in the late nineteenth century there was a marked change in the distribution of occupations between the different RG classes. In St Albans and East Hertfordshire, this change occurred in the 1880s, whereas for Baldock it came about a decade later. Accordingly, in order to compare the results from the other local studies referred to by Field with those obtained from the baptismal registers for Hertfordshire, an average has been calculated from the data in the other local studies for the percentage distribution of occupations between the RG classes not only for the whole of the different periods covered by the 19th century data, but also for the data covering the late 19th century (primarily from the 1880s onwards). A separate average has also been calculated for the 20th century data. These three averages can then be compared with the figures from the Hertfordshire data for the same periods. In addition, because much of the data from the other local studies combines RG Class IV with RG Class V,

³⁵ David W. Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2011), p.22.

³⁶ David Hempton, ‘Methodism’, in *Nineteenth-Century English Religious Traditions – Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. by D. A. Paz (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1995), pp.117-142 (pp.121-122).

the Hertfordshire data has been similarly aggregated. Table 4.9 compares the results for Hertfordshire with those from the other local studies, and the data is also illustrated in Figures 4.10 to 4.13. Comparisons can be drawn by looking at changes over time and changes by location.

Table 4.9: Percentage of occupations by RG Class for Hertfordshire entries in the baptismal registers for the St Albans, Baldock and Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuits compared to results for other local studies

<i>Location</i>	<i>Registrar General's Classes</i>				<i>Number of entries</i>
	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV-V</i>	
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	
<i>19th century</i>					
Data from other local studies	1	11	29	59	4937
Data from Hertfordshire	1	7	21	71	410
Data from St Albans	3	4	39	54	120
Data from Baldock	1	10	16	73	99
Data from East Hertfordshire	0	8	13	79	191
<i>Late 19th century</i>					
Data from other local studies	1	17	29	53	1106
Data from Hertfordshire	1	12	13	74	124
Data from St Albans	0	0	18	82	11
Data from Baldock	2	14	16	68	63
Data from East Hertfordshire	0	11	15	74	50
<i>20th century</i>					
Data from other local studies	1	21	42	35	1546
Data from Hertfordshire	0	52	17	31	23
Data from Baldock	0	57	14	29	14
Data from East Hertfordshire	0	44	22	33	9
<i>All periods</i>					
Data from other local studies	1	16	33	49	6483
Data from Hertfordshire	1	10	21	68	433
Data from St Albans	3	4	38	55	120
Data from Baldock	1	16	16	67	113
Data from East Hertfordshire	0	9	13	78	200

Changes over time

All periods

For all periods, one of the more obvious comparisons is the almost total lack of representation in RG Class I for both Hertfordshire and the other local studies, mainly either zero or 1%. St Albans records 3% in this class, which is three times the figure for the other local studies and Baldock, although this only represents four people, namely a gentleman, two Primitive Methodist ministers and a doctor. Baldock only recorded a Primitive Methodist minister in this class, and East Hertfordshire had no entries at all. Overall, for all

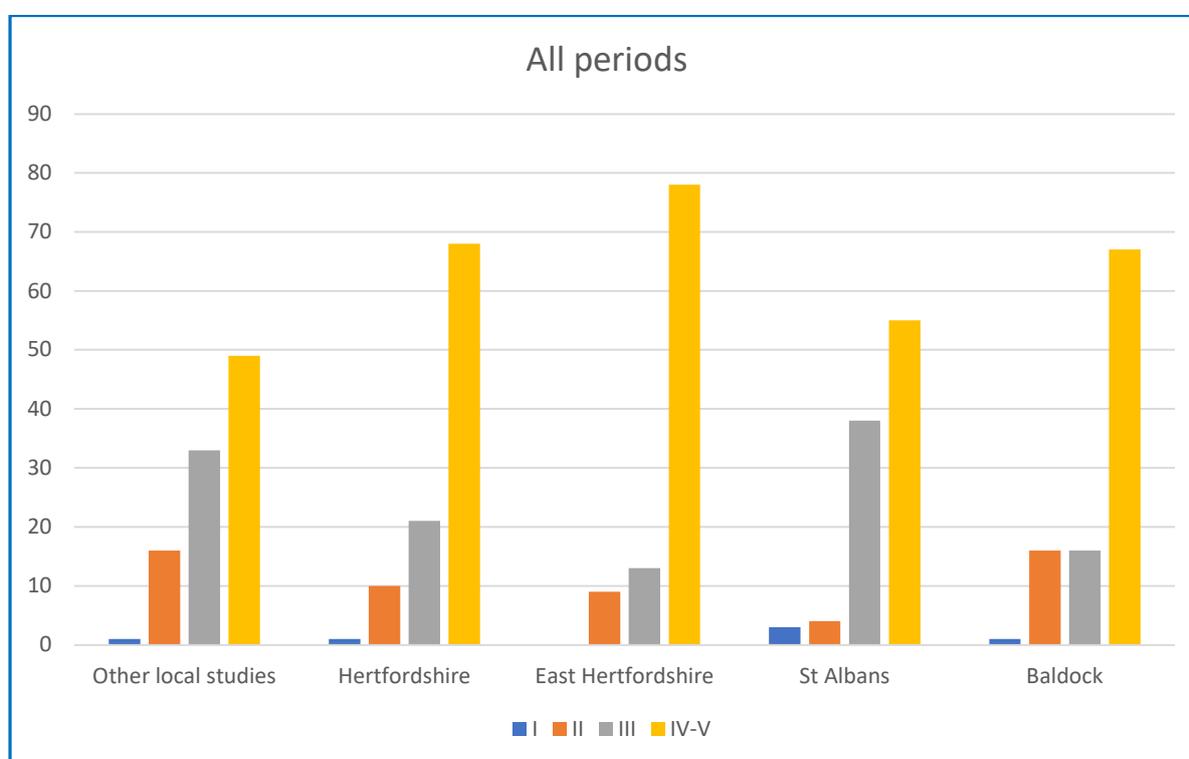


Figure 4.10: Comparison of percentage of occupations by RG Classes for all periods of baptismal register entries for Hertfordshire with results from other local studies

periods, it is clear that RG Classes IV-V predominate for all locations; moreover, the Hertfordshire figures are consistently and significantly higher than that for the other local studies (ranging from 55% to 78%, compared to 49% for the other local studies), with the more rural areas of Baldock (67%) and East Hertfordshire (78%) scoring higher than the more urban area of St Albans (55%). RG Class III was the next most prominent class for all

locations except for Baldock (where RG Classes II and III were equally represented). There was a similarly wide variance in the figures for this class (25 percentage points ranging from 13% to 38%), with the rural areas of Hertfordshire recording significantly lower figures (13% for East Hertfordshire and 16% for Baldock) than the urban area of St Albans (38%), where the figure was much closer to that of the other local studies (33%). As for RG Class II, this was the least represented class in Hertfordshire (aside from RG Class I) in all locations except Baldock. Baldock recorded the same figure as the other local studies (16%), but both East Hertfordshire and St Albans were well below this figure, East Hertfordshire being just over half (9%) whereas St Albans was only a quarter (4%).

Overall, for all periods and across all RG Classes, the St Albans data most closely matches the results from other local studies. East Hertfordshire and Baldock have a similar pattern to each other, one which differs from St Albans because of the much higher percentage in RG Classes IV-V and a correspondingly lower percentage in RG Class III.

19th century

In the 19th century all Hertfordshire locations demonstrate a pattern consistent with the other local studies. RG Classes IV-V predominate, followed by RG Class III, RG Class II and RG Class I in that order. For RG Classes IV-V, the rural areas of East Hertfordshire (79%) and Baldock (73%) recorded figures significantly above the other local studies (59%), with the urban area of St Albans (54%) well below the figures for the rural areas. In contrast, for RG Class III, St Albans had the highest percentage figure (39%), well above the rural areas, at three times the figure for East Hertfordshire (13%) and two and a half times the figure for Baldock (16%), as well as being significantly higher than for the other local studies (29%). As for RG Class II, Baldock (10%) was very similar to the other local studies (11%) whereas East Hertfordshire (8%) was somewhat lower. However, St Albans was significantly lower, recording only 4% in this class.

Overall, the figures for the 19th century show that occupations falling within RG Classes IV-V were highest in the rural areas of Hertfordshire with very low representation from occupations in RG Class II (79% and 13% respectively for East Hertfordshire and 73% and 16% for Baldock), whereas for the more urban area of St Albans the class distinctions were

much less marked, with 54% of occupations falling in RG Classes IV-V and 39% in RG Class II. Compared to the other local studies, there were significantly more occupations falling within RG Classes IV-V in Hertfordshire (71% as opposed to 59%) whereas the figures for RG Class III were quite similar (21% in Hertfordshire and 29% in the other local studies). In contrast, only 7% of Hertfordshire occupations were in RG Class II, compared to 11% in the other local studies.

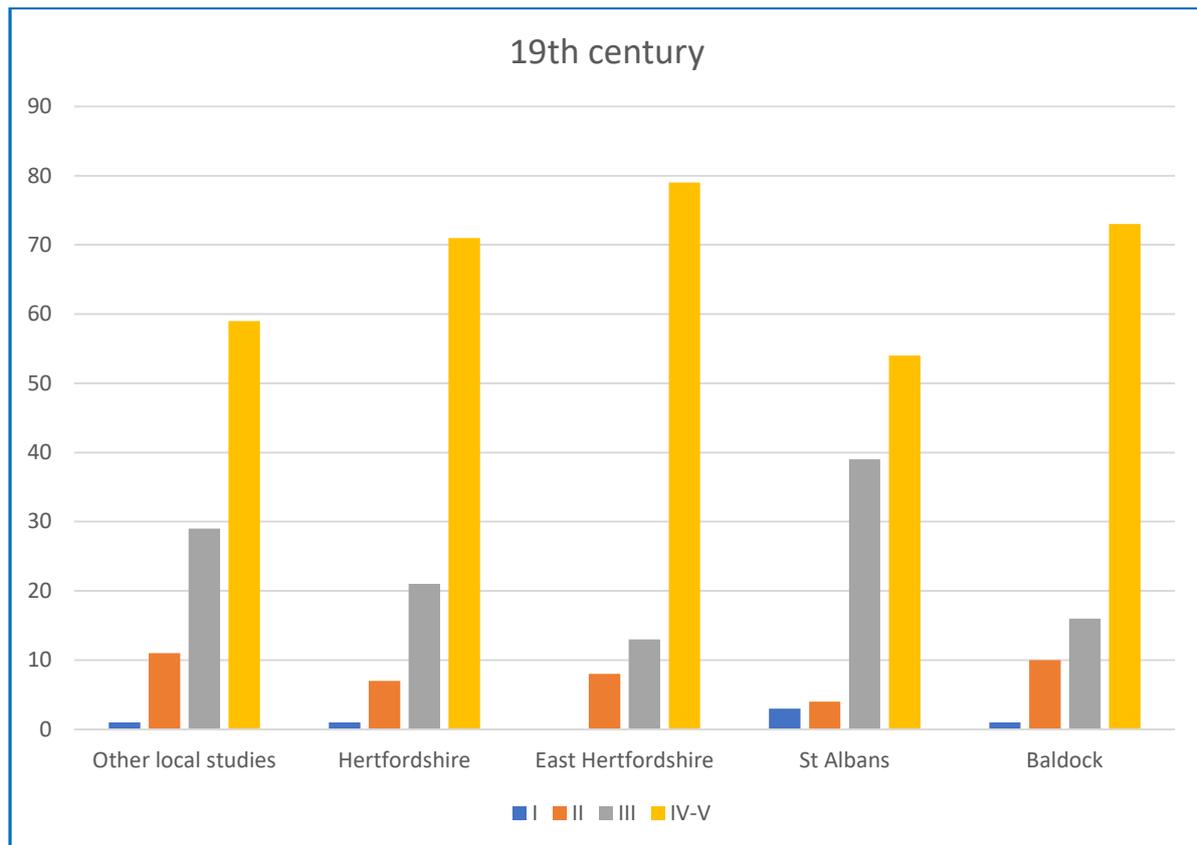


Figure 4.11: Comparison of percentage of occupations by RG Classes of 19th century baptismal register entries for Hertfordshire with results from other local studies

Late 19th century

The data for the late 19th century also show a consistent pattern between the various Hertfordshire locations and the other local studies. Unsurprisingly, the fewest number of occupations were in RG Class I; the next largest was RG Class II, followed by RG Class III, with RG Classes IV-V recording the highest number of occupations. However, within this general

pattern there were some marked differences. In Hertfordshire, the proportion of occupations in RG Classes IV-V were consistently and significantly greater than for the other

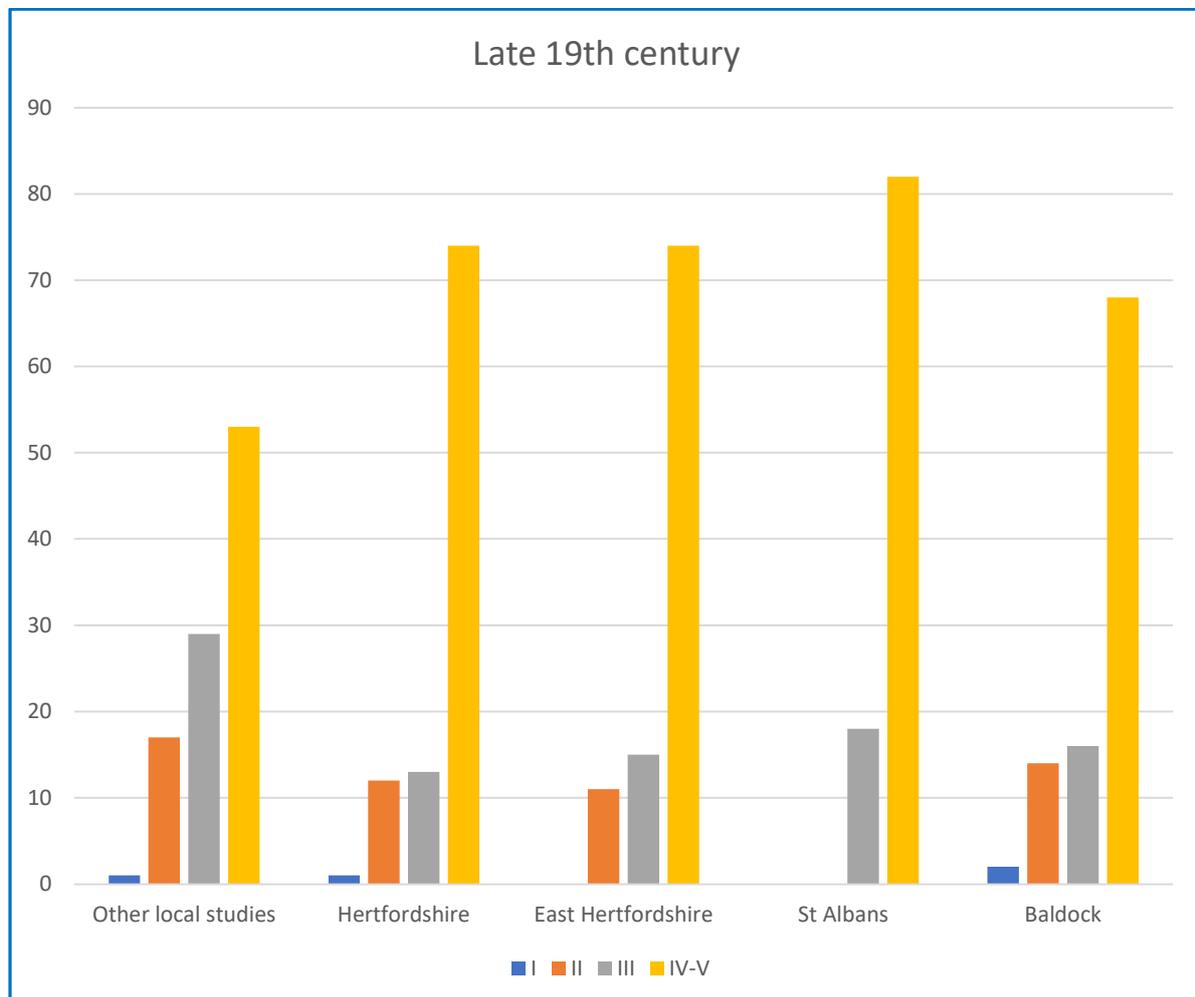


Figure 4.12: Comparison of percentage of occupations by RG Classes of late 19th century baptismal register entries for Hertfordshire with results from other local studies

local studies (Baldock – 68%; East Hertfordshire – 74% and St Albans – 82%; compared to the other local studies at 53%). Consequently, the proportion of occupations falling within RG Classes II and III were all much lower in Hertfordshire than for the other local studies. For RG Class III, the other local studies recorded almost twice as many occupations as Hertfordshire locations. The proportions of Hertfordshire occupations within RG Class II showed the greatest similarity with the other local studies, East Hertfordshire recording 11% and Baldock 14%, compared to 17% for the other local studies. For the late 19th century, there were no St Albans occupations within RG Class II.

It is also interesting to note that, in line with the other local studies, the percentage of occupations within RG Classes IV-V in East Hertfordshire and Baldock was lower for the late 19th century than for the 19th century as a whole. The figure for the other local studies fell by 10%, from 59% to 53%, whereas that for East Hertfordshire fell by only 6%, from 79% to 74%, and Baldock fell by 7%, from 73% to 68%. In complete contrast, however, the figure for St Albans rose dramatically by 52%, from 54% to 82%.

20th century

A rather different picture is painted by the data from the 20th century, setting aside the very low incidence of occupations in RG Class I, although it should be noted that there is no data for St Albans for this period (as the society here had ceased to exist in 1887). Firstly, there were very significantly more occupations in RG Class II in East Hertfordshire (44%) and Baldock (57%) than in the other local studies (21%). This is a reversal of the balance found in RG Class II for both sets of 19th century data. Secondly, so far as RG Class III is concerned, the

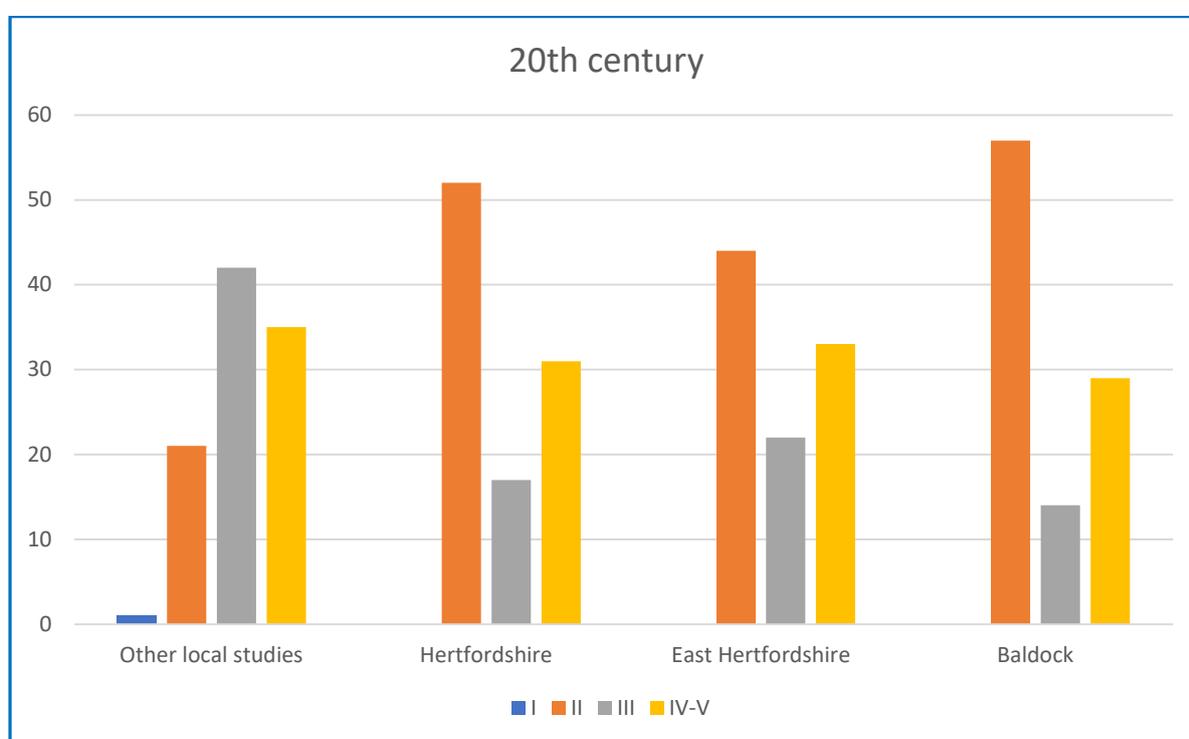


Figure 4.13: Comparison of percentage of occupations by RG Classes of 20th century baptismal register entries for Hertfordshire with results from other local studies

20th century data is consistent with the 19th century figures; there were nearly twice as many occupations in RG Class III in the other local studies (42%) than there were in East Hertfordshire (22%) and three times as many as Baldock (14%), despite an increase of about 45%, compared to the late 19th century, in the proportion of occupations falling within RG Class III in East Hertfordshire and the other local studies.

So far as RG Classes IV-V are concerned, the figures for East Hertfordshire (33%) and the other local studies (35%) are almost the same in the 20th century data, with Baldock recording a slightly lower figure (29%). At the same time, however, there were significantly fewer occupations falling within these classes in the 20th century compared to the late 19th century. East Hertfordshire experienced a fall of 55%, and Baldock a fall of 57%, compared to a fall of 34% for the other local studies.

Changes by location

St Albans

The 19th century data shows that, in St Albans, only just over half of the occupations (54%) were in RG Classes IV-V. This location also recorded the highest percentage of occupations in RG Class III (39%) of any location, a third higher than the figure for the other local studies (29%), double the figure for Baldock (16%) and three times that of East Hertfordshire (13%). In contrast, St Albans' occupations in RG Class II accounted for only 4%, almost three times lower than the other local studies (11%) and Baldock (10%) and half that of East Hertfordshire (8%). By the late 19th century, the position had changed radically. Occupations in RG Class III had fallen by 54% to only 18% of the total, whereas those in RG Classes IV-V had risen by 52% to 82%. The loss of skilled occupations and their replacement by semi-skilled and unskilled occupations is completely contrary to the pattern in East Hertfordshire, Baldock and the other local studies, where the figures demonstrate generally an upward rather than a downward social mobility towards the end of the 19th century.

Baldock

In the 19th century, three quarters of the occupations in the Baldock baptismal register were within RG Classes IV-V. By the late 19th century, this proportion had fallen by 7% to 68%. There was no change in the percentage of occupations in RG Class III (16%) but, compared to the 19th century, the occupations falling in RG Class II rose by 40% from 10% to 14%. There was also an increase (from 1% to 2%) in the occupations falling within RG Class I. Here again, there is evidence of upward social mobility, which continued into the 20th century. Despite the loss of occupations in RG Class I and a static percentage in RG Class III (14%), the occupations in RG Classes IV-V fell by 57% from 68% in the late 19th century to 29% in the 20th century whilst occupations in RG Class II quadrupled from 14% to 57%.

East Hertfordshire

For East Hertfordshire, a very similar pattern to Baldock is evident. The preponderance of RG Classes IV-V is even more marked in the 19th century and late 19th century figures (respectively 79% and 74%), with correspondingly slightly fewer occupations than Baldock in RG Class III (13% and 15%) and RG Class II (8% and 11%). In the 20th century, RG Class II becomes the class with the greatest number of occupations (44%), an increase over the late 19th century figure of 400%. RG Class III also saw an increase of 47% (from 15% to 22%), whilst RG Classes IV-V registered a decrease of more than half (55%) from 74% down to 33%. Despite the total lack of representation in RG Class I, the East Hertfordshire figures also provide evidence of upward social mobility over time.

Conclusions

This analysis of occupational data from the Hertfordshire baptismal registers is an example of the further empirical investigation and factual verification that Field referred to, and it is evident that the occupational characteristics of Primitive Methodists in Hertfordshire are generally in line with Field's conclusions. For Hertfordshire in the nineteenth century, the evidence demonstrates that 'Primitive Methodism achieved its greatest successes in Classes III, IV and V' and that, in the later nineteenth century, 'Primitive Methodism generally remained faithful to its humble origins', again with a predominance in RG Classes III, IV and V. Field suggested that 80-100% of 19th century Primitive Methodists belonged to the manual grades; however, in Hertfordshire it would appear that the figure is more like 70%.

Nevertheless, his comment that by no means all Primitive Methodists belonged to 'the poorest grade' is borne out by the fact that there were only 60 people (14%) with occupations recorded in RG Class V. Moreover, for Baldock and East Hertfordshire (the only locations to have 20th century data), a comparison of the figures for the late 19th and 20th centuries clearly shows that there was a marked shift from the labouring classes to the semi-skilled and the craftsmen, as Field has suggested.³⁷

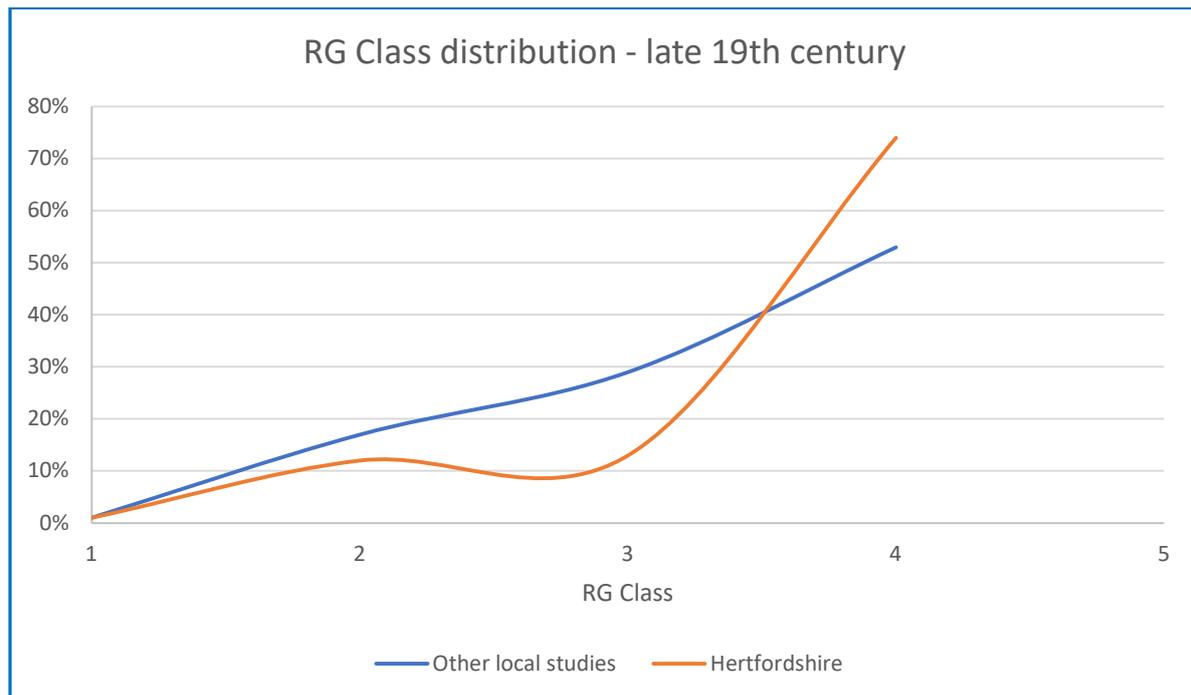


Figure 4.14: Comparison of RG Class distribution in the late 19th century

It is clear from the evidence provided by the baptismal registers that the social structure of Primitive Methodists in Hertfordshire was changing over time and that, generally, social class was increasing; it is also the case that this move in upward social mobility came much later in Hertfordshire than in the areas represented by the other local studies. In the 20th century, the class base of the membership in Hertfordshire achieved a greater spread than it did in the 19th century, but the distribution between RG Classes is clearly different from that found by Field in the other local studies, as can be seen by comparing Figure 4.14 with Figure 4.15. In the late 19th century, upward social mobility in Hertfordshire was lagging behind the changes recorded in the other local studies, but the evidence shows that in the

³⁷ Field, 'Social Structure of English Methodism', p.216.

20th century the predominant social class in Hertfordshire was RG Class II, whereas this position was occupied by RG Class III in the other local studies.

The comparisons of 19th century data would suggest that Primitive Methodists in Baldock and East Hertfordshire were generally of more humble origins than in the areas represented by the other local studies. It also seems to be the case that they did not exhibit the same

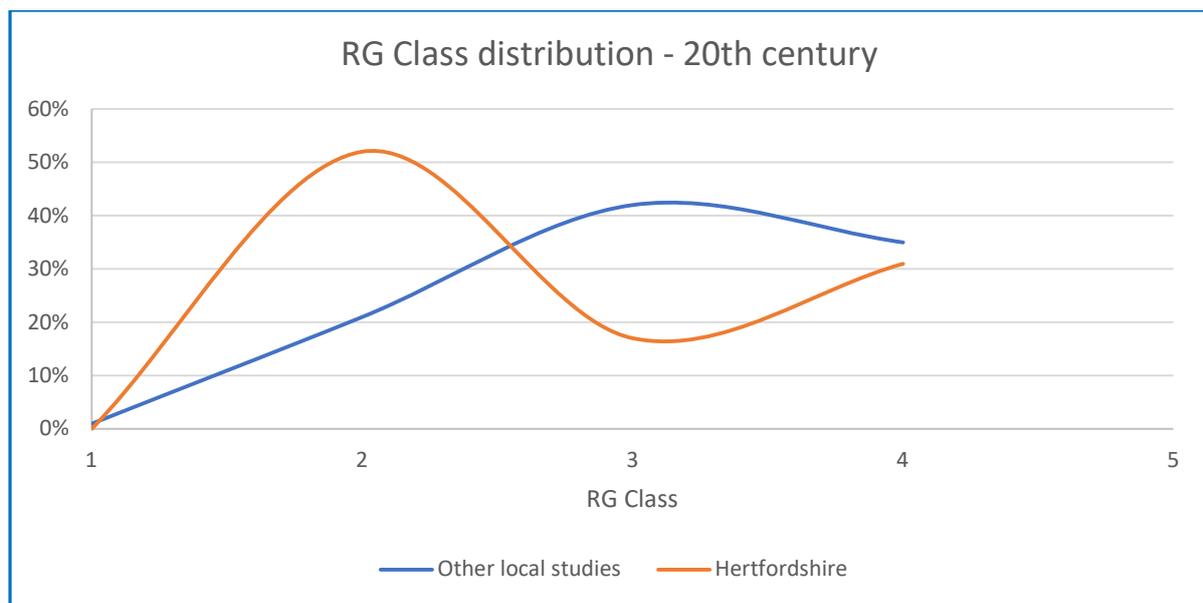


Figure 4.15: Comparison of RG Class distribution in the 20th century

degree of upward social mobility, particularly in the later nineteenth century, as did Primitive Methodists in the areas covered by the other local studies, with the percentage falling within RG Classes IV-V falling by 6.6% in Baldock and East Hertfordshire compared to a fall of 10.1% in the other local studies. However, the evidence from the 20th century data would suggest that there was a much more marked degree of upward social mobility for the Primitive Methodists in Baldock and East Hertfordshire in this later period, equivalent to two social classes, having regard in particular to the very significant reduction in the number of occupations falling within RG Classes IV-V (down by 57.3% in Baldock and 55.4% in East Hertfordshire) and a consequential rise in occupations falling within RG Class III (up by 46.6% in East Hertfordshire) and a very substantial rise in occupations falling within RG Class II (up by 307% in Baldock and 300% in East Hertfordshire). A similar conclusion can be drawn

from the data illustrated in Figures 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 (for Baldock) and Figures 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 (for East Hertfordshire) which show the same general trend over the decennial periods from the 1880s onwards.

The data from the Hertfordshire baptism registers cannot be used in the same way as that from marriage registers, nor can the results be interpreted directly by comparison with the data from other local studies. Nevertheless, there is enough evidence from the Hertfordshire figures to conclude that there was upward mobility of up to two RG classes for a relatively high proportion of Baldock and East Hertfordshire Primitive Methodists. A rather different picture emerges from the St Albans data. Compared to the 19th century as a whole, here there was an increase of 51.8% of people falling within RG Classes IV-V in the late 19th century, and a consequential fall in occupations in RG Class III of 53.8%, with RG Class II failing to register any occupations at all (see Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3). In St Albans, contrary to the general pattern in Hertfordshire and elsewhere, it would seem that Primitive Methodists experienced a degree of downward social mobility, which in some cases could have been up to two social classes. This was largely the result of an increase in the proportion of low skilled and unskilled occupations increased, mainly caused by the loss of more skilled occupations in the straw plaiting and hat making industries and, as already noted, may be part of the explanation for the demise of Primitive Methodism in St Albans towards the end of the nineteenth century.³⁸

Looking at the county as a whole, as Tables A6(1), A6(3) and A6(5) in Appendix 6 show, the Hertfordshire baptismal register entries relate to a wide number of different locations: these are mainly small rural settlements, and entries relating to towns appear less frequently. This demonstrates the predominantly rural nature of Primitive Methodism's support in Hertfordshire. Moreover, the occupations mentioned in the registers (see Appendix 6, Tables A6(2), A6(4) and A6(6)) also show that the great majority of Primitive Methodist households came from the lower social classes, albeit not necessarily the lowest. In both instances, this is similar to the pattern found by Ambler in Lincolnshire.³⁹ Analysis of

³⁸ See footnote 13.

³⁹ Ambler, 'Social change and religious experience: aspects of rural society in south Lincolnshire', pp.324-325 and pp.328-329.

these class patterns over time also shows that most Primitive Methodist households experienced some upward social mobility, albeit in many cases this did not occur until the twentieth century.

Chapter 5

Financial arrangements

Introduction

John Wesley, in his 1760 sermon on the use of money, put forward ‘three plain rules by the exact observance whereof we may approve ourselves faithful stewards of “the mammon of unrighteousness”’. These were: ‘having, first, gained all you can, and, secondly saved all you can, then give all you can’.¹ Norris, in his study of the financing of 18th century Wesleyan Methodism, comments that ‘financial issues were a constant and substantial preoccupation for contemporary Methodists at every level’, concluding that a history which fails to address financial matters ‘would simply be incomplete’.² Precisely the same is true for the Primitive Methodists in Hertfordshire in the 19th and 20th centuries, as is abundantly clear from local society and circuit records.

This chapter considers the financial arrangements of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire largely as experienced by local societies and circuits. As Chapter 2 shows, these were the building blocks of the organisation, with their focus on the ‘grass roots’ membership, and, in particular, they provided lay people with the opportunity to play an important part in the running – and funding – of the organisation. As Hempton has commented, ‘for those who raised the money and for those who spent it, balance sheets reveal as much about personal and religious priorities as they do about profit and loss’.³ Thus, society accounts are not merely dry figures on a page: money was a key resource for every part of the Connexion, and no more so than for the local society, particularly since the most important source was

¹ John Wesley, ‘Sermon XLIV - The Use of Money’ in *Sermons on Several Occasions* (Peterborough: The Epworth Press, 1944), pp. 576-588 (p.586).

² Clive Murray Norris, *The Financing of John Wesley’s Methodism c.1740-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp.6-7.

³ David Hempton, *Methodism – Empire of the spirit* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), p.110.

‘the money of a dedicated community, committed to the voluntary principle’.⁴ Every penny was accounted for and meticulously recorded by those who had been entrusted with the office of treasurer. The accounts are important because they give an insight into the matters which were of day-to-day importance for a society and they demonstrate what mattered for the life of the society, its purpose and its mission.⁵

As Chapter 2 has shown, Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire frequently embarked on the ‘task of reaching into communities where there was little chance of forming sustainable societies’. In particular, chapel building was a venture which would immediately incur a debt of several hundred pounds, even for the smallest and plainest of Hertfordshire chapels, ‘with no prospect of building a society wealthy enough to service it’.⁶ Servicing debt thus became a pre-eminent requirement for societies, alongside the maintenance of the Connexion’s ministers and the support of missionary activities. However, societies were not always in control of their own financial affairs, as they were subject to the rule of the circuit Quarterly Meeting: this meeting decided when a society could be authorised, or be required, to hold special fund-raising collections, even for its own day-to-day running expenses.⁷ As Garratt found in Shropshire, the success of the Connexion in any particular locality was measured not simply by the provision of facilities for worship but, perhaps more importantly, by how well the circuit was able to manage its financial affairs.⁸ As this chapter will show, a similar pattern can be discerned in Hertfordshire.

This chapter considers first the sources of income available to a local society. It then looks at the various ways in which societies spent their income, before turning attention, briefly, to

⁴ S. J. D. Green, *Religion in the Age of Decline* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.97; Clive Binfield, *So Down to Prayers: Studies in English Nonconformity 1790-1920* (London: J. M. Dent, 1977), p.174.

⁵ Hempton, *Methodism – Empire of the spirit*, p.110.

⁶ Jeremy Crump (2018) ‘“Our Struggle in London”: Primitive Methodists and the Metropolis’, *The London Journal*, 43.2 (2018), 137–162 (pp.153 and 158).

⁷ Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1868 (Jul-Sep), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism; Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1889 (Oct-Dec), NM9/13, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS); Garratt, ‘Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900’ (PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2002), p.98; Priscilla Mary Truss, ‘Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932’ (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2016), p.76; *The General Rules of the Primitive Methodist Church* (London: William A. Hammond, 1912), Rules 224 and 653.

⁸ Garratt, ‘Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900’, p.92.

their financial responsibilities towards the circuit and the Connexion. As Norris found, financial and spiritual well-being were inextricably linked and financial matters dominated activities at every level from local society to Connexion. Although Norris was writing about 18th century Wesleyan Methodism, nevertheless because of the similarities of structure and finance between Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism his overall framework is still of relevance when considering the financial affairs of the Primitive Methodists.⁹ However, the particular problem faced by Primitive Methodism was that whilst, as with Wesleyan Methodism, its membership was the primary source of funds yet it was confronted with the dichotomy that the essence of the movement was its declared aim to minister to those at the lower end of the social scale who were those least able to contribute to the cause. Thus, this chapter will show how important financial affairs were to even the smallest society and how financial considerations were never far away from the difference between success and failure.

Sources of income

Unlike the Church of England, Primitive Methodism did not benefit from any endowments or public funding and nor, for the most part, was there any local patronage. However, there were several potential sources of income for a local society, and most were keen to make use of every available opportunity to raise money for the cause.

Class and ticket money

The most readily accessible source of income for a society was direct funding from its membership. From the first rules of 1819, every class member was 'expected to give one penny per week, if they can afford it, or more if they choose'. Local preachers were clearly expected to set a good example to others in this regard. However, it seems that, at Stansted in 1867, James Woodcock failed to live up to expectations. The Quarterly Meeting decided to inform him 'by letter that we deeply deplore his conduct for some time past in refusing to pay Class Money according to rule and otherwise helping us to maintain Connexional order and discipline on the Branch'; the sanction for his conduct was that 'he therefore be left

⁹ Norris, *The Financing of John Wesley's Methodism c.1740-1800*, pp.155 and 222.

without preaching appointments on the next plan'.¹⁰ First issued to Wesleyan Methodists in 1742, class tickets were adopted by Primitive Methodists in 1811.¹¹ A ticket was issued every quarter: it bore the month and year of its issue and was inscribed with the name of the bearer so that it acted as a certificate, or 'token', of membership. As Lloyd has observed, 'possession of a ticket gave religious commitment, enthusiasm, experience, and reassurance a solid form'; she considers that because it was 'issued and renewed by the preacher, the Primitives' ticket served as a financial and supervisory instrument'.¹² Petty was clear that 'the introduction of society tickets was a highly beneficial arrangement' not so much for its spiritual value but rather because it was 'a means of speedily leading to a financial arrangement of much importance and benefit'.¹³ This was because, in addition to the weekly class money, every class member was also expected to give 'what they can afford at the quarterly renewal of their tickets'.¹⁴ Truss states that 'a payment of 1s 6d was required' although Rodell refers to 'a quarterly subscription of 1s'.¹⁵ Special services were noted on the quarterly preaching plan for the 'Renewal of Society Tickets'. Very often these were week night meetings as these services were almost always conducted by circuit ministers rather than local preachers, thus providing ministers with the opportunity to exercise regular pastoral oversight of their members.¹⁶

¹⁰ *Minutes of the General Meeting of the Society of People called Primitive Methodists* (Hull: John Hutchinson, 1819), p.11, <<https://www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk/content/subjects-2/primitive-methodist-history/minutes-of-a-meeting-held-at-nottingham-august-1819>> [accessed 28 April 2020]; Meeting held on 3 June 1867, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Methodist Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, Essex Record Office (ERO).

