

Ridgeway Methodist Chapel

Joyce Brown's childhood memories of the chapel from the 1950s

When we moved from Eckington to Ridgeway in 1949 we attended Chapel and as a family of 4 children were immediately accepted.

Services every Sunday were 10.30am and 6pm. Sunday School 9.30am and 2pm. After morning Sunday School we all trooped down for the chapel service.

Dad was a chapel steward and also a Circuit Steward involved with the fabric of Chapels and Manses within the Sheffield South Circuit.

The chapel had a really good choir of 5 bass, 4 alto, 4 tenors, 6 sopranos, a really experienced organist and an organ pumper.

The choir were well known for putting on special services/performances: Easter, mid-summer, choir anniversary, Christmas. All very dedicated souls, some still singing from music books with Tonic Sol-fa! Easter evening service - the choir would sing The Crucifixion or Olivet to Calvary or part of The Messiah. Again the chapel would be full.

There was always so much singing in chapel - I can often attend church now and not need to open a hymn book much to others' amazement. I was brought up a Methodist!

I remember walking through the Moss Valley from Eckington aged 7/8 years, to Good Friday service with Handel's Messiah sung, then a Good Friday Tea in the Sunday School. The chapel was full of regulars and visitors with extra seating of forms along the aisles.

The next great (but regular) occasion was Whitsuntide, when special new hymns were purchased and of course had to be practised. The Sunday School pupils all went down to the chapel to practise from the song sheets.

On the great day (Whit Monday) we all met up at the Sunday School and eventually set off up the road into the village along with the big boys pushing a harmonium mounted on wheels for the occasion. We stopped at particular places along the road (where people would come out to join in the singing) right along to the school then onto the housing estate then up to High Lane, a T junction. Left along Phoenix Road to the Phoenix Inn then back along stopping at groups of houses until we came to Haven Farm and finally The Newlands. By this time it was lunch. So we children used to run home over the fields (a short cut) for lunch. The harmonium of course had to be pushed along the road.

The afternoon was down from Sunday School after calling at The Lawns and The Old Vicarage down to Church Lane. On down the hill to Sloade Lane. You will see many of the group both on Church Lane and by the stream/River Moss on Sloade Lane. Note the extra musical instruments: 2/3 violins, 1 cello. Then down to FORD along Green Lane. By this time it was 4pm. The end.

All able bodied folk walked back up the fields or round the road. Some waited for our hourly bus at half past the hour. We went back to Sunday School for sandwiches, jelly, blancmange, cakes, buns and cups or tea.

Another highlight of the chapel year was the Sunday School anniversary. Again new booklets of hymns were purchased. We all loved the variety some more than others.

When the day arrived, a special stepped platform was erected at the front of the chapel next to the pulpit, and over the bass part of the choir stalls. When we went to sit on the steps, little ones were at the bottom, older ones as it progressed up. Three services were held on that Sunday. My

sister and I had new dresses each anniversary. I was particularly happy to have a new dress rather than 'hand-me-downs' from my older sister.

The chapel again was full of visitors from neighbouring villages. Very exciting!

The choir anniversary was a wonderful occasion: anthems, solos, duets, quartets etc, all followed by refreshments in the Sunday School.

We entered for the Eisteddfod held in Sheffield South Circuit.

On 2 occasions over a period of 8 - 10 years we had visits from 2 Wesleyan deaconesses, firstly Sister Susan and Sister Nelly and then Sister Dorothy and Sister Olive. I'm not sure how Ridgeway was selected whether it was the thriving chapel, Sunday School or choir, but the ladies came for 2 weeks at a time living in a caravan, once near where I lived.

They were very involved with the young people, the Bright Hour (ladies mid-week meetings), taking services, visiting etc. Everyone enjoyed their stay.

Armistice Day was another red letter day, watching the soldiers and men from the village march down from laying the wreaths at the memorial in the village, to either chapel or church. Prayers and hymns were said and sung to remember the fallen from the great wars.

Joyce Brown

February 2025

Picture gallery

Whitsuntide walks



Church Lane 1949



Whitsuntide 1949



1952



Sloade Lane 1952



St Cross 1952



Whitsuntide 1957



Instruments in 1958



Mission caravans





Sunday School celebration tea

