

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this book to the memory of all those faithful members and ministers who have served their Lord and this Church over the years; to those who are with us today, serving faithfully and belonging to the Church family; and to those countless others who will follow on. To God be the Glory!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to place on record my indebtedness to Ruth Abbott, who has devoted so much of her time to painstakingly type out this manuscript, for creating order out of the chaos I gave her, and for making the entire thing both presentable and readable. Thank you Ruth for your patience!

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FOREWORD

“What is a church?
Our honest sexton tells-
“’Tis a tall building,
with a tower and bells!”

So said the author George Crabbe in the early part of the 18th century. But I would strongly disagree with him, and I hope that by the time you have read what follows this Foreword, you will disagree with him too!

Because a church, this church or any church, has very little to do with towers or bells and everything to do with people! And I speak with the authority and experience of someone who has the privilege of being the minister of a church where people matter. ‘Twas ever so at Bamford Chapel.

As you read this amazing story of the birth, growth, and development of Christ’s body here in Bamford, you can only, as I have been in writing it, be amazed at the faith and the fortitude, the courage and the convictions of so many saints. Because “saints”, they most surely have been.

From those days in the late 18th century, when a few people gathered in Ralph Holt’s home, through times of typhoid and cholera, and the Industrial Revolution and the heyday of the Sunday School, to the 20th century with its world wars and the consequent cynicism and doubting of so many, Bamford Chapel has stood here at the centre of the local community. Indeed to rephrase another author: *“Before Bamford began, the Chapel already was!”*

On at least two modern maps that I have seen, there is no sign of the Chapel! But Bamford Chapel has made its mark on many more things than local street maps. Many thousands of people have had cause to thank God for the influence this church has had on so many lives, both young and old. Here, within this sanctuary, generations have worshipped, many individuals have heard God’s call to them, and people have been served and helped, healed and restored, strengthened and comforted, blessed and inspired.

My wife, my children, and I have so much to be thankful for as regards Bamford Chapel. And we have only been members of this local Church for just over four years! How much more some of you, who have worshipped and witnessed here for much longer, should have cause to thank God for what you have known and experienced. Margaret and I still find Bamford Chapel hard to take in. Because it really is so different from the average church.

And we have spent all of our lives and ministry in those average churches, where members struggle each week to keep the doors open, where there are few if any children, where the church at present is but a shadow of what it used to be, and where the future seems very dark, and at times almost non-existent.

So please share in this story of Bamford Chapel. Because you are part of it. It has, with the influence of the Holy Spirit, changed thousands of lives, including yours. And ours! To God be the glory!

Rev David Wiseman
January 2001

1. STORY OF BAMFORD CHAPEL

It really all began with a wedding.

Two leading families in this part of Lancashire in the late 18th century were the Kays and the Fentons. The Kays were a major force in the Independent Chapels in Lancashire, particularly around Ramsbottom and Bury, whilst the Fentons had been landowners in Bamford for well over 200 years. And in 1789, Joseph Fenton, aged 24, of Crimble Farm married Ann Kay, then of Limefield House in Bury. Until this time, the Fentons had worshipped at St Luke's Church in Heywood, and many of the family were baptised, married and buried there.

The Kays, who had made their fame and fortune out of cotton, had been instrumental in founding the Park Congregational Church in Ramsbottom in 1798, and with the encouragement of Robert Kay (Ann's brother), the Rev Benjamin Holmes of Ramsbottom began preaching at Ashworth in 1796. Two years later, Robert Kay encouraged John Windsor of Bury to preach in and around Heywood. No doubt, these areas were very familiar to Mr Kay, as he came to visit his sister, Ann Fenton, now living at Crimble.

In November 1799, John Windsor requested that Thomas Hackin, an itinerant preacher from Ossett in Yorkshire should join him at Heywood, and for some time, Mr Hackin preached twice every Sunday. The new group of Independent worshippers tried to erect a chapel, but because of local opposition in Heywood, their meeting room was taken away, and the number of hearers diminished.