¹¹ H. B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I (London: Robert Bryant, c. 1905), p.111; H. B. Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church* (London: Primitive Methodist Publishing House, 1919), p.28.

¹² Dr Jill Barber, 'Primitive Methodist Class Tickets: an introduction - 1811-1932', <<https://www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk/content/subjects-2/primitive-methodist-history/primitive-methodist-class-tickets-an-introduction>> [accessed 28 April 2020]; Joseph Ritson, 'The Ticket Renewal', *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1908, p.856; Sarah Lloyd, 'The religious and social significance of Methodist tickets, and associated practices of collecting and recollecting, 1741-2017', *The Historical Journal*, 63.2 (2020), 361-388 (pp.368, 376 and 377).

¹³ John Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, from its Origin to the Conference of 1860, the First Jubilee Year of the Connexion*, revised and enlarged by James Macpherson (London: John Dickenson, 1880), p.47.

¹⁴ *Minutes of the General Meeting of the Society of People called Primitive Methodists*, p.11.

¹⁵ Truss, 'Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932', p.181; Jonathan Rodell, *The Rise of Methodism – A Study of Bedfordshire 1736-1851* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Bedfordshire Historical Record Society and The Boydell Press, 2014), p.249.

¹⁶ Baldock Circuit Plan 1875 (Apr-Jun), NM6/47; Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1889 (Oct-Dec), NM9/13, HALS; HALS; Saffron Walden Circuit Plans 1868 (Jul-Sep), 1905 (Jan-Mar) and 1909 (Apr-Jun), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism.

The Connexion's rules (consolidated in 1912) made it doubly clear (in Rules 299 and 306) that class money should be paid weekly by every class member and also emphasised the need 'to subscribe at the quarterly renewal of tickets as liberally as circumstances will allow'. It was the responsibility of class leaders to collect class and ticket money on a regular basis and to pay it to the circuit; repeated neglect of this duty rendered the leader liable to be removed from office.¹⁷ However, as Garratt has noted, 'the giving of class and ticket money represented a considerable sacrifice for many poor families' because of 'the poverty of Primitive Methodist congregations' (referring to Woodcock's account of Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds). Also referencing Woodcock, Truss has commented that 'the penny was always paid but the quarterly fee was often difficult to extract because of "the backwardness of some of the leaders to enforce Connexional rule"'.¹⁸

It is unsurprising, therefore, that the Connexional rules were often honoured more in their breach than in their observance, a pattern which can clearly be seen amongst Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire. In 1866, the Stansted Quarterly Meeting urged all its class leaders 'to pay more attention to the rule respecting each member paying one penny a week' and asked them to ensure that the money was collected weekly. In 1881, Mr Toms, a member of the Saffron Walden Quarterly Meeting, local preacher and society steward at Furneux Pelham, was deputed to 'speak to the members at Dassell who do not pay class and ticket money, and kindly request them to do so according to their circumstances'. In 1889, members in the Saffron Walden circuit were 'affectionately' requested to pay their class money weekly and in 1892 each member of the Baldock circuit was 'desired to contribute weekly and to subscribe at the renewal of the quarterly tickets as much as his circumstances will allow'. Some circuit plans even included the name of the 'collector' at each preaching place so that there could be no doubt either in the members' minds as to whom the money should be paid or as to who was responsible for its collection.¹⁹

¹⁷ *The General Rules of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Rules 298, 299 and 306.

¹⁸ Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', p.98; Truss, 'Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932', p.181; Henry Woodcock, *Piety Among the Peasantry: Being Sketches of Primitive Methodism on the Yorkshire Wolds* (London: Joseph Toulson, 1889), pp.150-152.

¹⁹ Meeting held on 3 December 1866, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5; Annual Reports, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1889, D/NM 3/5/4, ERO;

There are frequent references to the impecuniosity of many members of Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire. This description is apt both in towns as well as villages and appears to apply uniformly across the county. When Thomas Russell began his ministry at St Albans in 1865 he found 'only a poor situation' whilst the members at Redbourn in 1870 were described as being 'all of the poorest class' and 'all of the humblest rank in life'.²⁰ In March 1879, there were over 100 members of the Saffron Walden circuit who were unable to pay the 3d Connexional per capita levy. The circuit's report to the District Meeting stated very forcefully that

all the year the ministers have had to pay for them, without receiving their own lowest allowable salary. Many money-earning members remove from our villages to towns, leaving poor parents and members to be paid for. Few or none are received by us. We feed town membership and salaries.

In its report to the 1880 District Meeting the Saffron Walden circuit noted that 75 of its 213 members (well over a third) were 'too poor to pay to Class, and too good to be dismembered'. In 1886 it was noted that 'the Primitive Methodists in St Albans had been struggling for many years against poverty' and, in 1890, the Primitive Methodists of Anstey were described as 'a few poor people' that 'are practically without funds'. Even in 1905 the members at Berkhamsted were reported to be 'mostly working people and none are rich'.²¹ As Werner has commented, those members who did pay their dues 'were demonstrating an allegiance to the cause that was both voluntary and genuine'. Nevertheless, the Connexion was clearly aware of the financial pressures experienced by many of its members and it allowed those that could not afford to contribute to remain members in good standing, as

Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1889 (Oct-Dec), NM9/13, HALS; Baldock Circuit Plan 1892 (Jul-Sep) (author's copy).

²⁰ Thomas Russell, *Record of Events in Primitive Methodism* (London: William Lister, 1869), pp.7-154 (p.146); *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 4 June 1870, p.8.

²¹ Annual reports, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1889, D/NM 3/5/4; Meeting held on 15 March 1880, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860 – 1885, D/NM 3/1/1; Meeting held on 6 March 1890, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO; *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 18 September 1886, p.6; *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 16 December 1905, p.2.

the Connexion's rules and the Saffron Walden circuit's report to the 1880 District Meeting make clear.²²

Pew rents

The charging of a 'rent' for the use of a seat in the chapel was an important source of income for a local society and, as McLeod has commented, it was a system that 'was very widely used throughout the nineteenth century, even by the most proletarian denominations such as the Primitive Methodists'.²³ The 1851 Religious Census provides information about the numbers of 'appropriated' sittings (i.e. those seats for which a charge was made) and 'free' sittings, and it is clear from the returns that such seat appropriation was a common feature in Nonconformity generally as well as in the Church of England. In Rosman's view, the fact that nonconformists and Anglicans alike charged pew rents in order to cover some of the running costs of places of worship was a result of the acquisition by Nonconformity of 'its own social elite' although, as Chapter 4 has shown, there is little evidence of such an elite in Hertfordshire's Primitive Methodist societies.²⁴ Watts has argued that pew rents restricted the growth of churches by deterring the poor.²⁵ However, the Primitive Methodists were keen to ensure that there were always 'free' seats available. The Connexion's rules required applications for permission to build places of worship to state how many lettable and free sittings were intended to be provided. At the same time, the importance attached to pew rents as a source of income was underlined by the rule that 'the trustees of a chapel must appoint one person or more to attend to the seat letting'. It was also advised that a quarter's rent should be requested in advance, presumably in order to increase the likelihood of the payments being made.²⁶ Snell and Ell have calculated that the percentage of sittings appropriated nationally in 1851 for Primitive Methodism was

²² Julia Stewart Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion – Its Background and Early History* (London: University of Wisconsin Press Ltd, 1984), p.138; *The General Rules of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Rules 294c and 304.

²³ K. D. M. Snell and Paul Ell, *Rival Jerusalems – The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.340; Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1984), p.59.

²⁴ Doreen Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.195.

²⁵ *Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship, England and Wales, Report and Tables*, LXXXIX (1852-3); Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II: The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp.229-232.

²⁶ *The General Rules of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Rules 158 and 341.

44.7%. The Hertfordshire census returns show that 42.1% of sittings were appropriated (although this had risen to almost 44% by 1870). Two places, Brickendon and Newgatestreet, had no appropriated sittings, whilst more than half the seats were chargeable at St Albans (60.1%) and Hertford (54.5%).²⁷

The chapel at Trowley Bottom was built in 1845 with 40 lettable sittings and 60 free seats. Although the membership numbered only 17, it was reported that 'the rent for sittings already let amounts to more than will pay the interest' on a loan of £40. Assuming a rate of interest of 5% p.a., if all 17 members had a lettable seat then the average cost would have been 2s 4d per seat per annum, or 7d per quarter. When the Dassells chapel opened in 1868, there were 40 free seats and 40 lettable sittings. On average 80 people attended the principal service, so all the appropriated seats must have been let. Through the 1870s, income from pew rents represented about a third of the society's total income. By 1890, pew rents amounted to £3 19s 6d, the equivalent of 2s per seat, and this represented 29% of the society's total income. Furneux Pelham chapel was built in 1873 with 60 free sittings and 70 lettable seats. The main service was generally attended by 120 people, so at least 60 of the lettable seats must have been occupied. Pew rents accounted for about a third of the society's total income in 1874.²⁸

Donations

Income from donations features regularly in society accounts, often from named individuals but also anonymously.²⁹ As Watts has commented, 'the cost of building and maintaining chapels by communities of predominantly poor men and women meant that many churches were heavily dependent on a handful of prosperous men in their congregation'. However, whilst very welcome, such donations were very variable in frequency and amount and, as

²⁷ Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, p.348; Census of Religious Worship 1851, as referred to in Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851* (Hertfordshire Record Publications Vol. 11, Hertfordshire Record Society, 1995), pp.97-205.

²⁸ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1846, pp.94-95; Chapel schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1870-1879, D/NM 3/5/3; Chapel schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1884, D/NM 3/5/4, ERO.

²⁹ Furneux Pelham trust treasurer's accounts, 1908 – 1949, NM9H/1; Dassells trust treasurer's accounts, 1877 - 1950, NM9G/1; Trowley Bottom trust accounts 1921 - 1960, NM2K/1, HALS.

such, could not be relied upon as a regular and dependable source of income. Garratt found a similar situation in her study of Shropshire.³⁰

Collections

A staple feature of every Methodist gathering was the collection. As members were being asked to make regular weekly and quarterly contributions through class and ticket money, general Sunday collections would have required a particular focus in order to generate more income. Some of these, such as 'rent', 'lighting' and 'furniture' collections, were specifically to raise funds for the upkeep of the chapel, although it is clear that costs were not always covered. In the 1880s and 1890s, the lighting and cleaning collections at Dassells raised on average only just over half of the society's outgoings, whilst those at Furneux Pelham only raised 40% of what was spent. At Dassells in 1884, the collection at the chapel anniversary raised 7s 6d, almost twice the annual amount brought in from pew rents.³¹ In addition, key occasions in the liturgical year, such as Christmas, Easter and harvest festivals as well as chapel and Sunday school anniversaries and special events such as camp meetings, all provided opportunities for fund raising.³² For an agricultural community, the harvest festival was an occasion of particular significance. At Trowley Bottom in the 1920s the harvest festival Sunday collections were frequently four times larger than the Easter Sunday collections. For some societies, a regular feature of the harvest festival was the sale of fruit and vegetables, demonstrating that every opportunity was taken to increase a society's income. At Furneux Pelham, these sales amounted on average to 50% of the amount raised by the harvest festival Sunday collections whereas at Dassells they were more than 70%.³³ Special collections were shown on the circuit plan so that congregations and preachers alike would know when and where particular causes were being supported, and by the end of the 19th century almost every Sunday was earmarked for a particular cause. In 1868, Dassells, Furneux Pelham and Anstey had a special collection once a month, but by 1905 this had

³⁰ Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II*, p.232; Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', p.259.

³¹ Chapel schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1870-1879, D/NM 3/5/3; Chapel schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1884, D/NM 3/5/4; ERO; Dassells trust treasurer's accounts, 1877 - 1950, NM9G/1, HALS.

³² The Connexion had been making use of various anniversaries as a fund raising opportunity since 1828 (see Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', p.256; *General Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, 1828*, pp.35-6).

³³ Trowley Bottom trust accounts 1921 - 1960, NM2K/1; Furneux Pelham trust treasurer's accounts, 1908 - 1949, NM9H/1; Dassells trust treasurer's accounts, 1877 - 1950, NM9G/1, HALS.

increased to three Sundays out of every four. In the Baldock circuit, special collections were held every two weeks in 1875, but this had risen to three out of every four Sundays by 1899, and from 1900 collections were specified for different causes on every Sunday of the month.³⁴ The demands placed on society members to contribute appropriately to so many different causes and funds may also help to explain why many found it so difficult to pay their regular class and ticket money.

In addition to several services, at each of which a collection would be taken, most of these special occasions and anniversaries involved a public tea, usually held on the following Monday, which provided another opportunity for a collection. Initially, the Connexion's rules only permitted tea meetings to be held in support of a Sunday school, but in 1850 the Conference decided that they could take place for other purposes, subject to the approval of the circuit authorities, and there are many instances in circuit records of societies being encouraged to hold them. The circuit plan also clearly emphasised that 'no Tea Meeting must be held without the sanction of the Circuit Authorities'. As the purpose of a tea meeting was almost always linked to the raising of funds, it is clear to see why the Quarterly Meeting's authority was required before such a meeting could be held.³⁵ As is evident from the many reports of such events in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, the tea meeting was a highly popular means of raising funds. Indeed, so frequent were these reports that the editor had to remind correspondents that, beyond stating the amounts raised, they should

refrain from inserting thanks to friends at the place, in their communications. Such thanks are of local interest only, and we cannot afford space for them. Nor do we always feel at liberty to print in our pages that the cake and tea were good.³⁶

³⁴ Saffron Walden Circuit Plans 1868 (Jul-Sep) and 1905 (Jan-Mar), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism. Baldock Circuit Plan 1875 (Apr-Jun), NM6/47; Baldock Circuit Plan 1899 (Jul-Oct) and 1900 (Jul-Sep), NM6/48, HALS.

³⁵ *General Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, 1850*, p.18; Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1868 (Jul-Sep), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism; Meeting held on 2 December 1867, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

³⁶ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1864, p.561.

In addition to fundraising for specific causes, tea meetings also provided a means for the society to promote itself amongst the members of the local community and, possibly, to recruit new members. As Truss has commented, a further purpose of tea meetings was to secure the presence of, and financial contributions from, what was, for most societies, a growing number of 'hearers' – those who attended chapel services but who had not committed themselves to becoming members.³⁷ The popularity of tea meetings is amply demonstrated by the one held at Bushey Heath in October 1889 to raise funds for the new chapel, as it was reported that 'there were so many to tea that there was no room to seat them, so a second sitting became necessary'.³⁸ Thus, tea meetings were very much part of the mission ethos of the Primitive Methodists. In 1867, Anstey held one on Christmas Day.³⁹

Bazaars and other events

Collections on special occasions and at tea meetings, whilst very useful sources of income, could raise only limited sums of money. When something more substantial was required, a society would hold a bazaar. Charity bazaars were a very common feature of Victorian life, particularly in the last three decades of the 19th century; a high proportion of them, outside London at least, were in support of church causes and they could also be a source of entertainment.⁴⁰ Heffer has argued that, as part of the Victorian ideal of 'doing good', there were strong links between philanthropy and religion which led to 'a predisposition to help the deserving poor'. In particular, 'the poor were expected to do all they could to sustain themselves, and the rich were supposed to be alert to their obligations as Christians to help those less fortunate'. Primitive Methodism was well-placed to tap into this prevailing culture by holding a variety of fund-raising events that were designed, at least in part, to draw in those from outside the Connexion.⁴¹

³⁷ Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', p.266; Truss, 'Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932, pp.157 and 266.

³⁸ Dassells trust treasurer's accounts 1877 – 1950, NM9G/1; Furneux Pelham trust treasurer's accounts, 1908 – 1949, NM9H/1, HALS. *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 2 November 1889, p.2.

³⁹ Meeting held on 2 December 1867, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

⁴⁰ F. K. Prochaska, 'Charity Bazaars in Nineteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 16 (Spring 1977), 62-84 (pp.66-67 and 72).

⁴¹ Simon Heffer, *High Minds: The Victorians and the Birth of Modern Britain* (London: Windmill Books, 2014), Chapter 16, pp.632 et seq and pp.632 and 634.

Bazaars were very elaborate and largescale affairs that would have taken a great deal of planning and involved a significant effort by many members. A bazaar enabled a wide cross-section of the membership to become involved in its organisation by running stalls (such as fancy goods, clothing, stationery and other household effects), making speeches, giving lectures, and providing food, amusements and entertainment, with societies frequently coming up with ever more imaginative ways to pull in the crowds. In 1880, at a Christmas bazaar in Berkhamsted 200 people 'took tea' and more than £28 was raised to reduce the debt on the schoolroom. In September 1882, also at Berkhamsted, a mid-week bazaar was held in order to reduce the chapel debt, the local newspaper commenting that 'nothing could be more useful than the articles on sale, which the friends – many of whom are labouring people – readily contributed'. Unfortunately the report failed to mention how much money was raised. At St Albans in 1884, a two day bazaar was held mid-week, special attractions being 'a Choice Collection of African Curiosities, Objects of Natural History, Rare Specimens of Seaweed, with Microscopic Instruments' and singing by the Blue Ribbon Choir. Baldock's 'bazaar and fancy fair' which was held on Boxing Day in 1885 provided a fish pond and a magic lantern among its amusements and these helped to ensure that 'the proceeds exceeded the anticipations of its promoters'. In 1887, the society at Queen's Road, Watford also held a bazaar over two days, the aim being to reduce the outstanding chapel debt of £850. This bazaar was clearly designed with an eye to making use of every marketing opportunity, as it included lectures on phrenology and chemistry as well as 'the sale of sticks manufactured ... from wood felled by' none other than William Gladstone MP. A bazaar at Bushey in 1892 raised £46 whilst one at Chorleywood in 1894 raised £30, thus demonstrating that this method of fundraising could produce a substantial sum even for a small society.⁴²

Similar fundraising efforts continued into the 20th century, although seemingly with less frequency. In 1905, the society at Harpenden held a two day 'Japanese' bazaar with the aim

⁴² *Hemel Hempstead Gazette and West Herts Advertiser*, 1 January 1881, p.5; *Hertfordshire Mercury and County Press*, 16 September 1882, p.6; *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 6 September 1884, p.5; *Hertfordshire Mercury and County Press* 2 January 1886, p.5; *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 1 December 1888, p.7; *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times* 10 December 1892, p.5; *Watford Observer*, 19 May 1894, p.6. Gladstone's hobby of felling trees was well known at the time (Peter Sewter, 'W. E. Gladstone: A love for trees and tree-felling' (Master's thesis, University of Chester, 2007)).

of reducing the £500 debt on the chapel and Sunday school. The bazaar, which was opened by Sir Charles Lawes-Wittewronge, the local squire, and was attended by the Chairman of the Urban District Council as well as the Wesleyan and Congregational ministers, was considered to be 'a creditable success'. A 'successful rose garden and fancy fair' was held at Redbourn in 1907 in aid of chapel funds.⁴³

Other events, such as sales of work and 'rummage' sales, were also employed as a means of raising much needed funds.⁴⁴ In addition, something that delivered cultural and educational value as well as being entertaining was bound to be well received by Victorian society, so it is hardly surprising that occasions such as illuminated lantern lectures and concerts also featured as fundraising activities, usually in the winter months. An 'interesting' lecture with musical items took place at Harpenden in April 1899 and the society at Baldock held a concert in February 1904. Other such events included an 'American evening' of recitations and musical items at Queens Road, Watford in 1907, and a lantern lecture in 1924 at Dassells. A newspaper report of a concert at Berkhamsted in January 1905 noted that

'the hall was crowded, the audience being composed mostly of the ordinary working class people. There was a general good will manifested by other denominations to aid the PMs who are known to have a debt of £710 on their place of worship and are poor people who do their utmost to help themselves'.⁴⁵

Many of these events were reported in local newspapers and this served to draw the attention of a wider public to the presence and activities of Primitive Methodist societies, thus aiding both fundraising and the recruitment of new members. The involvement of local gentry not only raised the profile of Primitive Methodism but also generated further press coverage and publicity for the cause. Furthermore, the presence at Primitive Methodist events of such worthies, as well as ministers from other nonconformist denominations, also

⁴³ *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 8 December 1906, p.8 and 29 June 1907, p.8.

⁴⁴ *West Herts and Watford Observer*, 19 December 1903, p.4, 18 May 1907, p.10 and 30 May 1908, p.4. Dassells trust treasurer's accounts 1877 – 1950, NM9G/1, HALS.

⁴⁵ *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 15 April 1899, p.8; *Herts and Cambs Reporter and Royston Crow*, 19 February 1904; *West Herts and Watford Observer*, 16 February 1907, p.4; Dassells trust treasurer's accounts 1877 – 1950, NM9G/1, HALS; *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 28 January 1905, p.3.

served to demonstrate that Primitive Methodism had not only come of age as part of the culture of respectability but that individual societies had become an accepted and important part of their local communities. As Parsons has argued, 'nonconformist social and political status reached new heights' at the end of the Victorian period and into the Edwardian era. Evidence from Hertfordshire shows that the Primitive Methodist in the county were very much a part of this.⁴⁶

Society outgoings

Having considered the various sources of income available to a local society, attention now turns to the ways in which this money was spent in order to support and grow the Primitive Methodist cause.

Chapel building

It has been noted that the building of a chapel was essential to the growth and spread of Primitive Methodism and to the continued existence of a local society.⁴⁷ It is unsurprising, therefore, that a great deal of effort and not a little money was spent on chapel building. However, the construction of a chapel, even though it might be small and plain, involved a substantial capital outlay which would have placed a considerable financial burden on society members. Whyte has argued that Victorians saw ecclesiastical architecture as 'a necessary if expensive means of housing worshipping communities' and Currie has pointed out that 'chapel ownership was a desirable if awesome responsibility'.⁴⁸ In many cases, as Ritson describes, 'the poverty of the people compelled them to build on faith very largely', or, as Calder more prosaically puts it, chapel building was 'a heroic tale of reckless confidence ... undertaken by poor followers buoyed up by faith alone'.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Gerald Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen: The Transitions of Victorian Nonconformity', in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by Gerald Parsons, Vol I Traditions (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp.67-116 (p.109); Binfield, *So Down to Prayers: Studies in English Nonconformity 1790-1920*, p.18.

⁴⁷ See Chapter 3.

⁴⁸ William Whyte, *Unlocking the Church – The Lost Secrets of Victorian Sacred Space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.35; Robert Currie, *Methodism Divided* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p.45.

⁴⁹ Joseph Ritson, *The Romance of Primitive Methodism* (London: Primitive Methodist Publishing House, 1910), p.230; Sandy Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), p.190.

The Primitive Methodist Conference had long recognised the difficulties that could be caused by imprudent chapel building. Watts notes that, in 1836, it was ‘decreed that any preacher who encouraged the building of a new chapel without “reasonable prospect of its being supported” should “forfeit one fourth of his salary”’; Kendall recalls that ‘District Building Committees had been established in 1835, and District Chapel Committees in 1847’ in an attempt to try to regulate what he referred to as ‘the “boom” in chapel-building’. The Conference of 1843 recommended that before chapel building commenced at least one third of the costs should be secured within a year of the chapel opening, although this did not become a regulatory requirement until 1882, when the Conference determined not only that the ‘one year’ period should be reduced to six months but also that it would be a requirement for local trustees to demonstrate, in their ‘application to build’, that one fourth of the estimated cost of the chapel had already been raised.⁵⁰

The first Primitive Methodist chapel in Hertfordshire was not built until 1844, so that, in theory at least, local societies should have been following the Conference rules of 1843. Nevertheless, as discussed further below, this did not prevent many local societies from being shouldered with a large burden of debt. Many ministers were very keen to publicise their new building projects in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* but they were equally anxious to stress how they were abiding by the financial rules, as the reports of chapel building at Baldock, Ashwell and Croxley Green demonstrate.⁵¹

The total cost of building a chapel amounted to much more than the physical works involved. In addition to the building works, there was the cost of the land and the fitting out of the building to make it fit for purpose. In some cases, land was given to a local society by a benefactor or secured at an advantageous price, and there were also instances of donations in respect of professional skills and labour and the provision of fixtures and fittings. The costs referred to in the various record sources usually only give a global sum,

⁵⁰ Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II*, pp.237-238; *Minutes of the Primitive Methodist Conference 1847*, pp.19-21; *Minutes of the Primitive Methodist Conference 1849*, pp.109-123; H. B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II (London: Robert Bryant, c. 1905), pp.456-458; Stephen Hatcher, *The Stone which the Builders Rejected – the Primitive Methodist Chapel 1811-1932* (Manchester: Methodist Property Office, 2001), pp.17 and 18.

⁵¹ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1857, pp.552-553 (Baldock); *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1862, p.113 (Ashwell); and *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1868, p.368 (Croxley Green).

which may not (and, indeed, are unlikely to) include all the costs actually incurred in the provision of the chapel. Nevertheless, they provide the only information available as to the costs incurred in chapel building in Hertfordshire so they have been used as the basis for comparison, albeit with this caveat in mind.

Land costs

As was seen in Chapter 3, finding suitable land on which to build a chapel was often no easy task for a local society. In many cases, the result was often the erection of chapels on 'irregular and inadequate sites' in 'uninviting, inconvenient, and, in some cases, in such out-of-the-way places, that the inhabitants themselves have great difficulty finding them'.⁵² The site for the chapel at Trowley Bottom, which occupied the corner of an agricultural field, must have been acquired quite cheaply in 1845 as the whole project was completed for the sum of £70, which was said to be 'the entire cost of the building, including the land, deeds, and other things'.⁵³ At Harpenden, a small and awkwardly shaped piece of land barely large enough to accommodate a chapel was acquired in 1865 for just £15.⁵⁴ In the same year the society at Dassells was greatly indebted to a local farmer, William B Wyman Esq, who not only bought a piece of land but also 'presented' it to the society so that they could build a chapel. He also gave a donation of £5 to the chapel fund.⁵⁵ The society in Berkhamsted had been meeting in 'a rented room in a back yard, through a narrow passage' but in 1867 Thomas Russell (the Primitive Methodist minister at St Albans) was able to secure 'an eligible site in High-street, with a commanding view to the Grand Junction Canal and the London and North Western railroad' for £116. Unfortunately, Russell does not explain where the funds for this purchase came from.⁵⁶ Two years later in Tring, Russell was also able to purchase a parcel of land in a side street some distance from the town centre for £60 although, again, he omits to say how this sum was financed.⁵⁷ In 1886, the society at Aldenham secured a lease from the principal local land owner, Frederick William Thellusson,

⁵² George W. Dolbey, *The Architectural Expression of Methodism - The First Hundred Years* (London: The Epworth Press, 1964), p.65; G. Hodgson Fowler, *A Manual on Chapel Architecture for the Use of the Methodist Churches* (London: Primitive Methodist Book Room, 1873), p.13.

⁵³ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1846, pp.94-95.

⁵⁴ Valerie I. Bloye, *A history of Southdown Methodist Church, Harpenden, celebrating the Church's life from 1865 to 2000* (Harpenden: 2000), p.5.

⁵⁵ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1868, p.745.

⁵⁶ Thomas Russell, *Record of Events in Primitive Methodism*, pp.146-147.

⁵⁷ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, July 1871, p.446.

5th Baron Rendlesham, on a small plot of land at Four Want Ways, near the hamlet of Round Bush. This was an odd-shaped plot of land in the corner of a field and in a relatively isolated rural location, well away from any neighbouring buildings.⁵⁸ Land for a new chapel in Nightingale Road, Hitchin was purchased from the Hitchin Gas Company for £140 in 1899. Although donations for the new venture were said to be 'gratefully received' there is no indication as to how the land cost was financed.⁵⁹ At Boundary Road, St Albans, the site for the new chapel built in 1909 was gifted to the local society, although it was valued at £200.⁶⁰

As these examples demonstrate, not unsurprisingly, land became more expensive as the 19th century progressed into the 20th century. From those instances where land and build costs are both known, it is also clear that land costs typically amounted to around a fifth of the total cost of acquiring a chapel, although in the case of Trowley Bottom the land cost must have been considerably less than this. For many societies this would have constituted a not inconsiderable sum which had to be raised before any building work could begin and unless a society was able to benefit from a local benefactor, as in the case of Boundary Road, St Albans (which was rare), it was inevitable that the whole chapel building exercise would be 'born into debt'.⁶¹

Building costs

There are nineteen Primitive Methodist chapels in Hertfordshire for which build costs are available (or can be computed). The reported costs of construction for these chapels ranged from £70 in the case of Trowley Bottom, Flamstead in 1845 (which, as noted above, included land and legal costs) to £5,000 for Letchworth in 1914. However, in this case, the building included not just a chapel but a Sunday School and other suites of rooms, as was also the case at Croxley Green (build costs of £1,087 in 1893) and Whippendell Road, Watford (build costs of £1,999 in 1903). Trowley Bottom chapel was also one of the smallest in Hertfordshire, seating 100, whereas Letchworth was very much the largest with a seating

⁵⁸ Typed copy lease of land at Four Want Ways by Lord Rendlesham to trustees, 1 Feb 1886, NM7P/4, HALS.

⁵⁹ Baldock Circuit Plan 1899 (Jul-Oct), NM6/48, HALS.

⁶⁰ *Primitive Methodist Leader*, No. 215 New Series, Thursday, July 22, 1909.

⁶¹ Green, *Religion in the Age of Decline*, p.128.

capacity of 500. The average cost of the thirteen chapels built in Hertfordshire between 1845 and 1890 was £245, and the median cost was £250. This is much greater than the mean expenditure on 32 chapels in north Shropshire between 1831 and 1891 of £204 and the average cost of 16 chapels Norfolk of £218 referred to by Garratt and the median cost of 72 Primitive Methodist chapels built before 1850 which Watts found to be £200, despite the fact that the great majority of these thirteen chapels were small, with an average capacity of less than 110 sittings. However, if the bigger chapels at Baldock and Berkhamsted (with 300 and 275 sittings respectively) are taken out of the equation, the average cost falls to £210 and the median cost to £200, which is exactly in line with Watts' findings.⁶² It may be concluded, therefore, that the average build costs of the smaller and earlier Primitive Methodist chapels in Hertfordshire were no more or less expensive than in other parts of the Connexion.

However, the picture changed quite dramatically in Hertfordshire after 1890. The average cost of the six chapels built after this date was £1,839, but, as noted above, these costs covered not simply the building of the chapel itself but also ancillary accommodation as well. For example, Croxley Green, St Albans Road, Watford and Whippendell Road, Watford all had school halls and four additional rooms. Moreover, the capacity of these later chapels tended to be much greater than the earlier ones, with an average of more than 340 sittings. Indeed, the three largest Primitive Methodist chapels in Hertfordshire were built between 1898 and 1914; each had a capacity of more than 400 and, together, they provided for over 1,350 sittings.⁶³

Because chapel sizes and designs vary considerably, a total cost figure is not always a useful comparator; instead, a build cost per seat basis is to be preferred, on the basis that the chapel would be intended to accommodate not only the existing membership but also its anticipated (and hoped for) growth.⁶⁴ On this basis, the average cost per seat of the eighteen chapels was £2 16s 7d, reducing to £2 7s 10d if Letchworth is not included. This is

⁶² Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', p.250; Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II*, p.223.

⁶³ Department for Chapel Affairs, Methodist Church, *Methodist Church Buildings, Statistical Returns including seating accommodation as at July 1st, 1940* (Manchester: The Methodist Church, 1947), p.19; *Kelly's Directory of Hertfordshire, 1914* (London: Kelly and Co. Ltd, 1914).

⁶⁴ Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, p.187.

less than half of the average cost of £6 7s 2d for all nonconformist chapels built in the 19th century from 1841 onwards as calculated by Calder.⁶⁵ As Figure 5.1 below shows, build costs per seat rose generally throughout the 19th century. For nonconformist chapels as a whole, the costs peaked around 1880 and then began to fall slightly, whereas Primitive Methodist costs in Hertfordshire continued to rise. Calder suggests that the rise in costs for nonconformist chapels generally reflected the changing social and legal status of Dissenters, as a result of which more imposing and, therefore, expensive chapels were being built.⁶⁶

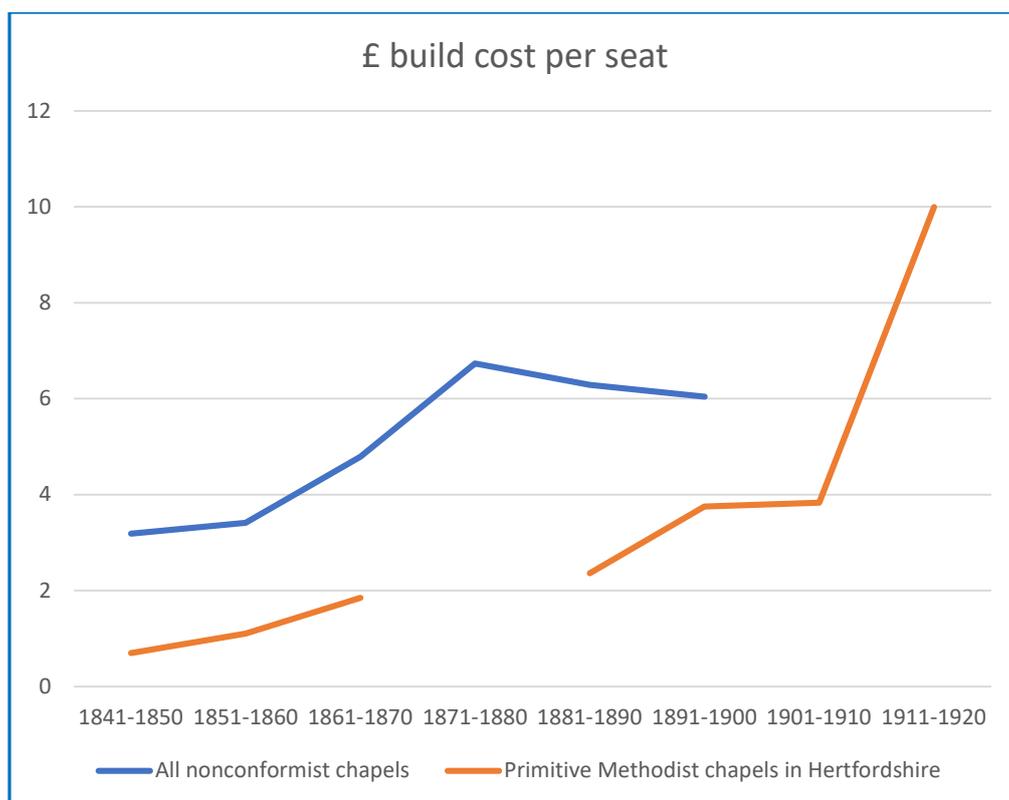


Figure 5.1: Build costs per seat of Hertfordshire Primitive Methodist chapels compared to all nonconformist chapels

Figure 5.1 indicates that the same may also be true initially, at least, for Primitive Methodists in Hertfordshire. The chapels originally constructed in the county up to about 1890 were generally very small and unpretentious and, consequently, cost less per seat than those of nonconformity generally. The build cost per seat for this period was an average of £1 15s, well below the average of £4 17s 7d for nonconformist chapels overall. This disparity

⁶⁵ Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, p.192.

⁶⁶ Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, p.192.

suggests that not only the construction but also the fitting out of these chapels leant heavily towards plainness and a lack of ornamentation, even where a local society was able to benefit from donations in kind. Nevertheless, the build cost per seat shows the same rising trend from 1840 as for nonconformity generally. Furthermore, after 1880 the build cost per seat for Primitive Methodist chapels in Hertfordshire continued to rise.

In common with land, building works cost more in the later 19th and 20th centuries as a result of the impact of inflation. Calder suggests that this could reasonably be taken into account by indexing costs relative to wages (since rising wages appeared to be the most significant component of increased costs), although he also notes that ‘an indexation approach to generate present day values creates as many problems as it solves’.⁶⁷

Moreover, in the case of Hertfordshire chapel costs, the effect of inflation on chapel costs between the 1840s and the first decade of the twentieth century can be discounted, since over this period the average rate of inflation was close to 0% and for several decades was negative. However, average inflation in the period from 1911 to 1920 was over 10.5%, largely due to the First World War, which would have contributed significantly to the dramatic rise in build costs in this decade.⁶⁸

From 1890, the average cost per seat was £4 16s 5d, rising to £5 17s 7d per seat in the 20th century. This was partly a reflection of the much larger and more expansive premises that were constructed after 1890. With the exception of the chapel built in Hitchin in 1900, which had 180 seats, the other five Primitive Methodist chapels in Hertfordshire built after 1890 all had space for more than 220 sittings, the average capacity being 375 as compared to 127 before 1890. In addition, this steep rise in costs parallels the progression of the Primitive Methodists from ‘connexion’ to ‘church’. Kendall dates this as occurring in 1902, when Class tickets were first issued bearing the name “Primitive Methodist Church”.⁶⁹ As part of this ‘coming of age’, more ‘mature’ premises were being provided, befitting the Connexion’s enhanced status. Not only were these later chapels much larger than earlier

⁶⁷ Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, pp.190-191 and p.243.

⁶⁸ Historical UK inflation rates, <<http://inflation.iamkate.com/>> [accessed 28 April 2020].

⁶⁹ Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church* (London: Primitive Methodist Publishing House, 1919), pp.134-135.

ones, they were also architecturally more adventurous, as can be seen in the designs of the chapels at Berkhamsted, St Albans Road, Watford and Letchworth.

Financing chapel construction

Before embarking on a chapel building project, it was necessary for societies to set up a building fund in order to meet the Connexional rules regarding the financing of chapel construction. At Baldock, members contributed to such a fund 'from one farthing per week upwards' and it was not until sufficient funds had been raised that the society 'sought and obtained the sanction of the District Building Committee to proceed with the undertaking'.⁷⁰

As seen in Chapter 1, Primitive Methodists were noted for their celebration of particularly significant events or occasions and two particular milestones associated with chapel building were often celebrated ceremonially: stone-laying and opening. Such public ceremonies also constituted part of the wider culture of Victorian society. Gunn considers that 'rites of civic culture' were an integral part of nineteenth century middle class Victorian 'respectability' and Roberts has noted that 'urban communities have used ritual and ceremony to mark collectively specific moments in time deemed worthy of celebration and commemoration'. Primitive Methodism was a part of this.⁷¹

The stone-laying ceremony

Stone-laying was important because it marked the start of the construction of a chapel. It was also an elaborate affair and always carefully planned, not only as a cause for celebration but because it could be used to raise the public profile of Primitive Methodists in the particular locality as well as providing an opportunity to raise funds. Donations would be sought from local worthies and other supporters who were invited to lay commemorative stones and a collection would be taken at the service. The ceremonial events were invariably followed by an extravagant and often sizeable tea, and even another public meeting, both of which provided further opportunities for fundraising. The report of the

⁷⁰ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1857, pp.552-553.

