

Acre Mill Baptist Church 1871 – 1971

1 Introduction

*'The Lord has done great things
for us; whereof we are glad'.
Psalm 6 v 5.*

One hundred years of Christian witness and service at Acre Mill Baptist Chapel calls for thanksgiving celebrations, not for our own achievements, but for what God has done for us and through us.

Many stalwart Christian men and women have willingly given time and talents in the service of our Lord and Saviour and many today still carry on in the same spirit the work of the Master.

Can we look forward into the new century with that same faith and determination? We can; we will, through Christ our Lord, who alone **IS** able.

We are aware that many faithful friends would love to join with us in our Centenary Celebrations. We would love to have you. We are also aware that many may not be able to come because of sickness or distance, We would value your prayers on this wonderful occasion and assure you that we, too, will pray for God's blessing for you.

God be with you all,
Yours in Jesus' name
Allan H. Webb (Church President)

Part 1 1871-1892

The Bacup Times, Saturday October 21st, 1871;

'On Wednesday evening the first of a series of opening services connected with the School Chapel that is just on the eve of completion at Stacksteads was held at Zion Chapel, Bacup, where the Rev J. P. Chown of Bradford delivered an eloquent and masterly discourse, selecting as his text Isaiah, Chapter 55, v.5. 'A leader and commander of the people'. There was a numerous congregation and the collection amounted to nearly £40. The School Chapel has been erected at a cost of about £1000 upwards of which £400 has already been collected. The building is 66ft long and 33ft wide, inclusive of three class rooms. Owing to the fall of the ground, two additional rooms are to be obtained beneath the chapel. The style of the architecture is gothic. The roof is an open one and the principal timbers are stained and varnished. The walls are of stone from the neighbouring quarries, pitched on the face, with ashlar dressings on the buttresses and windows. The building is warmed and ventilated on the most improved principle. The architects are Messrs Russell and Whittaker of Rochdale, contractors for the masons work Smith and Pilkington and for the joiners' work Messrs Sutcliffe Bros.

It will be seen from our advertising columns that the opening services are to continue tomorrow.

Carried forward on a wave of growing industry and trade, Britain was Queen and Workshop to the world. Business was booming and at the heart of this prosperity were the mills and mines of Lancashire. Cotton was a profitable business and Rossendale was a good place to spin and weave it. Growing output of cotton meant more profits, more mills, a railway, more houses, shops, public buildings, streets, and more people to be reached for Christ.

The members at Zion Baptist Chapel, Bacup in the time of the Rev David Davies were concerned that there was no Baptist chapel between Bacup and Waterbarn, a distance of some two miles containing several thousand people. A few of the members visited the district and resolved to pioneer the opening of a

Sunday School in this rapidly growing area. A site was chosen, money was raised and, in December 1870, in the midst of a bitterly cold spell of weather, the foundation stone was laid by Samuel Howarth of Rook Hill. The chapel was completed in October of the following year.

The opening services began on Wednesday October 18th 1871 and continued until Saturday October 29th. The official opening took place on Sunday October 22nd 1871 and was advertised as follows:

'On Sunday October 22nd, 1871, two sermons will be preached by the Rev H. Dowson, President of the Baptist College, Burnley. In the morning at Zion, Bacup and in the evening at the School Chapel, Stacksteads. In the afternoon the Rev David Davies of Bacup will preach in the new school.'

It is not difficult to imagine the pride of those first members as they looked upon the fruits of their work on that Sunday afternoon in October 1871. There was the building they had prayed for and had watch rise from confused heaps of stone and timber during the past ten months. The builders had at last gone, the site had been hurriedly tidied and the inside had been cleaned, swept and polished. Now they could admire the building God had given them for His work and look with satisfaction at the careful workmanship in the clean, honey coloured stone, the slates, beams, glass, boards, doors and windows that would serve for the next hundred years. They were proud and they looked with hope and optimism to the future God had for them and that stone building.

Outwardly it looked much the same as it does to-day. The entrance was a porch at the side of the building, where the fourth set of windows are now. The whole building was some seven or eight feet shorter for the northern wall once stood where the doors to the chapel aisles are now situated. There were no walls around the chapel and behind stretched a wide expanse of moorland.

What the inside of the building was like we can only guess, for the whole was remodeled some 27 years later. It was probably a large hall, open to the roof and had three classrooms at the southern end where the vestries are to-day, although they were probably larger. Two other classrooms were to be found beneath the school, these being entered by a side door. There were no pews and the scholars sat on portable wooden forms set out inside the hall. There was a special place for the choir who were accompanied by the harmonium.