As no other room could be obtained in Heywood, Robert Kay proposed that the worshippers in Ashworth and Heywood be united in one congregation, and Bamford was chosen as a central spot. A house was obtained in Bamford by Mr Kay to be used both as a Sunday School and a temporary preaching place. During this time, Mr Hackin continued to visit the area, often linking his visit to Bamford with one to the nearby village of Spotland.

During 1800, Mr Hackin gained permission from Ralph Holt of Bamford, to preach in his barn, and later in his house, so that soon, services were being held twice during the week and up to four times every Sunday. Mr Holmes continued with his work at Ashworth, and by October 1800, it was deemed more necessary than ever to erect some local place of worship. And so it was, that in January 1801, a subscription fund was started, to raise money for the building. Mr and Mrs Joseph Fenton, who by now had moved to Bamford Hall, gave a portion of their land at Butterworth Fold, and building began almost immediately.

<p>1801 George III was in his 41st year as King, William Pitt resigned after 17 years as Prime Minister. Lord Nelson sank the Danish fleet at the Battle of Copenhagen. Rochdale numbered 11,000 inhabitants. Heywood numbered 4,283.</p>
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We need to pause and recall what local living conditions were like in 1801. There were very few people living in Bamford, roads as we know them were unknown, and people existed without benefit of gas or water supplies. The road from Rochdale to Bury was by way of Broadhalgh, Arthur Pitts, Diggles', Dixon Fold, Hollin Lane, behind Bamford Hall to Simpson Clough, then by way of Grizlehurst through Birtle. There was no post, no newspapers, no radio or telephone, and very few means of communication. The stagecoach between Rochdale and Manchester had only begun in 1790. The journey by coach to London took five days. Highwaymen were a common threat.

Extreme poverty was the norm, very few people could read or write, and the majority of the local population earned their living by working on the land or spinning wool or cotton at home. The small cottages where people lived were barely furnished, and conditions that we take for granted two centuries later, like health, education and holidays, books, schools and shops were unknown. Illness and disease were rife, and life was hard.

The "Evangelical Magazine" for 1801 gave the following account:

"On Wednesday, September 30th, a small, neat chapel was erected and was opened at Bamford, near Rochdale, in Lancashire. Mr Ely of Bury introduced the service by prayer and reading the Scriptures. Mr Littlewood of Rochdale gave thanks unto God for the erection of this house for His service, and prayed for the successful dispensation of the Gospel therein. Mr Roby of Manchester, preached from Psalm 26.8, and Mr Blackburn of Delph from 1 Corinthians 1.23. Mr Coles of Stand concluded. The erection of this chapel was occasioned principally by the successful itinerant labours of Mr Hackin. The expense is defrayed by the liberal subscriptions of a few individuals. It could not contain the congregation that assembled at the opening."

1802 On the international scene, the question of slavery dominated every issue in the USA. Napoleon Bonaparte was elected Consul for Life in France, and the composer Beethoven realised that he was going deaf.

What became of Thomas Hackin, who figured so prominently in those first few years of Bamford Congregational Church is unknown; but he does not seem to have been chosen as pastor of the church he had largely helped bring together. However in February 1802, the church minutes record: "*Ebenezer White, formerly of the Academy at Hoxton, came to Bamford, and supplied for several months.*" Nor was Mr White invited to be the permanent minister, though he remained at Bamford until August 1802.

By now, the first baptisms had been conducted. Mr Hackin conducted the first: John, the son of James and Joan Heywood of Spotland Smithy, born 6th May 1801. Of the first 16 baptisms conducted in the year 1802, Ebenezer White conducted 8, Thomas Hackin 5, and Benjamin Holmes 3.

1803 Britain declared war on France. Meanwhile the USA bought the Mississippi Valley from France, thus doubling the size of the country. Joseph Haydn was Europe's greatest living composer.

The Rev J T Parsons began his ministry at Bamford on January 2nd 1803 - the first Minister of the new chapel. Trained at Hoxton Academy, he had served at Congleton

before coming to Bamford. In September 1803 the second anniversary of the church, ten people, 8 men and 2 women signed a covenant and declared themselves an Independent Church. They were Thomas and Susanna Parsons, Robert Ashworth, John Butterworth, Samuel Lord, William Scott, John Crabtree, James Smith, James Clegg and Ann Fenton.