⁷¹ Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle-Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1840-1874* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2007), pp.163-186; Ben Roberts, 'Entertaining the community: the evolution of civic ritual and public celebration, 1860-1953', *Urban History*, 44.3 (2017), 444-463 (p.444).

stone-laying ceremony in 1868 for the first chapel at Croxley Green mentioned four such local worthies who laid stones and gave £1 each; it also noted that a subscription list of sixty families had been formed. In total, the stone-laying ceremony raised nearly £40 towards the eventual total cost of some £220.⁷²

A stone-laying ceremony at Sandon in 1863 raised a total of £7, made up of donations from those who laid stones and collections at the ceremony itself and at the tea meeting and evening service. Given that £5 10s of this total sum came from six named individuals, it is clear that the local congregation (the size of which was described as 'good', notwithstanding the 'unfavourable weather') was not in a position to make much of a contribution to the building fund.⁷³ In 1867, the stone-laying proceedings at Berkhamsted included a procession through the town to the site of the new chapel. Thomas Russell, the minister at Berkhamsted, also indicates that the donations of four people 'helped us much'.⁷⁴ At the stone-laying at Dassells in 1868, there was a collection on behalf of the building fund and, after the service had concluded, a public tea was held 'to which about 100 sat down'. This was followed by a public meeting where further donations were sought and another collection made. All in all, the collections, donations and profits from the tea amounted to £14 17s 8¹/₂d, no small achievement for a society of only 50 members, particularly when taking into account that, as Agar comments, agricultural wages in East Hertfordshire 'were of an East Anglian bleakness throughout the [19th] century'. Although £5 of this sum represented Mr Wyman's donation, that would still leave nearly £10 that was raised by the members and their friends; assuming all 100 who attended the tea would have contributed, this represents an average donation of nearly two shillings per head which was almost 20% of a typical week's wages for an agricultural worker.⁷⁵

⁷² *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1868, p.175 and pp.368-369.

⁷³ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1864, p.116.

⁷⁴ *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 3 August 1867; Thomas Russell, *Record of Events in Primitive Methodism*, p.147.

⁷⁵ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1868, p.745; Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1881, D/NM 3/5/2, ERO; Nigel E. Agar, *Behind the Plough: Agrarian Society in Nineteenth-century Hertfordshire* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2005), p.92, referring to E. H. Hunt, *Regional Wage Variations in Britain 1850-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

At the stone-laying ceremony in Tring in 1870 five donations of £5 each were received, including one from the minister's wife. In addition, the local Friends of Temperance made a gift of £20.⁷⁶ In the case of the stone-laying ceremony for the chapel at Boundary Road, St Albans in 1909, which again was followed by a public tea, the Mayoress of St Albans (the wife of Councillor Samuel Ryder who had donated the land to the society) laid the first stone and 'eleven others were laid by ladies and gentlemen taking sympathetic interest in our work'. Those who laid stones contributed a total of £250 15s. and, overall, the stone-laying ceremony raised a total of £271 1s. 6d.⁷⁷

The opening ceremony

As with stone-laying, these were also elaborate affairs which often took place across a weekend, with two or three services usually taken by high profile ministers. Inevitably, there were also tea and public meetings. At Ashwell, the celebrations began on 6 October 1861 and extended until 24 November, with ministers from London and from the local Independents and Baptists. Donations, tea meetings and collections at the opening services raised £47 towards the total cost of £200.⁷⁸ At the opening of the new chapel at Hemel Hempstead in September 1861 'three sermons were preached to crowded congregations' by a visiting minister from Aylesbury and one from the local Baptists, although by the close of proceedings only £50 had been raised towards the total cost of £270.⁷⁹ There were also three opening Sunday services in 1868 at Dassells and on the Monday there was a tea meeting for 150. This was followed by a public meeting in the evening. The events of the weekend appear to have raised some £46 towards the total cost of £130, which was considerably more than the £15 raised at the stone-laying ceremony.⁸⁰

At Trowley Bottom the opening services took place on Christmas Day 1845. A local Baptist minister and Rev John Garner, a very prominent Primitive Methodist minister, officiated, and £20 was contributed to the overall cost of £70.⁸¹ In 1909, the preacher at the opening

⁷⁶ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1871, p.446.

⁷⁷ *Primitive Methodist Leader*, No. 200 New Series, 8 April 1909.

⁷⁸ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1862, p.113.

⁷⁹ *Hertford Mercury and Reformer*, 21 September 1861.

⁸⁰ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1868, p.745.

⁸¹ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1846, pp.94-95. John Garner was one of the ministers named as a permanent member of the Primitive Methodist Conference in the Deed Poll and was the first Secretary of

service of the chapel at Boundary Road, St Albans was Professor Arthur Peake MA DD. Peake, who was a tutor at the Primitive Methodist Hartley College for ministerial training in Manchester and was the first non-Anglican to become a professor of divinity in an English university, was said to be Primitive Methodism's greatest scholar. That such a pre-eminent and academic person as Peake could be engaged for the opening ceremony of the re-formed Primitive Methodist society in St Albans, in addition to the involvement of the Mayor and other councillors at the stone-laying ceremony, is an indication of the new society's high social aspirations as well as, perhaps, an attempt to distinguish and distance itself from the earlier failed society in the city. Equally, it may also demonstrate the ability of the thriving Primitive Methodist community in Luton (from where the new society in St Albans was missioned and where there were, in 1909, no less than three separate Primitive Methodist circuits) to attract such a notable preacher as Peake for this special occasion. The service was followed by a tea meeting and 'after tea the hall was again filled for the public meeting'. However, despite all these efforts, it seems that the opening events only raised a little over £50 (compared to more than £270 at the stone-laying).⁸²

Overall, these opening ceremonies raised around a fifth of the total build costs, so it was clearly well worth a society investing time and effort in making the necessary arrangements. The society at Trowley Bottom did very well to raise nearly 30% of their costs, whilst the society at Dassells did exceptionally well by raising 35% with their five events such that 46% of the total costs of construction had been paid by the time of the chapel's opening.⁸³

Subscriptions, donations and collections

Whilst stone-laying and opening ceremonies provided individual opportunities to raise money towards a building project, giving by subscription to a building fund was a favoured method of fundraising over a more sustained period of time. The case of Baldock has already been noted (see footnote 70); at Trowley Bottom, a society of only 17 members, the

the General Mission Committee. He was President of Conference in 1843. (My Primitive Methodist Ancestors web site - <https://www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk/content/people-2/primitive_methodist_ministers/g/john-garner> [accessed 12 March 2020]).

⁸² *Primitive Methodist Leader*, No. 215 New Series, 22 July 1909; Wilkinson, John T., *Arthur Samuel Peake – A Biography* (London: Epworth Press, 1971); C. H. Dodd, revised by J. W. Rogerson, 'Peake, Arthur Samuel (1865–1929)', ODNB <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35427>>.

⁸³ Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1870-1879 ,D/NM 3/5/3, ERO.

minister reported in 1846 that, despite £20 having been raised by subscriptions and collections by the opening ceremony, 'the begging operations are not yet closed, nor are they intended to close till at least £30 shall have been raised, thus leaving a debt of £40 on the property'.⁸⁴

Many societies also benefited from 'donations from friends' which, as Hempton notes, is 'a recurring Methodist phrase'.⁸⁵ After several years of meeting in rented rooms, the Primitive Methodists in Watford secured their first chapel by acquiring 'the court house, which was originally built for a place of worship ... being central, and in the most eligible part of the town'. The building cost

'£350, with a strip of land six yards wide, and several buildings of good service. Fitting up, &c., has cost £50 more; thus the whole cost, with title deeds and enrolment, has amounted to upwards of £400, and this valuable property is now settled on the Primitive Methodist connexion for ever as an entire free-will offering to the Lord by Mr Vines.'⁸⁶

The chapel built by the society at Redbourn in 1862 cost 'nearly £300' and evidently left the thirty members in debt right from the start. Eight years later, the society was pleased to record that J Palmer Esq., described as 'a kind benefactor', had donated 'the princely sum of £50' and that the members themselves, now numbering forty, 'by diet of hard begging and their contributions, all being poor people' had been able to raise a further £50.⁸⁷ In 1868, the Dassells society was particularly grateful to W. B. Wyman Esq., not only for the gift of the land on which the chapel was built (see footnote 55), but also 'for his valuable attention to the erection and his Christian liberality in contributing and collection for the funds

⁸⁴ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1846, pp.94-95; Trowley Bottom trust accounts 1921 – 1960, NM2K/1, HALS.

⁸⁵ Hempton, *Methodism – Empire of the spirit*, pp.115-116.

⁸⁶ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1866, pp.121-122. The society's benefactor was Mr Caleb Vines, a wealthy man of independent means in his early 70s. He was a solicitor and investor and owned about 150 freehold and leasehold properties in the east end of London. He lived in Islington, London but also had a country house at Bushey near Watford in Hertfordshire; <http://freepages.rootsweb.com/~vinesfamhist/genealogy/chartdavid1760.htm#_msocom_6> [accessed 7 April 2020]. Mr Vines also 'secured to the Connexion a valuable chapel ... free of debt' at Bushey (see Russell, 'Record of Events in Primitive Methodism', p.147).

⁸⁷ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1870, p.380.

upwards of £20'.⁸⁸ A new society had been formed in Hitchin in 1898 and two years later it was decided that a new chapel should be provided. It was reported in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* that 'the building scheme does not err on the side of extravagance' and that 'five hundred pounds is all that at present it is proposed to expend'. William Hartley had promised £25 and a grant was sought through the District Building Committee. Nevertheless, it was evident that 'this sum, without substantial help from outside sources, will be much more than the thirty members, none of them men of wealth, will be able to deal with'.⁸⁹ Notwithstanding that the construction of a new chapel was clearly well beyond the society's means, the members were determined to proceed, even though they would have to rely on heavily on donations and grants.

Donations were frequently supplemented by various fundraising events, typically tea meetings, bazaars and collections at special services. In particular, chapel anniversary celebrations, including tea and public meetings, provided an ideal opportunity to raise much needed funds in order to reduce the chapel debt. At Ashwell, as well as the usual contributions from 'donations, tea meetings, and opening services', the society held a bazaar in 1862 to raise further funds; in 1881, at Dassells, a weekend in June and the chapel anniversary in October raised a total of £3 9s 1/2d for chapel funds from collections, tea meetings and donations. In 1887, there were special chapel collections at Dassells which raised 7s 9d and, that year, even the camp meeting collection of 8s was earmarked 'for chapel' funds.⁹⁰ At the Trowley Bottom anniversary weekend in 1857, it was reported that

'although trade is very dull, and money with many persons scarce, it was cheering indeed to see the people give their money so freely for the "house of prayer". Two years ago this chapel was greatly embarrassed; now we have money enough to pay all the arrears of interest, and to reduce the principal a little'.⁹¹

⁸⁸ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1868, p.745.

⁸⁹ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1900, p.395. William Hartley (of Hartley's Jams) was a third generation Primitive Methodist and became the most significant benefactor to the Primitive Methodist cause; <<https://www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk/content/people-2/lay-people/surnames-beginning-with-h/sir-william-pickles-hartley>> [accessed 28 April 2020].

⁹⁰ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1862, p. 113; Dassells trust treasurer's accounts 1877 – 1950, NM9G/1, HALS.

⁹¹ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1858, p. 55.

One of the most pressing needs for a local society was that of raising money to reduce chapel debt. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that success in debt reduction was a cause for celebration which needed to be publicised, despite the fact that, in some cases, it meant admitting that even interest payments had fallen into arrears. This importance was further emphasised by the fact that special celebration Sundays and other fundraising events were frequently highlighted on the quarterly circuit plan, not only in the list of preaching appointments but often supplemented by a diary of dates, the purpose of which was to draw readers' attention to specific events. The Baldock circuit plan contained a 'special notice' for all society stewards who 'must see that Collections are made when planned'; furthermore, it was 'requested that collections be made on every Sabbath and at both services as appointed'.⁹²

Moreover, fundraising was not a purely Primitive Methodist affair. At Berkhamsted in 1867, 'a sermon was preached in the Wesleyan Chapel, by a lady named Miss Stedman, after which a collection was made on behalf of a new chapel, to be erected in Highstreet, opposite the Union Workhouse'. It was a not infrequent occurrence that Wesleyan Methodists lent support to the endeavours of their Primitive Methodist friends in such matters, another instance of such collaboration being recorded at Baldock in 1857. When no Wesleyan Methodists were available, other nonconformist denominations would offer assistance, such as the Independents at the stone-laying ceremonies at Sandon in 1864 and Dassells in 1868, the Congregationalists at the stone-laying ceremony at Boxmoor, Hemel Hempstead in 1869 and the Baptists at the stone-laying ceremony at Boundary Road, St Albans in 1909.⁹³ The involvement in fund-raising events of ministers from other nonconformist denominations also highlights that Primitive Methodism societies were now very much an accepted and important part of their local communities.

⁹² Baldock Circuit Plan 1900 (Jul-Sep), NM6/48, HALS.

⁹³ *Herts Guardian, Agricultural Journal, and General Advertiser*, 4 May 1867, p.5; *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1857, pp.552-553; *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1864, p.116; *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1868, p.745; Roger & Joan Hands and Eve Davis, *The Book of Boxmoor* (Buckingham: Barracuda Books Ltd, 1989), p.35; *Primitive Methodist Leader*, No. 200 New Series, 8 April 1909.

Connexional funds

Another source of funding for chapel building was the Connexion. The Connexion's efforts began initially as a response to the unregulated and, in a number of cases, reckless chapel building projects of the early 1840s which resulted in the 1843 Conference rules to control chapel building. In 1847, the Conference established the General Chapel Fund 'for the purpose of rendering financial assistance to distressed chapels'. The aid provided by the fund was 'conditional upon local effort'; however, since most chapel building projects cost more than local societies could afford, by the later years of the nineteenth century many societies were labouring under a considerable burden of debt. The Connexion's response to this situation, largely the brainchild of William Hartley, was the formation in 1889 of the Primitive Methodist Chapel Aid Association Limited. The Association accepted deposits and paid interest at $3\frac{1}{2}\%$, which was above the prevailing rate at the time of its launch, and provided long-term loans to trustees at a rate of $3\frac{3}{4}\%$. For most building projects, the Association's loan was dependent on one half of the cost having been raised locally. In addition to the payment of interest, a small proportion of the principal had to be paid off each year. The Association was clearly very successful in meeting its objectives as, in its first seven years of operation, trustees' liabilities were reduced by over £36,000. Moreover, despite the small differential of $\frac{1}{4}\%$ in interest rates, the Association not only covered its working expenses but also was able to build up reserves which were used, in 1900, to establish the Church Extension Fund. Kendall makes the point that, despite its name, the Fund was 'a thoroughly *missionary* department' whose primary aim was to establish churches where they were most needed.⁹⁴

A number of Hertfordshire societies took advantage of these Connexional funds. To assist with the building of the new chapel in Queen's Road, Watford in 1886, the society secured a mortgage of their 'chapel and premises' and, in 1896, three years after the new chapel had been built at Croxley Green at a total cost of £1,087, the trustees took out a mortgage with the Primitive Methodist Chapel Aid Association Limited to secure the sum of £440. The mortgage was to be repaid by yearly payments of £22, with interest due at the rate of $3\frac{3}{4}\%$ per annum. The loan was finally repaid in 1919. In 1909, the trustees of the new chapel at

⁹⁴ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II, p.458 and 536-537; Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, pp.127-128 and 140.

Boundary Road, St Albans obtained a loan of £400, free of interest, from the Church Extension Fund, which amounted to about half of the total cost of the building works. In 1928, the society at Dassells took out a loan of £50 from the Chapel Loan Fund to assist in financing the building of a Sunday school, representing some 40% of the overall cost.⁹⁵

Debt

Despite the sums raised by the application of the Connexional rules regarding the funding of chapel construction, it was rare indeed for the whole of the costs to have been covered by the time the chapel was opened. Indeed, a chapel building project was often one which would immediately result in a debt of several hundreds or thousands of pounds for most societies that would never be wealthy enough to service it.

When the Hemel Hempstead chapel opened in 1861, only £50 (19%) of the £260 total cost had been subscribed and the following year the chapel at Bendish opened at a cost of £80, towards which only £30 (38%) had been raised. In 1868, the 50 members at Dassells had managed to raise £60 (46%) of the total cost of £130 of their chapel, which equated to an average outstanding debt of £1 8s per member. The nearby society at Furneux Pelham also had 50 members when the chapel opened in 1873. Here, however, the chapel cost £400 of which only £114 (29%) had been, resulting an average debt per member of £5 14s 5d. Although the chapel at Furneux Pelham cost three times that of the chapel at Dassells, the average debt per member on opening was four times that at Dassells. These two building projects clearly demonstrate why it was important for local societies to do whatever they could to follow the Connexional rules on chapel financing. Some fifty years later, the situation was little changed: at the opening of the Boundary Road chapel in St Albans in 1909, only £324 (41%) had been raised towards the total cost of some £800.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Mortgage of chapel and premises, Queen's Road, Watford, 18 May 1886, NM7J/11; mortgage between chapel trustees and the PM Chapel Aid Association Ltd, Croxley Green, 1896, NM7M/1; Dassells trust treasurer's accounts, 1877 - 1950, NM9G/1, HALS; *Primitive Methodist Leader*, No. 200 New Series, 8 April 1909.

⁹⁶ *Hertford Mercury and Reformer*, 21 September 1861; *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1862, p.750; Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1869, D/NM 3/5/2; Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1870-1879, D/NM 3/5/3, ERO; *Primitive Methodist Leader*, No. 215 New Series, 22 July 1909.

The consequences of not following the Conference rules on financing are clearly demonstrated by the case of the Primitive Methodist chapel at Markyate. The chapel cost £327 7s 1d to build in 1869 but the society had to take out a mortgage of £200 to finance it. Over thirty years later, in 1902, the circuit Quarterly Meeting noted that the society's income was 'inadequate to meet the interest [on the Mortgage] and other expenses'. Moreover, the property was in a dilapidated condition requiring repairs costing £35. These costs were 'not raisable at Markyate or by Circuit' and the society was 'unable to pay off original debt' which still stood at £130. As a result, the chapel was sold, but the proceeds of sale only realised less than £105, which meant that the circuit was left with the balance of the debt on its accounts.⁹⁷

Chapel maintenance

Having expended not inconsiderable amounts of money, time and energy in constructing a chapel, there was a continuing duty on the local society to maintain the premises in good condition so that the buildings would not only serve the needs of existing members but also provide a sound base from which to mission further localities. The printed forms provided for the annual chapel schedules which each society was required to complete and submit to the circuit demonstrate very clearly the financial matters on which members were required to focus their attention. For example, there are regular entries for heating, lighting and cleaning costs (including the payment of a chapel keeper or caretaker), repairs, insurance, interest payments on, and repayments of, outstanding debts.⁹⁸

Heating, lighting and cleaning

Whilst chapels may have been, for the most part, plain and simple buildings, there is ample evidence in society treasurers' accounts that keeping the chapel clean and tidy and in a fit and relatively comfortable state for worship and other meetings was of considerable importance to a local society. Lighting and heating the chapel was particularly important during winter months and for evening services. It was necessary therefore to ensure that

⁹⁷ Richard and Geraldine Hogg, *The Book of Markyate – The Parish & Its People* (Tiverton: Markyate Local History Society and Halsgrove, 2002), p.39.

⁹⁸ Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1870-1879, D/NM 3/5/3; Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1884, D/NM 3/5/4, ERO.

everything was kept in good repair, especially in those places where the evening services tended to be the most popular of the day.⁹⁹ It is unsurprising, therefore, that heating, lighting and cleaning costs were a key component of chapel outgoings. At Dassells, these amounted to 37% of general running expenses in 1871 rising to 55% by 1877. At Furneux Pelham, they were 16% in 1875 but had risen to 39% by 1884. In the 1920s, the heating, lighting and cleaning costs at Trowley Bottom amounted to an average of 24% of the annual running costs. There are numerous entries for the purchase of coal and oil for heating and lighting, with evidence of increasing consumption of both during the winter months. In turn, this not infrequently resulted in increased levels of cleaning required at this time of the year. There are also many references in the accounts to the purchase of lamp glass, lamp cotton and lamp wick, as well as new lamps.¹⁰⁰

Chapel keeper

Because of the need to keep the chapel premises in good order week by week, the post of chapel keeper or caretaker was a highly important role. Indeed, it is often the only paid employment regularly referred to in chapel accounts. As such, it served two main purposes: looking after the chapel and providing a small supplementary source of local employment. Members at Dassells paid their chapel cleaner 8s per annum in 1877 (compared to the average farm labourer's earnings of £35 per annum); the payment was raised to 10s per annum in 1891 and to 12s per annum in 1893. This remained the annual payment until 1915, when it was raised to 16s per annum. Members at Furneux Pelham had been paying their chapel keeper 16s per annum since at least 1908; this rose to 18s in 1919 and to £1 in 1924, at which level it remained until 1932. The chapel keeper at Trowley Bottom seems to have been more highly valued, being paid £3 per annum in 1921, rising to £4 per annum in

⁹⁹ Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000*, p.243.

¹⁰⁰ Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1870-1879, D/NM 3/5/3; Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1884, D/NM 3/5/4, ERO. Dassells trust treasurer's accounts, 1877-1950, NM9G/1; Furneux Pelham trust treasurer's accounts, 1908-1949, NM9H/1; Trowley Bottom trust accounts 1921-1960, NM2K/1, HALS.

1927.¹⁰¹ Some people undertook the role of chapel keeper ‘for very many years’, as was the case with Mrs Cawdell at Baldock.¹⁰²

Perhaps unsurprisingly, some aspects of the chapel keeper’s job involved considerable physical effort. At Boundary Road, St Albans, Mrs Haddow had been appointed as the chapel keeper in 1921, but only two years later, at the annual meeting of the trustees in January 1923,

‘the Chapel steward was instructed to see Mrs Haddow & point out the unsatisfactory matter of the chapel heating, suggesting to her the advisability of having male assistance in this & similar matters - the remuneration to be deducted from present salary.’

Mrs Haddow then worked for a time with a Mr Lane, but the following year gave up the role entirely. This episode also reveals something of the importance to a local society of maintaining the chapel heating, particularly in the winter months.¹⁰³

Repairs and maintenance

Looking after the chapel was one of the key responsibilities of local trustees. Between 1871 and 1881, about 15% of total annual outgoings of the society at Dassells was spent on repairs, and, between 1875 and 1882, repairs amounted to about 8% of the total outgoings at Furneux Pelham.¹⁰⁴ Society accounts include several references to repairs to roofs, guttering, glazing and windows, as well as frequent mentions of repairs to, or replacement of, heating stoves. It is likely that much of the routine maintenance, including redecoration, was carried out by the members themselves, but the Dassells accounts show that in 1895

¹⁰¹ Dassells trust treasurer's accounts, 1877-1950, NM9G/1; Furneux Pelham trust treasurer's accounts, 1908-1949, NM9H/1; Trowley Bottom trust accounts 1921-1960, NM2K/1, HALS. These Hertfordshire payments seem small in comparison to the £6 per annum paid to the caretaker at Flamborough PM chapel in Yorkshire in 1894 (Truss, ‘Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932’, p.182).

¹⁰² *Herts and Cambs Reporter and Royston Crow*, 10 January 1908, p.8.

¹⁰³ Minutes of trustees’ meetings, Boundary Road, St Albans, Aug 1908-Nov 1928, NM5B/1, HALS.

¹⁰⁴ Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1870-1879, D/NM 3/5/3; Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1884, D/NM 3/5/4, ERO.

the society decided to carry out 'repairs and white-ing (sic) [the] chapel by contract', which cost 15s.¹⁰⁵

In ensuring the continuing maintenance of the buildings, the spiritual life of the chapel was not overlooked. In 1892, members at Dassells spent £4 12s 6d on the purchase of a harmonium and 3s for its delivery. A special 'harmonium fund' was set up to finance such a large and abnormal expenditure, and the accounts record that donations totalling £4 2s 6d had been received. Even the Sunday school fund contributed 5s. The harmonium must have served the chapel reasonably well since it was not until 1911 that repairs, valued at 7s 6d, were needed. The Dassells society also regularly bought hymn books and, in 1923, presumably the organist was the beneficiary of the 'hymnal tune book' that was purchased for the relatively large sum of 16s. Clearly, music and singing were an important part of the life of the society at Dassells.¹⁰⁶ The same must also have been true of the societies at Furneux Pelham and Trowley Bottom, where the accounts contain several references to the acquisition of hymn books, which for Furneux Pelham in 1921 accounted for 62% of the society's total expenditure that year. Other expenditure included sacrament wine at Furneux Pelham and the repair of the organ at Trowley Bottom.¹⁰⁷

Insurance

Recognising the importance of insuring the Primitive Methodist estate, primarily against the risk of fire, the Connexion created, in 1866, the Primitive Methodist Insurance Company Limited (PMIC), a business devoted entirely to providing insurance for 'chapels, schools, manses, colleges, and other buildings belonging to the denomination'. Several societies in Hertfordshire chose to insure not only their chapels with PMIC, but also, by the 20th century, a number of manses.¹⁰⁸ Aldenham provides a typical example. An insurance policy was taken out with PMIC in 1887 under which, for an initial premium of 3s 8d, renewable

¹⁰⁵ Dassells trust treasurer's accounts, 1877-1950, NM9G/1, HALS.

¹⁰⁶ Hymn books were purchased in 1900, 1906, 1912 and 1921. Dassells trust treasurer's accounts, 1877-1950, NM9G/1, HALS.

¹⁰⁷ Furneux Pelham trust treasurer's accounts, 1908-1949, NM9H/1; Trowley Bottom trust accounts 1921-1960, NM2K/1, HALS.

¹⁰⁸ Chapels insured with PMIC included Hemel Hempstead (1875), St Albans Road, Watford (1891), Bushey (1891), Croxley Green (1892-3 and 1911) and Chorleywood (1920). There were manses insured with PMIC in Bushey (1900) and Watford (1905 and 1919); NM3D/1, NM7I/45, NM7J/4, NM7J/5, NM7L/6, NM7M/2, NM7M/4-5, NM7N/2 and NM7N/3, HALS.

annually at four shillings, the building and contents were insured for £195; the harmonium was insured separately for £5. By 1934 the harmonium had been replaced with an organ, which was insured for £30. That same year the insurance value of the building and its fixtures and fittings had been increased to £370, although the premium had also increased to eight shillings a year. The trustees at Trowley Bottom were paying 4s per annum for fire insurance in 1924, but this had risen to 7s by 1926, at which level it remained until 1932.¹⁰⁹

Debt reduction

Paying off part or all of the outstanding debt was also an important part of society financing and was strongly encouraged by the Connexion's rules.¹¹⁰ The accounts demonstrate that most societies were very diligent in seeking to repay capital debt regularly; nevertheless, this was often no easy task, particularly when membership numbers were small. When the Dassells chapel opened in 1869 the fifty members were faced with an outstanding debt of £70. This had been reduced to £37 by 1880, although by this time there were only eleven members. Thus, although the debt had been reduced by 47% over a period of eleven years, the average debt per member had increased by two and a half times from £1 8s in 1869 to £3 7s 2d in 1880. It was a similar situation at Furneux Pelham, where the outstanding debt of £286 confronting the fifty members at the opening of the chapel in 1873 had been reduced to £200 by 1884. However, there were then only 22 members, so that although the debt had been reduced by 30% in eleven years the average debt per member had almost doubled, from £5 14s 5d in 1873 to £9 1s 10d in 1884. Falling membership thus presented a further difficulty for societies already struggling with significant burdens of debt.¹¹¹

Between 1869 and 1890, the Dassells debt was reduced on average by £4 per annum and in 1901 the total of donations received amounted to £27 16s 6d, which enabled the chapel debt to be reduced that year by the very significant sum of £32.¹¹² At Furneux Pelham,

¹⁰⁹ Aldenham insurance policy, from 1887, NM7P/1; Trowley Bottom trust accounts 1921-1960, NM2K/1, HALS.

¹¹⁰ Chapel trustees were 'urged to reduce the debt upon their respective trust estates at least five per cent, per annum' (*The General Rules of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Rule 344).

¹¹¹ Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1869, D/NM 3/5/2; Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1870-1879, D/NM 3/5/3, ERO.

¹¹² Dassells trust treasurer's accounts 1877-1950, NM9G/1, HALS; Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1884, D/NM 3/5/4, ERO.

between 1875 and 1884, the average annual debt reduction was almost £12, although some £9 of this came from the annual rents received from two cottages owned by the society.¹¹³

Chapel improvements

After several years of regular use, a number of chapel premises were in need of a more general refurbishment than was possible with normal maintenance. Some fortunate societies also found that the growth in membership demanded an enlargement of their buildings. Indeed, as Garratt has suggested, the building of a chapel might well have been a means of encouraging mere adherents to become full members of the Connexion so that, thereby, they would make an 'economic commitment' to the local society as well as a spiritual one.¹¹⁴

In 1871, only four years after the opening of the Berkhamsted chapel, the growth of the society was such that the chapel 'had to have a front gallery put in' which increased its capacity to 275 sittings thus making it the fifth largest chapel in Hertfordshire.¹¹⁵ Rarely will a local society have been able to raise a sum which was sufficient to cover the total of the cost of the planned improvements before starting such a project. Consequently, in order to pay for chapel improvements, it was necessary for societies to take out a new mortgage or secure private loans to cover the shortfall in fundraising. However, the imperatives that drove these improvement projects seem to have carried more weight than the financial consequences of the decision to proceed, as, inevitably, the result was an increase in the level of a society's debt even before the debt arising from the initial building of the chapel had been cleared. Such was the case in Baldock in 1857 where a new chapel was built costing £330 whilst there was still a debt outstanding on the previous chapel of £85. As the minister explained, 'we deemed it best to open the chapel when we did ... as it was a time when our friends were best able to help us in money matters'.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1870-1879, D/NM 3/5/3; Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1884, D/NM 3/5/4, ERO.

¹¹⁴ Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', p.220.

¹¹⁵ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1871, p.446.

¹¹⁶ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1858, p.310.

The accounts for Trowley Bottom and Dassells highlight rare examples of an exception to this rule in Hertfordshire. At some time between 1858 and 1862, the chapel at Trowley Bottom was 'considerably improved at an outlay of £19, all paid'. This prudent approach is also evident in the 20th century: in 1920, the trustees were planning a renovation scheme for the property but resolved that it 'be deferred until a substantial sum of money is in hand'. At Dassells in 1887, a 'Renovation Bill' of £3 15s was 'paid off' out of normal chapel income for the year, which was no mean feat for such a small society. In 1907, £2 12s 6d was spent on 'putting backs to seats', which was almost wholly financed from the balance in hand at the beginning of the year.¹¹⁷

However, despite the special fundraising events which chapel improvements required, such projects not infrequently increased the size of a society's debt. It was not surprising, therefore, that the Saffron Walden Circuit Quarterly Meeting felt it necessary, in 1883, to ensure 'that the chapel stewards at each place in the circuit be informed that they are not to spend chapel money for improvements, repairs etc without the sanction of the Trustees'.¹¹⁸ At Tring, in 1890, the society added a vestry and nine years later refurbished the whole premises, increasing the chapel's capacity by 20 seats. Special services were held in February 1899 'in aid of the Renovation Fund, on which a deficit of about £10 still exists'.¹¹⁹ In March 1898, the society at Harpenden submitted plans to the District Building Committee for a new Sunday school building and alterations to the chapel which were completed by October 1899. The cost of the chapel alterations was £343, only £39 of which (approximately 11%) had been raised by October 1899; the new Sunday school cost £440, only £159 of which (about 36%) had been raised.¹²⁰ In 1927, the society at Dassells decided to build a Sunday school. The accounts show that this cost £126 15s and that, through a variety of means such as gifts, donations, jumble sales and money from the Connexional Chapel Loan Fund, a total of £137 8s had been raised. This more than covered the cost of the Sunday school and also enabled the society to spend a further £7 10s on renovating the

¹¹⁷ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1862, p.750; Trowley Bottom trust accounts 1921-1960, NM2K/1; Dassells trust treasurer's accounts 1877-1950, NM9G/1, HALS.

¹¹⁸ Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1, ERO.

¹¹⁹ *Bucks Herald*, 25 October 1890, 21 December 1895, 11 February 1899 and 4 March 1899.

¹²⁰ Valerie Bloye, *A history of Southdown Methodist Church, Harpenden, celebrating the Church's life from 1865 to 2000* (2000).

chapel. Chapel 'renovation' features regularly in the Dassells' accounts in the 20th century, in 1902, 1915 and again in 1932 (the year of Methodist union).¹²¹

Private loans could sometimes be secured at a better rate of interest than the 3³/₄% offered by the Primitive Methodist Chapel Aid Association Limited. In 1889, the Dassells society Dassells obtained two 'Notes in Hand' totalling £31 from a Mr John Starr, on which interest was payable at 3¹/₂% per annum. However, the debt was not paid off until 1901, by which time the society had paid Mr Starr over £13 in interest, amounting to 30% of the total cost of the loan. Nevertheless, this did not deter the society from taking on another loan in 1902, this time for £5 3s 11³/₄ from a Mr Soper. This would have funded almost half of that year's expenditure on the chapel renovation.¹²²

Financing the circuit

Each Primitive Methodist circuit was responsible for managing its own financial affairs and for exercising financial oversight over its constituent local societies. Indeed, as Garratt has noted, 'the ultimate success of the connexion in the local setting' depended on 'a circuit's ability to manage its financial ... affairs'. In large measure, this meant funding the travelling preachers who were appointed to serve in the circuit and providing them with somewhere to live. However, the weakness of the system (described by Pocock as 'precarious') was that the circuit was almost wholly reliant on contributions made by local societies, which were not always readily forthcoming.¹²³

¹²¹ Dassells trust treasurer's accounts 1877-1950, NM9G/1, HALS.

¹²² Dassells trust treasurer's accounts 1877-1950, NM9G/1, HALS. This was almost certainly Arthur Soper, a farmer, who lived in Dassells just seven properties away from the chapel (see <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/imageviewer/collections/7814/images/HRTRG13_1288_1292-0449?treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=jxF178&_phstart=successSource&pld=7559169> [accessed 3 May 2020]).

¹²³ Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', pp.92 and 97; Truss, 'Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932', pp.161 and 181-183; Christine Pocock, 'The Origins, Development and Significance of the Circuit in Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism in England 1740 -1914' (PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2015), pp.155-162. The principle that the itinerant ministry should be funded by the organisation's members was first recognised by Primitive Methodism as early as 1811, although it was not expected that preachers would be paid more than the circuit could raise (Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. I, p.435; Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II*, p.237).

Society contributions were generally related to the size of their membership. The members at Furneux Pelham represented 7.6% of the Saffron Walden circuit membership and they were expected to contribute 7.2% of the circuit assessment. At Dassells the membership accounted for 2% of the circuit's members and they were asked to contribute 2.8% of the circuit assessment. However, the amounts sent by the local societies to the circuit frequently did not equate to the individual assessments. In 1864, the Stansted Branch Quarterly Meeting decided that their minister should 'call the members together at each place on the Branch and urge them to contribute more liberally to the support of the Ministry'.¹²⁴ In December 1898, the Quarterly Meeting resolved that the 'Circuit Steward write to F Pelham urging them to make up their allocation'. Clearly, this did not produce any lasting change as, in December 1904, the society at Furneux Pelham only sent £2 10s 6d as against an assessment of £3 5s, representing an average contribution of 2s 3d per member. This society already had the greatest outstanding deficiency on its circuit payments, amounting to nearly 44% of the total circuit deficiency. As a consequence, its contribution for the next quarter was raised to £8 0s 4d, equivalent to 9.4% of the total circuit assessment.¹²⁵ These examples illustrate the extent of the financial demands, responsibilities, commitments and expectations that were placed on local society members, no matter what their social or economic standing might be. Much was expected of them and the burdens were 'heavy', although it is also clear that 'the most was made of meagre resources'.¹²⁶

Funding the travelling preachers

A significant proportion of society contributions was spent on the salaries of the travelling preachers stationed to the circuit, even though Primitive Methodist ministers were paid less than their Wesleyan counterparts and substantially less than the average Church of England incumbent. There were also various additional payments for board and meals as well as

¹²⁴ Meeting held on 6 December 1864, Minutes of Quarterly Meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

¹²⁵ Meeting held on 6 December 1898, Minutes of Quarterly Meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO; Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1905 (Jan-Mar), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism.

¹²⁶ Rodney Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists and Reformers: Primitive Methodism and Rural Society, South Lincolnshire, 1817-1875* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1989), p.66; James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society – South Lindsey 1825-1875* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p.222.

allowances for children. Married men were paid considerably more than a single preacher (in 1849 it was more than double the single preacher's salary).¹²⁷ As the 19th century progressed, so the number of married ministers grew, resulting in an increase in the financial burden for circuits and their local societies. As noted in Chapter 2, from the 1840s to the 1880s there was a steady decline in the number of unmarried preachers appointed to stations in Hertfordshire circuits. Unfortunately, this rise in ministerial costs coincided with a steady decline in the membership of these circuits over the 20 years from 1875 to 1895, so that the increasing burden of funding the travelling preachers was being borne by fewer members.

In 1850, the minister responsible for the societies at Furneux Pelham and Anstey was paid a quarterly salary of £12 7s, with an additional '3 children's allowance' of £4 16s. The society at Furneux Pelham contributed on average £1 8s 5d a quarter towards these costs and the members at the newly formed Anstey society contributed an average of 14s 10d.¹²⁸ These 'quarterage' payments were clearly insufficient to fund the travelling preacher's salary and allowances so it became necessary to seek income from other sources. A charge was often made for copies of the circuit plan (2d each in the case of Baldock and Saffron Walden) and a fee had to be paid for a baptism. In 1905 in the Saffron Walden circuit, 'magic lantern' and other lectures were held in aid of the Circuit Fund and the Circuit Finance Committee was charged with arranging 'special efforts' for the same purpose. At the August Bank Holiday in 1900, the Baldock Circuit arranged a 'Great Gathering' at Benington.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ In 1849, the highest Connexional salary of £49 8s p.a. was paid to a married preacher and his wife, together with an allowance of £5 4s p.a. for each child under the age of 16. In addition, they were to have the use of a furnished house or rooms, for which they were required to pay 4s p.a.. A single preacher received £20 p.a. in 1849, together with an allowance of £10 p.a. for board, lodgings and subsistence (*The General Minutes of the Conferences of the Primitive Methodist Connexion – Consolidated in the year 1849* (Thomas Holliday: London, 1850), pp.87-88). By 1912 the annual salary for 'ministers on the approved list' had risen to £100, in addition to which a married minister was 'allowed two shillings per week for each of his children under eighteen years of age born during his ministry' (*The General Rules of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Rules 428 and 429). For a fuller discussion of travelling preachers' salaries and expenses see Pocock, 'The Origins, Development and Significance of the Circuit in Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism in England 1740-1914', pp.155-162; Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', pp.9127-128; Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, pp.114 and 223; and Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II*, pp.252-254.

¹²⁸ Accounts, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1850-1870, D/NM 3/3/1, ERO.