At first, teachers came down from Zion on alternate Sundays, there being two complete staffs, superintendents and secretaries, each teaching the school once every two weeks. Later, sufficient new teachers were trained to operate the school independently.

The new school chapel was a great success with attendances quickly rising to over a hundred at both morning and afternoon sessions. Although it was still under the authority of the church at Zion, increasing numbers and the growing amount of work involved in running the new school meant that organisation was left more and more to those teachers who were teaching each Sunday at the new school.

A feeling of independence from the church at Bacup grew, for we find a minute of a teachers meeting of April 1876

'the Zion people had given us an invitation to join with them in going to Southport. After a long discussion it was agreed not to join with them as we, at present, did not feel inclined to go. '

Later they changed their minds and went on the outing to Southport but the frequent references to 'the Zion people' in the Sunday School records seem to indicate that, even in 1876, there was a growing feeling of independence of the mother church.

The minutes show that activities multiplied - extra services morning and afternoon, a growing Sunday School, teachers meetings, committees, field days, walking days, outings, parties, bazaars, preachers, hymns, painting, repairing, heating lighting. Then, as now, there was much to be done.

Mr Law and John Ashworth were superintendents on alternate Sundays and there was a full range of classes from tiny children to adults. Strangers often came to 'see what was going on' and were welcomed and often enrolled on the spot. One such chance visitor recalled in 1921 over 30 years membership of the

church. There was no baptistry at the School Chapel and new members were baptised at Zion, Bacup by the minister. Four baptisms took place in 1871-72 and a further six in 1873.

The Rev C. W. Gregory, who was pastor at Zion from 1875-1879, and the Rev J. Horn, who commenced his ministry at Zion in 1879, must have found it difficult to look after this growing infant church and it was felt that it was desirable to have a co-pastor to attend to the work at Acre Mill so the Rev D. C. Chapman of Onckengates had charge of the School Chapel from 1879 until 1882. On his departure, the Rev E. A. Tydeman, then pastor at Zion, proved a faithful helper, conducting the Thursday evening service and presiding at the communion service each month.

The bulk of the work, however, fell upon the teachers and it is not surprising to find that they write, in January 1889, a letter to the Church at Zion;

'Dear Brethren,
We, the members of the church residing near to and worshipping at Acre Mill, believing that it would be for our mutual welfare that we should be formed into a separate church, desire that our formal dismission be granted for that purpose.'

There follows the signature of eighty members.

The reply from Zion is one of cordial agreement and the wish that;

'We trust that your separate existence will be the means of increasing your devotion and zeal in the service of the Master'.

The Rev Tydeman presided at the first church meeting on March 30th. 1889. The names of the first deacons sound strangely familiar; Joseph Bracewell, James Ashworth, Edwin Heyworth, John Howarth, Leonard Clark and Robert H. Ashworth. Joseph Bracewell was appointed chairman until a minister could be found. At the same meeting it was resolved to ask Mr C. Roberts, then a student at Brighton Grove College, Manchester, to become their pastor.

'We think we can offer him £100 per annum to commence'

The Rev C. Roberts became pastor in May 1889 and remained at the church for three years. In this time he baptised 43 people.

So, what had been just a building some eighteen years before was now a flourishing church in its own right and served a growing need in a still growing district. Bacup had a population of about 27,000 and had within its boundaries 67 cotton mills, 16 coal mines, 19 quarries, 7 size works, 3 felt works, 4 dye works, 5 heald and reed works, 4 print works, 2 breweries, 2 corn mills and 3 foundries. Although Manchester was only 95 minutes away by train, the fare of about 6 shillings was high for most working people and community life revolved round work, home and church.

The Church at Acre Mill played its part in serving the community about it, In addition to the usual Sunday School activities there was the Christian Endeavour, which met on a Thursday, the Band of Hope, the Mutual Improvement Society and the Sick and Burial Society. The church was, to many, education, welfare state and entertainment as well as the place where they prayed and worshipped each Sunday.

Even so, the work of the church had its problems which sound only too familiar to us in 1971. We read of a group of drunken men from Dogpits who one night 'ill-used everyone they met, so that the whole district was held in terror'

It is interesting to read the resolutions passed by the church meetings to cope with the everyday problems of the church. On smoking;

'that no smoking be allowed in the School as we consider the same to be a precedent that the younger scholars have begun to indulge in, and we consider the same to be injurious to our schools aims'.

