# The **Methodist** Church

High Street, Amersham, Bucks.

# A Brief History from 1818



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# A Brief History from 1818

Compiled by Ray Richards
Circuit Steward, Amersham Methodist Circuit 2015

#### Acknowledgements:

The idea for this publication came out of plans to refurbish the premises in 2014. A High Street Implementation Team was established by the Circuit to assist the Church Council in achieving the aims of its mission by making it a more useable and useful resource for the community.

My sincere thanks go to the 'HIT' Team and High Street Church Council for their permission to search the Church archives for without which, the publication of this book would not have been possible. Also acknowledgement is made to Amersham Museum for allowing the use of the photographs of properties other than the church that were or are in Amersham.

#### Ray Richards

Various Historical documents and artefacts relating to the church are on display around the premises.

#### Mission Statement 2015

We aim to be an outward reaching church, drawing together those in the local community in a fellowship that expresses Christian love.

Published September 2015

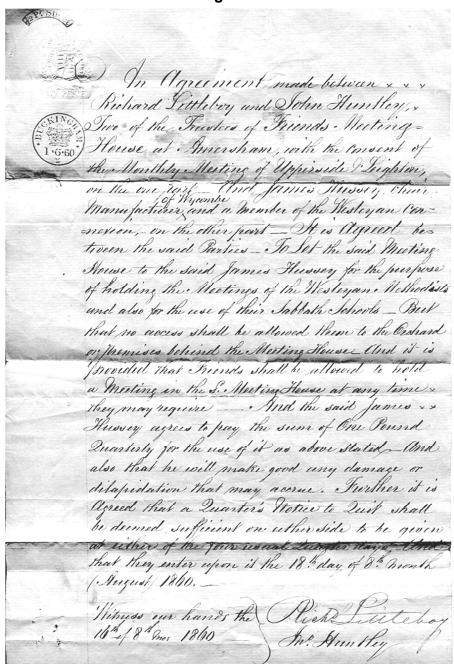
Wesleyan Methodist
Society was formed in
1818 and was a
member of the High Wycombe
Methodist Circuit.
It was probably under the
direction of the local doctor,
Thomas Nathaniel Gray, who
came to live at Apsley House on
the High Street in the 1820's.
The small group of Methodists in
the town became a force to be
reckoned with.

On 30th March 1851 Dr Gray reported that 23 members attended morning service at the converted cottage at Bury End then used by the Methodists.

When Dr Gray moved to London in 1860, the society rented the former Society of Friends (Quaker's) Meeting House in Whielden Street (see copy of the agreement opposite and on next page.)

They continued to meet there until March 1900, when the present church was opened at a cost of £400, on the site of Andrew Lane's Alms-houses opposite the Swan Inn, High Street.

#### Agreement with the Society of Friends To use the Meeting House 1860 to 1900





**Apsley House** 



**Bury End Cottage** 

Society of Friends (Quakers)
Meeting House, Whielden Street,
Amersham



# Agreement with the Society of Friends to use the Meeting House from August 1860 to March 1900

An agreement made between x x x Richard Littleboy and John Huntley, Two of the Trustees of Friends Meeting House at Amersham, with the consent of the Monthly Meeting of Upperside Leighton. on the one part and James Hussey Chair Manufacturer of Wycombe and a member of the Wesleyan connexion on the other part - It is Agreed between the said Parties To Let the said Meeting House to the said James Hussey for the purpose of holding the meetings of the Wesleyan Methodists and also for the use of their Sabbath Schools But that no access shall be allowed them to the orchard or premises behind the Meeting House And it is provided that Friends shall be allowed to hold a meeting in the S. Meeting House at any time they may require And the said James Hussey agrees to pay the sum of One Pound Quarterly for the use of it as above stated And also that he will make good any damage or dilapidation that may occur. Further it is agreed that a Quarters Notice to Quit shall be deemed sufficient on either side to be given at either of the four usual Quarter days And that they enter upon it the 18th day of 8th month August 1860.

Witness our hands the ) Richard Littleboy 16th of 8th month 1860) John Huntley

# Richard Goodearl Chair Maker High Wycombe 1843 to 1930



One of the first trustees (1896—1926)
High Street Methodist Church with his brother Benjamin who was also a chair maker.



Foundation stone laid by Benjamin's wife Mrs. B. Goodearl

Mr. Goodearl was a son of the late Mr. William Goodearl, who founded the firm of chair manufacturers now known as Goodearl Bros., Ltd., of Mendy Street, High Wycombe. After establishment of the firm the father and seven sons worked as chair makers, and as the business gradually developed, there became branches -- Messrs. Henry Goodearl and Sons; Benjamin Goodearl and Sons; and Alfred Goodearl and Sons (Bolton).

