OULTON PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL

**On the 10th October 1901, the Rev., F.C. France , Superintendant of the Lowestoft Primitive Methodist Circuit, the Circuit Steward, Adam Adams, Alderman of the town, who had been the former Vice-President of the Primitive Methodist Connexion in 1900 and G.H. Smart the Treasurer met the Trustees of the present chapel to consider the proposal to build a new chapel in Oulton. A list of the serving Trustees of the existing chapel was examined and a few more names added.**

**The meeting heard that Adam Adams had generously offered a piece of land and would charge nothing for its conveyance ‘on condition the work of building should be commenced without delay’. The generous offer of Alderman Adams was accepted and a vote of thanks was passed for his splendid gift.**

**It was decided to employ Mr. F.W. Richards of Stanley Street, Lowestoft as the architect and the minister offered to call on him to discuss the matter.**

**The following month the Trustees asked for two different plans for the chapel to be prepared. They decided that the present chapel should be demolished and the building material be used to build a schoolroom.**

**A public tea was arranged for December to raise funds for the new building.**

**At the end of January 1902, the Trustees felt that an additional 12 feet of land should be purchased and determined that the new chapel should be 40 feet long by 30 feet wide. The ceiling would be matchboard and there would be a wooden block floor with pitch pine seats.**

**Tenders were invited at the end of February and advertisements were placed in the *Lowestoft* *Journal*, the *Weekly Press* and the *Lowestoft Standard* for tenders to be submitted for the building work and furnishings.**

**By the middle of April, four building tenders had been received none of which were felt to be satisfactory. Then at a later meeting a letter was read from the architect suggesting that he prepares a simpler building plan. The Trustees agreed to this suggestion on condition that the cost of the building did not exceed £450.**

**By the end of May, the new plan had been drawn up and accepted. It was also agreed that Adam Adam’s bill for the transfer of land should be paid. Clearly everyone, including Adams himself, had forgotten that he had originally offered to pay the bill himself !!.**

**Nothing more appears to have been done for some months and the Trustees’ minutes show that in November 1902 discussions were still going on about the plans. It was suggested that the platform should be a foot longer and wider and doors should be placed at each side of the platform.**

**In the following January further tenders were received however no decisions had been made about them, although the application to build a chapel had been accepted by the District Building Committee.**

**Then the architect was asked to make further alterations whilst the building tender of J.S. Youngs of Oulton Broad for £557 was accepted. Adam Adams offered to pay £25 towards this building bill so that six feet might be added to the length of the new chapel in order to make it the same length as was originally intended.**

**The stone laying was fixed for the 13th April (1903) and the 3rd August was chosen for the opening ceremony. The builders signed an agreement to have the chapel completed by 31st July and accepted they would be paid in installments as funds were raised.**

**The intention to put the foundation stones inside the chapel was altered in February when it was agreed to place them either side of the front windows. In addition, a stone with the words ’Primitive Methodist Church 1903’ would be set above the front door.**

**The Treasurer was authorized to pay the architect’s fees of £7.10.0d and an application submitted to the Church Extension Fund for a loan of £400. A further loan of £150 free of interest for six months and thereafter at 4%, was obtained from an interested lady.**

**At a meeting at the beginning of March, it was agreed that the foundation stones should be laid by Mr. George H. Smart, the Rev., and Mrs Frederick Clulow, Alderman Adam Adams, Mrs G.H. Smart for the Christian Endeavour, Councillor George Shadford for the Sunday School, Mr. George Godbold for the Trustees, Mr George Flegg, Mr George Mobbs ( the local farmer of Laurel Farm) and Mr George Grimson. Those who laid the stones also placed a donation on them so it was financially prudent to have as many stone-layers as possible! The stone-laying was held inside the foundation walls of the church and was to be followed by a tea on the ground next to the new building and then by an evening meeting. A ‘booth’ to seat 400 people was hired and forms and seats were to be borrowed together with tea tables, urns, trestle tables and crockery. The charge for tea was fixed at 9d per person.**

**The Chairman of the District, William Hammond and the now former superintendent minister F.C. France were to be present as well as Francis Lucas M.P. for Lowestoft, A. Beauchamp Esq., , representatives from nearby Methodist chapels and the nonconformist ministers of the town. The Carlton Colville band was also invited to attend. Three hundred tickets, a hundred posters and five hundred programmes were ordered from Thomas Huke, printer, of Lowestoft. The programmes would contain hymns to be sung at the ceremony and would be sold at a penny each. George Shadford, a plumber and gas fitter offered to paint a large notice on the wall of the old chapel to advertise the event and this was ‘thankfully accepted’. Accounts show that £161, 13 shillings and 9 and a half pence was collected at the stone laying ceremony, somewhat less than the £200 hoped for. Newspaper reports of the stone-laying ceremony gave details of the speech by Francis France. The weather however, did not add to the enjoyment of the day for it was not favourable to open-air meetings as it was bitterly cold and there were occasional snow showers!.**

**Tenders were requested by the Trustees for oak seats for the chapel. The carpenters were asked to submit their own designs. Heating and lighting estimates were also invited. A ‘roof-raising effort’ was proposed for Whit Monday together with a public tea and evening meeting. It was decided that Mrs Smart be invited to open the new chapel and that ‘we present Mrs Smart with the’ New History of the Connexion’ when completed. This was the history of the Primitive Methodist Church by H.B.Kendall which was shortly to be published.**

**A water pump was donated and so too was a rostrum.**

**The Rev., F.C. France would preach at the opening service followed by other ministers and the local preacher, Adam Adams on subsequent Sundays.**

**At a Trustees meeting on 3 July 1903, it was resolved to send letters to the architect and tradesmen to urge them to ensure that the chapel was completed on time. The builder was instructed to ‘pick out in cement three Gothic arches for the wall at the rear…..to cost as little as possible’!**

**The builder was asked to provide a plan and estimate for a platform desk and two side gates which would be considered at the next meeting. The Trustees’ secretary noted in the minute book the discussion which determined ‘we preserve the copy of the plans and place on record our unanimous judgement that the architect has instructed the builder to bring the frontage too near the boundary of the road’ !**

**The cost of land was £27.3s.0d, architect’s fees £15, the contractor was paid £606.6s.6d, whilst seats, lighting and heating cost £81.16s.6d. At the opening ceremony £42.4s and 1 and a half pence was collected together with promises for a further £15.5s.0d. Bazaars had raised £62.6s.1d and further donations amounted to £33.9s.5d. Strangely there was no report of the opening of the new chapel in the local newspapers, usually so ready to report such events. Consequently there are no records of the events of that special day.**