On finance; November 1891.

'Having an adverse balance of £84-9-5 it was moved ... that we ask the Building Committee to lend us £100 for a time and also that we make an effort to keep straight in the future'.

On attendance; May 1893.

'It having been stated that about 20 of our members are not filling their places as they ought to do, it is resolved that a visiting committee be formed'.

On giving; July 1892.

'Res, that we have a special meeting to consider and devise ways of raising the support of this place'.

Part 2 1893-1904

The Church was without pastor for two and a half years following the departure of the Rev C. Roberts and, during this time the pulpit was occupied by various laymen and students from the colleges of Manchester and Rawdon. As usual, the work was done mainly by faithful church members and the names of the first deacons stand out in particular. They must have sat on every committee imaginable during those early years as an independent church, and there were many committees for every church meeting seemed to result in one or two being formed. How they found the time defies imagination.

It was thought necessary to make certain alterations to the inside of the church during these years. In September 1893 it was agreed that;

'since greater accommodation is required for our singers it is resolved that more accommodation be made for them'.

and in November 1893,

'that the singing gallery committee be given the requested power to erect an organ during the same time as the alterations be made'.

The members seem to have been aiming at the provision of a properly equipped church in the style of the day. Around them were many fine examples of church buildings and they were, perhaps, conscious of the origin of their building and wanted, not just a Sunday School Hall but a proper chapel. Accordingly, they turned the middle of the three classrooms into a minister's vestry and put up a pulpit and communion front.

The organ was built by Messrs Hardy and Son of Stockport at a cost of £216. This proved rather more expensive than the members had planned and, in order to meet the cost of the organ and alterations, the church applied to its own building fund for the loan of the whole of that fund. The Building Committee 'lent' £144 and, was empty. Although it does seem rather like taking money from one pocket and putting it into another, the Building Committee did ask that interest be charged if the loan were not paid back within two years'. Nevertheless, the organ was built and the singing gallery too and there was an official opening in May 1894. Mr R. H. Ashworth was appointed organist, a post he held for over 50 years. The job of organblower was advertised in the Sunday School:

'Applications to be sent to James Ashworth, stating terms'.

John Hargreaves and James Meadowcroft were appointed 'having promised to do the work for nothing'. It seems that Messrs Hargreaves and Meadowcroft had not realised what they were in for, for there appears soon afterwards the records of payments to a great many different organ blowers.

There was a great concern at this time about the lack of a minister and the church met on Sept 20th. 1894 to choose between the Rev Owen from Walsley, the Rev G. Charlesworth of Masham, Yorkshire and the Rev Ayres of St Helen's. The members spent half an hour in prayer, after which they agreed to invite the Rev Charlesworth to become their minister. He commenced his duties on January 6th. 1895.

The Rev Charlesworth seems to have been quite a man and certainly made a mark on a church that had been a little easy-going at that time. Firstly, he managed to negotiate a higher salary than the £90 per annum the frugal deacons had offered. You will remember that the previous minister had received £100. Secondly he set about sweeping away the spiritual cobwebs in the most vigorous manner.

At a church meeting on Jan. 5th. 1895, the day before he officially began his ministry, we read;

'At this stage of the meeting our new minister arrived and gave a few practical hints for the members' guidance and the churches welfare and his assistance and the good of the church in general'

It is a pity that the Rev Charlesworth's words were not recorded, for they seem to have made an impact. Within four years the church was expanding, financially sound and able to lay out considerable sums for alteration and building. He instituted changes in the church building, affiliation to the Baptist Union, regular visiting of church members, a ladies prayer meeting and put the finances of the church on a firm footing.

The belief was expressed that,

'If all the members and congregation could be induced to contributing regularly and according to their means the income of the church would be sufficient for all purposes'.

One idea, the forerunner of the system of pew rents at Acre Mill was

'the numbering of seats and appropriating them to voluntary subscribers'

By April 1896 a special meeting of church and congregation resolved;

'That in the opinion of this meeting it is desirable to provide a separate building for the accommodation of the Sunday School and that it is desirable to renovate the chapel and furnish it with pews and otherwise improve it',

Inevitably, a committee was formed. Some members had reservations about this reckless venture and after some discussion it was resolved that,

'We do not commence the building until two-thirds of the architect's statements have been got'.