Mr. Goodearl's illness had been of short duration; he seemed as active as ever up to within a few days of his death, which was attributed to senile decay. He was born on September, 6th, 1843.

#### **PUBLIC SERVICE**

The extension of the cause of Wesleyan Methodism was one of his deepest interests. Before he had passed his 'teens he preached in the churches of the Wesleyan Methodist circuit. He was particularly interested in the Local Preachers' Mutual Aid Association of which he was a past president and honorary treasurer of the High Wycombe district.

He travelled many miles, preaching sermons in order to raise funds for the assistance of deserving cases of local preachers and widows throughout the United Kingdom.

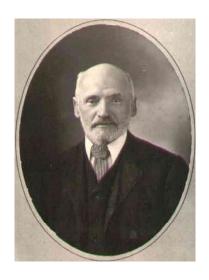
He served in most Wesleyan Methodist church offices, and was regarded as the oldest local preacher. The cause of temperance, too, claimed his attention and he was also a non-smoker.

#### THE FUNERAL

The Rev. J. G. Penman said that Mr. Goodearl had been a local preacher for seventy years and had served [two words indistinct here] certainly up to recent weeks, he had kept everyone in order and was full of vigour. Those who knew him best knew he had no patience with anyone who slacked in any way whatever. His memory was cherished, particularly in that church. Many of the churches in the circuit would never have been built had it not been for the zeal of Mr. Goodearl. He loved his church and his generosity was outstanding.

Those who knew only one side of his character might be amazed to know how he would practise sacrifice -- real sacrifice -- in order that he might help the work of God, not only in that church but in others.

# Stephen Weller 1844—1916



One of the first trustees 1896 - 1907 of High Street Methodist Church

Stephen was born at Wycombe Marsh 1821 and baptized at High Wycombe. He married Sarah Brion on March 4th 1844.

He was then a chair maker. In 1851 they were living at 55 Newland with the first four of their children; by then he was a French polisher.

Presumably he started his new business, perhaps in 1868, when he asked his son Stephen to join him. "Weller, Stephen and Son, varnish and polish manufacturers. Speciality, chair manufacturer's requisites."

It is not known when the family became Wesleyan Methodists but it is certain that Stephen was a prominent member of the Chapel.

Beside the entrance to the Chapel in West Wycombe there are several stones with names engraved upon them, including those of Mr. S. Weller snr., his daughter Sarah and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Ben North, and Mr. S. Weller jnr. The foundation stone was laid by Viscount Curzon, M.P. on August 8th. 1894.

Stephen gave an address at a Watch Night service in 1868, at a missionary meeting in 1872 and 1883, was elected Conference Representative in 1884 and was delegate to the Oxford District Meeting 1885.

For some years he was a member of the School Board as Wesleyan representative, and was elected a member of the High Wycombe Council at the first election after the extension of the Borough in 1880, also in 1881, but failed to be re-elected the following year. Also, going back to 1844, he was then Steward of the Independent Order of Rechabites, Olive Branch, tent no. 458. This was a Friendly Society whose function was to help its members in time of need.

In the 1880's Stephen took his son, Stephen 3rd into partnership and a few years later retired and went to live at Lyndhurst, Priory Road, High Wycombe. He and Sarah celebrated their Golden Wedding in March 1894 and their Diamond Anniversary in 1904.

As well as being a trustee Stephen was secretary of the church in Amersham.

By 1915 he had moved to Whittington Moor near Chesterfield (see letter, page 10)

#### Bucks Advertiser October 27th, 1899

#### NEW WESLEYAN CHAPEL

#### STONE LAYING CEREMONY

The Wesleyan denomination of Amersham, a town embraced in the High Wycombe Circuit, on Wednesday afternoon took part in the important ceremony of laying the memorial stones of a new Chapel, the construction of which has been commenced on a centrally-situated site in High Street. For something like forty years the members of the Wesleyan cause have enjoyed the privilege of assembling for public worship in the Friends' Meeting House on the High Wycombe road. During that period they have made fairly good progress in the church and Sunday school, and it has long since been felt that a new sanctuary should be erected to more adequately meet the requirements of the present day. Accordingly negotiations were entered into some time ago for the acquisition of four dilapidated houses in the High Street, which were secured for £10, while £150 was given for the site. The dwellings have been demolished, and the site affords ample accommodation for the new building. Plans for the Chapel were prepared by Messrs. Moxham and Son of High Wycombe, the design showing a building in the Gothic style of architecture, which, when completed, will constitute an ornament to the principal thoroughfare of the town. It is to be a brick slated edifice, and the interior measurement will be 40ft. by 23ft. In the new Chapel there will be sufficient space for 250 persons. The contract has been entrusted to Mr. F.T.Williams, of Station Road, Amersham, whose tender amounted to £400. Prior to Wednesday last about £250 had been contributed or promised.