¹²⁹ Baldock Circuit Plan 1875 (Apr-Jun), NM6/47; Baldock Circuit Plan 1900 (Jul-Sep), NM6/48; Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1889 (Oct-Dec), NM9/13, HALS; Saffron Walden Circuit Plans 1905 (Jan-Mar) and 1909 (Apr-Jun), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism. A copy of a plan for the Baldock Circuit in 1892 (Jul-Sep) is in the possession of the author. The Saffron Walden circuit charged 7d for a baptism at

Another important income stream came from the chapel collections for the Circuit Fund, and such Sunday collections feature with increasing regularity on circuit plans. In the Saffron Walden circuit in 1889 these were held at most places every two weeks but by 1909 they took place on three weeks out of every four. At Baldock in 1892, Circuit Fund collections were once a month; in 1898 they were every two weeks and by 1901 almost every society in the circuit was holding such a collection on a weekly basis.¹³⁰ The circuit's camp meetings, whose original purpose was to win more converts to the cause, now provided an opportunity for several collections to be taken to which people other than local society members might have contributed. By the 1880s, these collections also came to be appropriated for circuit funds 'for the support of the ministry'.¹³¹

Lack of income for a circuit could clearly hamper the growth of the organisation. John Guy, who was in his second year of ministry at Hertford in 1846 and was seeking to expand the missionary work of the Connexion in other locations, had been twice to Bishops Stortford and reported that 'if we had a third preacher we could mission many villages between this town and Ware. Several collectors have entered into labour with a view to obtaining the salary of another missionary'.¹³² It is also clear that paying for the itinerant preachers was the first priority for the circuit. In 1863, when there were three ministers stationed to the Saffron Walden Circuit, the Quarterly Meeting resolved 'that a strenuous effort be made without delay throughout our circuit, in public and in private, in our societies and our friends, in soliciting donations to enable us to pay our Ministers their salaries.' It was also requested that 'letters be written to the places that have not sent the extra collections telling them to forward it immediately'.¹³³ The circuit's support for its ministers was also shown in other ways. Rev Joseph Knipe was clearly held in high regard by the Stansted Branch since, in 1868, the Quarterly Meeting decided that he should 'be allowed £1 a

the chapel or 1s at the house in 1889 and the same fees were still being charged in 1909. In the Baldock circuit in 1875, the fee for a baptism certificate was 6d, although this had risen to 7d by 1892.

¹³⁰ Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1889 (Oct-Dec), NM9/13, HALS; Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1909 (Apr-Jun), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism; Baldock Circuit Plans 1898 (Oct-Dec) and 1901 (Apr-Jun), NM6/48, HALS; Baldock Circuit Plan 1892 (Jul-Sep) (author's copy).

¹³¹ Baldock Circuit Plans 1899 (Jul-Sep) and 1900 (Jul-Sep), NM6/48, HALS.

¹³² *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1846, p.159.

¹³³ Meeting held on 15 June 1863, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1, ERO.

quarter extra for board and lodgings and ten shillings extra salary' and the following year, prior to his departure to Bedford, it was decided that 'a Tea Meeting be held at Stansted before J Knipe leave the Branch the profits of which with any donations from any other part of the Branch be presented to him as a small token of esteem for his labours with us on this Branch'.¹³⁴

The last occasion when three ministers were appointed to the Saffron Walden Circuit was in 1876, at which time the circuit had a membership of 545. However, by the end of the 19th century, the membership had declined by over a third to 344 and, as a result, the circuit was clearly finding the costs of two ministers too much to bear. A Special Circuit Committee Meeting in 1898 resolved to send a letter to Conference appealing against the stationing of a second minister 'simply on the ground of an absolute inability to support him'. The letter set out the circuit's case:

Our average ordinary income is about £30 per quarter. We receive a grant from the Missionary Committee of £8 per quarter. Although we pay our ministers the minimum salary, our average deficiency is £10 per quarter. Our deficiency in March of this year was £12 16s 5d and our deficiency for current quarter is £15. Our station is situated in one of the poorest agricultural districts and our societies and congregations are composed almost exclusively of the labouring classes whose wages are about 10s per week.¹³⁵

The letter explained that 'under these circumstances we cannot hope for any great financial improvement' and that

to impose any further burdens upon us will we fear alienate a number of our most loyal officials, who have for many years financially as in other respects borne the burden and the heat of the day. We have no desire to evade our responsibility but

¹³⁴ Meeting held on 7 December 1868, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

¹³⁵ Meeting held on 18 June 1898, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO.

should rejoice if we were in a position to receive a second married man but under present circumstances it is impossible to do so. In all sincerity we assure you that if you confirm your present appointment it will speedily result in disaster and probably irretrievable ruin. Such an issue we feel assured would cause pain to you as well as bring sorrow to ourselves.

Unfortunately for the circuit, Conference did not agree to its request and the Saffron Walden circuit continued to have two ministers appointed to it until 1916. It would appear, however, that the Conference decision had been the right one since, in 1909, the circuit's yearly report to the March Quarterly Meeting 'showed the Circuit to be moderately prosperous'. However, this seems to have been more a reference to the fact that there had been a small increase in the number of members, even allowing for deaths and removals, than to the fact that the figures for the last quarter of the financial year showed a balance in hand of £1 10s 3d.¹³⁶

Housing

Circuits were required to provide their ministers with 'the use of a furnished house, or furnished rooms'. They also had to 'keep an inventory of the furniture in the houses of its ministers and arrange, when necessary, for a reasonable and economical replenishment thereof'. When a minister moved on, the circuit had 'to inspect the furniture and house occupied by him, to see whether everything pertaining thereto is in a clean and orderly condition'. Any damage 'for which the removing minister is to blame' had to 'be made good at his expense'.¹³⁷

As with salaries, paying for ministers' accommodation was a major expense for the circuit. In 1863 the Quarterly Meeting of the Saffron Walden Circuit resolved 'that special collections be made throughout the station towards furnishing a second minister's house'. In addition, Mr Wallis (one of the ministers) was to 'be requested to see if he can borrow £30 towards furnishing a 2nd Minister's house'. It seems that nothing came of his efforts in this regard since, in 1864, the Quarterly Meeting of the Stansted Branch authorised Mr Wallis 'to look

¹³⁶ Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1909 (Apr-Jun), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism.

¹³⁷ *The General Rules of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Rules 241, 266 and 429.

out for a more convenient house at a rental of not more than £12 per annum, instead of only occupying part of the present one which is very inconvenient'. Two years later, when Mr Wallis was preparing to move to a new station, the Quarterly Meeting decided that he should leave 'the goods which he has himself bought into the house to the value of £3 10s and that we raise the amount without interfering with the ordinary collections etc and forward the same to him'. The house was to be inspected 'before the arrival of the new preacher [to] see that it is ready for his reception'.¹³⁸

Debt

Debt was a constant feature of circuit accounts throughout the 19th century. In 1864 the Stansted Branch Quarterly Meeting decided 'that tea meetings be held at all the places on the Branch where convenient, the proceeds to go to reduce the Circuit debt' and in 1878 the Saffron Walden Quarterly Meeting resolved 'that we apply to the Needy Circuit Fund for help next year'. Nevertheless, despite the obviously poor state of its finances, the Quarterly Meeting also agreed to allow steps to be taken 'towards the erection of a chapel at Patmore Heath' provided the cost did not exceed £60. This can only be seen as a triumph of faith over adversity. Three years later, the circuit finances were still clearly in a precarious state: the circuit's annual report to the London District Meeting in 1880 noted that the half year deficit amounted to 'more than the Superintendent's salary'. The situation was not helped by the fact that, in the following year, the Connexional grant from the Needy Circuit Fund was reduced by £2 12s a quarter. As a result, the Quarterly Meeting decided that the sum of £1 12s that had been collected as 'Missionary Money' should be retained and used instead for circuit funds.¹³⁹

Circuit financial difficulties continued into the early 20th century. The collections made at camp meetings in the Baldock circuit during the summer months of 1900 were 'for the present quarter's deficiency'. At Saffron Walden the total expenditure for the last quarter of

¹³⁸ Meeting held on 15 June 1863, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1; Meetings held on 6 June 1864 and June 1866, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

¹³⁹ Meeting held on 15 September 1864, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5; Meetings held on 11 March 1878 and 9 December 1878, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860 – 1885, D/NM 3/1/1; Annual reports, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1889, D/NM 3/5/4, ERO.

1904 had been £142 19s 2d, whereas the total of the local society assessments had only yielded £134 5s. As a result the circuit was overdrawn by £6 0s 4d, with unpaid accounts amounting to £33 12s 8d. In some years, the circuit was forced to budget for a loss. The Circuit Plan for the second quarter of 1909 set out the local society assessments followed by the warning that

the above is only the Minimum which each society is expected to try and raise, and it is not sufficient to meet the outgo, so it is hoped that all the places will endeavour to send a little more, rather than have to make many special efforts.¹⁴⁰

However, it would seem that some societies were slower than others in paying their dues. In 1926, the Quarterly Meeting felt it necessary to write to the society at Furneux Pelham to request 'more support for the Circuit Fund'; since the early years of the century, the Furneux Pelham contribution had been £1 12s 8d, which was only about half of its usual assessment. By 1926, the annual contributions had fallen to £1, which is what must have prompted the Quarterly Meeting, when approving the nominations for new trustees at Furneux Pelham, to ask the newly formed trust to 'contribute 4s to defray deficiency' in the circuit fund. Not all was doom and gloom, however. In 1930, in a demonstration of true 'connexional' spirit, the society at Trowley Bottom donated £1 to the 'St Albans Debt reduction', even though they belonged to the Luton II Circuit.¹⁴¹

Financing the Connexion

In addition to their circuit assessments, local societies also had to pay their Connexional dues. The Connexional funds to which members were expected to contribute were many and varied, and also grew in number over time. The Connexion's Rules stipulated that 'annual missionary services shall be held and collections made in support of Missions at every place where we have a congregation' and requested that 'where it is practicable each circuit shall hold two missionary meetings at each place, one for the General Fund, and one

¹⁴⁰ Baldock Circuit Plan 1900 (Jul-Sep), NM6/48, HALS; Saffron Walden Circuit Plans 1905 (Jan-Mar) and 1909 (Apr-Jun), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism.

¹⁴¹ Meetings held on March 1926 and 9 March 1929, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1925-1931, D/NM 3/1/4, ERO; Furneux Pelham trust treasurer's accounts, 1908-1949, NM9H/1; Trowley Bottom trust accounts 1921-1960, NM2K/1, HALS.

for the African Fund'. The difficulties which societies faced in paying these Connexional levies has already been noted (see footnote 22): in 1882 the contribution to the Connexional Fund was 3d per member and for small societies like Furneux Pelham and Dassells this would have accounted for between 2% and 3% of their total outgoings for the year.¹⁴²

There are several references in trust accounts to payments to the Legal Defence Fund and the Sustentation Fund. Although in 1925 Quarterly Meeting instructed that 'one collection be taken at each society of the Sustentation Fund', the society at Dassells appears never to have contributed to this fund, although it contributed 1s a year to the Legal Defence Fund. Between 1921 and 1932, Furneux Pelham paid an average of 9s 9d a year to the Sustentation Fund and 1s 6d per year to the Legal Defence Fund. At Trowley Bottom, the society recorded just two payments to the Sustentation Fund between 1921 and 1932 and none to the Legal Defence Fund, although it did make a contribution of £3 to the Local Preachers' Aid Fund in 1932.¹⁴³

Conclusions

The financial demands placed on local societies were many and varied and several found it a struggle to fulfil their obligations. By Connexional Rule 346, the trustees of 'debtless chapels or those in easy circumstances' were asked 'to assist the Quarterly Meetings of the station to which they belong in supporting the ministry and defraying other necessary expenditure'. However, given the state of most chapel finances in Hertfordshire, it seems unlikely that there was ever a circumstance where this rule applied. As Hempton has noted, it was 'the

¹⁴² Kendall mentions the Aged and Necessitous Local Preachers Fund, Thanksgiving Fund, College Extension Fund, Superannuated Ministers', Widows' and Orphan's Fund, Missionary Jubilee Fund and Sustentation Fund (Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, pp. 122, 129, 130 and 139) and the Connexion's Rules include references to the General Chapel Fund, Legal Defence Fund, Local Preachers' Aid Fund, Connexional Fund, Sunday School Union Fund, African Missionary Fund, Chapel Loan Fund, Church Extension Fund, Equalisation Fund and Furnishing Fund (*The General Rules of the Primitive Methodist Church*, p.232 and Rule 649), although individual societies would not have been expected to contribute to all of these. Chapel schedules, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1884, D/NM 3/5/4; ERO; Dassells trust treasurer's accounts 1877-1950, NM9G/1; Furneux Pelham trust treasurer's accounts, 1908-1949, NM9H/1, HALS.

¹⁴³ Dassells trust treasurer's accounts 1877-1950, NM9G/1; Furneux Pelham trust treasurer's accounts, 1908-1949, NM9H/1; Trowley Bottom trust accounts 1921-1960, NM2K/1, HALS; Meeting held on 5 September 1925, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1925-1931, D/NM 3/1/4, ERO.

unpleasant reality that Methodist fund-raising always fell short of Methodist aspirations'.¹⁴⁴ Because the need for money was constant, the regularity of giving by means of class and ticket money, supplemented by numerous collections for particular causes, should have ensured a continual supply of funds. However, this was not always the case given the inability of many poor members to pay their dues as frequently as they should. Nevertheless, the fundraising potential of liturgical seasons, various anniversaries, tea meetings, bazaars and other activities 'ensured that there was a continuous round of these events during the course of a year'.¹⁴⁵ As Hempton has observed, this was money that was both raised and spent in the same geographic location, whether the immediate environs of the local society or the slightly wider boundaries of the circuit.¹⁴⁶

Although this chapter has focused on financial matters, the evidence has disclosed that the reality is about much more than simply the importance of such matters to a local society. The financial records of chapels and circuits also serve to demonstrate, particularly by the end of the nineteenth century and on into the early twentieth century, the social standing of Primitive Methodism in the places that it served. There was considerable collaboration between Primitive Methodists and other nonconformists, particularly Wesleyan Methodists. This was manifested in the frequent sharing of buildings, especially in connection with chapel building projects, and the local nonconformist ministers would often be found taking part in stone laying and opening ceremonies. When societies were fund-raising, it was certainly not uncommon for those ministers to be seen offering mutual support and encouragement by their attendance. The importance of a Primitive Methodist society to a local community could also be measured by the presence at bazaars of local politicians, such as mayors and other councillors, as well as the local gentry. Similarly, the increasing coverage in the local press of the activities of Primitive Methodist societies also serves to illuminate the growing social standing of the movement.

¹⁴⁴ David Hempton, *Methodism – Empire of the spirit*, p.111; *The General Rules of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Rule 346.

¹⁴⁵ Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', p.272.

¹⁴⁶ Hempton, *Methodism – Empire of the spirit*, p.128.

Moreover, as Kendall put it, 'finance is not everything'.¹⁴⁷ Local societies combined their fundraising with fellowship and a sense of belonging: the constant need for financial resources enabled a large proportion of the membership to become involved in the various fundraising activities, giving them a sense of achievement and purpose, as well as providing a means for the society and its activities to become an integral part of the local community. In all of this, money was the servant of the cause and not the master, as the various constituent parts of the Connexion were able to make use of the funds that were raised for missionary purposes, both to sustain the cause and to aid its growth.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II, p.532.

¹⁴⁸ As Hempton has commented, 'money was merely the servant of mission and not a commodity to be desired for the benefit of the individual' (Hempton, *Methodism – Empire of the spirit*, p.128).

Chapter 6

Anstey – the rise and demise of a Primitive Methodist local community

Introduction

Previous chapters have considered various aspects of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire from a county-wide perspective. At this level, the analysis has enabled an understanding of the wider picture of the movement and its place in Hertfordshire society. However, as Reay has argued, 'it is impossible to understand society and culture without examining local contexts', concluding that 'it is difficult to think of any fraction of the historical process which is not sited in the locality'.¹ It is unsurprising, therefore, that in recent years there have been a growing number of studies focusing on Primitive Methodist communities.² Ambler noted that Kendall's *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* 'is built up from a sound understanding of the significance of the local communities in which the Primitive Methodists lived and worshipped' and Tiller observed in her study of Oxfordshire that the 'particular nature of Primitive Methodism' was epitomised by a 'diverse, locally rooted and supported, and sometimes diffuse presence'.³ Hempton has also argued that 'Methodist histories which ignore Methodist people are not worth the paper

¹ Barry Reay, *Microhistories: Demography, Society and Culture in Rural England, 1800-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.262.

² For example: James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society in South Lindsey 1825-1875* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp.220-258; Rodney Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists & Reformers: Primitive Methodism and rural society, South Lincolnshire 1817-1875* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1989); Delia Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire' (PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2000); Stephen Hatcher, 'Origin and Expansion of Primitive Methodism in the Hull Circuit' (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 1993).

³ Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists & Reformers*, p.1; Kate Tiller, 'The desert begins to bloom - Oxfordshire and Primitive Methodism, 1824-1860', *Oxoniensia*, Vol. LXXI, Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society, 2006, p.85. Tiller's local study of Oxfordshire assesses the part Primitive Methodism had come to play in the county by the middle of the 19th century from a variety of perspectives, including numbers, location, settlement type, social class of adherents, chapel building and degree of opposition, and she uses the findings of her study to compare the situation in Oxfordshire with the national pattern of development of Primitive Methodism during the period in question.

they are written on'.⁴ Thus, to complete the historical picture, and in order to test whether and to what extent these county-wide perspectives hold true at the local level, it is necessary to look at Primitive Methodism in a local context. This is particularly important for an organisation that was founded essentially on local communities and one of whose strengths lay in its grass roots membership.

Having regard to the way in which the Primitive Methodist Connexion was organised, the appropriate local level context for investigation is that of the local society. The selection of Anstey as a society for further study was prompted initially by the high number of references to this location in the analysis of the surviving baptismal registers from the Saffron Walden Circuit referred to in Chapter 4. Moreover, the formation and the cessation of the local society at Anstey are both documented with some accuracy, so that it is possible to trace exactly the rise and demise of this rural Primitive Methodist society. This chapter will focus on the Primitive Methodists of Anstey by considering some key characteristics of this local society. It will be argued that the Primitive Methodists in Anstey were a community of neighbours, whose members offered each other mutual support and encouragement particularly in response to the socio-economic changes that took place in this part of Hertfordshire in the second half of the nineteenth century. The chapel was at the heart of this local society but this in turn resulted in inescapable financial responsibilities. Furthermore, the local society did not exist on its own, but was part of, and was inevitably affected by, the wider Primitive Methodist Connexion. This was most noticeable by the extent of the role and influence of the circuit in the affairs of the local society. This study of the local society at Anstey will also show, in a rural context, how the Connexion drew its support from the working class and the poorer members of society and how it prospered in response to economic hardship.

An introduction to Anstey

Anstey is located in north-east Hertfordshire, close to the county boundary with Essex (see Map 2). It is a small parish, covering an area of 2,170 acres, and, in the classification system

⁴ David Hempton, *Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion c.1750-1900* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.198.

used in Chapter 3, was an open parish.⁵ In 1851, Anstey had a population of 465. There were seven farmers, four shopkeepers, two shoemakers, two beer retailers, together with a carpenter, a wheelwright, a blacksmith and a miller.⁶ By 1890, seemingly, very little had changed. Now, Anstey had amongst its population six farmers and one farm bailiff, two shopkeepers, a butcher, a baker, five beer retailers (one of whom was also a painter), together with a carpenter, a blacksmith and a miller. In the 1891 census, Anstey had a population of 396.⁷

During the second half of the nineteenth century the population of Hertfordshire grew by nearly 40%; however, the Registration District of Royston (which included Anstey parish) was the only such District in the county to suffer a decline in population (of 26%) between 1851 and 1901. All the parishes in this District, with the sole exception of Little Horstead (to the south of Anstey), experienced a loss of population during this period of anywhere between 3% and 44%. Anstey recorded a loss of 22%, having suffered a gradual decline in population over the fifty year period, falling to 364 in 1901. Moore has suggested that this decline in population was 'in response to agricultural depression and the attraction of alternative employment and social opportunities elsewhere'.⁸ Agriculture was certainly the mainstay of the economy in this part of Hertfordshire in the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1851, of the men aged 20 and over in the Royston Registration District, 53% were agriculture workers and, by 1881, such workers made up over 69% of those employed in the parish of Anstey.⁹

⁵ *Kelly's Directory for Essex, Hertford and Middlesex*, 4th edition (London: Kelly and Co. Ltd, 1874). There were five principal landowners in 1874, although only one of them lived in the parish.

⁶ Census Returns of England and Wales, 1851, H.O.107/1707, The National Archives (TNA), London; *Post Office Directory of Essex, Herts, Kent, Middlesex, Surrey and Sussex [1855 Part 1: Counties & Localities]*, 3rd Edition (London: Kelly and Co., 1855), p.180.

⁷ *Kelly's Directory of Hertfordshire, 1890* (London: Kelly and Co. Ltd, 1890), pp.697-698; Census Returns of England and Wales, 1891, RG12/1100, TNA.

⁸ Julie Moore, 'The impact of agricultural depression and land ownership change on the county of Hertfordshire, c.1870-1914' (PhD thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2010), Table 2.2 p.51, p.52 and Appendix 6B p.263.

⁹ Census of England and Wales, 1851: Population Tables, Ages, Civil Condition, Occupations and Birth-Place of the People; Census of England and Wales, 1881: Tables: Ages, Condition as to Marriage, Occupations and Birthplaces of people, "Occupations of Males and Females".

It was in this context that the second half of the nineteenth century saw the formation, flowering and, ultimately, the disappearance of a Primitive Methodist community at Anstey.

In the beginning

Saffron Walden was first missioned in 1839; growth was such that it was made a separate circuit in 1850. In the surrounding settlements on the borders of Hertfordshire and Essex the new circuit 'pushed forward the good work, and made considerable progress both in erecting places of worship and in bringing sinners into the fold of Christ'.¹⁰ One of those places was Anstey, where, until 1850, the only place of worship was the parish church. William Upton observed that Anstey was 'a thinly populated, ignorant neighbourhood. Necessitous but very inaccessible'.¹¹ It was here that a new society was formed, probably in July 1850, as Anstey is included in the Saffron Walden circuit plan for the April-July quarter of 1850 and first features in the circuit accounts for the July-September quarter of 1850.

At its inception, the society consisted of just eight members 'on trial'. Initially, the membership of the society grew rapidly; by the end of 1850, the original eight 'trial' members had become full members and had been joined by a further 32 members on trial. There can be no doubt that the new Primitive Methodist society made quite an impact in the parish right from the start. A membership of 40 (as at December 1850) represented almost 10% of the population of the parish at this time. Moreover, the 'official' number of members does not give the full picture since, in the 1851 Religious Census, the Primitive Methodist entry for Anstey records that the average attendance was 50 for the morning service and 100 in the afternoon. A note on the census return supplied by Joseph Kendall, the Primitive Methodist minister from Saffron Walden, indicates that 'I was not, nor could not possibly be at this place today but this is the average number that assembles every Sunday'. As average figures, they are clearly rounded, conveniently perhaps so as to exceed the seemingly more precise attendance figures recorded for the parish church of 44 in the

¹⁰ Jaqueline Cooper, 'A fine field for usefulness: Primitive Methodism in the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1839-1900', *Family & Community History*, 5.1 (2002) 45-57 (p.45); John Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, from its Origin to the Conference of 1860, the First Jubilee Year of the Connexion*, revised and enlarged by James Macpherson (London: John Dickenson, 1880), p. 518.

¹¹ William Upton's Survey 1847-48, as referred to in Judith Burg (ed.), *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851* (Hertfordshire Record Publications Vol. 11, Hertfordshire Record Society, 1995), p.6.

morning and 95 in the afternoon provided by the rector, Rev George Porter. Moreover, it is interesting to note that both church and chapel had congregations of very similar size.¹² Nevertheless, in a parish where the population numbered only 465 in 1851, the figures returned in the Religious Census indicate that almost 22% were present at the Primitive Methodists' highest attended service (compared to an attendance index of just 0.5% for the Royston Registration District as a whole). Furthermore, not only did attendances at the Primitive Methodist meetings appear to exceed those of the parish church for both Sunday services but the Primitive Methodist meeting place was full to capacity in the afternoon whereas the parish church was not even a third full. This supports the conclusion reached in Chapter 3 that open parishes in Hertfordshire were more likely to be receptive to the establishment of nonconformist congregations.¹³

It also seems clear that the number of members continued to grow in the early years; the December 1865 Quarterly Meeting decided 'that a second class be formed at Anstey and that Bro G Whyman be requested to be the Leader'.¹⁴ Even so, establishing a new Primitive Methodist society was not without incident. In October 1851, Aaron Smith of Anstey was charged with assaulting Elizabeth Bysouth who, according to a newspaper report,

belongs to the body of Primitive Methodists, who meet for worship in a cottage, at Anstey; and while so engaged, Smith and others of his class, whose chief devotions are paid at the shrine of "John Barleycorn", take every opportunity of annoying and insulting them; and in this case, the complainant was struck, and knocked down by Smith in the most brutal manner.¹⁵

¹² Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1850 (Apr-Jul), Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1846-1859, D/NM 3/5/1; Accounts, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1850-1870, D/NM 3/3/1, Essex Record Office (ERO); *Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship, England and Wales, Report and Tables*, LXXXIX (1852-3) as referred to in Burg, Judith (ed.), *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851* (Hertfordshire Record Publications Vol. 11, Hertfordshire Record Society, 1995), pp. 121-122.

¹³ Census of Great Britain 1851, Religious Worship in England and Wales, Report and Tables, 1853, H.O.129/140-1-4-17(6), TNA; Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1846-1878, D/NM 3/5/1, ERO; see also Chapter 3, Table 3.11.

¹⁴ Meeting held in December 1865, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stanstead Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO; Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1868 (Jul-Sep), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism. Brother Whyman is noted on the 1868 circuit plan as being a local preacher. He is listed in sixth place out of twelve named Branch local preachers, indicating some degree of seniority in the role.

¹⁵ *Cambridge Independent Press*, 23 October 1851.

Smith, who did not attend the court, was found guilty and fined in his absence 10 shillings, with 13s 6d costs.¹⁶

The chapel

As was noted in Chapter 3, the provision of a meeting place was essential both to enable new societies to become established and for them to develop as a key part of the local community. This was certainly true in the case of the formation and early growth of the society at Anstey. In 1851, meetings of the Anstey society took place in 'a preaching room' which had 40 'free' seats and standing space for another 60 people. In reality, this preaching room was a converted agricultural building which was located in the northern part of the parish at Cheapside (see Map 2 and the photographs in Appendix 9).¹⁷ 'A barn and premises in the occupation of William Wisby and others' in Anstey parish was certified as a place for religious worship for 'Protestant Dissenters' on 15 May 1852. The registration was certified by Samuel Nicklin who was a Primitive Methodist minister stationed at Saffron Walden. It is not unreasonable to assume, therefore, that this barn and premises was the preaching room at Cheapside, although there is no indication as to how the Primitive Methodist community was able to acquire these premises.¹⁸

It is clear that the chapel was the focus of the community right from the start. When the local society was first formed, services were held at 10.30am and 2pm every Sunday; there was also a fortnightly week night meeting on Mondays at 7.30pm.¹⁹ By 1868, there were three services every Sunday, at 11am, 2.30pm and 6pm, as well as a fortnightly weekday meeting on Tuesdays at 7pm; this demonstrates the growth that the society had made since 1850. However, the converse was true some twenty years later as, in 1889, there were only two services each Sunday, at 11am and 2.30pm, although the fortnightly weekday meeting still survived, being held on Mondays at 7pm. In 1868, usually two of the three Sunday

¹⁶ *Cambridge Chronicle and University Journal*, 18 October 1851.

¹⁷ Census of Religious Worship 1851, as referred to in Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851*, p.121.

¹⁸ William Urwick, 'Nonconformity in Herts.' (London: Hazell, Watson, and Viney, Limited, 1884), p.846; William Leary, *Directory of Primitive Methodist Ministers & their Circuits* (Loughborough: Teamprint, 1990), p.152.

¹⁹ Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851*, p.121; Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1850 (Apr-Jul), Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, D/NM 3/5/1, ERO.

services were taken by the same preacher although occasionally the same person had responsibility for all three services. This provided the society with a variety of preachers, in keeping with the Primitive Methodist tradition, although the great majority were local preachers. Of the 39 Sunday services on the quarterly plan for July-September 1868, an ordained minister was present for only two and during this quarter Anstey's pulpit was filled by twenty different local preachers.²⁰ Anstey's own local preacher at this time, George Whyman, was planned for only one Sunday evening and two weeknight meetings, which once again demonstrates that local preachers were appointed by, and were required to serve the whole of, the circuit and not just their own chapel. It seems that the minister used the fortnightly weekday meeting as his opportunity to visit Anstey, as he was present at three of six such meetings in this quarter. By 1889, the two Sunday services were always taken by the same preacher. There were 26 Sunday appointments on the October-December quarterly plan for this year, and 25 of them were filled by ten different local preachers. David Bysouth, the only local preacher from Anstey on the October-December quarterly plan, had only two appointments at Anstey. As in 1868, the minister reserved his visits for the fortnightly weekday meeting, taking three of the seven meetings in this quarter.²¹ As Ambler has noted, the attendance of travelling preachers at these weekday meetings enabled them to maintain 'contact with meetings of local officials and the weekly class meetings of the local societies which were the spiritual heart of the Primitive Methodist connexion'.²²

Significant effort was expended on maintaining the property as the focus of the worshipping community, ensuring that it was fit for purpose as the society grew in numbers. Originally, the building had a brick floor and a thatched roof. Although it was eventually supplied with electricity, it was never provided with water or foul drainage and had only a stand-pipe at the roadside for water supply. Over time, improvements were made to the building: a platform was built at the north end to take the communion table, the interior walls were

²⁰ This is consistent with the figures noted in Chapter 2 for the Saffron Walden Circuit which show that 92% of appointments were filled by local preachers, with 60% of weeknight meetings being conducted by travelling preachers.

²¹ Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1868 (Jul-Sep), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism; Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1889 (Oct-Dec), NM9/13, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS).

²² Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists & Reformers*, p.44.

panelled in dark wood, the thatched roof was removed and replaced with an insulated ceiling covered with corrugated iron. In about 1885, an entrance porch with a gabled roof was built and earth closets were constructed. The ground to the north was used for Sunday School meetings and it was reported that, in the summer, the congregation spilled out into the field for al-fresco services.²³

The Connexion regarded Sunday Schools as an important part of its mission and evangelism, not just for religious purposes but also as places where writing and reading could be taught, and so it was at Anstey.²⁴ As the analysis of the membership of the Primitive Methodists at Anstey has shown, children were a very important part of the local society. Not only were they 'valued members of the community' but, as the 'rising generation', they had a significant role to play in the future existence of the society.²⁵ Sunday School Anniversaries were held in June and in the mid-1860s there were between 20 and 40 scholars.²⁶ This would suggest that the Sunday School at Anstey was attracting a good number of children, as the ratio of scholars to adult members was about 60% compared to a national figure of 2%.²⁷ The relative prosperity of the Primitive Methodist Sunday School may also be a reflection of the fact that the national school in Anstey, which had been built in 1853 to accommodate 70 children, was clearly inadequate.²⁸ However, it seems that the fortunes of the Anstey Sunday School fluctuated over the years. There is a reference to its 're-

²³ The description of the chapel building at Anstey is taken from: Jenny and Gus Goymour, 'The Cabin Past and Present', in *Anstey Chapel – The First 100 Years 1903-2003*, ed. by Steve and Pam Blackaby (Anstey: Chapel Trustees, 2003), pp. 42-45 (pp.42, 44 and 45); and Tom Doig, 'Nonconformity and the building of the chapel at Anstey', in *Anstey Chapel – The First 100 Years 1903-2003*, pp. 9-17 (p.10). The mention of 'al-fresco' services is very probably a reference to the outdoor camp meetings that were regularly held by Primitive Methodists (see footnotes 58 and 59).

²⁴ H. B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II (London: Robert Bryant, c. 1905), p.229.

²⁵ Julia Stewart Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion: Its Background and Early History* (Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press Ltd, 1984), p.160.

²⁶ Meetings held on 7 June 1861 and 9 March 1862, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1; Meeting held on 7 March 1864, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5; Saffron Walden Circuit report to London District Meeting, 16 March 1863; Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit report to the London District Meeting, 7 March 1864, Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1869, D/NM 3/5/2, ERO.

²⁷ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1863, p.488.

²⁸ *Kelly's Directory of Hertfordshire, 1890*, p.698; *Hertfordshire Mercury*, 29 June 1872. The Buntingford Poor Law Union, having decreed that places for 74 pupils were required in Anstey, considered that the existing school needed to be 'made efficient by providing more desks and a suitable gallery and appointing a Certified Teacher'.

establishment' in 1863 but it seems that this did not happen until 1864.²⁹ However, the extent to which this 'second coming' could be sustained must be questioned as the March 1867 Stansted Branch Report noted that there were 'no schools at present' and the March 1868 Quarterly Meeting resolved that 'the friends at Anstey have permission to commence a Sunday School, and be advised to do so'.³⁰ This third attempt must have been successful, however, since it would appear that the Sunday School remained in existence until the society ceased to meet.³¹

Some two years after the 1885 improvements, it would seem that there was a problem with the chapel that prevented it from being used for services. The Quarterly Meeting in March 1887 decided that 'we plan Open Air Services at Anstey on and after the 3rd Sunday in April, until the chapel is repaired', although nothing is said as to the nature of the defect. Moreover, no other mention is made of the matter in the minutes, so it must be assumed that repairs were satisfactorily effected.³²

The improvements to the building also resulted in an increase in the number of sittings. In 1890, the chapel is recorded as having 80 sittings, which is double the number mentioned in the 1851 census.³³ However, the chapel was never registered for marriage ceremonies, nor did it have a burial ground. Consequently, marriages and burials of Primitive Methodists would have continued to take place at the parish church.³⁴

²⁹ Meetings held on 15 June 1863 and 14 September 1863, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1; Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit report to the London District Meeting, 4 March 1867, Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1869, D/NM 3/5/2, ERO.

³⁰ Meeting held on 2 March 1868, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

³¹ Meeting held on 7 March 1899, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1, ERO. This meeting determined that Mr Wallis, the Saffron Walden minister, was 'to write to Mr G Smith, of Anstey, asking him to pay over the School balance to the Chapel Treasurer, as the Sunday School is now discontinued'.

³² Meeting held on 7 March 1887, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO.

³³ *Kelly's Directory of Hertfordshire, 1890* (London: Kelly and Co. Ltd, 1890), pp.697-698.

³⁴ On line searches of the Anstey parish registers have yet to reveal evidence of the extent of marriages and burials of Primitive Methodist families.

The Primitive Methodist community

It is unfortunate that there are no surviving documents which provide the names of members of the Anstey society. However, there are some other sources which offer a glimpse, albeit a restricted one, of who the Primitive Methodists at Anstey were. The baptism records of the Saffron Walden Circuit, which have already been examined in some detail in Chapter 4, provide an indication over time of those households in the village from which a child was presented for baptism. The first recorded baptism at Anstey took place in 1852 when Sarah Key, whose father Thomas was a labourer, was baptised by William Colley, the third minister in the Saffron Walden circuit at the time. In the 1850s, there were 36 Anstey baptisms, representing 25 households. In the 1860s, the number rose to 40, represented by 24 households, but in the 1870s the number of baptisms dropped significantly to 24 (from ten households), followed by a further fall to 14 (from eight households) in the 1880s. In the 1890s, there were just two baptisms, from two households.³⁵

Over the years, several family names reappear: Barkers (two households); Bentleys (2); Bysouths (2); Cattleys (6); Chappells (3); Coxalls (2); Godfreys (2); Keys (2); Martins (6); Smiths (3) and Whymans (2). Many of these households can be identified in the census returns for Anstey parish. This, in turn, provides information on ages, household sizes and occupations, as well as the general locations within the parish where the families lived. On the assumption that each household remained affiliated thereafter to the Primitive Methodist cause, a wider picture of the local society over time can be obtained. As it is more likely than not that such affiliations were maintained, this is the approach that has been adopted in the analysis that follows.³⁶ Whilst it is tempting, also, to assume that other households with the same family name were likewise associated with the local society, which would give an even broader membership base, there is no evidence in the available records to support such an approach. Accordingly, no such assumption has been made in the following analysis.

³⁵ Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register 1846-1861, NM9/9, Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register 1860-1876, NM9/10, and Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register 1866-1908, NM9/11, HALS.

³⁶ The baptism registers record numerous instances of several children from the same family being baptised over time, which suggests that households did maintain their affiliation with the local society.

Age

Of the 36 households mentioned in the baptismal register in the 1850s, 19 can confidently be identified in the census returns. These returns show that the average age of the head of the household when the baptism took place was 30. In the 1860s and 1870s, the average age of the head of the household rose to 35 but by the 1880s this figure had fallen slightly to 32. Whilst it is unlikely that the newly formed society at Anstey consisted solely of households with children, nevertheless these figures do suggest that, overall, it had a relatively young age profile. Moreover, the evidence indicates that the society was able to maintain this younger age profile throughout the 42 years of its existence. Younger residents of the parish might also have been attracted to the Primitive Methodist cause by the fact that Thomas Bennett, the third minister appointed to the Saffron Walden Circuit in 1850 (who appears most likely to have had responsibility for the Hertfordshire villages), was only 28 years old, as opposed to the resident Anglican rector at that time, Rev George Porter, who was 50.³⁷

There were other reasons why the Primitive Methodist minister might have attracted a greater following, certainly among the lower social classes. George Porter was the son of an Anglican clergyman and was a graduate, and later a fellow, of Christ's College, Cambridge (which held, and still holds, the advowson of the parish of Anstey). Having been ordained as a priest in 1824 in the chapel of Christ's College, he was appointed rector in 1830 and continued to serve in this capacity until his death in November 1867. Thus, George Porter occupied the post of rector throughout the formative years and early development of the Primitive Methodist society at Anstey. Moreover, before his death in 1867, his son, also Rev George Porter (and also a graduate of Christ's College, Cambridge), had been licensed by the Bishop of Rochester to serve as a curate at Anstey, albeit a post which he relinquished the following year. Nevertheless, even after such a short tenure, he was rewarded by the presentation from 'the farmers of Anstey' of a silver inkstand together with 'a pocket Communion Service, purchased with the joint contributions of the rector, Sunday-school

³⁷ Leary, p.19; H.O. 107/1707, p.17, TNA.

teachers, scholars, and other parishioners of Anstey ... as a memorial of the love and esteem of the subscribers'.³⁸

Because the baptismal registers record the age of the person, usually the father, who presented the child for baptism, this figure is likely to stay within the same general range over time. However, a wider view of the age profile of the local society at Anstey can be gained by analysing the census data for the ages of all members of the household, not only at the time of the baptism but also subsequently. Figure 6.1 shows the age profile of the Anstey society as recorded in the four census returns from 1861 to 1891.³⁹

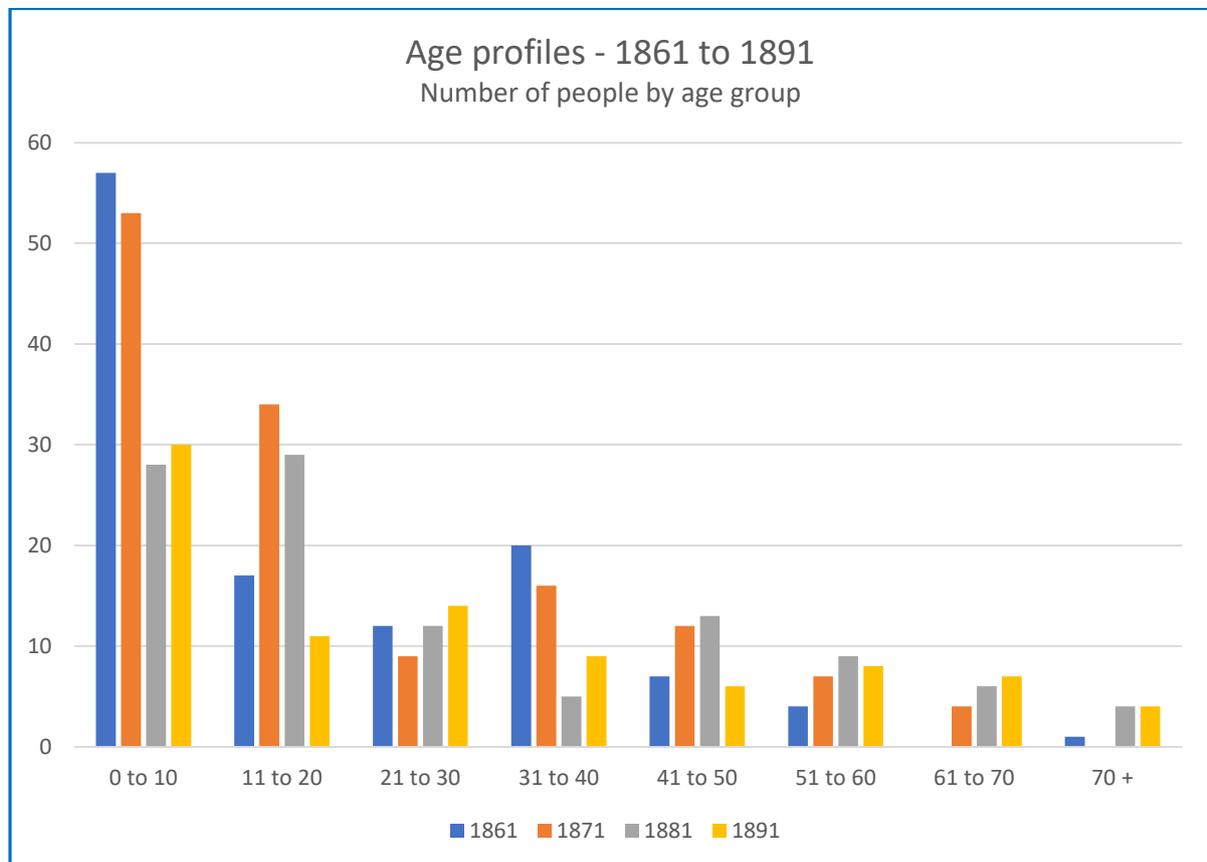


Figure 6.1: Age profiles of members of the Primitive Methodist society at Anstey – 1861 to 1891

³⁸ <<https://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/Documents/acad/enter.html>> [accessed 16 January 2021]; *Herts Guardian, Agricultural Journal, and General Advertiser*, 9 November 1867, p.4; *Hertford Mercury and Reformer*, 5 January 1867, p.3; *Hertford Mercury and Reformer*, 17 October 1868, p3.