So the work of raising the money began; tea parties, bazaars, a Christmas Breakfast, special collections and a hundred other ways.

Estimates were obtained for the building of an Iron School. This being the age of iron buildings, almost anything from a garden shed to a large factory, and bigger, could be ordered from standard parts and supplied by a number of contractors throughout the country. The first estimate accepted was promptly raised by the contractor and turned down by the church. Finally the tender of a Mr Humphrey of Harlesden, London, was accepted and he made the journey up to Stacksteads 'near Manchester' as the address ran, in order to draw up the final plans and specifications. The work was sub-contracted to a firm with the peculiar name of Killer and Co,- apparently an associate of Mr Humphrey. The specifications and alterations were examined carefully by Mr Thomas Bell, a Burnley architect, who also supervised the alterations to the chapel.

The 'Iron School' was to cost £388, exclusive of foundations and was to be completed in six weeks after the foundations had been laid. The site was cleared by local workmen and the soil removed by quite a number of local farmers with horses and carts, The foundations were of brick and, were laid by a local firm who, for the services of J. Balshaw, one of the bricklayers, charged £1-1-3 for 42 1/2- hours' work. The building was erected by Killers own men who lodged locally while the work was in progress.

The materials for the building, mainly iron and timber, were delivered to Stacksteads station by rail and carted to the site by a local farmer. Some damage seems to have been done to adjoining land for the record of compensation still exists. The building was constructed of standard parts bolted together, rather like a large Meccano set, and covered with '24 gauge galvanised, corrugated iron with stout unodourous felt under same'. The steelwork was finished by the early summer of 1897 but the woodwork and finishing was held up long after the promised six weeks had gone by. The secretary wrote a letter to Mr Killer in August 1897;

'I further have to point out that we have been waiting since July 23rd (for the woodwork) and as the fine weather is departing and days becoming shorter we cannot wait any longer. I must ask you to take this letter as notice that unless the material is delivered to the site before 31st. August, the committee will feel at liberty to place the work elsewhere and charge you with the difference'.

Mr Killer must have been moved, to action for the work was completed and the new Sunday School was opened on December 18th and 19th 1897.

The building was 67 feet long and 51 feet wide and was divided inside into a hall and seven classrooms. This can be seen today, for much of the original woodwork still remains. A 'lantern' skylight was set in the roof and the 'most modern' heating and ventilation system was installed. The inside was of wood, sized stained and varnished' and the outside, '-probably brown'. At some stage, an afterthought was to include an extra door in the infant's room 'In case of panic or emergency'. There was talk of using the new school building as a day school but the building did not comply with government regulations in this respect.

On Saturday December 18th. 1897 a Social Tea was held, and well attended. In the evening a public meeting took place, presided over by the Rev Charlesworth, and the school was officially opened. A statement of accounts was given by the treasurer, Mr A. Taylor, who reported that a bazaar held recently, had raised the amazing sum of £510, the Mayor of Bacup having donated £23 to this. The total amount raised since the commencement of the Sunday school and Alteration Fund was £674 and the cost of the school, including foundations, heating and lighting was £575. So the school had been built, with a handsome sum left over, but there remained the chapel alterations to be paid for. The trustees applied for a loan and the collections and efforts went on.

In May 1898 Thomas Bell, the architect who had advised on the building of the school wrote to the church offering to plan, design and supervise the alterations to the chapel - for 5% of the total cost. Bell's plans for the alterations still exist and it is interesting to note the changes made, for the building has altered little since 1898. The original building was a hall with three classrooms, the entrance was then at the side and a pulpit, choir gallery and communion had been added. The first task was to make the building larger in order to provide room for the new gallery at the rear of the church. The end wall was pulled down and rebuilt some seven or eight feet further back using the original stone. The roof and walls were extended to reach the new wall. This created room for a passageway behind the pews and a stairway to the new gallery. The old porch was removed and the doorway was built up to create a window to match the originals. A new porch was built so that the entrance was now to the rear of the church. Inside the building the new gallery was a difficult job. It was supported at the rear and sides by the walls and at the front by two iron pillars and was made to slope so that all could see comfortably. This presented the builders with many problems, but they did a beautiful job of work in matching the existing woodwork and masonry.

After strengthening the floor with new joists and floorboards in order to support the weight of the pews, seating was created for about 100 people, the pews being 'of a most comfortable make'. A baptistry, pulpit and new choir gallery were also built.