At the stone-laying ceremony there was a large gathering, including the Revs. W.Earl (Superintendent of the circuit) and W.Cuthbert, Mr.C.W.Deacon (Mayor of High Wycombe), Mr. John Thomas (Wooburn), Mr. and Mrs. J.Steevens, Miss Steevens, Mr. and Mrs. Elliott (Beamon End), Mr. and Mrs. H.Goodearl, Mrs. R.Goodearl, Mrs. B.Goodearl, Mr. and Mrs. J.Varney, Mr.S.Weller, Mr. and Mrs. J.T.Harris, Mr. and Mrs. C.F.Moxham, Mr. and Mrs. Peedle (Prestwood), Mr. Elgor, Mr. Bingham, Mr. H.Williams, Mr. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Swann, and others.

The donation during the afternoon included the following. Mr. John Thomas, £10, Mr. H.Goodearl, £4 6s, Mrs H.Goodearl, £6, Mrs Elliott, £6, Mr.C.W.Deacon, £5, Mrs.North (West Wycombe), £5, Mr.J.Varney £2 2s, Mr.Toovey (Amersham), £1, and Mrs. Steevens, £1.

A table tea was afterwards partaken of by a large number of persons in the Friends Meeting House, where at a later hour, a meeting was held under the presidency of Mr.H.Goodearl, J.P. The report was read by the Secretary to the Trustees (Mr. Stephen Weller, jun.), and the meeting was addressed by Mr. Joseph Steevens (High Wycombe). Mr.R.Hornby (Great Missenden), Mr.D.Pendle (Prestwood), Mr.Witter (who was conducting a mission at Amersham), and Mr. Swann, then the "Joyful News" evangelist in charge at Amersham.

The total amount of the proceeds was £50 6s 10d (2015 = £5531.00)

# **Opening Services**

# Chesham, Amersham and Rickmansworth Times Friday March 9th, 1900

#### NEW WESLEYAN CHAPEL

On Wednesday, the 28th of February, the opening services were held in the new Wesleyan Chapel, Amersham. An afternoon service was held after which came a public tea and another service in the evening. The Rev. Thomas Allen of Birmingham, was the officiating minister and gave two excellent addresses. Mr. Swann, the minister of this chapel, is leaving Amersham very shortly. Special services in connection with the opening of the above were held in this place of worship on Sunday last, two capital sermons being preached in the afternoon and evening by R.Goodearl, Esq., J.P. of High Wycombe. On Tuesday evening the Rev. William Cuthbert preached to a good congregation.

## Chesham, Amersham and Rickmansworth Times March 23rd, 1900

#### WESLEYAN CHAPEL

On Sunday last the final meeting of the special services which have been held in connection with the opening of the new Wesleyan Chapel took place when two excellent sermons were preached by Mr. C.W.Deacon, J.P., of High Wycombe, in the afternoon and evening, large congregations attending both services. We are pleased to add that the collections for the Finance Fund have been very good on the three Sundays these services were held.