³⁹ H.O.107/1707, pp.1-25; R.G.9/811, pp.1-20; R.G.10/1357, pp.1-18; R.G.11/1409, pp.1-17; R.G.12/1100, pp.1-14, TNA.

The general age of members becomes noticeably older over time; the average age of all adults was around 30 in 1861 and 1871, but thereafter rose steadily to 35 in 1881 and 39 in 1891.⁴⁰ This suggests that younger family members were moving away from Anstey, possibly to the growing towns and other nearby parishes in search of employment. However, whilst the overall number of those aged between 31 and 40 fell, the number of households remained relatively constant, indicating that it was particular family members who were moving away from the village rather than complete households. Moreover, the average age of adult females rose sharply from 1881 onwards, from 32 to 40, exceeding the adult male average age in both 1881 and 1891, signifying the loss of older adult males, either because of death or as a result of population movement away from Anstey. There is certainly some evidence of the former.⁴¹

The general ageing of the membership is further compounded by the increase in the numbers in the age groups 51-60, 61-70 and 70+; all of these groups have higher numbers in 1881 and 1891 than they did in 1861 and 1871. The number of children aged up to 10 decreased very considerably after 1871, such that, by 1891, there were only half the number recorded in 1861. The number of teenagers also fell quite markedly from 34 in 1871 to just 11 in 1891. At the same time, numbers in the range 21-30 remain relatively stable, at around 11 or 12 members, across the whole thirty year period.

Household numbers and size

The number of households affiliated with the Primitive Methodist society at Anstey through baptism remained remarkably constant over the thirty years from 1861 to 1891, at around 21, rising to a peak of just 24 in 1871. In 1861, Primitive Methodist households accounted for nearly 22% of all households in the parish; by 1871, this proportion had risen to over 26%. In 1881 and 1891, the proportion reduced slightly but even so Primitive Methodist households still represented more than a quarter of all households in the village.

⁴⁰ Adults have been calculated as those over the age of 10, since after this age most boys had left school and were put to work, usually as agricultural labourers, and most girls were recorded as having an occupation.

⁴¹ In 1881, Ann Coxall was a 44 year old widow and the 1891 census records that Elizabeth Key was a widow aged 67 and Charlotte Bradford was a 76 year old widow [R.G.11/1409, p.7 and R.G.12/1100, pp.2 and 12, TNA].

In 1861 and 1871, the average household size was 5.6 but it fell in 1881 to 5.3 and dropped quite markedly to 4.2 in 1891. Set in the context of a generally ageing membership, these figures would suggest that, whilst the number of households remained relatively stable, their overall size decreased because younger members tended to move away from Anstey. Thomas Coxall and William Martin, both 39 in 1871 and the heads of households, had moved away by 1881, although they remained agricultural labourers. William Chapell must have been one of the early members of the new society at Anstey, as his daughter Emily and son George were baptised in 1855 and 1859 respectively. He was appointed chapel steward at Anstey in December 1867, which was an important and respected senior position in the local society, but by 1881, aged 56, he had moved away, whilst remaining an agricultural labourer. William's son, John, who was only 11 in 1871, had moved to London by 1881 and become a shoemaker.⁴²

The 1891 census records those households living in dwellings with fewer than five rooms. There were 49 such properties in Anstey, of which 11 (22.4%) were occupied by Primitive Methodist families. David and Sarah Bysouth's cottage was one of the smallest, with only two rooms. Little wonder, therefore, that they no longer felt able to provide lodgings for the local visiting Primitive Methodist minister as they had done in 1861 and 1881, when they lived elsewhere in the parish.⁴³

Occupations

As was shown in Chapter 4, in the area of Hertfordshire covered by the Saffron Walden baptismal registers, between 1850 and 1900 there was a general reduction in the numbers of households where the father's occupation fell within RG Class IV, and by the end of the nineteenth century occupations within RG Class V had disappeared completely. On the other hand, the numbers falling within RG Classes II and III increased over this period. The detailed analysis in Chapter 4 demonstrated not only that there was evidence of the upward

⁴² Meeting held on 2 December 1867, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stanstead Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO; Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1868 (Jul-Sep), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism; R.G.11/1410, p.48; R.G.11/459, p.11, TNA.

⁴³ R.G.9/811, p.5; R.G.11/1409, p.15; R.G.12/1100, p.4, TNA.

social mobility over time for Primitive Methodists in East Hertfordshire but also that, for a relatively high proportion of them, there was upward mobility of up to two RG classes. However, this is not the pattern that emerges from a closer study of Anstey baptisms. As can be seen from Table 6.1, in the 1850s, 80% of the fathers who presented their children for baptism at Anstey had occupations that placed them within RG Class IV; moreover, in the 1880s and 1890s, this proportion rose to 100%. None of the fathers fell within RG Class I, and, between the 1850s and the 1890s, only 15.9% had occupations within RG Classes II and III.⁴⁴

In the 1850s, RG Classes II and III accounted for 16% of the baptisms compared to 84% for RG Classes IV and V. By the 1870s, the proportion of RG Classes II and III had risen to 40%, in line with East Hertfordshire generally, with RG Classes IV and V falling to 60%. However, from the 1880s onwards, occupations within RG Classes II and III disappear altogether, whereas they accounted for nearly 29% of all occupations in the 1890s in East Hertfordshire

Table 6.1: Summary of the percentage of occupations by RG Class for Anstey entries in the Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal registers

	1850s		1860s		1870s		1880s		1890s		1850-1899	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
RG Class I (professional)	0		0		0		0		0		0	
RG Class II (intermediate)	2	8.0	2	8.3	2	20.0	0		0		6	8.7
RG Class III (skilled)	2	8.0	1	4.2	2	20.0	0		0		5	7.2
RG Class IV (partly skilled)	20	80.0	20	83.3	6	60.0	8	100	2	100	56	81.2
RG Class V (unskilled)	1	4.0	1	4.2	0		0		0		2	2.9
Total	25		24		10		8		2		69	

as a whole. These figures would suggest that those households within RG Classes II and III moved away from Anstey after 1880, leaving a society where all the fathers of child-rearing

⁴⁴ The figures in Table 1 are derived from an analysis of the Anstey baptisms recorded in the Saffron Walden Baptismal Registers held at HALS.

age had occupations which were exclusively within RG Class IV. Almost all of these were agricultural labourers. As the report of the Saffron Walden Station to the London District Meeting dated 15 March 1880 commented, 'many money-earning members remove from our villages to towns'.⁴⁵

There is also evidence in the census records to support this statement. In 1861, William Strange, a 30 year old thatcher (RG Class II), lived almost next door to the Primitive Methodist chapel. He was almost certainly one of the first members of the new society, as his daughter Cecilia had been baptised there in 1853. However, by 1871 he had moved away. William Baker, a grocer (RG Class II), was also resident in Anstey in 1861 (aged 36) but had also moved away by 1871. George Whyman, who was an agricultural labourer (RG Class IV) in 1861 and 1871, and who was a local preacher on the 1868 plan, when he was aged 27, had become a bricklayer (RG Class III) and moved away by 1881.⁴⁶ David Bysouth, a 35 year old agricultural labourer and local preacher in 1861 had become a brickmaker (RG Class III) and moved by 1871. As noted above, John Chappell had moved to London by 1881 and was a shoemaker (RG Class III).

It is clear, therefore, that the Primitive Methodists in Anstey lost several of their heads of households with higher class occupations as a result of their removal out of the parish. Equally significantly, those who sought to improve their lot by moving to a higher class of occupation also appear to have moved away from Anstey as part of this process of upward social mobility.

Location

The pattern of settlement in Anstey parish is very similar to a number of places in north east Hertfordshire. It consists of a number of scattered groups of dwellings, with no obvious 'village' centre. One group is centred around the parish church, the former castle and Anstey Hall, with two others to the north at The Knoll and Cheapside. Elsewhere, there are a

⁴⁵ Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1870-1879, D/NM 3/5/3, ERO. For further and more detailed discussion of the social structure of Primitive Methodism in the east of Hertfordshire see Chapter 4.

⁴⁶ R.G.9/811, p.12; R.G.10/1357, p.6, TNA; Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1868 (Jul-Sep), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism.

number of 'ends', such as Snow End, Daws End, Pains End and Puttock's End. The remainder of the dwellings in the parish are mainly located on scattered farmsteads. Against this background, despite the fact that none of the dwellings in any of the census schedules from 1861 to 1891 is numbered, it has proved possible to identify the approximate location of the Primitive Methodist households in the parish. They are shown on the Maps 3, 4, 5 and 6.

In 1861, almost all the Primitive Methodist households in the parish were located in the area between Snow End and Cheapside, with a very marked concentration in The Knoll and Cheapside. At Cheapside, four out of five adjacent dwellings were occupied by Primitive Methodist households, and it is likely that the fifth (a Barker family, which is a Primitive Methodist name in Anstey) was similarly occupied. Nearby, at The Knoll, six adjacent properties were occupied by Primitive Methodist households. Together, these two groups of households represented the greatest concentration of Primitive Methodist households in the parish, and it is surely no coincidence that the Primitive Methodist chapel was also situated in Cheapside.

By 1871, whilst the concentration of Primitive Methodist households at The Knoll and Cheapside still remained, it is evident that a number of others were located on farms to the south and west of the parish. At Cave Gate, the Barkers and the Catleys lived next to each other, whilst at Pains End four adjacent properties were occupied by the Whymans, the Smiths and two families of Coxalls. In 1881, the Primitive Methodist presence was maintained at The Knoll (where three adjacent properties were occupied by Primitive Methodist households), Cheapside and Pains End. However, there were fewer households on individual farms, although there was a greater concentration evident in the area around Snow End, where the Barkers, the Stranges, the Chappells and the Bysouths all lived within a few doors of each other. Ten years later, in 1891, the key concentrations in The Knoll, Cheapside and Pains End were still evident, whereas most of the remainder of the Primitive Methodist households in the parish were once again scattered on individual farms.

The concentration of Primitive Methodist households in close proximity to the chapel is particularly evident throughout the decades. It is also clear that many households were living either next door to, or in very close proximity to, other Primitive Methodist

households. Undoubtedly, this would have helped to strengthen the bonds amongst the members of the local society as well as favouring the establishment of class meetings in members' homes. At the same time, the rise in popularity of the Primitive Methodist cause seems to have resulted in some conflict with the Church of England. The parish was split into two factions of almost equal geographic proportions: those living in Cheapside and The Knoll and, to a degree, Daws End, Snow End and Puttocks End, were nonconformist whilst the remainder were, in the main, Established Church.⁴⁷ The relationship between the Primitive Methodists and the Church of England cannot have been helped by the fact that the Rectory was situated just along the road from Cheapside and the Rector would have needed to pass through Cheapside and The Knoll, and past the Primitive Methodist chapel, in order to reach the parish church.

Knight comments that 'in many rural areas Anglican church and Methodist chapel existed almost in parallel', with a 'double allegiance' to both and McLeod considers that the distinction between church and chapel is not always 'clear cut'.⁴⁸ However, that seems not to have been the case generally in Anstey. Although, as already noted, the parish church had to be used for marriages and burials, very little evidence has so far come to light of children of Primitive Methodist families being baptised in the parish church, nor is there evidence of any co-operation or mutual respect when it came to arranging the times of the principal Sunday services. Neither of the two circuit plans that include preaching appointments at Anstey indicate that any sacrament services took place in the chapel: in the absence of such services, it may be that Primitive Methodists in the village would have availed themselves of the sacrament at the parish church, although there is no means of knowing whether or to what extent this may have occurred.

One exception to this general absence of 'double allegiance' in Anstey may be found in Thomas Barker. He had been born in the village around 1807 and in 1851 he was a 'shoemaker, grocer and church [word indecipherable]'. By 1855 he was a 'shopkeeper and

⁴⁷ Doig, p.11.

⁴⁸ Frances Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church and English Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.24-27, 32-34, 62 and 86-88; Hugh McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996), p.39.

parish clerk' and he remained a grocer and the parish clerk all his life.⁴⁹ Thomas was clearly a prominent member of the local community, and in his role as parish clerk he would have been closely involved with all the activities at the parish church. His daughter, Eliza, who was born in 1847, had been christened in Anstey parish church that year.⁵⁰ Yet Thomas also appears to have presented her for baptism at the Primitive Methodist chapel in 1855, when she was nine years old.⁵¹ The date of Eliza's Primitive Methodist baptism suggests that Thomas may have been one of the very early members of the newly formed Primitive Methodist society in Anstey. Elizabeth had two older siblings, Mary and Emma, and a younger brother, Alfred. Emma, at least, was christened at the parish church in 1844, but none was baptised in the Primitive Methodist chapel.⁵² There must, therefore, have been a particular reason why Thomas decided to have Elizabeth baptised there. That reason may, perhaps, be found in the fact that the death of an Eliza Barker occurred in 1857, and that Elizabeth is missing from the 1861 census.⁵³ However, it should be noted that there is no further mention of Thomas in the extant Primitive Methodist records subsequent to this entry in the Saffron Walden baptism register. The reason for this may lie in his appointment as parish clerk which caused him to re-focus his allegiance thereafter on the parish church.

Life as a Primitive Methodist in Anstey

Activities

As was noted in Chapter 2, the Quarterly Meeting of the Circuit tightly regulated the affairs of all the local societies in the circuit.⁵⁴ These meetings fixed the days and times of services, including the weekly evening meeting and the class meetings, as well as the dates for special services and events. In 1866 the class at Anstey was given 'liberty to change their meeting

⁴⁹ *Post Office Directory of Essex, Herts, Kent, Middlesex, Surrey and Sussex [1855 Part 1: Counties & Localities]*, 3rd Edition, p.180; *Kelly's Directory of Hertfordshire, 1894*, p.16; R.G.9/811, p.9; R.G.12/1100 p.7, TNA.

⁵⁰ "England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975" database, FamilySearch, <<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:J3KV-FX3>> [accessed 31 July 2019].

⁵¹ Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register 1846-1861, NM9/9, HALS.

⁵² "England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975," database, FamilySearch, <<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:J74X-25L>> [accessed 31 July 2019].

⁵³ Deaths registered in April, May and June 1857, England and Wales Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915, General Register Office.

⁵⁴ Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1; Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2; Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO. This oversight of local affairs generated more than eighty references to Anstey in the minutes of the quarterly meetings of the Saffron Walden Circuit and the Stanstead Branch between 1860 and 1892.

nights to Thursday' and in 1868 it was decided that 'Anstey ... morning services be appointed at 11 instead of 10¹/₂ o'clock'. The same meeting decreed that the 'Anstey week night meeting be held on the Tuesday instead of Wednesday'.⁵⁵

A missionary meeting was often held in the September quarter and, in 1877, a special Home Missionary meeting was held in December.⁵⁶ The holding of revival meetings, protracted meetings and camp meetings was of particular importance and relevance to the situation at Anstey, particularly in the latter years of the society's existence, when it became increasingly difficult to sustain and grow the membership from within. It is perhaps unfortunate that the minutes of the Saffron Walden Quarterly Meetings are silent as to the preachers who were to take these services and neither of the two extant plans that include Anstey contain any mention of revival services. However, from other circuit plans, there is evidence that the circuit's travelling preachers and its local preachers were involved in such services. Moreover, it would also appear that 'professional revivalists' were also involved.⁵⁷ There was usually one revival meeting and one protracted meeting each year at Anstey. These took place during the Spring or Winter months. Typically, a camp meeting was held once every year, usually between June and October, although between 1878 and 1892 there is only one mention of such a meeting in the Quarterly Meeting minutes.⁵⁸ However, camp meetings generally were very much in decline throughout the Connexion in the second half of the nineteenth century, leading Ambler to comment that the, by now, annual event was 'more a matter of routine than the result of the charismatic movement of the spirit'.⁵⁹ Consequently, the lack of such meetings at Anstey after 1878 is not particularly surprising. As noted in Chapter 2, camp meetings provided a 'recruitment opportunity' to attract new members by drawing public attention to the Connexion and its activities whilst revival meetings served to reinvigorate the enthusiasm of existing members. Thus, the lack of camp

⁵⁵ Meetings held on 3 December 1866 and 2 March 1868, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

⁵⁶ Meeting held on 10 December 1877, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1, ERO.

⁵⁷ Saffron Walden 1905 (Jan-Mar), Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism; Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists & Reformers*, p.74. One of the 'revival' preachers on this plan is referred to as being associated with the Primitive Methodist Mission Van and another is described as a Special Missioner.

⁵⁸ Meeting held on 2 June 1884, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1, ERO.

⁵⁹ Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists & Reformers*, pp.6-7.

meetings at Anstey in the later years of the society's existence would undoubtedly have been a contributing factor to the society's eventual demise; similarly, it seems evident that the annual revival meetings also failed to live up to expectations.

As Ambler has shown, Primitive Methodist societies, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century, had become

a significant part of the social life of the local communities. Their regular cycle of Sunday and week-night services, interspersed with an annual round of special events such as Sunday school and chapel anniversaries, became a well-established part of the social scene in villages.⁶⁰

Fund raising bazaars, tea meetings, public lectures and the provision of entertainment all contributed to the social activities that were common to most village Primitive Methodist societies.⁶¹ Such activities usually generated references in official documents, the occasional publicity leaflet or, much more likely, reports of the events in local newspapers.⁶² However, no such documentary evidence appears to exist so far as Anstey is concerned, apart from references in the minutes of Quarterly Meetings to tea meetings. This is somewhat surprising since in Hertfordshire generally, as in other parts of the country, the activities of local Primitive Methodist societies featured regularly in the columns of local newspapers.⁶³ Although there were six provincial newspapers that included Anstey within their areas of circulation, there is not even one mention to be found regarding the Primitive Methodists of Anstey or their activities in the village.⁶⁴ By contrast, events and activities taking place at

⁶⁰ Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists & Reformers*, pp.63-64.

⁶¹ Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists & Reformers*, pp.64, 65 and 69.

⁶² R. W. Ambler, 'Social change and religious experience: aspects of rural society in south Lincolnshire, with specific reference to Primitive Methodism 1815-1875' (PhD thesis, University of Hull, 1984), pp.330-362; Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900', pp.227 and 268-288.

⁶³ For example, there were reports of the 'very fully attended' revival service at nearby Furneux Pelham and a camp meeting at Baldock (*Hertfordshire Mercury*, 21 January 1860 and *Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times*, 22 August 1885) and even the struggling cause at Bishop's Stortford received a mention (*Hertfordshire Mercury*, 27 February 1869).

⁶⁴ The provincial newspapers whose circulation area included Anstey in the second half of the nineteenth century were *Cambridge Chronicle and University Journal*; *Cambridge Independent Press*; *Hertford Mercury and Reformer*; *Herts & Cambs Reporter & Royston Crow*; *Herts Advertiser*; and *Herts Guardian, Agricultural Journal, and General Advertiser*.

Anstey parish church and other locations in the village featured regularly; notably, there was a report of a meeting of the Church of England Temperance Society, presided over by the rector and held in the Schoolroom, without any mention of the Primitive Methodists.⁶⁵ This lack of newspaper coverage could reflect the lower social status of the Primitive Methodists in the parish and, consequentially, their lower public profile such that their activities were deemed not to be in the wider public interest. It may well be that local newspapers were reliant on receiving reports of events and that there was no one within the Primitive Methodist community at Anstey who felt able to take on this task. Whilst this might reflect lower levels of literacy amongst society members, it remains the case that other Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire were successful in obtaining press coverage of their activities and, moreover, it is clear (from the handwritten records of quarterly meetings) that there were some members of the local society at Anstey who were sufficiently literate. In any event, the lack of publicity would undoubtedly have made it much harder for the Primitive Methodists of Anstey to draw attention to themselves and thus to gain new members from the local community, particularly as the outward physical sign of their existence in the village, their chapel, was an unprepossessing building set well back from the road and not easily seen or noticed.

Societal bonds

There can be little doubt as to the importance in the daily lives of the Primitive Methodists community in Anstey of their religious beliefs. This is particularly evident in the strength to be derived from their common membership of the Primitive Methodist community. The concentration of Primitive Methodist households living in close proximity to the chapel and to each other has already been noted as a factor demonstrating the strength of the bonds between the members of the local society. These bonds would have been further reinforced by the considerable inter-marrying between Primitive Methodist families that took place in Anstey, evidence of which can be found in the census returns.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ *Herts & Cambs Reporter*, 17 December 1886.

⁶⁶ Family pairings that have been identified include Chappells and Martins, Coxalls and Catleys, Catleys and Stranges, Cattleys and Byes, Flacks and Catleys, Chapels and Whymans.

Several Primitive Methodist households also provided a home for other members of their extended families. In 1871, Charles and Mary Catley accommodated their 21 year old step son Joseph Chapel.⁶⁷ In 1881, David and Elizabeth Smith were looking after his 11 year old brother and his grandmother, Sarah Chappell who was a 74 year old widow, whilst living with Arthur Martin and his wife Sarah was Sarah's illegitimate 10 year old son, Christopher Skeggs.⁶⁸ In 1891, Charles and Martha Smith were caring for a married daughter and two granddaughters, although their daughter's husband was not living with them. Thomas Barker was living with his married daughter and her son-in-law and two grandsons.⁶⁹ It is notable that all these instances occur in the later decades of the nineteenth century, often, it would appear, in response to some economic or social crisis that served to disrupt normal family life.

The importance of membership of the local society and the strength that could be derived from it is also particularly illustrated by the case of Ann Godfrey. She is the only female to be listed in the Anstey baptismal registers as having brought a child to be baptised. In 1872, Ann gave birth to her daughter Frances. Although unmarried, she presented Frances for baptism on 30 September 1873 in a ceremony conducted at Anstey by the Rev Robert Horrocks, the first minister in the Saffron Walden Circuit at the time.⁷⁰ That such a ceremony could take place is not only indicative of the openness of Primitive Methodism in accepting all who loved the Lord Jesus into its societies, including those who had sinned, but it also demonstrates the strength of Ann's faith and her belief that, despite all that had

⁶⁷ R.G.10/1357, p.7, TNA.

⁶⁸ R.G.11/1409, pp.7 and 10, TNA.

⁶⁹ R.G.12/1100, pp.4 and 7, TNA.

⁷⁰ Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register 1846-1861, NM9/9, Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register 1860-1876, NM9/10, Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register 1866-1908, NM9/11, HALS; Births registered in October, November and December 1872, England and Wales Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837-1915, General Register Office; Marriages registered in April, May and June 1877, England and Wales Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915, General Register Office; R.G.11/1400, p.16, TNA; Hertfordshire Banns & Marriages, <www.findmypast.co.uk>[accessed 4 September 2019]. Ann's younger brother Arthur was brought for baptism as a baby by her father William on 3 February 1857. Ann, who was Arthur's next oldest sibling, was three years old when her brother was baptised but there is no record of Ann being baptised when she was born. This suggests that William must have become a member of the Primitive Methodist society at Anstey sometime between 1855 and 1857. Ann subsequently married an Arthur Lawrence in the parish church at Anstey in the June quarter of 1877 and moved to Stanstead Abbots.

happened to her, she would still be accepted as part of the worshipping community of that local society.⁷¹

Societal bonds also extended from one generation to another. For example, Thomas and Sarah Bye (see the photograph at Figure 6.2) baptised ten of their children at Anstey, from



Figure 6.2: Thomas and Sarah Bye photographed outside their cottage in Cheapside, Anstey⁷²

1858 to 1881, and must have been two of the earliest and most long-serving members of the society. In 1891 they were still living in the same cottage in Cheapside where they had been since at least 1861. In 1885, their son, David, presented his first child for baptism at Anstey.⁷³

⁷¹ David M. Young, *Change and Decay: Primitive Methodism from late Victorian times till World War I* (Stoke-on-Trent: Tentmaker Publications, 2017), pp. 13-14. See also the reference to the Connexion's legally binding doctrines, as set out in the Minutes of Conference for 1836 and 1849, at Chapter 1, footnote 12.

⁷² <<http://www.ansteyvillage.co.uk/history-1-2/>> [accessed 4 September 2019] (used with permission).

⁷³ Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register 1846-1861, NM9/9, Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register 1860-1876, NM9/10 and Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register 1866-1908, NM9/11, HALS; R.G.9/811, p.1; R.G.10/1357, pp.9 and 10; R.G.11/1409, p.1; R.G.12/1100, pp.1 and 14, TNA; <<http://www.ansteyvillage.co.uk/history-1-2/>> [accessed 4 September 2019].

Deprivation

As noted in Chapter 4, it has been a commonly expressed view, albeit that some (such as Calder) have argued that this was not necessarily the case, that the Primitive Methodist Connexion had most appeal to the working class and the poorer members of society and that the Connexion prospered in response to economic hardship.⁷⁴ There is a considerable body of evidence that, in Anstey, this was indeed the case. The records demonstrate that, for those Primitive Methodist households that have been identified in Anstey, there were numerous instances of deprivation and hardship, particularly in the later years of the community's existence.

Ann Coxall was recorded as being the head of a household in 1881, at the age of 44. Her husband, Samuel, had died in 1875 aged only 38, and her only daughter, Sarah, had died in 1878 aged just 15.⁷⁵ Ann was now occupied as a laundress in order to support her remaining family of six sons, aged from 5 to 16, who were living with her. Three were still at school and the three teenagers were all agricultural labourers. She was still living in Pains End Cottage, where she had been in 1871 when her husband was still alive, but by 1891 she had moved to London to live with her nephew.⁷⁶

Albert Sparkes was one year old in 1871. The family was living at the Anstey Windmill, and his father and his oldest brother Austin were both carpenters. Albert's siblings, Lucy and George, had been baptised at the Primitive Methodist chapel at Anstey by their father, also George, in 1861 and 1863 respectively. Albert appears not to have been so baptised, nor had his older siblings Austin, Emaline and Isaac. However, George appears to have died aged

⁷⁴ For the 'hardship' side of the debate, see, for example, David W. Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2011), p.12; Robert Currie, 'A micro-theory of Methodist Growth', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 36 (October 1967) 65-73, p.70; Joseph Ritson, *The Romance of Primitive Methodism* (London: Edward Dalton, 1909); and Anthony Armstrong, *The Church of England, the Methodists and Society 1700-1850* (London: University of London Press, 1973), pp.192 and 199. For the other point of view, see Sandy Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), pp.5-12, 259 and 266. In his report on the 1851 Religious Census, Horace Mann expressed the view that the Primitive Methodists were 'a community whose operations penetrate most deeply through the lower sections of the people' (Registrar-General, *Census of Great Britain, Religious Worship, Abridgement of the Official Report by Horace Mann Esq, England and Wales* (London: 1854), p.100).

⁷⁵ Deaths registered in July, August and September 1875, p.67, England and Wales Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915, General Register Office; Deaths registered in October, November and December 1878, p.78, England and Wales Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915, General Register Office.

⁷⁶ R.G.10/1357, p.6; R.G.11/1409, p.7; R.G.12/407, p.29, TNA.

about three in 1864.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, further tragedy was to strike this family. Albert's mother, Lydia, died aged 49 in 1873 and George senior died, aged 61, in 1875.⁷⁸ It is no surprise, therefore, to find that, by 1881, 11 year old Albert was an orphan inmate of the Buntingford workhouse.⁷⁹

Charlotte Bradford's youngest son, Henry, was baptised in the Primitive Methodist chapel at Anstey in 1856, when he was aged four. His five older brothers had all been born before, and in some cases well before, the Primitive Methodist society in Anstey was formed, so their names do not feature in the baptismal records. Charlotte and her husband, John, would also have been among the earliest members of the society. Unfortunately, by 1871, Charlotte was a widow; she had no occupation, but her four youngest sons, aged from 14 to 23, were all living with her and were employed as agricultural labourers.⁸⁰

The sixth child of seven born to Elizabeth and Thomas Key was baptised in the Primitive Methodist chapel in Anstey in 1855. The family were living in a cottage in Cheapside and continued to do so for at least the next 35 years. By 1891, Elizabeth Key was a widow aged 67. Her oldest son, John, aged 49, who was a boot maker, was the only child still living with her, and he was a widower.⁸¹

Life must have been quite hard, too, for Samuel Catley. He had lived in one of the cottages at Biggin Hall Farm since at least 1861 and by 1891 he was aged 70 but still working as an agricultural labourer. He was living with his wife Elizabeth, 61, who was a general domestic servant, and their son Edward, 21, an agricultural labourer, who was the seventh of the couple's eight children, three of whom were baptised in the Primitive Methodist chapel at Anstey.⁸²

⁷⁷ Deaths registered in January, February and March 1864, England and Wales Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915, General Register Office.

⁷⁸ Deaths registered in July, August and September 1873 and April, May and June 1875, England and Wales Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915, General Register Office.

⁷⁹ R.G.11/1410, p.31, TNA.

⁸⁰ Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register 1846-1861, NM9/9, HALS; R.G.10/1357, p.11, TNA.

⁸¹ Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register 1846-1861, NM9/9, HALS; R.G.9/811, p.2; R.G.12/1100, p.2, TNA.

⁸² Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register 1846-1861, NM9/9; Saffron Walden Circuit baptism register 1860-1876, NM9/10, HALS; R.G.9/811, p.18; R.G.12/1100, p.13, TNA.

Primitive Methodist discipline

As noted in Chapter 2, an important function of the Quarterly Meeting was to uphold internal discipline and standards of conduct in respect of both officers and members of the Connexion. In September 1881 the meeting determined that David Bysouth, one of Anstey's local preachers, should receive a written warning 'relative to his neglect of appointment at Dassell'.⁸³ Far more serious action was taken in 1869 against Brother Wombwell, who was to 'have no appointments on the Branch till he has promised to pay better attention to them, he having neglected his night appointment at Anstey, Nuthampstead and Pelham this quarter'.⁸⁴ Ultimately, however, it must be concluded that these various sanctions were effective, since there were no other recorded occasions on which an appointment was missed at Anstey. Sarah Bysouth, David's wife, found herself before the Quarterly Meeting in June 1863, but, by pleading 'guilty' to the charge and apologising for her conduct, managed to escape further penalty.⁸⁵

Drunkness and immorality were, unsurprisingly, more harshly treated, as the case of David Bysouth demonstrates. In 1864, he had been appointed the Stansted Branch Steward, a highly responsible and important circuit position, and in March 1866 he was confirmed in this position. However, just three months later the Quarterly Meeting resolved that 'Bro Rudder be elected Branch Steward in place of Bro Bysouth'.⁸⁶ Brother Bysouth, having been found guilty of being drunk, was suspended from all preaching appointments as well as being required to cease all his other chapel responsibilities. Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, it was agreed that Sarah Bysouth should 'lead the class at Anstey till next Quarterly Meeting'.⁸⁷ At that next meeting, it was decided that, despite the lack of a frank and open confession by David Bysouth and his stubbornness to co-operate with the formal

⁸³ Meeting held on 5 September 1881, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1, ERO.

⁸⁴ Meeting held on 8 March 1869, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

⁸⁵ The charge was that 'Mrs Bysouth struck the man with whom she deals with in business though the blow was given under very aggravating circumstances'. Meeting held on 15 June 1863, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

⁸⁶ Meetings held on 7 March 1864, 5 March 1866 and June 1866, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

⁸⁷ Meeting held on 26 September 1866, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

investigation, 'we nevertheless wholly on the grounds of mercy allow him to resume his offices as heretofore'.⁸⁸

This was not the first occasion that David Bysouth had been the subject of a complaint before the Quarterly Meeting; in 1865, he seems to have avoided any sanctions as it was recorded that 'has [sic] no charge has been proved against Bro Bysouth that he be requested to take his appointments as usual'.⁸⁹ Nor would this be the last time that the activities of the Bysouths gave the members of the Quarterly Meeting cause for concern. In 1867, a 'Special Committee Meeting' had to take place at Anstey to investigate a charge of immorality brought against Sarah Bysouth. It was alleged that, whilst David was away, she had four drunken men in her house on the night of Saturday 25 June and had allowed two of them to remain there until 4 o'clock on Sunday morning. Although Sarah Bysouth pleaded not guilty to all the charges preferred against her, nevertheless the Quarterly Meeting decided to 'conscientiously remove her name from the plan and expel her from Society'.⁹⁰

As Ambler has commented, and as previously noted in Chapter 2 in considering the role of the circuit quarterly meeting in disciplinary matters, the Primitive Methodist disciplinary code 'helped to define the way of life of the individual Primitive Methodist'.⁹¹ The cases Ambler refers to from south Lincolnshire Primitive Methodist societies cover very similar matters to those found at Anstey, namely neglect of preaching appointments, drunkenness and immorality, as well as a lack of attendance at services and a failure to maintain financial obligations.⁹² However, there is no evidence from the records that men and women were treated any differently when it came to administering sanctions. Rather, the evidence suggests that it is more the case that it was the character of the offence against the disciplinary code that determined the nature of the punishment rather than the gender of the offender. The minutes of circuit quarterly meetings for the Stansted Branch and the

⁸⁸ Meeting held on 6 December 1866, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

⁸⁹ Meeting held in December 1865, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

⁹⁰ Meeting held on 6 September 1867, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

⁹¹ Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists & Reformers*, p.73.

⁹² Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists & Reformers*, pp.70-72.

Saffron Walden Circuit record a total of 22 disciplinary cases between 1860 and 1931 relating to societies in Hertfordshire. Only two of these cases involved women: in one instance, no sanction was imposed as the women's apology was accepted and in the other case, involving immoral conduct, the woman received the same sanction that was meted out to a man who was charged with the same offence.⁹³

Financial affairs

The Saffron Walden Circuit Report of March 1880 to the London District Meeting made a particular point of stressing that many members were finding it increasingly hard to pay all the contributions that the Connexion required of them. The circuit had 'many money-earning members' who had moved from the villages to the towns and 'few or none' such members moved into the villages.⁹⁴ It is equally clear, from the small number of references in the records to financial matters, that this was precisely the situation that existed at Anstey. Moreover, this had been the position since the founding of the society.

The original eight members contributed a total of 13s 10d to circuit funds in the quarter ending September 1850, amounting to an average of about 1s a week for the society as a whole or a 1¹/₂d per member per week. For the quarter ending December 1850, the 40 members contributed a total of £1 15s 8d, the equivalent of just under 2s 9d a week for the society as a whole or just under a 1d per member per week. In the first three months of 1851, the 28 members raised the sum of £1 6s 1d for circuit funds, which was about 2s a week for the society as a whole and a little over ³/₄d per member per week. The neighbouring society at Furneux Pelham had 42 members in 1850 but they managed to raise £2 10s in the December quarter, 40% more than the £1 15s 8d raised by the members at Anstey. For the nine months from July 1850 to March 1851, the society at Furneux Pelham raised a total of £5 14s 6¹/₂d which was 52% more than the £3 15s 7d raised by the members at Anstey.⁹⁵

⁹³ Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5; Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1; Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2; Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1925-1931, D/NM 3/1/4, ERO.

⁹⁴ Saffron Walden Circuit Report (15 March 1880) to London District Meeting, Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1889, D/NM 3/5/4, ERO.

⁹⁵ Accounts, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1850-1870, D/NM 3/3/1, ERO.

It is clear, therefore, that the society at Anstey consisted of people who had very little disposable income. It is also clear that what they were able to give to the Primitive Methodist cause was insufficient to cover the society's share of the Saffron Walden Circuit's running costs. The circuit's costs (minister's salary, 3 children's allowance and house rent) amounted to £20 13s per quarter, or £82 12s per annum. The circuit's membership in 1850 was 516 which equated to a quarterly contribution of just over 9¹/₂d per member. For the 40 members at Anstey in the December quarter of 1850 this amounted to £1 12s 0d, yet the society only managed to pay £1 3s 4d towards the circuit's running costs. The Primitive Methodist society at Anstey was therefore running at a loss right from the beginning.⁹⁶

One way for a society to increase its regular income was through the 'letting' of seats (or 'sittings').⁹⁷ However, this seems never to have been an option for the society at Anstey. In 1851 all the sittings were described as 'free' and there is no record in any of the society's accounts of income received from seat rents.⁹⁸

The name of Bysouth frequently appears in the record of the financial affairs of the society at Anstey, and not always in a favourable light. In 1867 David Bysouth had refused to send the chapel collections to the Circuit as required. He had also failed in his responsibilities 'to pay the rent of the chapel at Anstey, £1 of which has been due five months, the other £1 having been due two months, the whole of which remains unpaid'. Financial irregularities were treated very seriously indeed by the Quarterly Meeting, and, as a result, it was concluded that David Bysouth was 'unfit to have a place on our plan, or to remain in society with us. We therefore move that his name be left off our plan and class book and he be considered no longer a member with us.' The Quarterly Meeting also wrote to the Bysouths requesting that the collection money be forwarded immediately to the Rev Joseph Knipe failing which 'we shall be under the necessity of taking further proceedings'.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ *Minutes of the 31st Annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: 1850), p.24; Accounts, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1850-1870, D/NM 3/3/1, ERO.

⁹⁷ See further discussion of this issue in Chapter 5.

⁹⁸ Census of Religious Worship 1851, as referred to in Burg, *Religion in Hertfordshire 1847-1851*, p.121.