The alterations were by no means an easy job. Bell wrote;

'This work will take twice as long as for a new building costing four times as much'.

In the event the work took about six months and it is interesting to compare Bell's original plans with the actual alterations carried out. The architect and builders were compelled to make many changes to their plans and although the actual contract was for £567 the final sum appears to have been about twice that

amount. This represents labour and materials on a large scale when one thinks of bricklayer J. Balshaw's 3p per hour pay rate. The re-opening services took place on January 24th 1889 and the following report appeared in the Rossendale Baptist of March that year.

'The friends at Acre Mill are thankful to be able to report the re-opening of their chapel. Up to the time of the settlement of the present pastor, the same building had to serve for both chapel and school services, an arrangement which is seldom satisfactory, and in this case it became very inconvenient as the friends were greatly cramped for room. To increase the accommodation it was decided to erect a separate building for the school and to improve the chapel.

This has now been done. A commodious iron school was erected and opened some twelve months ago and the chapel has been enlarged and extensively altered. The whole of the interior arrangements have been remodeled and the result is a most convenient, cheerful looking place of worship with seating accommodation for 400 persons. A handsome porch has been erected and connected with this a spacious vestibule which is entered by two swing doors and leads by two doors to the chapel aisles, and by a flight of steps to the sloping gallery, which is a new feature of the place and which will seat about 100 persons.

The body of the chapel is furnished with pews of a most comfortable make and all the interior woodwork including the pews, pulpit, choir gallery front, doors etc, is of pitch pine (varnished) except that the pulpit and communion rail are ornamented with polished walnut mouldings of chaste design.

The building is heated by means of hot water pipes and provision is made for conveying warm water to the baptistry when desired. New windows of chequered glass with amber coloured borders have been fitted throughout the school. At the pulpit end of the chapel there are three vestries, one in the centre being for the minister and the side ones for the choir. These latter being fitted with separate staircases leading to the choir gallery.

The walls are of a light terra-cotta colour and the roof is of French grey. The chapel now presents a very bright, airy and cheerful appearance and those who had the planning and superintending of the work have been much congratulated on their results. The work throughout was let by contract to Messrs Farrow and Shaw of Whitworth the architect being Thomas Bell of Burnley'.

The re-opening services continued for two weeks, the Rev Graham Tarn of Harrogate, the pastor, the Rev C. Williams of Accrington and the Rev R.M. Julian of Burnley preaching at various times. The services raised £81, but the church remained heavily in debt for the alterations - a debt which remained for a long time. None of the members were particularly wealthy for, unlike some of the churches of Rossendale which had wealthy patrons, the congregation at Acre Mill mostly consisted of plain, working folk. Perhaps there was a shopkeeper or two or even some who owned a small business, but it is a measure of the faith of those people that they were able to take on such a burden in the hope that the debt would be repaid if they followed God's plan for their work. Things were often difficult and, at one church meeting, a special collection was taken to meet current bills long overdue. £3 was collected and the bills were paid.

The church at Acre Mill was blessed by many willing and faithful workers whose names are lost in the past or appear briefly in the minutes of meetings. Few left any tangible record behind them except a life spent in service at Acre Mill. Perhaps this serves better than stones or plaques. Of one we read.

'The task of filling his place will be a difficult one'

It is certain that this could be said of many a faithful worker throughout Acre Mill's hundred years.

During the ministry of the Rev Charlesworth the work at Acre Mill continued to prosper. The Sunday and Weekday services were well attended, as was the Sunday School. Weekday activities included The Christian Endeavour, the Young Men's Improvement Society and the Choir. The latter was most popular and its members were treated to a free tea on Sundays in return for their services. A popular event was 'The Service of Song where the choir performed in a short musical play with a spiritual or moral message. Parts were spoken, short items sung and the whole performance accompanied t lantern slides. One such, entitled 'Little Minnie' was performed and reported in the Bacup Times of 1898

'to a packed audience, many of whom were in tears at the moving story of a young American girl'.

The Rev Charlesworth remained at Acre Mill until 1904, having been pastor for some ten years. In this time he had baptised 42 people.

Part 3 1905 -1947

From 1905 until 1913 Acre Mill was without a minister. The work went on however, as A. H. Stockwell, writing in 1910, reported in 'The Baptist Churches of Lancashire'.