#### Certificate as a Place of Meeting for Religious Worship by a Congregation Issued 6th September 1900

[Form for Certifying a Place of Meeting for Religious Worship under the Act 18 & 19 Vict., c. 81, to be signed in Duplicate by the person certifying.] TO THE REGISTRAR GENERAL OF BIRTHS, DEATHS, AND DIRECTIONS MARRIAGES IN ENGLAND. for filling up this Form. arthur Wille am (a) Insert in the blank I the undersigned (a).
spaces the Name, Residence,
and County, and the Rank
or Profession of the Person of in the certifying. Do HEREBY, under and by virtue of an Act passed in the Nineteenth year of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, intituled "An Act to amend the law concerning "the certifying and registering of Places of Religious Worship in England," (b) Here insert "Congre-CERTIFY that a certain Building known by the name of (b) The gational Church," "Baptist Chapel," or whatever name the building may be Weslenan (hakel Weslenan (c) Describe the locality situated at (c) It for to identify it. in the Civil Parish of County in the County (4). Borough of. in the Sub-district of Murershaw in the Registration District of Church (c) If the Building has a is intended to be used as kerelofore. (c) and will accordingly be forthwith Place of Worship, add the words, "as herectore." used as a Place of Meeting for Religious Worship by a Congregation or Assembly of persons calling themselves And I request that this Certificate may be recorded in the General Register Office pursuant to the said Act. Dated this (f) Insert on the line immediately nucler the signature, the word "Minister," "Proprietor," "A Trustee," "Occupier," "An Attendant," or such other words (Signature of the Person Certifying as will clearly show the con-nection subsisting between the Person certifying and the Place of Meeting. of the Place of Meeting above described. N.B.—When the Building to be Certified as a place of meeting for Religious Worship is intended to be used in lieu of a building previously Certified to, and recorded by the Registrar General, a form of "Notice of disuse" of the latter building should also be filled up and forwarded to the General Register Office, to ensure cancellation of the original

certificate and Record. (Act 18 & 19 Vict., c. 81, s. 6.)

#### **Letter from Stephen Weller November 1915**

In November 1915 a former member, trustee and first church secretary Stephen Weller (see short biography on separate page) who had moved to Whittington Moor, Chesterfield wrote a letter the minister Rev W Terry Coppin which included some history of the Wesleyan Methodists in Amersham:

"For forty years the Wesleyans had worshipped in the Friends Meeting House - then an opportunity came to buy - the first chance for something like a hundred years to acquire freehold land in the town. Some old Almshouses in the High Street had been condemned as uninhabitable - when offered for sale on condition that the houses should be pulled down and the site cleared - We bought it and built a chapel thereon - Rev Thomas Allen, President of Conference preached at the opening - a Trust was formed mainly of Wycombe men. The only Amersham man I think was Frederick Free who lived opposite, he was a Baptist but took some interest in the place for a time.

The preachers put up their horses at his house. His son joined the church and for want of a better, was appointed Chapel Steward, he had no stamina mental or moral, after a time he made a hash of things and then left the town.

With the departure of the son, the father ceased to take an interest in the place.

There was no one for a time capable of taking a lead, or even looking after the property and it was to far from Wycombe for any of us to see to things - as an instance of their indifference, I may tell you, the WC attached to the place was sadly in need of repair, rather than repair it, the building such as it was - was pulled down."



Town Band outside the Methodist Church c.1920's

The Church was enrolled as a member of the League of Nations Union in December 1927.



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Plan Money 6 Cass Tomey	2-0
6 Cass Trioney	1-14-1
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#### Church Accounts 1926 Income (£1.00 in 1926 = £54 in 2015)

#### Church Accounts 1926 Expenditure

Note the cost of Mantles and Gas Globes for lighting also Coke for the fire to give heating

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1926	Expenditure	F	a d.
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	of manfles		2.6
	3 Gas Elobes		2-0
2	Repairing Scutto & Chimmey		2-0
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-	Golei .		12-0
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- Q\$5			101

riginally there was no water supply and lighting was by gas. Heating probably came at first from an open fire and later from a big donkey stove.

Twenty years after the church was built (1919/20), Alice Wright, a society steward, recorded a membership of eight and by 1924 was all but closed.

In July 1927, the church made application to the Wesleyan Chapel Committee for a 'Modification of Terms' to carry out enlargement work on the premises amounting to £250 (£13,638 in 2015). Remarks on the Application Form by the Superintendent J. Bennett Richards say: "The case is an exceptional one. The School-Chapel was all but closed 3 years ago. Today, thanks mainly to the enterprise and devotion of two ladies who came to reside at Amersham, the whole of the work of the Church and School is full of promise."

SUPERINTENDENT REGISTRAR'S CERTIFICATE OF THE REGISTRY OF A BUILDING FOR THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGES THEREIN.

3 bereby Certify that a Separate Building named with the Civil Parish of the Civil Parish of the County of Buckengkam being a building certified according to law as a place of meeting for Religious Worship, was on the the County day of 1927, duly registered for solemnizing Marriages therein, pursuant to the 18th Section of the Act of 6 and 7 Wim. IV., c. 85.

Witness my hand this worthfired day of 1927

Superintendent Registrar.

The Chapel was not registered to Solemnize Marriages until 21st July 1927

By 1930 the membership had grown to 26 and the finances had improved.