⁹⁹ Meeting held on 6 September 1867, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

The Quarterly Meeting's decision was included in the Circuit's report to the London District Meeting in March 1868, which boldly stated that 'David and Sarah Bysouth have been separated by expulsion for dishonesty and not conforming to Connexional Rule'.¹⁰⁰ However, as if to demonstrate that no sinner is beyond redemption, the Quarterly Meeting of March 1868 resolved 'that application be made to the District Committee for the re-admission of D and S Bysouths [sic] into society, and if granted DB have liberty to take a few appointments next quarter'. Not only was the Quarterly Meeting prepared to reinstate the Bysouths as members, but it was also considered appropriate for David Bysouth to resume some preaching appointments. Unfortunately, the reasons for this change of heart are not recorded. Nevertheless, it would appear that the District Committee required some further persuasion before agreeing to reinstate the Bysouths as it was not until the Quarterly Meeting in March 1872, four years after the initial request for re-admission, that it was resolved to 'write for the sanction of the District Committee for the re-admission of David Bysouth and if sanction be given Bro Bysouth have appointments on the next plan'. This further supplication by the Quarterly Meeting must have had the desired effect since the minutes of the next meeting in June 1872 record 'that Bro Bysouth come on full plan'.¹⁰¹

More financial irregularities occurred in 1881 as the Quarterly Meeting determined 'that enquiry be made of the Society Steward at Anstey relative to 2 collections not accounted for on society report'.¹⁰² There is also a suggestion that the society at Anstey was again struggling to pay its way, as the March Quarterly Meeting had given permission to hold a 'special effort' if the members wanted to. Nevertheless, in the years that followed, it would appear that matters did not improve, since the minutes of the March 1883 Quarterly Meeting enigmatically record 'that the matter of Anstey money be left open'.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Sarah Bysouth had been found to be guilty of a charge of immorality – see footnote 90.

¹⁰¹ Saffron Walden Circuit Report (2 March 1868) to London District Meeting, Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1869, D/NM 3/5/1; Meetings held on 2 March 1868, 4 March and 3 June 1872, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5, ERO.

¹⁰² Meeting held on 6 September 1867, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Stansted Branch of the Saffron Walden Circuit, 1864-1872, D/NM 3/1/5; meeting held on 5 December 1881, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1, ERO.

¹⁰³ Meetings held on 7 March 1881 and 6 March 1883, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1860-1885, D/NM 3/1/1, ERO. 'Special effort' is Primitive Methodist code for a fundraising event or collection.

Four years later, matters came to a head because of 'the unsatisfactory financial condition of Anstey Society'. In June 1887, the Quarterly Meeting removed David Bysouth from the office of Society Steward at Anstey; the meeting also issued instructions that all preachers appointed at Anstey were to ensure that they took away with them the Sunday collection money and that all class money was to be paid to the minister. Clearly, the Quarterly Meeting felt that those in charge of the local society at Anstey at this time could not be trusted with direct responsibility for its financial affairs.¹⁰⁴

After the meeting, Rev Edwin Devenish, the circuit's superintendent minister, wrote a letter to David Bysouth. In it, he said

The last Q. Meeting though deeply regretting the unsatisfactory financial condition of Anstey Society found it absolutely necessary to make new arrangements to the effect that the 2nd Minister should act as Society Steward and Class Leader and that the preacher planned take the cols. away with them. Will you please forward 10/6 back Quarterly owing the Circuit. Mrs Bysouth promised the Rev G R Bell that she would forward it in a few days.¹⁰⁵

Interestingly, it was Sarah Bysouth who replied to this letter. She said

I have sent you the 10/6 and am very sorry that you have taken my husband off being Society Steward. He feels it very much. When I wrote to you I did not say my husband would not have anything to do with the money. I said I should not myself. We have always done our best for the society at Anstey and always found a home for the Travelling Preachers when they come but has [sic] you have taken my husband off being society steward there will no longer be a home here for them. As for the cottage meeting you can have when you please has [sic] my husband says he shall not attend.

¹⁰⁴ Meeting held on 6 June 1887, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO.

¹⁰⁵ Letter dated 22 June 1887 from Rev E I Devenish, Bysouth correspondence, Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1889, D/NM 3/5/4, ERO.

The friends quite thought of having a Chapel opening and they are very much disappointed. I owe you for 2 quarterly plans but will pay you for them when I see you. The March quarter you sent 10 and I only sold 5 – this quarter you have sent six and have sold all of them and want 3 or 4 more if you can send them. I hope you and Mrs Devenish are quite well.

She signed off the letter by saying ‘I remain, yours truly, Mrs Bysouth’ and added a postscript to the effect that ‘what I have got towards the Rent of the chapel I will give you when you pay the rent’.¹⁰⁶

It would appear that Sarah Bysouth considered the whole matter to be over-dramatised and certainly not entirely their fault. She is at pains to point out that she and her husband had devoted a great deal of their time and efforts to the society at Anstey over the years with the implication that, as a result, they might have been due some credit for their activities on behalf of the society. Nevertheless, her immediate reaction was to cease providing lodgings for the travelling preacher, although her actions stopped short of severing all ties. Bearing in mind that all this was happening at the time when the chapel was closed for repairs (see footnote 32 above), it is also clear that the society was using the Bysouths’ cottage for their meetings during this period; Sarah Bysouth was evidently prepared to allow this arrangement to continue, albeit that her husband was adamant that he would no longer be present for services. Sarah was also hoping to remain at least on civil terms with the travelling preacher by wishing him and his wife good health.

Rev Edwin Devenish responded to Sarah Bysouth in a letter perhaps rather tersely in three numbered paragraphs. Firstly, he acknowledged, with thanks, the receipt of the 10/6 for the ‘Balance of Quarterage’. In the second paragraph, regarding the removal of David Bysouth from the office of Society Steward, he said that ‘the unsatisfactory management of society affairs etc. rendered it painfully necessary to make the change. My colleagues fully supported the necessity of the change. We all made the change with regret’. Interestingly, in the third paragraph, relating to the chapel rent money, he commented that ‘I will keep

¹⁰⁶ Undated letter from Sarah Bysouth, Bysouth correspondence, Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1889, D/NM 3/5/4, ERO.

your letter for reference to the College money you have in hand and will make some arrangements for specials to meet the Rent Requirements as soon as practicable'. He clearly had in mind the need for the Quarterly Meeting to authorise the holding of special collections at Anstey in order to raise sufficient funds to pay the outstanding chapel rent, although there are no further references to be found to such collections in the records.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, it would appear that this particularly unpleasant episode was brought to a satisfactory conclusion in the weeks following this exchange of correspondence since, at the Quarterly Meeting in September 1887, David Bysouth was reinstated as the Society Steward for Anstey.¹⁰⁸

The demise of the Primitive Methodists of Anstey

A critical requirement of a local society was its ability to finance its chapel since, as has been previously noted, a meeting place was essential to the establishment, development and functioning of a local society. Two years on from the financial problems of 1887, matters had clearly not improved, particularly regarding the society's ability to pay the chapel rent, and the Quarterly Meeting was becoming increasingly concerned about the situation. In March 1889, after what had clearly been a lengthy discussion about the problems at Anstey, the Quarterly Meeting resolved 'that the proprietor of Anstey Chapel be asked to reduce the rent thereof to £3 per year'. In particular, the Meeting wanted the proprietor to understand 'how difficult it is for Anstey friends to raise the present rent'. It was also decided that Rev George Burbidge, the superintendent minister of the Saffron Walden Circuit, should 'write to the member of parliament for the division in which Anstey Chapel stands, asking for a donation towards Anstey Chapel Fund'. The second minister, Rev Thomas Harrison, was deputed 'to solicit donations towards Anstey Chapel Fund, in the neighbourhood of Anstey'. As well as seeking support from outsiders, the Quarterly Meeting considered that the local society should also play its part; consequently, it was decided 'that the friends at Anstey be asked to have a Tea Meeting and do what they can to raise the money to pay their rent'. In order to help them do that the Meeting determined that Rev Thomas Harrison should be

¹⁰⁷ Letter dated 30 June 1887 from Rev E I Devenish, Bysouth correspondence, Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1889, D/NM 3/5/4, ERO.

¹⁰⁸ Meeting held on 8 September 1887, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO.

planned at Anstey on one Sunday in the following quarter, presumably as an incentive to the local members both to attend and make a financial contribution to chapel funds.¹⁰⁹

The March 1889 minutes do not name the 'proprietor' of the chapel. In 1887, Rev Edwin Devenish referred, in the Bysouth correspondence, to 'the College money' which Mrs Bysouth was holding to pay the rent. From this, it might be inferred that the chapel building and land belonged to one of the two Cambridge colleges that had connections with Anstey parish.¹¹⁰ However, the minutes of the March 1890 Quarterly Meeting refer to a 'Mr Adams'. This was Charles Adams, who lived in Barkway where he was a farmer of 250 acres. He was also an estate surveyor, valuer and land agent with a practice in London; in particular, he acted as land agent for the Hon Baron Dimsdale of Essendon Place, who was one of the major landowners in Anstey. Charles Adams was also one of the major landowners in Anstey, as well as lord of the manor.¹¹¹ When he died in 1894, his estate was valued at over £15,000 and a newspaper report in 1896 said that the Primitive Methodist chapel at Anstey 'was a part of the estate of the late Mr C F Adams of Barkway'.¹¹² No evidence has been found to show whether or not Charles Adams acquired the property from one of the Cambridge colleges after 1887; however, it is clear that, by 1890, it was Mr Adams that the Anstey trustees were dealing with regarding their use of the chapel.

At some point, Mr Adams must have responded to the March 1889 Quarterly Meeting's request for a rent reduction since, in March 1890, the Quarterly Meeting asked the Rev George Burbidge

¹⁰⁹ Meeting held on 5 September 1889, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO.

¹¹⁰ Bysouth correspondence, Reports and schedules of Primitive Methodist chapels, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1880-1889, D/NM 3/5/4; meeting held on 6 March 1890, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO. King's College, Cambridge owned land in Anstey parish (see document reference King's/KC/KCAR/6/2/015 in the Janus Archives at <<https://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2FGBR%2F0272%2FKC%2FKCAR%2F6%2F2%2F015>> [accessed 4 September 2019]) and Christ's College, Cambridge owned (and still owns) the advowson of the parish church (see <<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/7831/page/17502/view/>> [accessed 4 September 2019]).

¹¹¹ *Kelly's Directory of Hertfordshire, 1874* (London: Kelly and Co. Ltd, 1874), p.16; R.G.11/1411, p.8, TNA.

¹¹² Principal Probate Registry, *Calendar of the Grants of Probate and Letters of Administration made in the Probate Registries of the High Court of Justice in England, 1894*, p.5; *Herts & Cambs Reporter*, 10 April 1896.

to reply to Mr Adam's note about the Anstey Chapel rent, informing him that he is a Minister who only came to reside at Saffron Walden in July last; that he has made enquiries about Anstey, and finds that the Primitive Methodists thereat are a few poor people; that they are practically without funds; and that he has no power in the matter beyond recommending the Primitive Methodists at Anstey to pay their rent.¹¹³

A special Quarterly Meeting was convened the following month 'to consider the Anstey Chapel case' when it was decided that 'the replying to Mr Adam's letter about the rent of Anstey Chapel be put into the hands of the Superintendent Minister and Mr J Kettle'.¹¹⁴ These two must have discussed the matter and reported back to the next Quarterly Meeting in June 1890, which resolved 'that relative to Anstey Chapel matters, we decide not to give notice to the owner to give it up; nor to take any other step relative thereto'. The Quarterly Meeting's policy appeared to be that, despite the small number of members at Anstey (unfortunately the actual figure is not mentioned in the records) and their obvious impecuniosity, nevertheless there was no wish to see the society fold. Consequently, efforts were focused on attempting to reduce the society's costs, the principal one being the chapel rent.¹¹⁵ However, both the local trustees and those involved at circuit level were entirely in the hands of Mr Adams, and it would appear that he was not prepared to exercise any leniency so far as the chapel rent was concerned. Even though the June 1890 Quarterly Meeting had resolved not to give up the chapel, it would seem that at some point during the next six months this is precisely what did happen, since the December 1890 Quarterly Meeting resolved to 'accept the offer of Mr Bysouth to preach in his house during the winter', albeit 'that we cannot pay any rent or become responsible for any rent for it'.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Meeting held on 6 March 1890, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO.

¹¹⁴ Meeting held on 14 April 1890, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO; Mr J Kettle was a Circuit Steward, the Society Steward at the Saffron Walden chapel and a senior local preacher in the circuit, appearing ninth in the list of 38 local preachers on the 1889 plan (Saffron Walden Circuit Plan 1889 (Oct-Dec), NM9/13, HALS).

¹¹⁵ Meeting held on 5 June 1890, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO. At the meeting held on 16 June 1890, the inability of Anstey members to raise funds themselves was clearly recognised since Anstey chapel was 'excused from holding a Collections Sunday for Circuit Funds' (Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO).

¹¹⁶ Meeting held on 4 December 1890, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO.

Matters were now getting far more serious, since, without a chapel as a meeting place, the future of the local society was very much at risk. It is unsurprising, therefore, that six months later the Quarterly Meeting was effectively forced to decide that 'a letter be sent to each of the members at Anstey, informing them that there will be no Society at Anstey, and requesting them to join either the Primitive Methodist Society at Furneaux Pelham or the Primitive Methodist Society at Langley'. Three months after that, in September 1891, the minutes record the formal transfer of David Bysouth's membership from Anstey to the society at Langley. The minutes also make it plain that the society at Anstey had ceased to meet, since it was also resolved that 'the name of the Rev G W Stanger as Society Steward of Anstey be left off the Plan'.¹¹⁷

With the decision of the March 1892 Quarterly Meeting 'that Anstey be not put on the next Plan' the demise of the society at Anstey was complete. Even so, it would appear that some hope of resurrection remained, as nine months earlier Mr Toms, the society steward at neighbouring Furneux Pelham, was charged by the Quarterly Meeting with the responsibility of seeing whether an alternative premises could be secured for the Anstey society. However, nothing came of this; the minutes of the Quarterly Meeting in June 1892 record the simple fact 'that we cannot find another room at Anstey to conduct services in' with the inevitable consequence 'that a full report of the giving up of Anstey be sent to the next District Meeting'.¹¹⁸

Conclusions

The Primitive Methodist society at Anstey, which was in many ways characteristic of a Primitive Methodist Victorian rural locality, typifies the grassroots nature of the Connexion, exemplifying the 'the community-based mission of the Primitive Methodists'.¹¹⁹ The society was at its strongest in its first twenty years. The Primitive Methodists clearly made a big impact on their arrival in Anstey in 1850: attendances at chapel exceeded those at the

¹¹⁷ Meetings held on 4 June and 3 September 1891, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO.

¹¹⁸ Meetings held on 4 June 1891, 3 March and 2 June 1892, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO.

¹¹⁹ Jeremy Crump, "'Our Struggle in London": Primitive Methodists and the Metropolis', *The London Journal*, 43.2 (2018), 137-162, p.158.

parish church from the very early days, a Sunday School had been formed by 1861 and a second class of chapel members was established in 1865. In the 1850s and 1860s, the number of children presented for baptism at Anstey Primitive Methodist chapel amounted to nearly half of all Primitive Methodist baptisms recorded in the Hertfordshire chapels of the Saffron Walden Circuit. However, over the next twenty years this growth could not be sustained. Although, in the 1870s, the number of children baptised was still greater at Anstey than any other Hertfordshire location in the Saffron Walden Circuit, this figure was declining and by the 1890s was in single digits.¹²⁰

The society of Primitive Methodists at Anstey was a very close-knit group in many ways, geographically, socially and economically. Many of the society's members experienced hardship, particularly in the later years of the society's existence, and it was often necessary to rely on family members, and no doubt other members of the society, for support and assistance in what, for them, was an 'economy of makeshifts'.¹²¹ Nevertheless, as the case of Ann Godfrey demonstrates, the Christian faith of the Primitive Methodists of Anstey sustained them throughout all their troubles and hardships and enabled them at least to survive, if not overcome, their social and economic difficulties. However, because of the prevailing wider economic conditions that affected this part of Hertfordshire in the later decades of the nineteenth century, the Anstey Primitive Methodists were not only unable to sustain the earlier growth but they also found it increasingly difficult to maintain the community's membership.¹²² Longstanding members, such as David and Sarah Bysouth and Thomas and Sarah Bye, would doubtless have made considerable contributions to the life and well-being of the society, but every generation would need to produce such examples if the future of the society was to be assured. As the *Christian Messenger* would later put it, 'when we cease to evangelise we begin to die'.¹²³ However, from the 1870s onwards, fewer children seem to have moved from the Sunday School into full membership. At the same time, growing numbers of the younger and middle aged economically active members

¹²⁰ See Chapter 4.

¹²¹ Olwen Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France 1750-1789* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), Part III, pp.69 et seq.

¹²² See footnotes 8 and 9 above regarding the agricultural depression and falling population in this part of Hertfordshire.

¹²³ *Christian Messenger* 1901, p.355.

moved away from Anstey, leaving behind an ever-decreasing number of ageing and impoverished folk, since few, if any, 'money-earning members' had moved into the village. Nor were there any wealthy benefactors to come to the society's aid, such as happened elsewhere in the Connexion especially in the latter years of the nineteenth century.¹²⁴

Nevertheless, because of the 'connexional' nature of Primitive Methodism, the local society at Anstey was not on its own. The Circuit provided the travelling preachers (on appointment from the Conference or the District) and supported the members at Anstey by arranging for local preachers to fill the other preaching engagements on the Circuit Plan. The Circuit also provided mutual support and encouragement for the local society – spiritually, socially and financially. In return those members were expected to attend regularly and faithfully and provide similar support and encouragement to one another. They were also expected to contribute to the well-being of the Circuit, not least in financial matters. But herein lay another problem for the Primitive Methodists of Anstey, particularly in the later years of the society's existence, because by this time the cause consisted of 'a few poor people practically without funds'.¹²⁵ It is clear, therefore, that the parlous financial state of the society's affairs was the main reason for the ultimate demise of the Primitive Methodists of Anstey. However, even in the face of the seemingly inevitable, the Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting indicate that the Circuit was not going to give up Anstey without a struggle, with every effort being made to secure the community's future. Ultimately, with too few people to raise the necessary funds to pay the chapel rent and meet the circuit expenses, and, consequently, being without a place of worship, the fate of the society effectively was sealed.

There are relatively few opportunities for the voice of the ordinary member of the Primitive Methodist Connexion to be heard, as they rarely leave any trace in the written record of a society. This study of the Primitive Methodist community at Anstey provides an insight into

¹²⁴ Crump, "'Our Struggle in London": Primitive Methodists and the Metropolis', p.139; Alexander J. Calder, 'The Primitive Methodist Connexion - Tackling the Myth' (PhD thesis, Open University, 2012), pp.146 and 268; Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume III: The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2015), p.115.

¹²⁵ Meeting held on 6 March 1890, Minutes of quarterly meetings, Saffron Walden Circuit, 1885-1901, D/NM 3/1/2, ERO.

the lives of grassroots members of the Connexion in Hertfordshire and helps to shed some light on what might otherwise be a forgotten aspect of social history. 'Belonging' to the cause was a very important part of the lives of the members of the Anstey society; the main focus of attention was the chapel, without which there would have been no society at Anstey. However, within that chapel's sphere of influence have come, and gone, a cast of many characters who have served the cause and sought to maintain a Primitive Methodist presence in Anstey for a period of more than forty years. The several generations of local people who made up this community of faith are the real manifestation of the history of the Primitive Methodist Connexion's involvement with Anstey.

Chapter 7

Reflections

Introduction

This study has sought to bring to light the hidden history of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire. As Jeppesen has argued, ‘recovering ... forgotten histories ... forces us to reconsider the dominant narratives’, so it is appropriate, therefore, that the story of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire should be told not from the point of view of the dominant Connexional narrative but from the perspective of the local societies in the different places in the county where Primitive Methodism became established.¹

Nevertheless, the Hertfordshire story has to be seen in the context of the way in which the Connexion developed nationally. Kendall observed that, by 1832, Primitive Methodism ‘had got through her own probation’ but, writing in 1919, he was clearly of the view that it took another fifty years before it came to be ‘accepted’, albeit unenthusiastically, by the Church of England and the public at large. As Parsons has noted, despite Primitive Methodism being ‘the most radical, revivalist, and working-class of the major Nonconformist denominations’, nevertheless by 1885 it was able to demonstrate a well organised and increasingly centralised ruling conference, a book room that was responsible, among other matters, for the publication of several magazines, its own hymn book, a theological college and two public schools, to which, four years later, would be added an orphanage.² Kendall also draws attention, in the years from 1885, to the considerable developments in the Connexion’s involvement with ‘the growth and recognition of social service’, including other movements such as the Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavour, Temperance and the Band of

¹ Chris Jeppesen, ‘Growing up in a Company town: the East India Company presence in South Hertfordshire’, in *The East India Company at Home 1757-1857*, ed. by Margot Finn and Kate Smith (London: UCL Press, 2017), p.253.

² Gerald Parsons, ‘From Dissenters to Free Churchmen: the traditions of Victorian Nonconformity’, in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by Gerald Parsons, Vol. 1 Traditions (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp.67-116 (p.97); H. B. Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1919), pp.120-121.

Hope.³ In all of this, the development of the Primitive Methodist Connexion can be seen very much as part of the transition of nonconformity generally from 'dissent' to 'free church'⁴

From a Hertfordshire perspective, the development of Primitive Methodism generally followed a similar pattern to the national picture. At the time of Queen Victoria's accession, Primitive Methodism was unknown in Hertfordshire yet by the time of her death, there were very few places in the county that had not been touched in some way by the Connexion. However, the Primitive Methodism of the early twentieth century was not the same as the Primitive Methodism that first arrived in Hertfordshire. Over the years from 1838 to 1932, Primitive Methodism first became established, then expanded and ultimately contracted, albeit at different times and rates and in various places. To begin with, it was primarily the county's villages that were the centre of attention for the Connexion, from which the circuits eventually took shape and developed. As the county's urban areas began to grow, the focus of Primitive Methodism began to change from the rural areas to the towns. On its arrival in Hertfordshire, Primitive Methodism was strongly evangelical in nature, as this was the driving force behind the movement's expansion. By the end of the third quarter of the nineteenth century the focus had begun to change, with society members becoming more attuned to 'a life of service and good citizenship', as McLeod put it. Primitive Methodists were now demonstrating not only their allegiance to the cause but also the need to serve the wider community, a development which Martin has described as a 'brand of individualism, decency, self-improvement, homespun piety and service'.⁵ Garratt found a similar move from 'piety' to 'service' in Shropshire.⁶

There was also a change in how the Primitive Methodists were seen by others in society. On their arrival in the county, Primitive Methodists faced considerable local opposition to their

³ Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, pp. 113, 117-119 and 143-145.

⁴ Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen: the traditions of Victorian Nonconformity', p.109; David W. Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2011), p.2.

⁵ Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1984), pp.26-27 and 33; David Martin, 'Faith, Flour and Jam', *Times Literary Supplement*, 1 April 1983, 329-330.

⁶ Delia Garratt, 'Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900' (PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2002), pp.289 and 295.

activities and their very presence. However, over the years, this initial opposition and resentment was replaced firstly by toleration and then by a much broader understanding of the role that the Primitive Methodists had come to play in society generally, especially as Primitive Methodists themselves were more comfortable with their own 'respectability' and growing social standing.⁷ It is clear from the increasing number of newspaper reports that contain references to Hertfordshire's Primitive Methodists and their activities, especially from the 1880s onwards, that the movement had become very much an accepted part of the community. It is equally clear from these reports that, by the end of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, Primitive Methodism had a greater impact in towns than in the villages. For many of these factors, a comparison of time lines suggests that changes happened in Hertfordshire as a consequence of, and often slightly later than, the modifications to the national picture and not the other way around. In other words, Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire was not in the vanguard of change. Certainly, the reason why changes occurred later in Hertfordshire cannot be the result of the county's 'isolation' from national affairs, given Hertfordshire's close geographical and other links with London. It is more to do with the fact that, in the first place, Primitive Methodism was already 25 years old before it took root in Hertfordshire, so that all subsequent developments in the county would be behind the national curve. Secondly, it is likely that the slower pace of change was due to the more gradual growth in the size of the county's towns compared to the stronger and faster growth experienced by industrial and urban areas elsewhere in the country, which delayed both the closure of village societies and the opening of new urban ones. A third factor contributing to the slower pace of change in Hertfordshire compared to the national position was the sustained emphasis, well into the early twentieth century, in the county on agriculture, from which the mainstay of local society members continued to be drawn.

This study has considered a number of themes in relation to Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire – its organisation, its people, its property and its finances. Having explored, through these themes, the Connexion's presence in the county from the perspective of the local societies in Hertfordshire and the circuits to which they belonged, the study concluded

⁷ McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, p.33; Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, p.113.

by demonstrating how these themes came together at the grass roots level by looking in some detail at the life of one particular local society, at Anstey.

Organisation

The local society was the essential building block of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, made up of the grass roots membership and organised into classes. This was the Connexion 'on the ground' in a particular location: in Kendall's view, such members 'kept piety alive' and were responsible for 'the moral and spiritual enlightenment' of their local area.⁸ As the Hertfordshire evidence demonstrates, the local society offered its members a variety of leadership roles, such as society stewards, class leaders and assistants, Sunday school teachers and local preachers, which provided members with status and responsibility.⁹ In addition, those who fulfilled these roles had a particular obligation to 'prune and water the new and vigorous societies planted by others who had moved on, going further into the country to break up the fallow-ground'.¹⁰

However, societies did not exist in isolation from one another: their grouping into a circuit was an important means of establishing important 'connections' with the wider Connexion which provided individual societies with mutual strength and support. The ability of Primitive Methodism firstly to evangelise an area, secondly to become established and then, thirdly, to mission other areas owes much to the flexibility of the Connexion's structure and organisation. The pattern of circuit development in Hertfordshire demonstrates considerable flexibility and fluidity between 1838 and 1932 as the Connexion responded both to changes on the ground and to outside influences. Growth in the nineteenth century was manifested by an embryonic pattern of development (as the map at Figure 3.3 in Chapter 3 illustrates), which Kendall described as 'multiplication by division' and 'by analogies with organic chemistry'.¹¹ Moreover, the changes in circuit boundaries in Hertfordshire show that the circuit was not only the means for facilitating and sustaining

⁸ H. B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church* (London: Robert Bryant, c. 1905), Vol. 1, p.301 and Vol. 2, p.223.

⁹ McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, p.24.

¹⁰ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. 1, p.282.

¹¹ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. 1, p.478; H. B. Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: Joseph Toulson, c.1888), p.20.

growth but it could also be adjusted to cope with retrenchment and re-formation, as happened in the case of Hitchin and Letchworth in the twentieth century.

The evidence from Hertfordshire also demonstrates clearly the importance of the circuit in relation to the distribution and use of the Connexion's travelling preachers. The principal responsibilities of such preachers were to offer support and encouragement to existing societies and to provide the means by which new areas could be 'opened up' to Primitive Methodism, and these twin responsibilities meant that the Connexion asked much of its ministers, especially those new to the task.¹² Establishing new societies inevitably took some time, yet more than half of the ministers appointed to Hertfordshire circuits spent only one year in the county before being moved elsewhere in the Connexion, although this was the particular nature of itinerancy, especially in Primitive Methodism. Moreover, it is clear that many of those who did serve in Hertfordshire were relatively inexperienced in terms of the 'numbers of years travelled'; for almost a fifth of ministers, Hertfordshire was their first appointment. This could indicate that the Connexion did not regard Hertfordshire as an area of the highest priority for missionary effort, yet the opposite conclusion is suggested by the fact that some of the Connexion's most experienced travelling preachers were appointed to the key growth points of Watford, Berkhamsted and, in the later years of the nineteenth century, Baldock. Overall, however, the clear picture that emerges is one that serves firmly to emphasise the great flexibility of the circuit system in allowing the Connexion to make the best possible use of its resources at any given time. In addition to mission, this flexibility is also to be found as a response to the support and encouragement that was provided to existing societies and the evidence shows a clear relationship between membership numbers and the extent of ministerial resources being deployed.

The circuit was also important for the small army of local preachers who supported the travelling preachers by filling many of the very large number of preaching appointments on the circuit plan, and this was as true in Hertfordshire as it was elsewhere in the Connexion. It is abundantly clear that these local preachers provided vital support and encouragement to local societies and without their work it would have been quite impossible to sustain

¹² A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740-1914* (London and New York: Longman, 1976), p.55.

them all. Thus, the subsequent maintenance of missioned ground was wholly reliant on the circuit having sufficient members willing and able to take on the role and responsibilities of a local preacher. Although, as Hempton put it, ‘the engine of the movement’s expansion’ may have been the itinerant nature of the Connexion’s travelling preachers, the critical role played by local preachers in sustaining the missionary efforts of those travelling preachers should not be underestimated.¹³ Rodell, referring to a suggestion by Ward that ‘the geographical distribution of the mature Methodist movement’ was a product of ‘entrepreneurial’ factors, has argued that ‘passionate preachers and the availability of resources to support them were one of the keys to Methodist success’.¹⁴ It is clear, therefore, that the growth of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire was due not only to the investment by the Connexion in its travelling preachers in order that evangelistic advances could continue to be made but also to the increasing number of enthusiastic and committed local preachers who continued to maintain the life of the newly formed local societies. This is true ‘connexionalism’ in action, with equally important inputs at both national and local levels.

However, the early missionary work and growth of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire was not sustained and some signs of stasis are evident in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire did not experience such a decline as occurred in other parts of the country.¹⁵ The number of members continued to rise throughout the third quarter of the nineteenth century and chapel building continued into the early decades of the twentieth century. The Hertfordshire evidence thus supports the views of Wickham and McLeod as against Gilbert (as discussed in Chapter 1) regarding the nature and extent of the decline of

¹³ David Hempton, *Methodism – Empire of the spirit* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), p.99; Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, p.19.

¹⁴ Jonathan Rodell, *The Rise of Methodism – A Study of Bedfordshire 1736-1851* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Bedfordshire Historical Record Society and The Boydell Press, 2014), p.227, quoting from W. R. Ward, *Parson and parish in Eighteenth-century Surrey: Replies to Bishops’ Visitations*, 34 (Guildford: Surrey Record Society, 1994), p.xii.

¹⁵ Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, pp.145-148; Alexander J. Calder, ‘The Primitive Methodist Connexion - Tackling the Myth’ (PhD thesis, Open University, 2012), p.80; Garratt, ‘Primitive Methodism in Shropshire, 1820-1900’, p.165; Priscilla Mary Truss, ‘Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds c.1820-1932’ (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2016), pp.268 and 272.

nonconformity.¹⁶ In Hertfordshire, Primitive Methodism reached its zenith in terms of the number of members in 1876, when the total for the three circuits of Baldock, Berkhamsted and Watford stood at 858. Chapel building was at its greatest in the county in the period from 1863 to 1872 and it continued right through until 1914. The high water mark for the number of societies was in 1873, when there were 25. By the end of the nineteenth century membership in these three circuits had reduced to 625, spread amongst 22 societies, representing a decline of 27% in membership and 12% in the number of societies, although there had been no decline in the number of chapels.

Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire displayed even fewer signs of retrenchment and decline in the early twentieth centuries. Although membership numbers continued to fall, from 625 in 1900 to 615 in 1912 (the last year for which figures can be readily computed), this was only a relatively small decrease. Indeed, the Watford circuit saw its membership increase from 300 in 1902 to 355 thirty years later. In addition, the number of extant societies in 1932 remained the same as it was in 1900 and the 22 chapels in existence at the turn of the century had only fallen to 21 by 1932. Moreover, the early years of the twentieth century saw further growth through the establishment of new societies primarily in towns (at Watford, St Albans, Hitchin and Letchworth) but also in a village (Knebworth). Taken together, these figures for membership, chapels and societies indicate the continuing strength of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire from the late nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century. However, a closer study reveals that the pattern of the Primitive Methodist offering was changing. From its beginnings in the county after 1838 the Connexion was strongly a village based enterprise but by the end of the nineteenth century the focus had clearly shifted to the growing towns, in line with what Gilbert described as 'the process of retrenchment in rural areas'.¹⁷ Moreover, this shift in focus became even more marked in the twentieth century. This was the Connexion's response to the economic changes taking place in the county at this time and the consequential shift in population, particularly those who made up the Connexion's traditional membership, from the villages to the towns.

¹⁶ Edward Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1957), pp.127, 131-134 and 149-150; McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, p. 32.

¹⁷ Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, p.171.

People

As the President and the Secretary of the Conference said in their 'Annual Address of the Conference to the Societies under its Care' in 1875, Primitive Methodism 'has been from the beginning the people's church'.¹⁸ In nineteenth century Hertfordshire, the head of most Primitive Methodist households would be found within either Class III, IV or V of the Registrar General's 1951 scheme of social classification by occupation, thus ensuring that in Hertfordshire 'Primitive Methodism generally remained faithful to its humble origins'.¹⁹ The occupations mentioned in the extant baptismal registers for Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire show that the great majority of Primitive Methodist households came from the lower social classes, albeit not necessarily the lowest. In both instances, this is similar to the pattern found by Ambler in Lincolnshire and by Field in his analysis of a number of regional studies, and the Hertfordshire data bear out Field's observation that by no means all Primitive Methodists belonged to 'the poorest grade'.²⁰ Although Gilbert argued that the success of evangelical nonconformity 'depended largely on its appeal to the artisan classes' which encompassed 'a wide range of prestige, wealth, and skill', nevertheless, the evidence from Hertfordshire indicates, as McLeod has suggested, that this is too broad a category.²¹ In the nineteenth century, the heads of many Primitive Methodist households in Hertfordshire, particularly in the rural parts of the county, were in occupations which did not create much prestige, did not generate any wealth and, for the most part, lacked particular skills, the vast majority being agricultural labourers. Apart from the occasional exception, such as Thomas Barker, the village shoemaker, grocer and parish clerk at Anstey, only in St Albans was there evidence of more skilled occupations, mostly related to the straw plait industry, although there was a marked loss of these skilled occupations in the late nineteenth century.

¹⁸ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1875, p.485.

¹⁹ Clive Field, 'The Social Structure of English Methodism - Eighteenth-Twentieth Centuries', *British Journal of Sociology*, 28.2 (1977), 199-225 (p.207).

²⁰ Rodney Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists and Reformers: Primitive Methodism and Rural Society, South Lincolnshire, 1817-1875* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1989), pp.62-63; Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, pp.62-67. Some 70% of households belonged to the manual grades (IV and V) but only 14% had occupations falling within Class V.

²¹ McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, p.24.

In the early twentieth century there was a noticeable change in emphasis, with a marked shift from the labouring classes to the semi-skilled and the craftsmen, as Field has suggested.²² The occupational evidence shows that the social class of Primitive Methodists in Hertfordshire was increasing during this period, although this move in upward social mobility did not generally occur until the early twentieth century, which was much later than in other parts of the country. This is mainly due to the fact that Hertfordshire had remained a largely agricultural county even by the turn of the century, with the unskilled and semi-skilled occupations of many households continuing to reflect this general economic picture. However, as the economic situation began to change, so too did social mobility, and at an increased pace. Those Primitive Methodists who lived in the largely rural areas of the county experienced a marked degree of upward social mobility, equivalent to two social classes. However, the opposite was true for Primitive Methodists in the St Albans area. Here, in the late nineteenth century, the proportion of low skilled and unskilled occupations increased, largely as a result of the loss of occupations in the straw plaiting and hat making industries. Thus, in contrast to the general pattern in Hertfordshire and elsewhere, the Primitive Methodists of St Albans experienced a degree of downward social mobility, in some cases of up to two social classes.

Property

Having somewhere to meet as a local society was of particular importance for the Primitive Methodist Connexion in any location. However, this was only the start of the Connexion's work in each place and was by no means the end. As an article in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* in 1899 made clear, in many villages

not much is needed to erect a chapel suitable for the locality, but after it has been erected and even paid for, it is not always easy to succeed with the real work of a church. The population is small and usually on the decline. Two or three families may

²² R. W. Ambler, 'Social change and religious experience: aspects of rural society in south Lincolnshire, with specific reference to Primitive Methodism 1815-1875' (PhD thesis, University of Hull, 1984), pp.324-325 and pp.328-329; Field, 'The Social Structure of English Methodism', p.216.

be the mainstay of a place, and it often happens that in the course of a year or two these families remove.²³

The same article also drew attention to the additional problems caused by other clerical opposition, noting that where 'the feeble cause has to withstand the attacks of an aggressive clergyman or curate, the outlook becomes unpromising indeed, and it is not astonishing if the friends give way to despondency'. This picture would certainly not have been an unfamiliar one for Primitive Methodists in many parts of Hertfordshire, especially during the early decades of the movement's existence in the county. However, by a combination of evangelistic zeal and determination to succeed on the part of each local society, the Connexion was able not only to establish roots in many locations but also to consolidate the work in these places as well as missioning yet further areas.

The 1899 article concluded by making reference to a proposal that had come before the Connexion's General Committee for permission to sell the chapel in a small village location in Oxfordshire. It was noted that

there is practically no cause there at present, and the local preachers of the circuit are not disposed to take the journey to preach to a mere handful of people. And yet the Primitive Methodists are the only representatives of the Free Churches in the locality. If we sell and leave the place the people will be deprived of the chance of ever attending a Nonconformist religious service, a result which will not be good, either for Nonconformity or the villagers, or for that matter, for the Established Church.

Again, this example describes a situation that would not have been unfamiliar to a number of societies in Hertfordshire and neatly encapsulates the difficult choices that could be faced by several Primitive Methodist circuits. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, there

²³ *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1899, p.796.

were still three places in the county where the Primitive Methodist chapel was the only religious alternative to the parish church.²⁴

Over the years between 1838 and 1932 there have been in existence nearly fifty separate Primitive Methodist local societies in Hertfordshire and, despite their relatively small size, these societies were responsible for building over thirty chapels. The Hertfordshire experience thus fits well with Gilbert's observations that the main purposes of chapel building were to support a society's aspirations regarding its permanence and status in a particular locality, to function as a 'focus for group identity', and to be the heart of its religious and social activities.²⁵ Although Kendall saw the acquisition of a chapel as the means by which societies could provide themselves with 'independence of outside interference and a reasonable guarantee for the future', nevertheless a sizeable minority, nearly 39%, of local societies in Hertfordshire, never progressed beyond the use of a house, a barn or other meeting place.²⁶

Some limited physical evidence of the Primitive Methodist Connexion's existence in Hertfordshire still remains; however, much of it is hidden in full sight. Although there are Methodist societies still in existence in eight locations that were originally part of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, only two chapels, at Harpenden and Croxley Green, are still in use by the Methodist Church today and one of these (Croxy Green) has had its stone inscriptions defaced to obliterate the word 'Primitive'. Other former chapels still exist but have taken on new uses and appearances, for example as dwellings, offices, a pizza restaurant or a (now redundant) arts centre.²⁷ It is clear, therefore that although, much as Ambler found in south Lincolnshire, there may be 'few tangible reminders of the significant contribution which Primitive Methodism made to the life of the area', nevertheless the legacy of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire is by no means insubstantial.²⁸

²⁴ *Kelly's Directory for Essex, Hertford and Middlesex*, 4th edition (London: Kelly and Co. Ltd, 1874). The three locations were Anstey, Benington and Hatfield (Newgatestreet); the society at Hatfield had disappeared by 1890 and the Anstey society 'ceased to meet' in 1892.

²⁵ Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, pp.160-161.

²⁶ Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, Vol. II, p.275.

²⁷ See David Noble, 'Symbols of faith: the meeting places of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire, 1838 – 1932' (MA dissertation, University of Roehampton, 2012), particularly pp.58-68 and Appendices 3 and 4.