'From the end of 1904 up to the present time, the church has been without a pastor, the pulpit being supplied by ministers from other churches and by College students and laymen. The friends have worked hard and cheerfully to reduce the debt and they have the satisfaction of knowing that the same has been reduced from £850 to £280 at the present time - the money having been raised by At Homes, Concerts, Carnivals, Pea Parties etc. The Ladies Aid Society is in a healthy condition and has worked nobly for the debt. The friends are also thankful to the Lancashire and Cheshire Association for a grant giving the privilege to solicit help from Churches and friends of the Association - by which means £150 was raised. £50 of the present debt is owing to mortgages and £200 to the Baptist Building Fund, a loan having been granted free from interest.

The church is today in fair condition and has among its members many who are working earnestly. In connection with the School there is a flourishing Young Peoples' Society which has crowded meetings of young people on a Wednesday evening. There is also a Young Men's Mutual Improvement Class at which most of the leading subjects of the day are discussed. There is also a Sick and Burial Society in connection with the Church and School.

The following have been Superintendents of the school since the formation of the church. viz. Messrs John Howarth, William Henry Lord, Leonard Clark and Tattersfield Wilcock. The following are officers of the Church and Sunday School : Deacons - Messrs John Howarth (Treas), William H Lord (Sec). Tattersfield Wilcock, John Hy. Ashworth, Robert Barnes and James Heyworth, Organist: Mr Robert Ashworth. Deputy Organist: Mr Myles Ashworth, Choirmaster: Mr A. S. Collinge. Pew Rent Secretaries; Messrs Albert Taylor and James Heyworth. Chapel Keeper; Mr R. Barnes. School Secretaries; Messrs Robert E. Dyson, Fred Ashworth and Thomas Oddie Harmoniumist; Mr J. Walmsley'

In 1913 the Church invited, the Rev S. J. Wilson of Nottingham to take up the pastorate. In accepting he wrote;

'It will be my aim to place the spiritual welfare of the church in the forefront of my work as I am certain that if we seek the kingdom of God first, all things will be added unto us'.

The Rev Wilson took up his ministry in April 1913 and it may fairly be said of him that, with God's help, he kept his pledge to the church. After his departure in 1915 the church was again without pastor until 1923.

For a period from 1917 the Sunday School was commandeered for use as a hospital and was named 'Acre Mill Auxiliary Hospital'. There was accommodation for 25 patients, mainly convalescents and over 200 cases were treated during this time. Oddly enough the last patient to be treated had been a scholar at Acre Mill Sunday School,

In 1921 the church celebrated its 50th anniversary. The Bacup Times reported that;

'On Saturday and Sunday large gatherings were held in celebration of the Jubilee of the Acre Mill Baptist Church and Sunday School. The proceedings commenced with a reception in the Church by Mr Clark, Mr Wilcock, Mrs Lord and Miss Maggie Lord, followed by organ recital. Tea was then served to 300 and afterwards a reunion was held in the church. John Haworth presided'.

John H. Ashworth gave a short history of the church and a statement of the current state of affairs. In 1921 there were 93 members, the Sunday School had 130 scholars on roll 25 teachers and 3 superintendents. Over 2,000 scholars had been enrolled since the Sunday School began in 1871,

A report was given on the Christian Endeavour, the Band of Hope and the Ladies Aid which, it was proudly stated, had raised over £355 for the debt.

Other speakers were Mrs Lord, Mrs Proctor, Thomas Barcroft and the Rev J. Richards of Zion who recalled the setting up of the Sunday School. Afterwards a sermon was preached by the Rev Gawthrop.

There was growing concern about the lack of a minister for although the members of the church and congregation had done much, the need for permanent and regular oversight was felt. Invitations were made without success until the Rev R. V. Tate accepted an invitation in 1923. The church meeting which extended this invitation consisted of almost 70 members, and it is a reflection of the inflationary effects of the war that his salary was more than twice that of his predecessor.

It was at this time that the church suffered the loss of Mr John Henry Ashworth who had served faithfully for many years. The members decided to have a chair made for the communion in recognition of his services. It still occupies that place.

The Rev Tate remained for three years at Acre Mill and left the church in March 1926. It was placed on record that;

[We record the value of Mr Tate's services as pastor of this church during the last three years and hope that his services to the church at Lancaster will be divinely blessed](#)

He must have been highly regarded for, in 1929, it was resolved to invite him to return as pastor, the church having been without a permanent minister since his departure. The Rev Tate was apparently unable to accept for, in November the Rev D. G. Owen, then of Millom, Cumberland became minister and remained until 1935.