The covenant, which runs to three pages, is headed "A Solemn Covenant, proper to be read at the admission of new members". The first paragraph reads: "*We do in the presence of the Almighty and heartsearching God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Great and awful crowned King of Zion, and of the holy elect angels who invisibly preside in our assemblies, we call heaven and earth to witness that we this day dedicate ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten. Called to the fellowship of Saints and venturing to believe that we are quickened together with Christ, we engage to withdraw ourselves from all intimate communion with a sinful and unbelieving world, and to seek our supreme happiness in the favour of our compassionate Saviour, who loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might redeem it from all iniquity and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.*"

As can be read, the people of the early 19th century had a far different style of language from ours today. They would have equal difficulty understanding our words and phrases, as we do with theirs. This was the language of their faith and worship, and we would have found their style and ways of worship difficult to share in and follow.

There were two Deacons, Robert Ashworth and John Crabtree, and the Lord's Supper was administered to the church for the first time on October 2nd 1803. The little church was already beginning to have its effect on the community, seeing from the registers, that the Rev Thomas Parsons conducted 27 baptisms in his first year at Bamford. The building of a vestry and a manse was begun in July 1803 and in May 1804 "*the house and vestry were finished and entered upon by the Minister Thomas Parsons and his wife Susanna.*" (Incidentally, to help pay the debt on the manse, Mr Parsons visited various places collecting money, and raised £142 from London and £30 from Birmingham).

<p>1804 Napoleon crowned himself Emperor. Nationally, Richard Trevithick constructed the first steam engine to run on rails and William Blake published "Jerusalem". Locally, the Rochdale Canal opened, accompanied by vast crowds, and the city bells of Manchester.</p>

By this time, other members were being added to the fellowship, names like Robert Porter (who later became a Deacon), John Woolstenholme, William Kay, John Hopwood and Alice Clegg. It would seem that most of the early members were husbands and wives: the Minister and his wife, Robert and Sarah Ashworth, John and Mary Butterworth, Samuel and Mary Lord, John and Elizabeth Crabtree, James and Alice Clegg, William and Elizabeth Kay.

The Rev Thomas Parsons conducted 21 baptisms in 1804 and a further 18 in 1805. The Crabtrees had a son, Edward, the Heywoods had another son, Jonathan, and the Kays had a daughter, Mary Ann. But the most notable entry in the baptism register is that on February 20th 1805, when James Phillips, the son of Robert and Hannah Kay, was baptised by the Rev Thomas Parsons. Young James Phillips was to make quite a name

for himself in future years. We cannot ascertain exactly where the Robert Kays were living at the time - some records say Manchester, whilst the baptism register describes them of Rochdale. Truth to say, they probably had more than one house.

1805 Lord Nelson died at the Battle of Trafalgar. Napoleon assembled 2,343 ships at Boulogne, ready to invade England.

1806 Napoleon beat the Prussian army twice in one day. Napoleon puts Great Britain under blockade. He confiscates all British property and imprisons all British subjects on French territory.

In 1806, the Lancashire Congregational Union was formed, and both the Minister, the Rev Tom Parsons and Bamford Congregational Church were founder members. Bamford was the 36th oldest Congregational Church in the old Lancashire Congregational Union, of which 14 have now closed, leaving Bamford to be the 22nd oldest, and among the 3 largest of those early 22.

1807 Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society became the first missionary to China. Great Britain abolished the slave trade, thanks to William Wilberforce.

The birth rate in the small village of Bamford was high, as is reflected by there being 27 baptisms at the chapel in 1806 and a further 26 in 1807. But difficulties were beginning to arise for the young church at Bamford, and I leave it to the earliest church records to tell part of the story.

