

## **SOME NOTES ABOUT THE HISTORY OF ROUNDHAY METHODIST CHURCH (From the late Mr. Maurice Jones, 13 July 1993) © by Barbara Worthington.**

Roundhay Methodist Church, affectionately known as "Ladywood" because of its former situation on the corner of Ladywood and Springwood Roads, the gates being situated in Ladywood Road, is a much older cause than many people imagine. It first appears on the Plan of Leeds Circuit in 1815 with an evening service each Sunday<sup>1</sup>. It is possible that the first chapel was built about this time.

The site of the first chapel was in North Lane, then called Chapel Lane. This was right by the road side on a site later developed as the grounds of Mayo House, now pulled down and replaced by new houses in a cul-de-sac known as Mayo Close. A little nearer to Wetherby Road was a building, the upper story of which was used by the early Methodists for their class and "band"<sup>2</sup> meetings.

The first chapel soon proved too small and a second was built within a stone's throw of the first and a little nearer to Wetherby Road, but unfortunately there is no record of the date. The building had no vestry and the floor was of bare stone. It was heated by a coke stove in the centre and lighted by candles. It was, like its predecessor, the private property of two brothers, John and Joshua Burton, having been built by them on their own land, for the use of the Methodists. When the two brothers died, the property passed into other hands and the little Methodist Society was given notice to quit.

Mr. Jones quotes here from a Souvenir of a Re-union of the Sunday School held in November 1910 at which he was present. "Mrs. Nicholson<sup>3</sup>, who lived at the residence we now call The Mansion, used to say that sitting under the portico on a summer evening she could hear us singing". This may be doubted by some, but imagine Roundhay 150 years ago; the Park then was strictly private and few in Leeds knew of its existence. All around was agricultural land with a house here, and another there, which stretched right away down to the Barracks on one side (West) and Sheepscar on the other (East). The waves of sound chased by other waves as we sing on, have reached, and are passing the Church steeple. They roll sweet and mellowed by distance, across the Waterloo Lake. They have reached The Mansion and the air has become vibrant with spiritual harmony. The old lady sitting there in the open air has been reading and meditating, Suddenly her mind is recalled to the present. Thrilled by that message from across the valley, she leans forward and says "Hark how those Methodists sing".

Here we must acknowledge the large contribution that Mr. Maurice Jones has made to this article. He told us that his grandfather attended the old chapel in North Lane, his mother attended the 1874 chapel all her life and he was baptised in that building in 1903. He attended the Sunday School there and met the lady who was to become his wife. They were married there in 1930.

<sup>1</sup> I should explain that the Plan in Methodism is a preaching plan produced each quarter. This gives details of who is to preach each Sunday at the various Churches in the Circuit. A Circuit usually consisted of 5 or 6 Churches, sometimes having a minister each, one of whom will be a senior minister known as the Superintendent, but more often two or more Churches will share one minister. Methodism also trains local men and women to be lay preachers known as Local Preachers, who will preach at any Church in their own circuit, only occasionally moving outside.

<sup>2</sup> "Band" in Methodism has no musical connection, matters discussed in "band" were not to be discussed with anyone not present at the meeting. Methodist members are still divided into classes under a "class leader" for the purpose of pastoral oversight.

<sup>3</sup> *Mrs. William Nicholson Nicholson d. 1871.*

In due course, after the Methodists had quit the old chapel owned formerly by the Burton brothers, a large plot of land was bought in Ladywood Road, but the conditions of the sale would not allow the Chapel to be built. After some delay, the difficulty was overcome by obtaining the consent in writing of all the owners of property in the neighbourhood. The way was now clear, and the foundations of the new Church were laid on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1873.

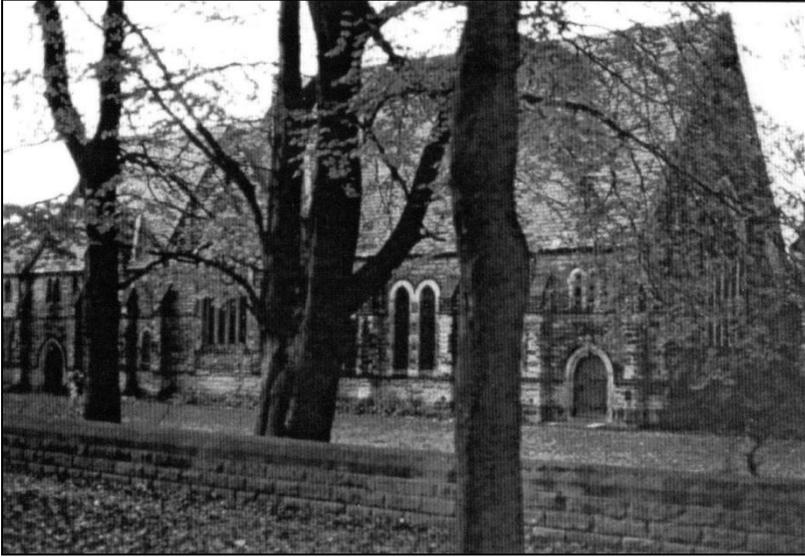
It was at this juncture that some person or persons, invested with a little brief authority and heedless of historic associations and Methodist susceptibilities, changed the name of Chapel Lane to North Lane, and also, the old landmark Horse Shoe Lane, was removed and Oakwood Lane substituted.

The new Chapel was opened on Friday July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1874, the architects being Messrs. Perkin & Son of Leeds. The actual cost of the building was £3,756. Some stones from the old chapel were built into the walls of the new, and so links with the past remained. A Sunday School was commenced in 1877 with 68 scholars. Increased accommodation became necessary and an addition was built to the church at a cost of £726. The school continued to grow, and in 1937 the ground floor was enlarged at a cost of £1,577.

In 1950 Mrs. Penrose Green (whose family lived at 'Towerhursf' on Oakwood Lane) gave 2200 sq. yds. of land adjacent to the chapel to the then Trustees but it was 1959 before a church hall was erected here on the site. The building cost £3,180. In 1953, Sir Edwin Airey built a second storey onto the existing Sunday School ground floor building at his own expense. It was opened by the then Lord Mayor of Leeds, Alderman D.G. Cowling, himself an old scholar of the Sunday School. The room was handed over to the Trustees by Lady Airey, Sir Edwin being ill at the time.

To quote from the Centenary Brochure of 1974 "Ladywood" was described as an elegant building in the early English style consisting of nave and transepts and with seating accommodation for 250. The interior has undergone much change with the tendency being to reduce the seating capacity.

The last service in this building was held on December 21<sup>st</sup> 1985 when the congregation moved into temporary quarters in the Youth Hall next door while another new Church was built adjoining this Hall. The 1874 building has been pulled down and is now the site of a complex of warden-scheme flats known as "The Manor". The present new building, still known affectionately as "Ladywood" but now having no border on Ladywood Road, fronting only onto Springwood Road, was officially opened on Saturday October 25<sup>th</sup> 1986.



**Old Roundhay Methodist Church, 1959**



**New Roundhay Methodist Church, 1986**