During his ministry, the church celebrated its 60th anniversary and special celebrations were held. The Bacup Times reported;

['On October 24th 1931, the diamond jubilee of the Acre Mill Baptist Church and Sunday School was celebrated. After tea, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of Mr W. Henry Lord. There were also present Mr Webster Peacock, Coun. E. Barcroft, Mr Thomas Barcroft, the Rev H. Motley, Mrs Clingo and the pastor Mr D. G. Owen.'](#)

During the evening old hymns were sung and anthems rendered by the choir under the leadership of Mr J. S. Riley. The latter also gave the solo 'Lead Kindly Light', in good style, Mr George Greenwood officiated at the organ.

Other speakers were Mr W. H. Lord, L. Clarke, Mrs L. Fielding, G. Greenwood, T. Barcroft and W. Peacock.

From 1935 to 194, the church was without a permanent pastor once more and during this time the students of local Colleges proved of great value.

One such temporary minister was Sister Nellie Lewis of whom the present deacons have vivid memories. She remained at the church for some ten months in 1937-38 and although this was only a short time, left an impression of enthusiasm and vigour. She earned from the church ... 'the very best thanks for her services to this church and school'.

Her arrival seems to have been connected with a concert given by a Fishermen's Choir who, dressed in fishermen's sweaters and having appropriately tanned and weather-beaten faces, sang good, old-fashioned hymns of a nautical style. They were much enjoyed, and it was resolved to invite them back, although there are no records of them repeating the performance.

About this time an evangelical week was planned, the main speaker being one Doc. Sharpe, a reformed bookmaker and fiery preacher.

The war had inevitably meant a loss of membership and some left to join the forces but did not return. Things were difficult with respect to buildings for the Sunday School was used as a British Restaurant from the early years of the war.

Throughout the war the question of a minister still remained and in 1943 it was decided to approach Ebenezer Baptist Church, Millgate with the object of arranging a joint pastorate. As a result, the Rev J. A. Jones of Cardiff was appointed as pastor of two churches. He remained from September 1944 to December 1947 when he accepted the pastorate of Slade Lane Baptist Church, Longsight Manchester.

Part 4 1948-1971

From 1947 to 1958, the Church was again without a minister and again the work of the church fell wholly upon the faithful members, too numerous to mention here.

In 1958 the Rev T. O. Morgan became minister and remained until 1961, his pastorate being shared by friends at Sion Baptist Church, Cloughfold. He is affectionately remembered as an excellent preacher and a lover of old Welsh hymns. His work with the young people of Acre Mill was particularly rewarded.

In May 1962 the Rev Tom Stobart was inducted as minister of Acre Mill and Sion Baptist Churches. During this time it was felt necessary to make repairs to the Sunday School Building. The '24 gauge galvanized corrugated iron' was showing signs of wear after sixty-six years of Rossendale weather and the 'three coats of good oil colour' had failed to prevent a good deal of rust. The framework of the building was preserved and was re-clad with rustless material on the outside and the building extensively modernised inside. Most of the structural work was done by qualified tradesmen but members of the church worked hard, particularly in doing the painting and refitting of the kitchen. The project cost almost £5,000 and was completed in three months. The building was re-opened in May 1962.

The Rev Stobart left Acre Mill in 1969 to take up a pastorate in Essex and left behind seven years faithful and successful work for the Lord. He is remembered as a quiet, thoughtful man with gift for preaching and an understanding manner with all, young not-so-young.

Conclusion

At the present time we are again without a minister, but the church has learned to overcome this difficulty for it has been so for more than fifty of its hundred years. Christ's work continues here and, as can be seen from our programme, activities abound. The Church building has been redecorated in time for its hundredth birthday and much work has been done to make this a memorable and blessed time for all. Before you leave, please do one small thing. Sit quietly at the back of the church and look around. Look carefully at the colours of the walls and the rich browns of the woodwork; study the lines of the roof; admire the fine organ, the flowers and let the peacefulness of the building impress you; feel the smooth wood and remember the hundreds who have worshipped here on more than five thousand Sundays. Remember all those countless, faithful workers to whom the church owes a great debt. Be sentimental; but not too sentimental. Remember that our Church has a future as well as a past. A hundred years have ended, but another hundred is just beginning. Christ needs people to become a part of that next hundred years.