“The Rev Thomas Parsons remained at Bamford till the spring of 1808, and many from the surrounding neighbourhood flocked to his ministry. But being naturally of rather an irritable disposition, and some misunderstanding arising betwixt himself and the congregation, his usefulness seemed to be at an end, and proposals were made that he should resign his charge as pastor of the church at Bamford, which he accordingly did, though not in the most gently and pacific manner. He left but few who lamented his removal. The Rev J T Parsons bore a good character, but was of a hot temper. He was much valued as a preacher by those who loved good sounding and high Calvinistic Theology”. And though we are told that he left in the Spring, he was still conducting baptisms until the November of that year, 1808, another 25 in all.

1808 Richard Trevithick displayed his 5mph rail engine in London. In Rochdale, 52 stone Daniel Lambert was on exhibition.

1809 Napoleon arrested the Pope. Austria declared war on France.

It wasn't long before Thomas Parson's place in the Bamford ministry was filled by the second occupants of the manse, the Rev John Gray and his wife, Agnes. He had been educated at Roby's Academy in Manchester, and he first visited Bamford to preach for the people on June 11th 1809. He received a unanimous call by the congregation and he eventually accepted the call and settled here on May 16th 1810.

1810 Sweden declared war on Britain. Drake Street, named after the then Vicar of Rochdale was opened. Though still a fairly small town, Rochdale had over 80 public

houses. The Leeds-Liverpool Canal was opened. Factories were now beginning to be lit by gas, rather than oil and candles.

Bamford Chapel continued to grow in numbers and in faith, and in 1810, Robert Porter's wife, Ann became a member. So did Abraham and Alice Leach and John and Margaret Ashworth. Where did these members live? Well, the Woolstenholmes lived at Hooley Bridge, as did the Porters and the Ashworths, the Crabtrees lived at Passmans, the Kays lived at Meadowcroft, the Lords lived at Cut Gate, whilst the Fentons of course, resided at Crimble. After serving the Bamford church for 5 years, the Rev John Gray was ordained on August 23rd 1815. Curiously, John Gray had conducted 33 baptisms at Bamford, prior to his ordination.

1811 The Luddites were a growing force, as they travelled around, smashing the new machinery for producing cotton, wool and lace. John Bright was born in Rochdale. Lord Byron paid his only visit to Rochdale.

We should record that these first dozen years or so, had seen the growth, not only of the church, but also of the school. It really was a school, where reading and writing were the main subjects, and Mrs Ann Fenton took it upon herself to provide all the books. There was a girls' schoolroom and another for the boys. Robert Porter was the first S.S. Superintendent, and incidentally S.S. stood for "Sabbath School". Some of the leading teachers were Mr and Mrs Fenton's sons James and John and later their cousin James Phillips Kay.

Few people locally or nationally could read or write and education was fast becoming a prime necessity. As the Sabbath Schools started and grew across the land, there was some opposition from within the church, due to the feeling that this was but a new way to break the Sabbath. At first, the Sabbath Schools, like that at Bamford, were concerned to teach children to read and write, but later arithmetic was added to the syllabus. Women found a role in the Sabbath Schools, which they had never had in the church. Poorer boys and girls gained a hitherto unavailable education and this helped them to move from one social class to another. And also the Sabbath Schools became a most efficient recruiting agency for the nonconformist churches. In a small community like Bamford, a large proportion of church members grew into the church from the Sabbath School.

1812 Spencer Perceval, the British Prime Minister was assassinated in Parliament. The USA declared war on Britain. Beethoven performs his 5th piano concerto, nicknamed "The Emperor".

Alongside the growth of the Sabbath School at Bamford, it is important to realise a few of the many contrasts between then and now in church activities and behaviour.

The early Congregational churches helped to start the Christian church singing. Prior to Isaac Watts, the churches had in the main been chanting and singing metrical psalms. In the 40 years between 1770 and 1810, ten national hymn books were published by the Congregationalists. Hymn singing was quite different from today's tradition. Up to and after the turn of the century, hymn singing had been led by pitch pipe, fife and lute. And

from what we can read of the day, all the evidence goes to show that right up to the 1850's, hymn singing in the churches was bad.

