

Celebrations of 150 years at Wingrave Chapel

September 2009

Wingrave Methodist Church celebrated its 150th anniversary, or more correctly, the 150th anniversary of its present building.

The celebrations started on the 19th. September with the opening of a free exhibition at the church which traced the history of Methodism in Wingrave going back as far as when the first Chapel which was built about 1841, the early Methodists were more interested in saving souls than keeping records and no details of that building have survived.



The present building was built as a Primitive Methodist chapel in 1859, replacing the earlier building. Fortunately the record keeping had improved somewhat as the excellently presented exhibition showed.

The membership then comprised mainly agricultural workers, it must have taken a real effort to raise the sum of over £260 to build the new chapel. The exhibition depicted the development of the building over the years. In 1905, the chapel was altered and a brand new schoolroom added.



This increased the outreach in the village as it was possible to accommodate more activities and the exhibits showed that Wingrave was a lively outgoing society that contributed a great deal to village life.

Pictures of some of the members and of outings to the seaside brought many comments from visitors who recognised old family members and even some who remembered past Sunday School teachers.



In the early 1990s the rear of the building deteriorated to the point where it necessitated a major rebuild of the rear of the premises, this provided a modern kitchen, toilet and two meeting rooms which now support many activities.

There were many pictures showing this work in progress and showed the major effort by many church members doing some of the hard work.

Those who prepared and manned the exhibition are to be congratulated on producing a display that depicted the Methodist witness in Wingrave from the 1830s through to the present day. It is not possible to do it justice in a few words, it must have taken many hours of hard, skilful and dedicated work to put it all together.

On the evening of Saturday 26th September the **Wingrave Monday Choir** performed an **Anniversary Concert** in the Aylesbury Methodist Church.

This group of singers practice regularly in the Wingrave chapel schoolroom and described themselves as 'A group of highly non-professional singers, who do it for fun. No skills or religious affiliations required, just enthusiasm.' They were augmented by a few friends and instrumentalists and presented a programme that was a delight to listen to.

Led by their Director John Alexander, the choir produced a sound, in a wide range of religious and secular music, that belied their 'non-professional' tag. The music ranged from an anthem 'Lead me, Lord' by the Samuel Sebastian Wesley, which would be familiar to most current and past choristers to the politically incorrect 'Short People' by Randy Newman.

A very good evening was enjoyed by all.

Service of Celebration

The celebrations ended with a **Circuit Service at Wingrave** led by **Rev Ann Varker** on the evening of Sunday 27th September.



The chapel was packed with a congregation gathered from the village and folk from around the Aylesbury Vale Circuit.

The theme centered around what the Wingrave society was doing now and what they hoped would develop in the future. The chapel was decorated with many pictures and other reminders of all these ongoing activities.

There were a series of short presentations on various activities such as the Nup End Cafe, made possible by the last building improvements, the cafe not only provides a modestly priced good meal but also a chance for folk to meet and share their problems and joys, a place for food, fun and fellowship.



The cafe also provides funds from its profits for the Whitechapel Mission and we heard of the early morning trips to Whitechapel to assist in cooking over 100 breakfasts for the 'Street People' of East London.

Other activities described were the two Saturday morning meetings which take place each month, for the Ladies there is the '3Fs' meeting and the Gentlemen have a 'Breakfast Club', both meetings include a meal followed by discussion of a topical subject and provide the local community with a meeting point for anyone to come and air their

views.

Weeknight activities such as the Tuesday Bible Study Group were reported on as were what have become community projects, like the Rumanian 'Shoebox' appeal and the making of shopping bags to save the environment from the menace of discarded plastic bags.

The general picture presented was of a dedicated society of Methodists in Wingrave that are proud of their past but but more importantly are looking forward to a very active future in the service of their Lord and the local and wider community.

To this end they are looking to make the premises more adaptable for Worship and more usable for other activities and have ongoing discussions on how best to achieve these



objectives. The plans shown here show the chapel area devoid of it's pews which has naturally provoked much discussion, one which has gone on in many chapels up and down the country.

The Circuit will watch these developments with interest and much goodwill and hope to gather again in the remodelled chapel to celebrate the opening.

Many messages have been received at Wingrave following these celebrations, these have been published in the Wingrave 'News from the Pews' some are appended below.

We will all have our own special memories of our celebrations: having Chris and Peter Lemmon with us again; folk sitting out in our garden enjoying tea and cakes in the warm sun; chairs in the aisle; Muriel, with William and Paige, blowing out the candles on our cake (Caroline said we **had** to have one – and made it!); singing "Use your hands for good deeds" are some of mine. Common to us all will be our deep appreciation of the careful research and skilful display of our past history by Pru and Robin, together with John Burk's carpentry. It provided a remarkable historic spread of fascination to those with family links or none. In the Worship area, Sandra and Doug created a colourful and eye-catching record of our current activities. We are indebted to them all; as well as those who spoke at

our Service, acted as guides, cooked, washed up, cleaned and all the activities that combined to make the Anniversary such a memorable event: THANK YOU! **Pat**

"Just to say what a wonderful weekend. We have had many comments about the wonderful concert on Saturday and the amount of talent. Please pass on our thanks to all concerned. Secondly a really superb service last evening - again thoroughly enjoyed by both Tony, myself and Paul Ingram who had spent part of the day with us. With best wishes *Pauline & Tony*"

"This is just to say Congratulations to you all at Wingrave for such a splendid exhibition celebrating 150 years of Methodism in the village. The Circuit Service was a wonderful finale to the week of celebrations and the good attendance was proof of that. Thank you for making us all so welcome and especially to treat us to the lovely birthday cake! You should all be very proud of your achievements as a church community, which was made evident by the speakers on Sunday evening. It is a wonderful tribute to those who have gone before, as well as giving hope for the future. With all good wishes: Chris Palmer"