The old stove was removed and the central heating system was purchased from the old Post Office and installed with a coal boiler. In 1960 this was replaced by a gas boiler fitted by a local company, George Darlington & Sons Ltd at a cost of £147-10s (£3067 in 2015). In the same year the windows were replaced and chairs from the former Methodist Church in Woodside Road, Amersham were installed.

In 1961 the rostrum pulpit was removed and replaced by the present panelling and pulpit from the Memorial Chapel at Park Lane Methodist Church, Wembley, which had originally been built as a memorial to Mabel Comben and came as a gift from her two sons, one being Stanley Comben, who lived in Sycamore Road, Amersham and was a director of Comben & Wakeling Ltd a building and construction company. The cost of removal, transport and erecting at High Street was born by Stanley Comben's brother. (See photo on back cover)

The brick pillars and iron gates were added in the 1970's in memory of Miss K. Mason.

In November 1978 it was reported to the Annual Church Council meeting that the church membership was 24 but by January 1995 it had fallen to 13 and by November 2009 there were only 10 members.

## **Sunday School**

The Minutes of the Teachers meeting held on Monday January 4th 1937 reported on arrangements for the New Year Party:

"It was agreed again to hold a New Year Party for the scholars and teachers. All were to be invited irrespective of past attendance. Party to be held on January 16th (Saturday) at 5 o'clock and to be over by 8 o'clock if possible. It was agreed to ask Mrs. Wright to undertake the catering arrangements. The meeting expressed it's gratitude to Mrs. Wright through Miss Ida Wright. A motion was carried that the scholars should be warned of more stringent rules to be imposed in considering invitations for the summer treat."

It was reported at the Annual Teachers meeting held on January 27th 1937 that the Sunday School had eight teachers and 41 scholars.

At the annual council meeting in February 1939 it was agreed the school prizes for the best boy and girl (attendance and conduct) are to be in the form of a Bible or Hymn Book. Membership - A special effort was to be made to help the young people in understanding church membership. Rev. Eavis said he would meet anyone between 7.00 and 7.30pm on Thursdays to explain things.

By January 1943 the number of scholars had risen to 67 with an average Attendance of 46.

It appears that by December 1951 the Sunday School had gone into decline, according to the minutes of the Annual Sunday School Teachers Council:

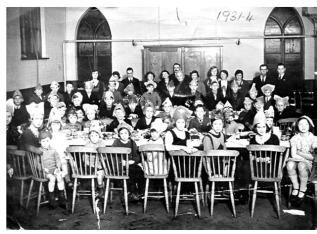
"Mr. Hailey said, that in view of the smallness of the school it wasn't worth while coming while there were others there who could do it. Mr. Stratfull said was it worth him chopping the wood and the fire being lit for the few that came on Sunday mornings, or was it worth while anybody doing anything?

From the Minutes of the Annual Teachers Conference November 30th 1960: As the result of Scripture Examination of 1960 our scholars won the Highest Shield in London North West District.

The 1968 Outing was to Littlehampton and parents were asked to pay 3 shillings and 6 pence (= £2.84 in 2015) per child.

It was reported to the Annual Teachers Council in January 1969 that there were 26 scholars in the Primary department and 26 in the Junior School.

By November 1974 the numbers had dropped to 35. Sadly, the numbers attending continued to decline and by September 2000 there were only 4 members so it was decided to close.



Sunday School c. 1931 - 34



Scholars with 1960 Scripture Examination Shield

## **Women's Bright Hour**

The High Street Methodist Women's Bright Hour was established in 1930.

Currently the only records of activities available to us date from 1951.

Various activities were arranged throughout the years with speakers from different organisations and clubs. In 1951 they invited a speaker from the British Women's Temperance Association.

Committee meeting minutes show that they raised funds for the church and other organisations through Christmas Sales and other events including a Bring & Buy day each month.

For several years a Sick Fund was established which would enable gifts to be distributed to those unwell particularly around the Christmas period.

In 1960 the following donations were made:

Chapel Trust £20-0s-0d
Homes for the Aged £ 2-2s-0d
B & F Bible Society £ 1-1s-0d
United Nations £ 1-1s-0d
Ministerial Training £ 1-1s-0d
Retirement Fund £ 3-3s-0d

Total £28-8s-0d (2015 = £590—64)

The 70th Anniversary of Women's Bright Hour was celebrated in May 2000 as part of the Church centenary year.

The last records available are the minutes of the AGM held on 20th February 2002 which recorded the election of officers, the financial statement and arrangements for the anniversary Rally at which Stella Bristow of Methodist Women in Britain would be the speaker.