²⁸ Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists and Reformers*, pp.8-9.

Finance

Finance underpinned the very existence of a local society, as the history of the society at Anstey clearly demonstrates. The need for regular income to pay for the travelling preachers and provide them with accommodation was a key requirement, but the constant need for funds was made even more acute as soon as local societies acquired a meeting place, especially if that involved the building of a chapel. The financial consequences of chapel building meant that a society would be encumbered with a considerable burden of debt, often for many decades. In Hertfordshire, as elsewhere, regular giving by the members, through class and ticket money and special collections, was never enough to meet all the necessary outgoings, and all societies were therefore faced with the necessity of constant fundraising.

However, the need for funds provided an important opportunity for many in the local society to become involved with the various fundraising activities, thus strengthening the fellowship of the members of the society and giving them a sense of purpose and achievement. Moreover, this need provided numerous and frequent occasions when a local society could seek to bring itself more to the attention of the wider community. Thus, whilst the importance of financial matters, per se, should not be understated, the financial records and fundraising activities of a local society also serve to demonstrate, particularly by the end of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, the growing social standing of Primitive Methodism in the local community. By this time, many fundraising activities were regularly reported in the local press. Up to the end of 1849 there had been only eight newspaper reports of Primitive Methodist activities in Hertfordshire. This doubled in the 1850s and increased fourfold in the 1860s and 1870s. During the 1880s, such reports appeared about once a month somewhere in the county, and for the whole of the period from 1880 to 1909 there was an average of one report every five and a half weeks. In total, these reports referred to 34 different Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire.²⁹

²⁹ Figures computed from an online search of the seven newspaper titles circulating in Hertfordshire between 1838 and 1909. Data after 1909 is unreliable as virtually no Hertfordshire newspaper titles have so far been scanned after this date.

Another measure of the standing of a Primitive Methodist society in its local community was the attendance at bazaars and similar fundraising events of prominent local politicians, such as mayors and other councillors and, on occasions, the local gentry. Such attendance would almost certainly guarantee several column inches in the local newspapers. A further indication of the growing acceptance of Primitive Methodism into a local community could be seen in the mutual support being given by other nonconformist denominations in the area, especially Wesleyan Methodists. Many reports of fundraising activities in connection with chapel building, especially those appearing in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, show that Hertfordshire Primitive Methodists were able to make use of the buildings of these other denominations for such occasions, and it was often the case that local nonconformist ministers and others would not only attend but also take part in Primitive Methodist stone laying and opening ceremonies. It was also not unknown for those ministers to offer mutual support and encouragement to the local Primitive Methodist society by their attendance at bazaars and similar fundraising events.

Although fundraising provided the ideal vehicle to raise the profile of Primitive Methodism and to demonstrate its social standing in the community, as well as offering an opportunity to strengthen the fellowship of society members, and was indeed important for these functions, nevertheless its principal purpose was to provide the means for the local society to be able to sustain its own work and to aid the growth of the wider Connexion. As the case of Anstey shows, a society that could do neither of these things would not be able to survive.

Conclusion

This study set out to discover and document the history and development of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire. Its main chapters consider in some depth several different aspects of the denomination; an appreciation of each of these aspects is key to understanding what it was that shaped the rise and growth and the subsequent 'coming of age' of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire. The study has sought to illustrate these aspects with particular reference to the local societies and circuits which the Connexion established in the county, using mainly archival material and records and through socio-economic and demographic analysis of these sources.

The case study of the history of the local society at Anstey demonstrates how these themes came together at the grassroots level and illustrates the part that they played in the growth and development of the Connexion. The social characteristics of the Primitive Methodists at Anstey were very similar to those of members of the Connexion living in the rural areas of East Hertfordshire generally. The opportunity for Anstey Primitive Methodists to demonstrate upward social mobility was to a large extent denied to them because of the prevailing wider economic conditions that existed in the later decades of the nineteenth century and which seem to have affected this part of Hertfordshire particularly badly. Many of those with skilled occupations moved away from Anstey, leaving a society where all the fathers of child-rearing age were almost all agricultural labourers. Moreover, because those who moved away tended to be younger and middle aged, the ones who were left behind were not only unable to sustain the growth of the early days of the society but they also found it increasingly difficult even to maintain the numbers of members.

The evidence from Anstey illustrates clearly the extent to which the chapel was of central importance to the life of Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire, and the records show just how much money, time and effort was spent over the years by all societies in ensuring that it was looked after and remained fit for purpose. Given their socio-economic backgrounds, most of Hertfordshire's Primitive Methodists had never been particularly wealthy and many members found it hard to pay all the financial contributions that were required of them to support not only the local society but also the Circuit and the wider Connexion. The maintenance and upkeep of the chapel was a key outgoing for all local societies and at Anstey in the later decades of the nineteenth century the membership losses made it increasingly difficult to raise sufficient funds to pay the chapel rent. It was the giving up of the chapel, an inevitable consequence of the society's financial state, that ultimately led to the circuit's decision that the society at Anstey should 'cease to meet'.

Circuit records demonstrate that local societies did not exist on their own, but were part of, and were inevitably affected by, the wider Primitive Methodist Connexion. This was most noticeable by the extent of the role and influence of the circuit in the affairs of local societies which could be seen in planning and organisation of services, the supply of

travelling and local preachers to fill preaching appointments, financial oversight and matters of discipline. Despite falling membership numbers and a worsening financial situation, the circuit was determined that everything possible should be done to support a struggling society and secure a future for it, particularly where, as in the case of Anstey, Primitive Methodism represented the only religious alternative to the Church of England.

Nevertheless, the Connexion was pragmatic in recognising that where the long term future of a society was unsustainable, the inevitable decision to 'give it up', as happened at Anstey, had to be made. As the 1899 article in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* reflected, 'where there is absolute failure it is wise to look the plain fact in the face and act accordingly'.³⁰

A study of the local society at Anstey also serves to illustrate very well the 'connexionalism' that is inherent in the history of Primitive Methodism. This is something that can also be seen elsewhere in the Hertfordshire record; indeed, the history of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire can be seen as the quintessence of 'connexionalism', namely local people and societies running their own affairs in their own way whilst still being connected to and forming part of the wider organisation. Examples of the former are the Harvest Festival sale of fruit at Dassells and the annual bazaar at Watford, whereas the latter is exemplified by the appointment and stationing of ministers by, and the promulgation of regulations from, the Connexion.

In the 94 years of its existence in Hertfordshire, Primitive Methodism spread across the whole of the county and was to be found both in villages and rural areas as well as in towns. Societies had become an accepted and important part of their local communities and there was close collaboration between Primitive Methodists and other nonconformist denominations. The activities of local societies attracted benevolent public interest and, particularly from the 1880s, they were widely and positively reported by local newspapers and were actively supported by local politicians and other dignitaries. Primitive Methodism had clearly come of age in Hertfordshire, as it had done elsewhere in the country.

³⁰ *Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1899, p.796.

As noted in Chapter 1, inevitably, there are gaps in the narrative: this study is not, therefore, the last word on Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire and there is more to be discovered. Firstly, there is a need for a more detailed study of Primitive Methodism in Watford. As previously noted, this location was missing from the 1851 Religious Census yet at Methodist Union there were three sizeable and separate Primitive Methodist societies in the town with three of the largest chapels in Hertfordshire. Secondly, further study is warranted of the history of Primitive Methodism in St Albans, in an attempt to discover the reasons for the decline and subsequent loss of this once important missionary society which was responsible for the successful missioning of many different areas across Hertfordshire. Thirdly, it would be beneficial to understand how the Primitive Methodist Connexion in Hertfordshire approached the Union of 1932 and what happened to former Primitive Methodist societies in the period immediately following.

As Methodist Heritage makes clear, Primitive Methodism forms a significant part of the history of the Methodist Church in Great Britain as it exists today.³¹ This history has relevance for the present day because, as the Rev. Richard Teal, President of the Methodist Conference, argued in his presidential address to the Conference in June 2020, referring to John Wesley's *Thoughts Upon Methodism*, 'a church which loses its memory about its basic foundation has no future'.³² It is important, therefore, for the Methodist Church today that the memory of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire is not lost and that its history should be known and understood. Thus, this study serves to address what has been a missing element in the Connexional story and to advance understanding of this previously neglected area of Primitive Methodist history.

McLeod has noted that there is as yet no single definitive interpretation of the history and development of the various strands of nonconformity and, in doing so, has identified the

³¹ See <<http://www.methodistheritage.org.uk/heritageofmethodism.htm>> [accessed 3 July 2020].

³² Rev. Richard Teal, Presidential Address to the Methodist Conference, 27 June 2020 <<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-conference/conference-2020/presidency/the-presidents-address-to-the-methodist-conference-2020/>> [accessed 29 June 2020]. He quoted from John Wesley's 'Thoughts Upon Methodism' where Wesley said "I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case, unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit and discipline with which they first set out." (See John Emory, *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley AM*, Vol VII (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831), p.315.)

need for 'more detailed local research' to assist in drawing more general conclusions. Field has also drawn attention to the need for 'more detailed research at the grass-roots level', as has Obelkevich.³³ This study is a contribution to such research and, as Knight put it, is a 'modest response' to such calls for a more local exploration of the factors at work.³⁴ It supports the general argument that the construction and subsequent maintenance of a chapel was central to the life of local nonconformist congregations and it also provides evidence that corroborates the findings of other studies that nonconformity, and Primitive Methodism in particular, was attractive to a distinctive class following. Watts has argued that the history of Victorian England 'cannot be understood without a knowledge of Nonconformity'.³⁵ This study of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire adds to that knowledge and understanding. Overall, it demonstrates that the Primitive Methodist story in Hertfordshire through the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, whilst distinctive, is nevertheless generally consistent with the broader national picture of nonconformity in the journey from 'dissent' to 'free church'.

³³ McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, p.24; Field, 'The Social Structure of English Methodism - Eighteenth-Twentieth Centuries', p.216; James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey, 1825-1875* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p.256.

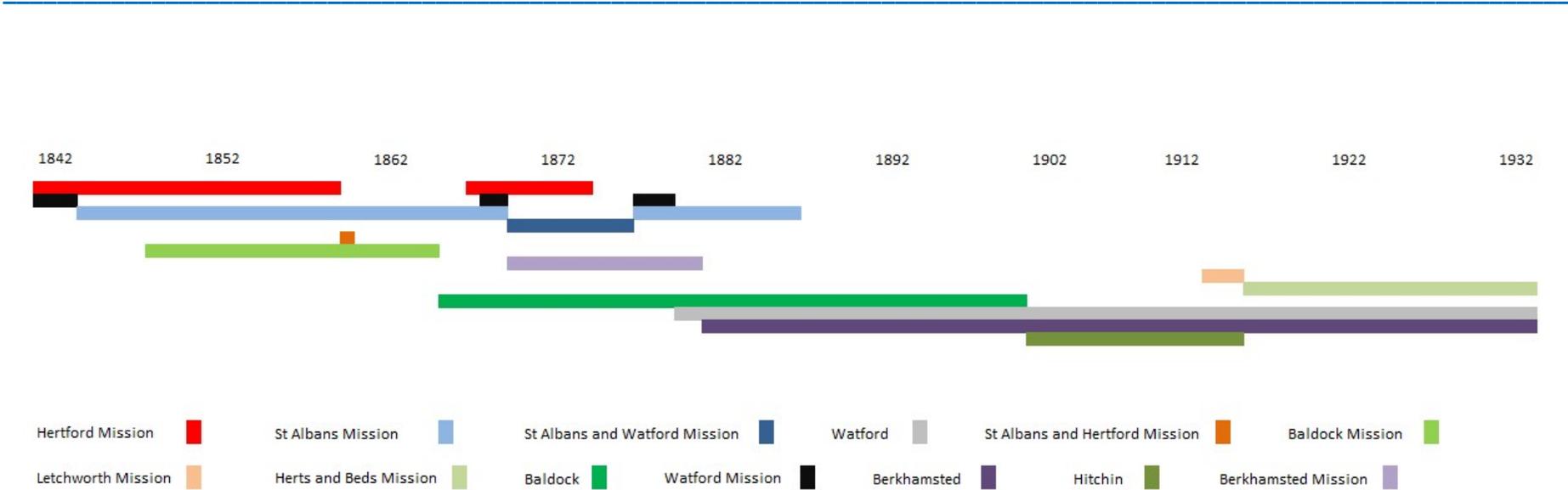
³⁴ Frances Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church and English Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.20.

³⁵ Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II: The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.3.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Primitive Methodist circuits in Hertfordshire



Appendix 2

Data sources for Hertfordshire land ownership

One of the principal sources of land ownership and chapel data that has been used is *Kelly's Directory for Essex, Hertford and Middlesex* for 1874.¹ This year was chosen, firstly, because the period of greatest Primitive Methodist chapel building in Hertfordshire ran from 1858 to 1872, with 16 of the 22 chapels built between 1843 and 1872 having been constructed since 1858, and, secondly, as the early years of the 1870s recorded the highest number of Primitive Methodist chapels in use in Hertfordshire in the whole of the nineteenth century. *Kelly's* lists the major landowners for each parish and indicates, by naming their country seats, whether or not they are resident in the parish. It also gives details of the nonconformist chapels in each location.

The second principal source is the *Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales* (1870-72).² Unlike *Kelly's*, it is the exception rather than the rule for the *Imperial Gazetteer* to list the major landowners in a particular parish. However, the *Imperial Gazetteer* deals with the issue of landownership by grouping parishes into four categories, those used in Hertfordshire being: where land was held 'in one hand'; where land was 'in few hands'; where it was 'subdivided' (or, in one case, simply 'divided'); and where it was 'much subdivided'. The *Imperial Gazetteer* usually also gives a full description of the parish church together with brief details of any nonconformist chapels in the parish.

¹ *Kelly's Directory for Essex, Hertford and Middlesex*, 4th edition (London: Kelly and Co. Ltd, 1874).

² John M. Wilson, *The Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales* (Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, Dublin and New York: A. Fullerton and Co., n.d., c. 1870-2); GB Historical GIS, University of Portsmouth, History of Hertfordshire, Map and description for the county, *A Vision of Britain through Time*, <<http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/place/17451>> [accessed 22 June 2016].

Unfortunately, neither data source is complete. Moreover, as far as accuracy is concerned, given the sheer amount of data referred to in both sources it would be surprising if the errors were limited to those of omission. For example, the parish of Layston is not referred to in *Kelly's* and the *Imperial Gazetteer* omits any mention of Stanstead Abbots and Stanstead St Margarets. In respect of land ownership, *Kelly's* does not list the landowners in the larger towns and, similarly, the *Imperial Gazetteer* often does not give a parish classification for the main urban areas, presumably on the basis of the reasonable inference that such areas were most likely to be much divided. However, as a comparison between the two data sources reveals, that is not always the case. The *Imperial Gazetteer* does not record a classification for Baldock, which it describes as a small town, yet *Kelly's* gives only one resident landowner. Similarly, in the case of Berkhamsted, there is no classification given in the *Imperial Gazetteer* whereas *Kelly's* reports only one landowner. In total, out of 136 parishes, there are 29 cases (21.3%) where the *Imperial Gazetteer* does not record a parish classification, after allowing for a total of 11 cases of towns where land ownership has been assumed to be 'much divided'. In *Kelly's*, apart from the parishes that are not mentioned at all, the only gaps in land ownership data are for seven of the county's towns. Nevertheless, in all of these cases it is reasonable to assume that there were multiple landowners.

There are also some discrepancies between the numbers of landowners recorded in *Kelly's* and the parish classification given in the *Imperial Gazetteer*. In the case of Aldbury, *Kelly's* lists three major landowners, two of whom reside in the parish, whereas the *Imperial Gazetteer* classifies ownership in the parish as being 'in one hand'. Similarly, in both Furneux Pelham and Norton *Kelly's* records more than six major landowners, with two and four residing in the parish respectively, although the *Imperial Gazetteer* describes both parishes as being 'in few hands'. The opposite is true of Broxbourne, of which *Kelly's* said there was one resident landowner but the *Imperial Gazetteer* listed as 'subdivided', and Widford, where *Kelly's* listed two major landowners but the *Imperial Gazetteer* classified the parish as 'much subdivided'.

Snell and Ell noted that 'despite some historians' use of the *Gazetteer* ... there has been no rigorous examination of how reliable its coverage and classifications were'. In order to test

the reliability of the land ownership data they compared the information in the *Imperial Gazetteer* for Leicestershire with land-tax assessment data for the county. On the basis of a number of statistical tests, Snell and Ell concluded that ‘the *Imperial Gazetteer* is a dependable source for land ownership’ and that ‘its classifications can be treated confidently by historians’.³ Similar tests have been carried out in order to compare the land ownership data for Hertfordshire given in *Kelly’s* with that referred to in the *Imperial Gazetteer* and the results are given in Table A2 for the 91 parishes in the county where a comparison between the two data sets was possible.

Table A2: Number of owners in Hertfordshire in 1874 by categories of land ownership (compared with Leicestershire data for 1832)

Land ownership	Hertfordshire		Leicestershire	
	Mean rank	n.	Mean rank	n.
In one hand	23	7	5.5	4
In few hands	44.5	58	38.5	49
Subdivided	48.4	13	63.4	24
Much divided	62.5	13	78.2	30
Total		91		107

Chi-square	10.7	42.4
Degrees of freedom	3	3
Significance	0.014	0.000

A Kruskal-Wallis test of the data in Table A2 shows that the relationship between the two sets of Hertfordshire land ownership data is statistically highly significant, although not quite as strong as it was in Leicestershire, with the likelihood of the distribution of land ownership derived from the data in *Kelly’s* arising by chance being 1.4%. Thus, the land ownership data in *Kelly’s* can be treated as a reliable source for land ownership data in Hertfordshire.

Both *Kelly’s* and the *Imperial Gazetteer* provide details of the nonconformist chapels and other religious buildings in each parish, aside from the Established Church. However, this is another area where there are distinct differences between the two sources. The two

³ K. D. M. Snell and Paul Ell, *Rival Jerusalems – The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.440-448 and p.370.

descriptions only tallied for 90 out of the 136 parishes, with 33.8% failing to match. One of the main reasons for this was the failure of the *Imperial Gazetteer* to record religious buildings in the main towns. Overall, *Kelly's* recorded 140 religious buildings in Hertfordshire, as against 67 in the *Imperial Gazetteer*. These missing buildings are not evenly spread across the various denominations: 24% of Independent chapels are missing, as are 34% of the Wesleyan Methodist chapels. Baptists and Catholics are both missing 60% of their buildings, but the Primitive Methodists fared worst of all, with 77% of their chapels not being recorded in the *Imperial Gazetteer*. *Kelly's* is not immune from errors of omission or mis-description either. Nevertheless, the number of errors detected in the *Kelly's* data is considerably less than the number found in the *Imperial Gazetteer* data. In addition, because of the high numbers of religious buildings missing from the *Imperial Gazetteer*, *Kelly's* is to be preferred as a reliable source for data on nonconformist chapels.

Appendix 3

Open and closed parishes

The classification of parishes in terms of land ownership has been attempted by a number of historians. Whilst each has adopted a slightly different approach, there does seem to be a general consensus that four categories are an appropriate number for a classification system, with two categories signifying an open parish and two a closed parish. In this Appendix, the systems devised by Mills, Everitt, Obelkevich and Ambler are compared.¹

For Mills, Obelkevich and Ambler, parishes in categories 1 and 2 were classed as closed whilst those that fell in categories 3 and 4 were regarded as open. Everitt used slightly different terminology, preferring to describe categories 1 and 2 as 'estate' parishes, since all the land was held by one or a few dominant landowners, whereas categories 3 and 4 were 'freeholder' parishes, as the land was divided among many, often small and independent, owners.

From the descriptions given in Table A3(1) below, it can be seen that the categories devised by Mills and Obelkevich were based on the relative size of land holdings in the parish, measured in terms of acreage. In contrast, Everitt's classification was modelled closely on the categories in the *Imperial Gazetteer*; Ambler's categories are similar to Everitt's and were derived from his examination of land ownership data taken from *White's 1856 Directory of Lincolnshire*.

¹ Dennis Mills, 'English Villages in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries; a Sociological Approach. Part 1: the concept of a sociological classification', *Amateur Historian*, 6.8 (1965), p.272; Alan Everitt, *The Pattern of Rural Dissent: the nineteenth century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1972), pp.20-21; James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey, 1825-1875* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p.12; Rodney Ambler, 'Social change and religious experience: aspects of rural society in south Lincolnshire, with specific reference to Primitive Methodism 1815-1875' (PhD thesis, University of Hull, 1984), pp.46-64.

Table A3(1): Parish classification systems

<i>Author</i>	<i>Category 1</i>	<i>Category 2</i>	<i>Category 3</i>	<i>Category 4</i>
Mills	Squire's village where a resident landlord owned at least half the acreage	Absentee landlord's village where at least half of the acreage was owned by the absentee proprietor	Freehold or peasant village where there were more than forty proprietors or one in which there were between twenty and forty proprietors owning less than an average of forty acres each	Divided villages which did not fall into one of the above three classes
Everitt	Parishes where the property was in one person's hands	Parishes where the property is in a few hands	Parishes where property was subdivided	Parishes where property was much subdivided
Obelkevich	Squire's parishes, in which one landlord owned more than half the land	Oligarchic' parishes in which a few landlords owned most of the land but none had more than half	Freeholder' parishes in which the land was owned by smallholders averaging less than forty acres each	Divided' parishes, all those not falling within the preceding categories, in which there were often several large landlords with small or medium holdings and a large number of smallholders
Ambler	Village where the land, except the glebe, is in the hands of one resident proprietor	Village where the land, except the glebe, is in the hands of one or two proprietors who may be non-resident, or as many as three proprietors if one of the three is resident	Divided village which may have as many as three non-resident owners	Much divided village having many owners and occupiers where the directory usually refers to other small owners, apart from the families which it lists by name, as owners in the general description of the village

Data for the area of land holdings in Hertfordshire are not readily available and so, for this reason alone, a system of classification of parishes based on the models of Mills and

Obelkevich has been discounted. The close association of Everitt’s system with the classification used in the *Imperial Gazetteer* has its attraction but, because of the concerns (discussed in Appendix 2) about the accuracy of some of its Hertfordshire land ownership data, this, too, has been discounted. Ambler’s model is based on data from a commercial directory, so it can be applied equally well to the land ownership data for Hertfordshire derived from *Kelly’s* which, as shown in Appendix 2, is statistically reliable. Accordingly, the approach that has been followed in this study is to classify parishes to one of four categories, based on the category descriptions set out below in Table A3(2).

Those parishes within category I and category II are classified as closed parishes, whereas those in category III and category IV are open. However, as Ambler noted, such classifications can ‘never be applied with rigid uniformity’ and, moreover, they are only representative of a particular moment in time. Nevertheless, as Snell and Ell point out, ‘landownership was a long-standing phenomenon: parish structures in this regard were not prone to change much over the short term’.²

Table A3(2): Parish classification system for Hertfordshire

<i>Category I</i> In one hand	<i>Category II</i> In few hands	<i>Category III</i> Divided	<i>Category IV</i> Much divided
A parish where the land is in the hands of one resident proprietor	A parish where the land is in the hands of one or two proprietors who may be non-resident, or as many as three proprietors if one of the three is resident	A parish which may have as many as three non-resident owners	A parish having many owners and occupiers where the directory usually refers to other small owners, apart from the families which it lists by name, as owners in the general description of the village

² Ambler, ‘Social change and religious experience’, p.50; K. D. M. Snell and Paul Ell, *Rival Jerusalems – The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.444-445.

Appendix 4

Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire

<i>Location</i>	<i>Date of formation</i>	<i>Meeting place</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Number of years before chapel built</i>
Hertford	1838	Unspecified; 1841, house in St Andrews	Chapel built in 1844	6
Trowley Bottom (Flamstead)	1838	House	Chapel built in 1845	7
Watford	1840	Room in Hedge's Yard; from 1843, house in occupation of George Grigg	Chapel formed at Carey Place 1865 (sold 1885); Queen's Road chapel built 1886	25
Sopwell Lane, St Albans	1841	Preaching room	Chapel built in 1844	3
Baldock	1842	Open air; house from 1844; converted house 1847	Chapel built in 1857	15
Chorleywood	1842	House	Chapel built 1893	51
Chipperfield	1842	House	Chapel never built	
Sandridge	1843	House	Chapel never built	
Great Munden (Frogs Hall, nr Ware)	1844	House	Chapel never built; last mentioned in 1851	
Bushey	1844	Unspecified	Chapel built at Clay Hill 1852; The Rutts, Bushey Heath - 1883 to 1890; High Road, Bushey 1891 (demolished 1967)	8
Norton	1844	Open air, then a house	Chapel never built	

Weston	1844	House	Chapel never built	
Roestock	1844	Unspecified	Chapel never built (?)	
Willian	1845	Unspecified	Chapel never built	
Hitchin (1)	1845	House at Hitchin Hill	Chapel never built	
Aston	By 1847	Occasional preaching	Chapel never built	
Graveley	By 1847	House	Chapel never built	
Benington	1847	House; barn from 1850	Chapel built 1862	15
Hatfield, Newgate Street	1847	Chapel	First mentioned in Upton in 1847; closed in 1858?	
Hemel Hempstead (Crouch Field)	1849	Meeting room	Chapel built in 1869	20
Amwell End/Great Amwell/Ware	1850	Unspecified	Chapel never built	
Southdown, Harpenden	Early 1850s	Open air then house	Chapel built 1865	15
Essendon	By 1851	No evidence found for a chapel	Referred to in 1851 census	
Brickendon	By 1851	Not a separate building and not used exclusively as a place of worship	Chapel never built	
Anstey	By 1851	Preaching room	Converted barn	8
Furneux Pelham	By 1851	Barn	Chapel built 1870	19
Stevenage	1851	House	Chapel never built	
East Common, Redbourn	1852	Unspecified	Chapel built 1869	10
Ashwell	Since 1852	Cottage	Chapel built 1861	19
Langley Common (Kings Langley ?)	Since 1852	No evidence found for a chapel	Referred to in Return of the churches, chapels and buildings registered for religious worship - House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (1882); and Urwick	
Lower Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead	1852-1855	Meeting room	Chapel built 1861	19

Berkhamsted	1856	House	Chapel built 1867	11
Preston	By 1858	Preaching house belonging to Sister Mead	Chapel never built	0
Sandon	1861	Open air then house	Chapel built 1864	3
Goff's Oak	After 1861	Unspecified	Chapel built 1868	7
Bendish	1862	Chapel	Chapel built 1862	?
Markyate	1862	Chapel	Chapel built 1862	?
Dassells	1862	House then room (or barn)	Chapel built 1868	?
Barley	1863	Cart shed; two cottages converted to a meeting house 1866	Chapel never built; no record after 1883	
Royston	1863	Room	Chapel never built	0
Croxley Green	1866	House	Chapel built 1868; demolished and rebuilt 1893	2
Langdon Street, Tring	1869	Unspecified	Chapel built 1870	1
Aldenham	1870	House; iron mission room from 1874 to 1885; then open air or blacksmith's forge	Chapel built 1887	17
St Albans Road, Watford	1891	Iron chapel built 1891	Chapel built 1898	7
Hitchin (2)	1898	House	Chapel built 1900	2
Whippendell Road, Watford	1901	House	Chapel built 1903	2
Boundary Road, St Albans	1907	Hotel	Chapel built 1909	2
Letchworth	After 1907	Formerly meeting in the Skittles Inn in Nevells Road (a non-alcoholic public house)	Chapel built 1914	7
Knebworth	1930	Unspecified; mission hall rented from 1931	Chapel not built before 1932	

Appendix 5

Primitive Methodist chapels in Hertfordshire

<i>Location</i>	<i>Date built</i>	<i>In use in 1932</i>	<i>Date closed (if before 1932)</i>	<i>Number of sittings (where known)</i>	<i>Years in existence</i>	<i>Post-Union (where known)</i>
St Albans (Sopwell Lane)	1844	No	1875	200	32	Converted to a dwelling
Hertford	1844	No	1873	60	31	
Trowley Bottom	1845	Yes		125	88	Converted to a dwelling
Newgate Street, near Hatfield	1847	No	1858 (?)		12 (?)	
Anstey	1851	No	By 1921	80	62 (?)	Believed still to be in existence as an outbuilding to a house
Bushey (Clay Hill)	1852	No	1883		32	Converted to a theatre and now used as offices
Baldock	1857	No	1916	300	60	
Ashwell	1861	?		150	?	
Hemel Hempstead (Marlowes)	1861	No	1883 (?)	120	22 (?)	Demolished
Benington	1862	Yes		200	71	Demolished and rebuilt in 1933
Bendish	1862	Yes		100	72	Converted to a dwelling
Markyate	1862	No	1907		46	Demolished
Sandon	1864	?			?	

Harpenden	1865	Yes		265	68	Still in use
Watford (Carey Place)	1865	No	1885	160	21	Demolished
Berkhamsted	1867	Yes		275	66	Converted to restaurant and offices
Dassells	1868	Yes		90	65	
Croxley Green (first chapel)	1868	No	1893		26	Demolished (second chapel built on same site)
Goff's Oak	1868	Yes		80	65	Demolished in 1976-77
Redbourn	1869	Yes		100	71	Demolished
Boxmoor	1869	Yes		80	64	
Furneux Pelham	1870	Yes		130	64	
Tring	1870	Yes		120	63	Demolished
Bushey Heath (The Rutts)	1883	No	1890		8	Demolished
Watford (Queens Road)	1886	Yes		250	47	Demolished
Aldenham	1887	Yes		100	46	Converted to a dwelling
Watford (St Albans Road)	1891	Yes		450	42	Now used as Elim Pentecostal church
Bushey (High Road)	1891	Yes		200	42	Demolished
Chorleywood	1893	Yes		130	40	Converted to arts centre
Croxley Green (second chapel)	1893	Yes		225	40	Still in use
Hitchin	1900	Yes		180	33	Demolished
Watford (Whippendell Road)	1903	Yes		400	30	Demolished and rebuilt in 1938
St Albans (Boundary Road)	1909	Yes		200	24	Demolished
Letchworth	1914	Yes		500	19	Demolished

Appendix 6

The social structure of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire in the 19th and 20th centuries

(a) St Albans

Table A6(1): Hertfordshire locations referred to in the St Albans Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

<i>Locations</i>	<i>1840s</i>	<i>1850s</i>	<i>1860s</i>	<i>1870s</i>	<i>1880s</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
St Albans	4	15	17	10	3	49	40.8%
Redbourn		3	3	11	6	23	19.2%
Hemel Hempstead		8	7			15	12.5%
Watford		4	8		1	13	10.8%
Bushey		1	3	1		5	4.2%
Colney Heath		2				2	1.7%
Roestock		1	1			2	1.7%
Shenley		1				1	0.8%
South Mimms		1				1	0.8%
Hoddesden			1			1	0.8%
Aston			1			1	0.8%
Northchurch			1			1	0.8%
Letchmore Heath			1			1	0.8%
Berkhampstead			1			1	0.8%
Marshmore				1		1	0.8%
Croxley Green				1		1	0.8%
Smug Oak			1			1	0.8%
Bernards Heath					1	1	0.8%
TOTAL	4	36	45	24	11	120	

Table A6(2): Occupations referred to in the St Albans Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

	1840s		1850s		1860s		1870s		1880s		Total	%	RG Class	Total	%
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%					
Gentleman			1	2.8%							1	0.8%	I		
Minister			1	2.8%			1	4.2%			2	1.7%	I		
Doctor					1	2.2%					1	0.8%	I	4	3.3%
Grocer					1	2.2%					1	0.8%	II		
Silk factor			1	2.8%	1	2.2%					2	1.7%	II		
Dealer/poulterer					1	2.2%					1	0.8%	II		
General dealer					1	2.2%					1	0.8%	II	5	4.2%
Shoe maker					1	2.2%					1	0.8%	III		
Brick maker							1	4.2%			1	0.8%	III		
Tailor	1	25.0%									1	0.8%	III		
Trimming weaver	1	25.0%	3	8.3%							4	3.3%	III		
Carpenter			1	2.8%	2	4.4%					3	2.5%	III		
Gas man			1	2.8%							1	0.8%	III		
Boat man			1	2.8%							1	0.8%	III		
Baker			1	2.8%							1	0.8%	III		
Straw plaiter					1	2.2%					1	0.8%	III		
Blocker			1	2.8%	1	2.2%	2	8.3%			4	3.3%	III		
Poulterer			1	2.8%							1	0.8%	III		
Straw splitter			1	2.8%							1	0.8%	III		
Wheelwright			1	2.8%							1	0.8%	III		
Sawyer			1	2.8%	1	2.2%					2	1.7%	III		
Engine fitter			1	2.8%							1	0.8%	III		
Cordwainer			1	2.8%							1	0.8%	III		
Police (?)/rlway servant					1	2.2%					1	0.8%	III		
Silk weaver					1	2.2%					1	0.8%	III		
Hat maker					1	2.2%			1	9.1%	2	1.7%	III		
Railway policeman					2	4.4%					2	1.7%	III		
Blocker or greengrocer					1	2.2%					1	0.8%	III		
Strawplatt stiffener					2	4.4%					2	1.7%	III		
Agent for Friendly Soc.					1	2.2%					1	0.8%	III		
Whitesmith					1	2.2%					1	0.8%	III		
Engine driver					1	2.2%					1	0.8%	III		
Blacksmith							1	4.2%			1	0.8%	III		

Signalman				2	8.3%			2	1.7%	III		
Clothiers assistant				1	4.2%			1	0.8%	III		
Tailor				1	4.2%			1	0.8%	III		
Paper maker				1	4.2%			1	0.8%	III		
Bonnet sewer			1	2.2%				1	0.8%	III		
Silk throwster			1	2.2%				1	0.8%	III		
Well sinker						1	9.1%	1	0.8%	III	46 38.3%	
Ag labourer		9	25.0%	7	15.6%	6	25.0%	5	45.5%	27	22.5%	
Braizier		1	2.8%					1	0.8%	IV		
Rat catcher		1	2.8%					1	0.8%	IV		
Shepherd				1	2.2%			1	0.8%	IV		
Gardener		1	2.8%	4	8.9%		1	9.1%	6	5.0%	IV	
Car man				1	2.2%		1	9.1%	2	1.7%	IV	
											38 31.7%	
Labourer	2	50.0%	5	13.9%	7	15.6%	8	33.3%	2	18.2%	24	20.0%
Railway navvy				1	2.2%				1	0.8%	V	
Day labourer			1	2.8%					1	0.8%	V	
Rag and bone merchant			1	2.8%					1	0.8%	V	
											27	22.5%

(b) Baldock

Table A6(3): Hertfordshire locations referred to in the Baldock Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

<i>Locations</i>	<i>1870s</i>	<i>1880s</i>	<i>1890s</i>	<i>1900s</i>	<i>1910s</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Baldock	19	14	11	1		45	39.8%
Ashwell	8	10	7	1		26	23.0%
Norton	4	7	3			14	12.4%
Benington	1	2	3	1	1	8	7.1%
Whempstead				1	2	3	2.7%
Watton	1	1	2			4	3.5%
Hitchin				2	1	3	2.7%
Little Munden				1	1	2	1.7%
Barley	2					2	1.7%
Bygrave			1			1	0.9%
Ware	1					1	0.9%
Walkern			1			1	0.9%
Royston			1			1	0.9%
Furneux Pelham					1	1	0.9%
Watford					1	1	0.9%
TOTAL	36	34	29	7	7	113	

Table A6(4): Occupations referred to in the Baldock Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

	1870s		1880s		1890s		1900s		1910s		Total	%	RG Class	Total	%
	No	%													
PM minister			1	2.9%							1	0.9%	I	1	0.9%
Farmer	1	2.8%	2	5.9%	3	10.3%	3	42.9%	5	71.4%	14	12.4%	II		
Farm bailiff			1	2.9%							1	0.9%	II		
Baker and grocer			1	2.9%							1	0.9%	II		
Post Office clerk					1	3.4%					1	0.9%	II		
Excise man			1	2.9%							1	0.9%	II	18	15.9%
Blacksmith	2	5.6%	1	2.9%			1	14.3%			4	3.5%	III		
Baker	1	2.8%			1	3.4%					2	1.8%	III		
Bricklayer	1	2.8%									1	0.9%	III		
Groom and coachman					1	3.4%					1	0.9%	III		
Groom and gardener			1	2.9%							1	0.9%	III		
Miller			1	2.9%							1	0.9%	III		
Maltster			1	2.9%							1	0.9%	III		
Wheelwright					1	3.4%					1	0.9%	III		
Painter					1	3.4%					1	0.9%	III		
Postman					1	3.4%					1	0.9%	III		
Parchment maker							1	14.3%			1	0.9%	III		
Railway signalman	1	2.8%			1	3.4%					2	1.8%	III		
Flyman	1	2.8%									1	0.9%	III	18	15.9%
Agricultural labourer	12	33.3%	8	23.5%	5	17.2%	1	14.3%			26	23.0%	IV		
Shepherd			1	2.9%	1	3.4%					2	1.8%	IV		
Horsekeeper					3	10.3%					3	2.7%	IV		
Platelayer	1	2.8%			2	6.9%			1	14.3%	4	3.5%	IV		
Gardener	2	5.6%	1	2.9%							3	2.7%	IV		
Drayman	1	2.8%									1	0.9%	IV		
Cellarman					1	3.4%					1	0.9%	IV		
Watercress picker	1	2.8%									1	0.9%	IV		
Ticket collector							1	14.3%			1	0.9%	IV		
Carman			1	2.9%					1	14.3%	2	1.8%	IV		
Malt carter	1	2.8%	1	2.9%	1	3.4%					3	2.7%	IV		
Malt maker	3	8.3%									3	2.7%	IV	50	44.2%
Labourer	1	2.8%	3	8.8%							4	3.5%	V		
Road labourer	1	2.8%									1	0.9%	V		

Miller's corn labourer	1	2.8%					1	0.9%	V		
Railway labourer	1	2.8%	1	2.9%			2	1.8%	V		
Porter			1	2.9%	1	3.4%	2	1.8%	V		
Railway porter			1	2.9%			1	0.9%	V		
Coal porter			1	2.9%			1	0.9%	V		
Maltster's labourer			1	2.9%	2	6.9%	3	2.7%	V		
Bricklayer's labourer	1	2.8%	1	2.9%	1	3.4%	3	2.7%	V		
Brewer's labourer	2	5.6%	2	5.9%	2	6.9%	6	5.3%	V		
Marine dealer	1	2.8%	1	2.9%			2	1.8%	V	26	23.0%

(c) East Hertfordshire

Table A6(5): Hertfordshire locations referred to in the Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

<i>Locations</i>	<i>1850s</i>	<i>1860s</i>	<i>1870s</i>	<i>1880s</i>	<i>1890s</i>	<i>1900s</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Anstey	25	24	10	9	2		70	35.0%
Furneux Pelham	14	13	9	11	11	4	62	31.0%
Dassells		4	3	6	3	2	18	9.0%
Hare Street		4	8			1	13	6.5%
Nuthampstead	5	3	2	2			12	6.0%
Stocking Pelham	1	1	2	1	2		7	3.5%
Meesden	4						4	2.0%
Braughing		1	2				3	1.5%
Bishops Stortford			2			1	3	1.5%
Patmore Heath	1	1					2	1.0%
Albury	1						1	0.5%
Barley		1					1	0.5%
Brent Pelham				1			1	0.5%
Buntingford		1					1	0.5%
Little Hormead			1				1	0.5%
Much Hadham					1		1	0.5%
Puckeridge					1		1	0.5%
Ware					1		1	0.5%
Westmill		1					1	0.5%
Wyddial						1	1	0.5%
TOTAL	49	53	39	29	21	9	200	

Table A6(6): Occupations referred to in the Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit baptismal register

	1850s		1860s		1870s		1880s		1890s		1900s		Total	%	RG Class	Total	%
	No	%															
Ag foreman									2	9.5%			2	1.0%	II		
Farm bailiff							1	3.4%			1	11.1%	2	1.0%	II		
Farmer									1	4.8%	2	22.2%	3	1.5%	II		
Grocer	1	2.0%	1	1.9%									2	1.0%	II		
Miller					2	5.1%							2	1.0%	II		
Shopkeeper							1	3.4%					1	0.5%	II		
Thatcher	1	2.0%	2	3.8%	1	2.6%			1	4.8%	1	11.1%	6	3.0%	II	18	8.5%
Baker									1	4.8%			1	0.5%	III		
Blacksmith					1	2.6%							1	0.5%	III		
Brewer	1	2.0%											1	0.5%	III		
Bricklayer									1	4.8%	1	11.1%	2	1.0%	III		
Brickmaker			3	5.7%	5	12.8%	1	3.4%					9	4.5%	III		
Carpenter	2	4.1%	2	3.8%	3	7.7%							7	3.5%	III		
Foreman	1	2.0%											1	0.5%	III		
Groom							1	3.4%					1	0.5%	III		
Shoemaker			1	1.9%	2	5.1%							3	1.5%	III		
Tailor											1	11.1%	1	0.5%	III	27	13.5%
Ag labourer	40	81.6%	39	73.6%	18	46.2%	20	69.0%	4	19.0%	1	11.1%	122	61.0%	IV		
Carman			1	1.9%	1	2.6%	1	3.4%	2	9.5%	1	11.1%	6	3.0%	IV		
Carter	1	2.0%											1	0.5%	IV		
Gardener					1	2.6%	1	3.4%					2	1.0%	IV		
Haybinder									1	4.8%			1	0.5%	IV		
Horsekeeper					2	5.1%			3	14.3%			5	2.5%	IV		
Horseman									4	19.0%			4	2.0%	IV		
Platelay			1	1.9%									1	0.5%	IV		
Shepherd			2	3.8%	1	2.6%	1	3.4%			1	11.1%	5	2.5%	IV		
Turncock							1	3.4%					1	0.5%	IV	148	74.0%
Labourer	2	4.1%	1	1.9%			1	3.4%					4	2.0%	V		
Railway labourer					2	5.1%							2	1.0%	V		
Roadman									1	4.8%			1	0.5%	V	7	4.0%

Appendix 7

The social structure of Primitive Methodism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

Results from studies of the social structure of Primitive Methodist societies, based on the Registrar General's Classes I to V¹

(a) 19th century

Table A7(1): Social structure of Primitive Methodist societies – 19 th century					
Location	n =	Registrar General's Classes			
		I	II	III	IV-V
		%	%	%	%
Rural North Nottinghamshire	305	1	13	18	67
Boston and Lincoln	101	4	10	19	67
London 1841-1870	384	1	13	44	42
London 1871-1900	660	2	17	46	36
Falmouth	c.200	0	0	40	60
Oxford circuit 1841-1860	141	2	13	34	51
Oxford circuit 1861-1880	280	0	15	31	54
Oxford circuit 1880-1900	127	0	17	28	55
Reading	780	0	9	35	57
Norwich	698	0	10	30	60
Gainsborough, Horncastle and Louth	413	0	7	16	77
Black Country (Wednesfield, Monmore Green)	529	0	0	25	76
Hexham 1880-1900	319	0	17	14	69
Average for 19 th century		1	11	29	59

¹ The results of these studies come from various sources, but they are all referred to in Field, 'The Social Structure of English Methodism', pp.204-211.