PAST MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH

1879-1882 Rev D. C. Chapman
1889-1892 Rev C. Roberts
1895-1905 Rev G. Charlesworth
1913-1915 Rev J. Wilson
1923-1926 Rev R. V. Tate
1944-1935 Rev D. G. Owen

1929-1935 Rev J. A. Jones (Joint with Millgate)
1958-1961 Rev T.O. Morgan. (Joint with Sion)
1962-1969 Rev T. W. Stobart (Joint with Sion)

STUDENT PASTORS

1922 Mr Davies.
 1927 Mr P. E. Schofield
 1937 Mr Clements and Mr Downham
 1937-38 Sister Nellie Lewis
 1940 Mr A. Neave
 1988 Mr Garside
 1949 Mr Bonsall
 1950-51. Mr R. Drake
 1952 Mr W. G. Oliver
 1953-54 Mr B. Harrison.
 1955 Mr D. A. Roberts
 1956 Mr N. Bruen
 1957 Mr M. H. Taylor

CHURCH SECRETARIES

1889 Mr J. Ashworth
 1895 Mr W. H. Lord
 1911 Mr J. Howarth
 1917 Mr L. Clarke
 1917 Mr J. H. Ashworth
 1922 Mr E. Barcroft
 1941 Mr V. Brierley
 1942 Mr T. Lord
 1944 Mr R. Piper
 1945 Mr H. Lord
 1947 Mr E. Barcroft
 1948 Mr V. Brierly
 1969 Mr E. Evans

CHURCH TREASURERS

1889 Mr John Howorth
 1912 Mr W Henry Lord
 1928 Mr E. Barcroft
 1928 Mr C. Lunt
 1958 Mr J. Broadhurst

SPECIAL DATES

Dec 1870 Corner Stone Laid
 Oct 1871 Sunday School Chapel Opened
 Jan 1889 Church separated from Zion
 Dec 1897 New school built
 Jan 1889 Opening after alterations to chapel
 Oct 1921. Jubilee Celebrations

Oct 1931 60th Anniversary
 1963 Lancashire & Cheshire Association
 appointed as trustees.
 1964 Sunday School re—opened after
 modernisation
 1969 Oil heating installed
 1971 Interior of church re-decorated

OFFICIALS OF THE CHURCH 1971

President, Mr A. H. Webb
 107, Park Rd,
 Waterfoot

Secretary Mr E. Evans
 165 Newchurch Rd
 Stacksteads

Treasurer Mr J. T. Broadhurst
 4 Spring Hill Ave
 Stacksteads

Life Deacon Mr C. Lunt
 Deacons Mr R. Piper
 Mrs H. Nuttall
 Mr E. Smalley
 Mrs W. Smalley
 Mr J. Heyworth
 Mrs A. Heyworth
 Mr D. Talbot

Choirmaster Mr R. Piper

Organist Mr P. Webb

ACRE MILL BAPTIST CHURCH
CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

SUNDAY Oct 24th-SUNDAY Oct 31st 1971

Sunday October 24th 10. 30am Morning Service
6.00pm Underground Evangelism film
To Russia With Love
Speaker Mr J. Talbot. Music by O.H.M.S.

Special Meetings.

Monday 7.00pm Cubs and Scouts,
Tuesday 7.00pm Brownies and Guides
Wednesday 7.00pm Ladies Meeting - Slides.
Thursday 7.00pm Junior C.E and Choir

All parents and friends are invited to come along each night.

Saturday October 30th 3.00pm Service in the Church
Speakers Mr A. H. Webb, Church President.
Mr C. Lunt, Life Deacon.
Rev M. A. Taylor, Principal, Northern Baptist College
Rev A. T. Hubbard, Area Superintendent Lancs and Cheshire Assn.
Also representatives of Local Churches

4.30 and 5.15; Tea
There will be music in the church by past organists during this time.

Admission to tea by ticket ADULTS 35p. CHILDREN 20p.

Evening; Slides of past events, photographs, exhibition,
Items by choir, general re-union

Sunday October 31st. 10.30am Leader Mr F. J. Bayliss
Preacher Rev T. W. Stobart (Former Pastor)
6.00pm Leader Rev A. Neave)Former
Preacher Rev R. Drake.) Student Pastors

Items by choir conducted by Mr R. Piper
Organist; Mr P. Webb
Refreshments in School after Service,