Joan Stratfull President WBH 2002



Stella Bristow

## **Methodist Circuit changes**

Up until 1951 the Amersham Methodist Society was originally a member of the High Wycombe Circuit.

The July to October1951 Plan and Directory for the High Wycombe circuit shows thirty nine churches covered by a ministerial staff of eleven plus a Deaconess. Plan copies were charged at 6d each. (2015 = 74p)

: THE :

# METHODIST CHURCH HIGH WYCOMBE CIRCUIT.

PLAN AND DIRECTORY

JULY 15th, 1951 to OCTOBER 7th, 1951

#### MINISTERS:

REV. FRANCIS B. HUDSON, 28 Priory Avenue, High Wycombe (Tel. No. 747).

REV. OWEN M. COLLINS, 2 Roberts Rd., High Wycombe. (Tel. No. 85).

REV. GEORGE B. MIDDLETON, B.D., 154 West Wycombe Road, High Wycombe.

REV. THOMAS J. WELCH, The Manse, Bellingdon Road, Chesham. (Tel. No. Chesham 537.)

REV. ERNEST G. KITCHIN, 223 West Wycombe Road, High Wycombe.

REV. DERYCK N. HOWARTH, Leighton House, Glade Road, Marlow.

REV. W. J. PENBERTHY WHITE, Danesbury House, Chalfont St. Giles (Tel. Chalfont 23.)

REV. J. H. CARTWRIGHT, Lenton House, Park Lane, Lane End, High Wycombe. REV. R. ROBINSON, 34 First Avenue, Amersham.

Rev. O. J. Griffin, "Windsor Croft," Great Missenden (Tel. No. Great Missenden 66).

REV. A. G. BURNHAM, Marigot, Fennels Way, Flackwell Heath. SISTER EVA LYTH, 10 Desborough Street, High Wycombe.

A reorganisation of Methodist Circuits took place in October 1951 and High Street church was incorporated into the 'Chesham and Chalfont St. Giles' circuit.

The Chesham and Chalfont St. Giles Plan and Directory covering October 1951 to January 1952 shows seven churches and a ministerial staff of five.

Plans were priced at 3d each. (2015 = 37p)

By 1989 the circuit name had been changed to 'Amersham Circuit'.

There were eight churches in the circuit with a ministerial staff of four.

There was no charge for copies of the plan as they were financed with advertising by local businesses.

# THE METHODIST CHURCH

CHESHAM and CHALFONT ST. GILES CIRCUIT

OCTOBER 14th, 1951 - JANUARY 6th, 1952

#### MINISTERS:

REV. WALLACE J. HEATON, T.D., M.A., 5 The Avenue, Amersham REV. THOMAS J. WELCH, 100 Bellingdon Road, Chesham. Tel. 537

REV. CECIL F. WALPOLE, N.C.H.O., "Crofters," Station Road, Amersham. Tel. 1494

REV. ROBERT ROBINSON, 34 First Avenue, Amersham. REV. O. J. GRIFFIN, "Windsor Croft," Great Missenden. Tel. 66

August 1989

to

October

1989

# THE METHODIST CHURCH

AMERSHAM CIRCUIT

Plan and Directory

Chairman of London N.W. District
Rev. STANLEY K. CHESWORTH, 37 Long Buftlers, Harpenden, Herts.
Tel. 60567.

Rev. F. BARRIE HEAFFORD, B.A., 139 Woodside Road, Amersham, HP6 6NJ. Tel. 433504.

Rev. JAMES E. COOPER, "Cornerways", 15 Chartridge Lane, Chesham. Tel. 782537.

Rev. MARGARET LAWSON, M.A., The Manse, 54 Milton Fields, Chalfont St. Giles (2885) (United Reformed).

Rev. DAVID S. CRUISE, B.D., Th.M., 41 South Cottage Gardens, Chorleywood, Herts. Tel. 2370 (Overseas Division).



Panelling and Pulpit from Memorial Chapel at Park Lane Methodist Church, Wembley Donated by Stanley Comben

Amersham High Street Methodist Church is a member church of the Amersham Methodist Circuit and operates under a Team Ministry.

#### The Revd. Anne Ellis Superintendent Minister

11 South Park View Gerrards Cross, Bucks SL9 8HN 01753 891858

#### The Revd. Dr. Vincent Jambawo

41 Codmore Crescent, Chesham, Bucks HP5 3LZ 01494 580338.

Website: www. amershamcircuit.org.uk