(b) Late 19th century (post 1875)

Table A7(2): Social structure of Primitive Methodist societies – late 19th century

<i>Location</i>	<i>n =</i>	<i>Registrar General's Classes</i>			
		<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV-V</i>
		%	%	%	%
London 1871-1900	660	2	17	46	36
Oxford circuit 1880-1900	127	0	17	28	55
Hexham 1880-1900	319	0	17	14	69
Average for the late 19 th century		1	17	29	53

(c) 20th century

Table A7(3): Social structure of Primitive Methodist societies – 20th century

<i>Location</i>	<i>n =</i>	<i>Registrar General's Classes</i>			
		<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV-V</i>
		%	%	%	%
London 1901-1930	877	3	29	43	26
Oxford circuit 1901-1920	134	0	20	31	49
Oxford circuit 1921-1940	86	1	16	49	34
Lancaster and Preston 1921-1930	182	2	26	43	28
Lincoln 1901-1930	267	0	15	46	39
Average for the 20 th century		1	11	42	35

Appendix 8

Schemes of occupational classification

There are a number of difficulties associated with using occupational data as a means of identifying social class, not least the determination of the most appropriate way of classifying the data. Nevertheless, the systematic organisation and classification of such data is necessary in order to make use of it, despite the problems that have been extensively addressed in a wide body of literature.¹ Some of the difficulties that can be encountered in attempting to classify occupational data are the misclassification of occupations and the lack of standardisation of occupational terminology or agreed standard measures. Moreover, the more general the terminology the more likely it is to cover a range of skills – for example, ‘shoemaker’ does not distinguish between master and apprentice and ‘baker’ could be an employer or an employee. In addition, any classification scheme risks losing detail through aggregation; the greater the number of subdivisions the greater the uncertainties in allocating occupations, with consequentially a greater potential for error, but fewer subdivisions results in a possible blurring of occupational distinctiveness and the risk of producing unhelpful or meaningless results.²

Lambert and Bihagen have shown, nevertheless, that occupational data is a very good indicator of social stratification, although, in classifying such data, it has to be remembered, as Woollard has pointed out, that ‘occupational titles in themselves are classificatory’.³ Mills

¹ London Electoral History: Steps Towards Democracy - 7.12 Problems in classifying social class by occupation, endnote 1 <<http://leh.ncl.ac.uk/PDF's/LEH-Classification/LEH-CLASSIFICATION7.12SOCIAL-CLASS.pdf>> [accessed December 2014].

² London Electoral History: Steps Towards Democracy - 7.11 Classification by occupation, pp.1-8 <<http://leh.ncl.ac.uk/PDF's/LEH-Classification/LEH-CLASSIFICATION7.11OCCUPATIONS.pdf>> [accessed December 2014]; Paul Lambert and Erik Bihagen, ‘Stratification research and occupation-based social classifications’, *DAMES Node Technical Paper*, Economic and Social Research Council, January 2011, p.6.

³ Lambert and Bihagen, ‘Stratification research and occupation-based social classifications’, p.4. For examples of the use of occupational data see: W. A. Armstrong, ‘The use of information about occupations’, in *Nineteenth-century society. Essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social*

and Schurer commented that, in making a decision on which method of classification should be adopted, a key consideration is the ability to compare the results with other similar studies.⁴ This is an important consideration for the analysis of Primitive Methodist baptism registers and other membership data in order to determine whether there were any similarities or distinct differences between the followers of Primitive Methodism in Hertfordshire and other parts of the country.

There are various different methods of classifying occupational data in order to ascertain the social composition of a population. Helen Tyler, in her study of education and social mobility in and around Hitchin between 1870 and 1914, reviewed the work of a number of researchers from different disciplines all of whom used some form of occupational classification in their studies. She noted in particular that there were a number of ‘cross-overs’ between the various methodologies and concluded that, for her study, a comparative analysis of occupational data based on an 1895 coding of census data and a 20th century coding system would ‘give the most accurate results for the period [being studied] with the source material available’.⁵

In the 1940s, Moser and Hall undertook an inquiry into the use of occupation as a criterion for social grading. Writing about the inquiry in 1954, they noted that ‘several occupational classifications already exist, including those of the Registrar-General, the Population Investigation Committee and the Social Survey’. They concluded, albeit without explanation, that ‘for various reasons, none of these was entirely suited to our purpose’, preferring instead their own seven-point classification ‘prepared with the object of distinguishing

data, ed. by E. A. Wrigley (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 191–310; G. Routh, *Occupations of the people of Great Britain, 1801–1981: with a compendium of a paper by Charles Booth* (London: Macmillan, 1987); K. Schürer, ‘Understanding and coding the occupations of the past’, in *The use of occupations in historical analysis*, ed. by K. Schürer and H. Diederiks (St. Katharinen: Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte in Kommission bei Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 1993), 101–62; Matthew Woollard, ‘The Classification of Occupations in the 1881 Census of England and Wales’, *Historical Censuses and Social Surveys Research Group Occasional Paper No. 1* (Colchester: Department of History, University of Essex, 1999), p.28.

⁴ D. R. Mills and K. Schurer, ‘Employment and occupations’, in *Local Communities in the Victorian Census Enumerators’ Books*, ed. by Dennis Mills and Kevin Schurer (Oxford: Leopard Head’s Press Limited, 1996), pp. 136-160 (p.157).

⁵ Helen Tyler, ‘Education and Social Mobility 1870-1914: A study of four schools in the Registration District of Hitchin’ (MA dissertation, University of Hertfordshire, 2014).

between occupations in terms of their social prestige'.⁶ The main objective of their seven classes, listed in Table A8(1), was to refine and sub-divide the Registrar General's Class III into smaller and more distinctive categories, which they referred to as (iii), (iv) and (v).

Table A8(1): Moser and Hall's classification of occupational data	
<i>Class</i>	<i>Description</i>
(i)	Professional and high administrative
(ii)	Managerial and executive
(iii)	Inspectional, supervisory and other non-manual, higher grade
(iv)	Inspectional, supervisory and other non-manual, lower grade
(v)	Skilled manual and routine grades of non-manual
(vi)	Semi-skilled manual
(vii)	Unskilled manual

Others who devised their own classification schema were sociologists, like Moser and Hall, or geographers, writers from these disciplines believing that their particular use of occupational data required a unique classification system either in order to permit a more fine-grained socio-economic analysis than was possible with the broader classes of the Registrar General's scheme or to meet particular theoretical or empirical requirements.⁷

Historians, however, seem to have preferred classifications based on the Registrar General's five-class scheme of 1951, itself based on earlier work in 1911 where social class measures were introduced as 'a summary of occupations designed to represent "social grades"'.⁸ The five classes, with examples of 1951 occupations assigned by the Registrar General to each class, are set out in Table A8(2) below. Andrew Miles used this classification to analyse occupational mobility between 1839 and 1914, as did Baines and Johnson, in their study of

⁶ C. A. Moser and J. R. Hall, 'The Social Grading of Occupations' in *Social Mobility in Britain*, ed. by D. V. Glass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1954), pp.29-50 (p.30).

⁷ See, for example, Kenneth Prandy and Wendy Bottero, 'Social Reproduction and Mobility in Britain and Ireland in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *Sociology*, 34 (2000), 265-281; John H. Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Keith A. Cowlard, 'The Identification of Social (Class) Areas and their Place in Nineteenth-Century Urban Development', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 4 (1979), 239-257; Lambert and Bihagen, 'Stratification research and occupation-based social classifications', p.7.

⁸ Caroline Hall, 'A picture of the United Kingdom using the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification', *Population Trends*, 125 (Autumn 2006), 7-14 (p.7).

working class social mobility in interwar London, and David Jackson, in his work on occupational and geographical stability in Sittingbourne.⁹

TABLE A8(2): The Registrar General's 1951 classification of occupational data		
Class		Examples of 1951 occupations in each class
Class I	Professional	Accountant, architect, chemist, doctor, clergyman, judge, lawyer, optician, solicitor
Class II	Intermediate	Farmer, laboratory technician, M.P. nurse, police officer, teacher
Class III	Skilled non-manual	Cashier, clerical worker, estate agent, sales rep. secretary, shop assistant, waiter
	Skilled manual	Baker, bus driver, bricklayer, carpenter, electrician, hairdresser, policeman, train driver
Class IV	Semi-skilled	Agricultural worker, barman, fisherman, hospital orderly, packer
Class V	Unskilled	Road sweeper, labourer, car park attendant, refuse collector, window cleaner

In his 1974 study of York in 1841 and 1851, W. A. Armstrong analysed nineteenth century occupational data using the Registrar General's 1951 classification scheme, although he made modifications to the 1951 attribution lists published by the Registrar General.¹⁰ As Armstrong himself recognised, such an approach immediately raises the objection that 'it is anachronistic to apply a scheme devised for 1951 to data for 1851 in view of the major social changes that have taken place over the last hundred years'. However, he answered

⁹ Andrew Miles, 'How Open was Nineteenth-Century British Society? Social Mobility and Equality of Opportunity, 1839-1914' in *Building European Society, Occupational Change and Social Mobility in Europe 1840-1940*, ed. by Andrew Miles and David Vincent (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp.18-39 (pp.22-23); Dudley Baines and Paul Johnson, 'In Search of the 'Traditional' Working Class: Social Mobility and Occupational Continuity in Interwar London', *The Economic History Review*, n.s., 52 (1999), 692-713 (p.702); David G. Jackson, 'Occupational and geographical stability in the region of Sittingbourne, Kent, 1881-1891', *Local Population Studies*, 66 (2001), 52-75 (p.57).

¹⁰ W. A. Armstrong, *Stability and change in an English county town: a social study of York, 1801-1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 13-4; D. R. Mills and C. Pearce, 'People and places in the Victorian census. A review and bibliography of publications based substantially on the manuscript census enumerators' books, 1841-1911', *Historical Geography Research Series*, 23 (Cheltenham: Royal Geographical Society, 1989).

this objection by arguing that while there have been large changes in the class structure over those one hundred years, it is at least arguable that most of the changes have been structural, i.e. have occurred as a result of the shifting distribution of the occupied population among the various groups (notably the great rise in the proportion of managerial and white-collar workers, and decline in the proportion of self-employed and unskilled) rather than in the socially accepted hierarchical ordering of the occupations themselves.¹¹ Armstrong concluded his commentary by noting that 'the Registrar General's scheme, however modified, can only be a crude tool of analysis, but it is necessary to remember that the essential aim is to arrange empirical data so as to aid further understanding and facilitate analysis. There are numerous practical advantages in using the scheme and, until something better is devised it will no doubt continue to be used'.¹² This view was echoed by Dennis Mills and Kevin Schurer who, noting that 'the scheme adopted by Armstrong in his study of York ... has the potential of universality, and has been used in the study of many other localities', also commented that 'Armstrong's use of the Registrar General's 1950 [sic] scheme of social classification has won substantial support from students of the census, and any serious study of social stratification should make use of it, at least for purposes of comparison'.¹³

Both Ambler and Field have used an occupational classification based on the Registrar General's 1951 scheme of social classification. Ambler adopted this classification in his study of church leadership in Lincolnshire, based on occupational descriptions in trust deeds. In drawing attention to the requirement for comparability, he commented that the need to be able not only to analyse these occupations but to also use the analysis for comparative purposes means that the occupations given in the deeds have to be classified in a way which is comparable with similar studies and which can be understood against the general background of work on the social composition of nineteenth-century society.¹⁴ Field points out that the Registrar General's 1951 scheme of social classification is 'in line with the

¹¹ W. A. Armstrong, 'The census enumerators' books: a commentary', in *The census and social structure: and interpretative guide to 19th century censuses for England and Wales*, ed. by Richard Lawton (Frank Cass and Company Ltd, London, 1978), pp.28-70 (pp.55-57).

¹² Armstrong, 'The census enumerators' books: a commentary', p.57.

¹³ Mills and Schurer, 'Employment and occupations', pp.151-152.

¹⁴ Rodney Ambler, 'The social composition of church leadership - nonconformist trustees in Lincolnshire, 1800-1870', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 75 (1993), 133-56, p.143.

opinion of leading historians of social structure'. He also emphasises the importance of comparability when he points out that 'the adoption of some recognized method of categorizing social rank is obviously essential if we are ever to secure comparability of results from isolated studies'.¹⁵ As noted above, Mills and Schurer also stressed the importance of using a classification scheme that enables data from different studies to be compared,¹⁶ and Armstrong himself, perhaps not surprisingly, was of the view that his approach was the one to be followed until something better was devised.¹⁷

For his study of population, economy and family structure in Hertfordshire in 1851, Nigel Goose also devised a scheme for classification by social status.¹⁸ This classification bears a number of similarities with the Registrar General's scheme and with the modifications to this scheme made by Armstrong, as can be seen by the comparison between the two in Table A8(3) below.

TABLE A8(3): The classification of occupational data – a comparison between two schemes

W A Armstrong <i>Stability and change in an English county town: a social study of York, 1801-1851</i>	Nigel Goose <i>Population, economy and family structure in Hertfordshire in 1851 – Volume 2, St Albans and its region</i>
<p>1) Class I - Professional etc., occupations All employees of 25 or more were raised to Class I, whatever their classification in the Registrar General's lists.</p> <p>House and land proprietors, where 'living off interests' or 'of independent means', were placed in Class I.</p>	<p>A All gentry, land and property owners, higher professions (e.g. magistrates, justices of the peace, clergy, solicitors, accountants), farmers employing 20 or more labourers or owning/farming over 350 acres, people of independent means, and employer with over 25 employees</p>

¹⁵ Field, 'The Social Structure of English Methodism', pp.201-202. Field cites the following in support of his arguments: Francois Bedarida, 'Londres au milieu du XIX siècle: Une analyse de structure sociale', *Annales: Economies, sociétés, civilisations*, 23.2 (1968), 268-295 (pp. 284-94); Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: a study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 350-7; W. A. Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation', pp. 198-225.

¹⁶ Mills and Schurer, 'Employment and occupations', p.157.

¹⁷ Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupations', p.214 and 'The census enumerators' books: a commentary', p.57.

¹⁸ Nigel Goose, *Population, economy and family structure in Hertfordshire in 1851 – Volume 2, St Albans and its region* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2000), pp.693-4.

<p>2) Class II - Intermediate occupations All 'dealers', 'merchants' and all persons engaged in retail board, lodging and catering were initially classed as III, despite the fact that the Registrar General's lists placed them variously. Annuitants and those distinctly described as brokers or agents were placed in Class II.</p> <p>From Class III (or in a few cases IV), <i>upon consideration of individual cases</i>, those who employed at least one person (rather than members of their own families), were raised to Class II. In boarding, catering etc, the employment of one or more servants was taken to count for this purpose, and the general effect was to raise into Class II all those whose undertakings were at all substantial; for, at a minimum, the employment even of an apprentice is an obvious indication of self-employed status.</p>	<p>B Lower professions (e.g. teachers, local government officials, surgeons, police inspectors), annuitants, farmers employing less than 20 labourers and owning/farming under 350 acres, merchants with over 5 but less than 25 employees</p>
<p>3) Class III - Skilled occupations</p>	<p>C Doctors, skilled craftsmen, clerks</p>
<p>4) Class IV - Partly skilled occupations</p>	<p>D Semi-skilled workers, agricultural labourers, straw plaiters, servants</p>
<p>5) Class V - Unskilled occupations Those distinctly described as 'hawkers' were placed in Class V.</p>	<p>E Unskilled workers. Road/general labourers, hawkers, errand boys and other menial occupations</p>
<p>Paupers were placed in Class V</p>	<p>F Unemployed, prisoners, paupers, vagrants</p>
<p>A few very uninformative entries ('husband away', 'spinster', etc) were placed in a residual class X.</p>	<p>Z Unknown</p>
<p>Retired persons were classified on the basis of previous occupations.</p>	<p>In general, individuals were given the highest possible status: e.g. a "Brewer and farmer employing 25 labourers" would be classed as category A. Paupers, prison inmates and occupants of the workhouse, however, were all included in category F, regardless of any other occupational designation.</p> <p>Apprentices, assistants and the like were coded at one status group below that of their employer.</p>

A classification scheme for Primitive Methodist occupations in Hertfordshire

It is clear from studies of such communities elsewhere that people's occupations have been used as a surrogate for social status.¹⁹ A similar approach is needed, therefore, if the situation in Hertfordshire is to be compared with other locations in the country. It is equally clear that, in the choice of occupational classification scheme, the overall weight of opinion tends strongly towards the use of the Registrar General's 1951 scheme, as modified by Armstrong. Not only has it been widely used, principally by historians, for analysing the social composition of nineteenth and twentieth century populations but also, largely because of its widespread use, it has the strong advantage over other forms of classification of comparability between studies. Although Goose's classification scheme is a variant of Armstrong's and was devised specifically for the purpose of a Hertfordshire study, it can nevertheless be discounted as a model to be followed in classifying occupational data from Primitive Methodist records in Hertfordshire because it lacks the key element of comparability with other studies of nonconformist, and specifically Primitive and Wesleyan Methodist, membership.

As Ambler emphasised, the Registrar General's 1951 scheme 'structures the description of occupation by levels of skill', and, as Field points out, it has come to be widely used for analysing nineteenth and twentieth century occupational data.²⁰ Accordingly, it is this scheme of classification that has been adopted as the preferred method of analysis of the occupational characteristics of Primitive Methodists in Hertfordshire.

¹⁹ Field, 'The social composition of English Methodism to 1830' and 'The Social Structure of English Methodism'; Ambler, 'Social change and religious experience' and 'The social composition of church leadership', pp.143-145.

²⁰ Ambler, 'The social composition of church leadership', pp.143-145; Field, 'The Social Structure of English Methodism', pp.201-202.

Appendix 9

The Primitive Methodist chapel in Anstey

The building that was used as the Primitive Methodist chapel in Anstey is situated on private land. It is set back from the road between two cottages and cannot easily be seen from the public highway.

The building was photographed in 1997 (Figure A9(1)) and again in 2018 (Figure A9(2)).¹



Figure A9(1): The former chapel at Anstey in 1997



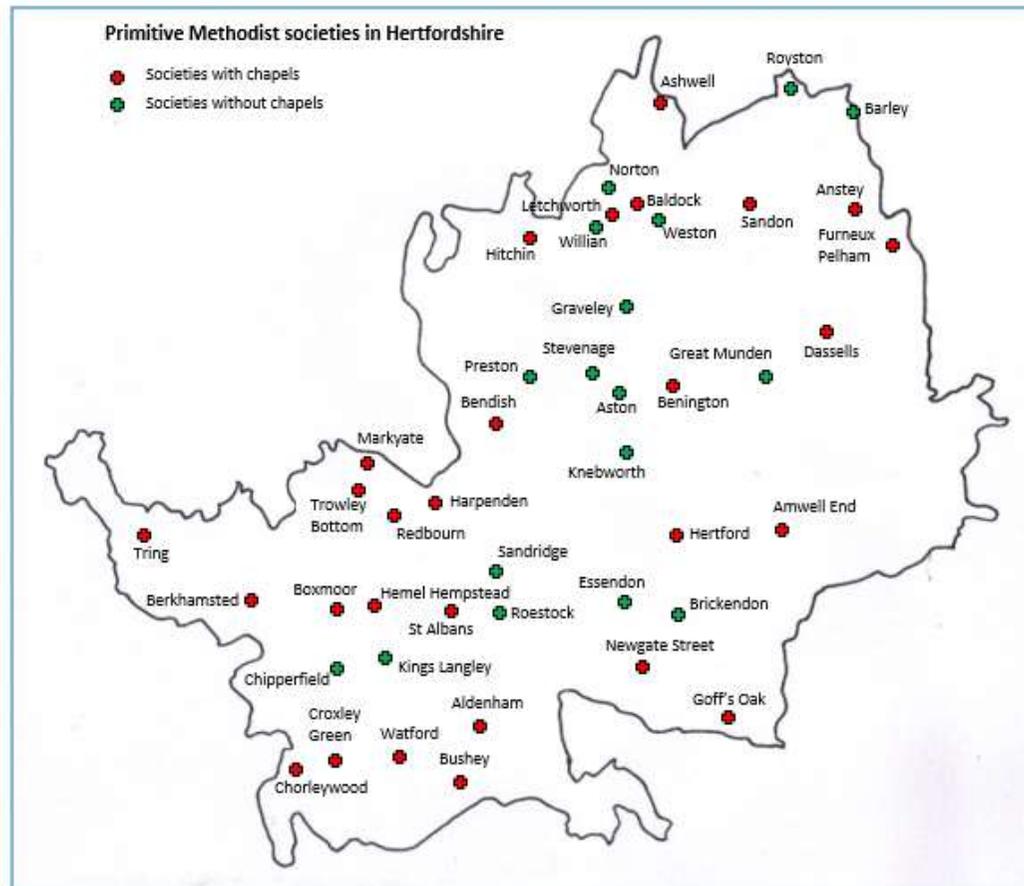
Figure A9(2): The former chapel at Anstey in 2018

¹ The 1997 photograph was taken by Keith Guyler and is to be found at https://www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk/content/chapels/hertfordshire/anstey_primitive_methodist_chapel/ [accessed 22 August 2018] and the 2018 photograph is to be found at the *Hertfordshire Churches in Photographs* web site at <https://hertfordshirechurches.wordpress.com/2018/09/19/primitive-methodist-former-cheapside-anstey/> [accessed 22 August 2019].

Maps

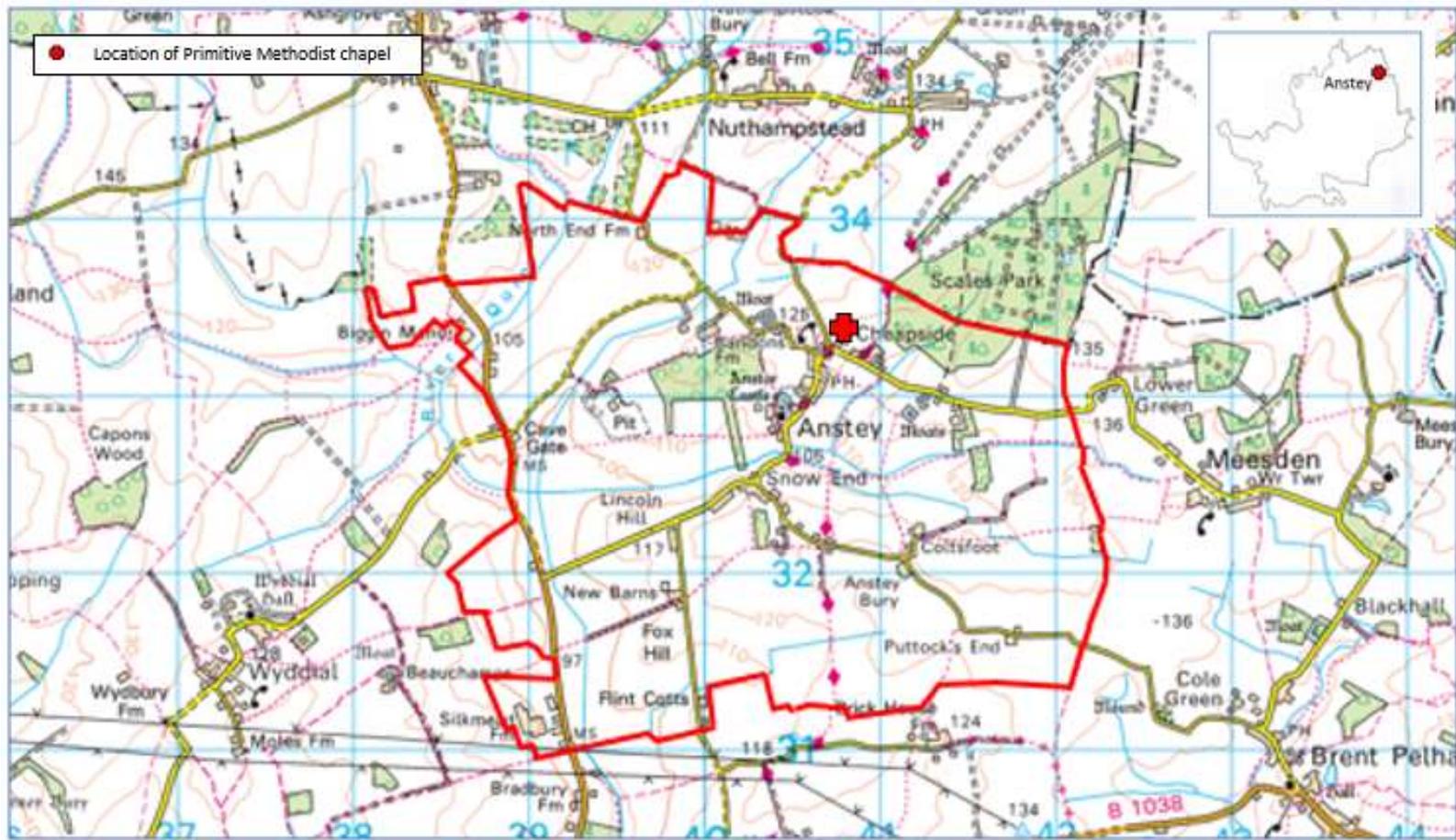
Map 1

Primitive Methodist societies in Hertfordshire



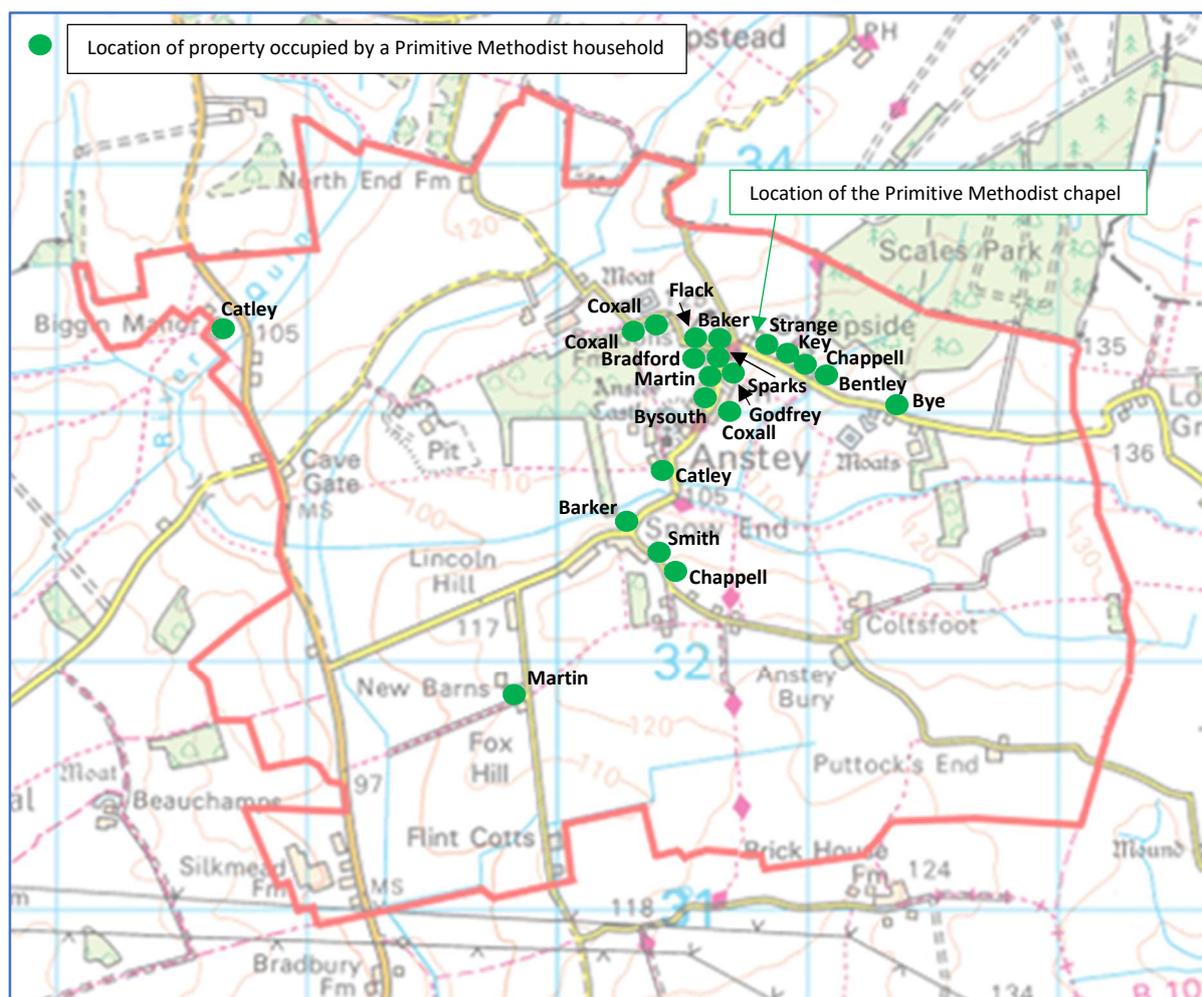
Map 2

Parish map of Anstey



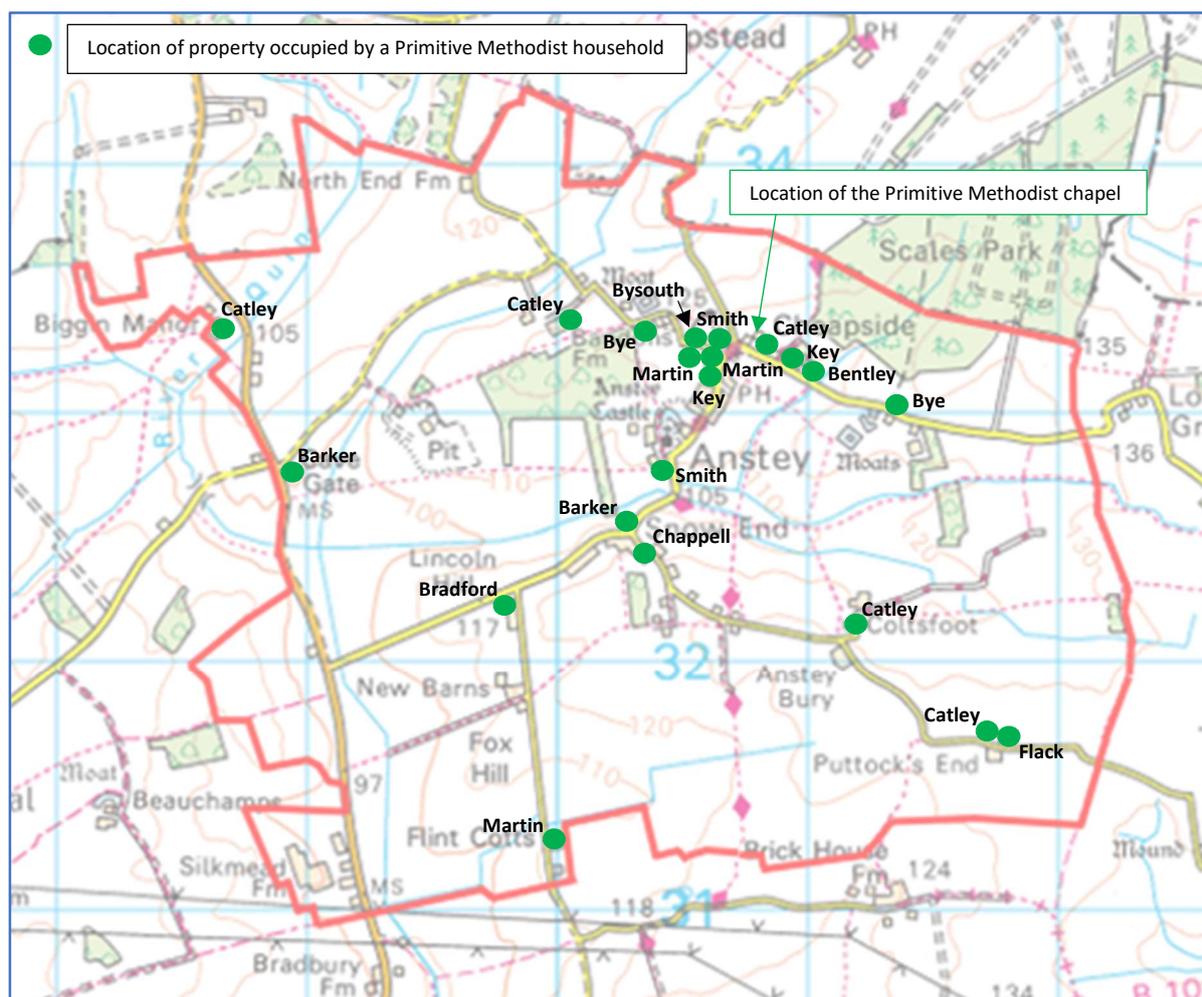
Map 3

Distribution of Primitive Methodist households in Anstey in 1861



Map 6

Distribution of Primitive Methodist households in Anstey in 1891



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D/NM 3/1/4 1925-1931

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D/NM 3/1/5 1864-1872

Circuit plans

Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit

D/NM 3/5/1 April-July 1850

Chapel schedules

Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit

D/NM 3/5/1 1846-1859

D/NM 3/5/2 1860-1869

D/NM 3/5/3 1870-1879

D/NM 3/5/4 1880-1884

Circuit reports

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D/NM 3/5/1 1860-1869

D/NM 3/5/4 1880-1889

Accounts

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St Albans Primitive Methodist Circuit

NM5/43 December 1846-January 1887

Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit

NM9/9 1846-1861

NM9/10 1860-1876

NM9/11 1866-1908

Marriage registers

Watford Primitive Methodist Circuit

St Albans Road Church

NM7I/1 July 1927-December 1935

Circuit plans

Baldock Primitive Methodist Circuit

NM6/47 April-June 1875

NM6/48 October-December 1898, July-September 1899, July-September 1900,
April-June 1901 and April-June 1902

Hitchin Primitive Methodist Circuit

NM6/48 October-December 1903

NM4/12 January-April 1923 and July-September 1923

Saffron Walden Primitive Methodist Circuit

NM9/13 October-December 1889

Minutes of trustees' meetings

Luton II Circuit

NM5B/1 Boundary Road, St Albans, August 1908-November 1928

Trust treasurers' accounts

Saffron Walden Circuit

NM9G/1 Dassells 1877-1950

NM9H/1 Furneux Pelham 1908-1949

Luton II Circuit

NM2K/1 Trowley Bottom 1921-1960

Missionary accounts

Baldock Circuit

NM4/7 Hitchin Station 1910-1927 (after 1916 includes Herts and Beds Mission
Circuit)

Lease of land

Watford Circuit

NM7P/4 Aldenham - lease of land at Four Want ways by Lord Rendlesham - 1 Feb
1886

NM7N/5 Bushey Heath - lease of manse at Heathlands - 27 November 1908

Mortgages

Watford Circuit

NM7J/11 Queen's Road, Watford - mortgage of chapel and premises, 18 May 1886
NM7M/1 Croxley Green - mortgage between chapel trustees and the Primitive Methodist Chapel Aid Association Ltd, 1896

Insurance policies

Berkhamsted Circuit

NM3D/1 Lower Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead - insurance policy on chapel building, 1875

Watford Circuit

NM7I/45 St Albans Road, Watford - insurance policy on chapel and contents, 11 July 1891
NM7J/4 Manse at 37 Marlborough Road - insurance policy, 8 September 1905
NM7J/5 Manse at 37 Marlborough Road, Watford - fire insurance policy, 22 December 1919
NM7L/6 Chorleywood - insurance policy on chapel building, 28 May 1920
NM7M/2 Croxley Green - insurance policy on chapel building, 16 January 1911
NM7M/4-5 Croxley Green - insurance policies on chapel premises, 1892-1893
NM7N/2 Bushey - insurance policy on chapel building, 13 June 1891
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NM7P/1 Aldenham - insurance policy, from 1887

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AHH18/1/3 Weston (1841)
AHH18/1/4 Graveley (1840)
AHH18/1/16 Norton (1846)
AHH18/1/23 Hitchin (1846)
AHH18/1/32 Baldock (1847)

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