There was much criticism written of hymn singing at the time. The "Congregational Magazine" in 1826 said: "*any person possessing the slightest ear for music, upon entering a Congregational Chapel, would be conscious of a disturbance, if not a shock to his musical feelings.*" The previous year, a contributor to the same magazine had complained of the "vociferation" and "nasal twang" of congregations when they sing. In London, he added, "*the singing is sometimes perfectly grotesque*", the precentor being often "*more skilled in grimace and vociferation, than in singing.*"

Bamford Chapel had no hymn books to begin with, and the precentor, or leader of singing, would read out two lines of the hymn, and then pitch the tune with the aid of a tuning fork, lute or pipe. Even these aids were luxuries, and many chapels sang as late as the 1860's, without any musical instrumental help. In many country chapels, a group known as "the singers" acted as precentors "much to the mirth of the ungodly". As late as the 1850's, we have records at Bamford, of James Jackson, who played the bass fiddle in the chapel "orchestra" being the butt of the jokes and conversations of the younger members of the congregation.

1813 The Duke of Wellington captured Madrid from the French. Meanwhile in England, Jane Austen wrote "Pride and Prejudice".

In the early years of the 19th century, there was a strong and general conviction that there should be no organs in chapels. This had the advantage of making choirs popular, particularly in the better-attended town chapels. So, in most town churches, the choir led the praise, whilst in country chapels like Bamford, it was "the singers", which could vary from a solo to a handful of voices. But certainly, nothing as grand as a choir. Choirs acted as both precentor and organ in many churches, and they became so popular, that in several churches, the hymns were sung by the choir alone. The first hymn book used by the members of Bamford Chapel was in 1865, when the Chapel began to use "The Congregational Hymn Book", first published in 1836.

1814 George Stephenson built his "Puffing Billy". The Russians, Prussians, Swedes and Austrians beat Napoleon at Leipzig.

Sermons on an average lasted for well over the hour. The more fashionable preachers in the early 19th century (of whom there were many) would speak for two or nearly three hours. Here we are speaking of men like Thomas Raffles (Liverpool), William Roby (Manchester), Robert M'All (Manchester) and Joseph Fletcher (Blackburn and Manchester). All of these Congregational ministers preached at Bamford Chapel at one time or another.

Bible reading in church was not common, even by the minister. The custom had disappeared entirely by 1800, and only began to reappear gradually in the mid 19th century. Prayers too were often on the long side, usually extending to over twenty minutes. Discussions went on, locally and nationally, as to whether to kneel or sit for

prayers, and whether to stand or sit for the singing of hymns. In the end, most churches, including Bamford Chapel, adopted the custom of kneeling for prayer and sitting to sing.

1815 The Duke of Wellington defeated Napoleon at Waterloo. US forces under Andrew Jackson, beat the British at New Orleans. Liverpool welcomed its first steam driven boat on the Mersey. The first stage-coach service began from Manchester to Clitheroe.

In most chapels, especially in the North of England, there was a distinct difference in chapel between the working class and the more affluent members of the community. The affluent in the North were usually local landowners and mill or factory owners, and this was so here in Bamford. At Bamford Chapel, the Fenton family and their servants sat down the right hand side of church, whilst most of their workers and tenants sat elsewhere, and in later days, upstairs. To become a member of the local chapel was a very important step in the life of any individual. Prospective members were visited, and questioned by the minister and usually two members, and then on joining, they were required to sign the church covenant.

In the early part of the 19th century, the custom was to hold morning and afternoon services only. By 1815, it was becoming the fashion to attend evening services as well. Much debate ensued about the dress of Independent ministers in the pulpit. By 1832 all Baptists and Wesleyans had abandoned clerical vestments, but Congregationalists were among the last of the non-conformists to do so. In 1839 only two Congregational chapels in London were not wearing gown and bands in the pulpit. In the Provinces, at chapels like Bamford, the custom continued well into the 20th century.

1816 Coleridge, Shelley, Lord Byron and Keats were all publishing their poetry. Louis XVIII is now the King of France. And the British defeat the Gurkhas at Kathmandu.

2. A MAJOR MINISTRY

1817 The first regular service between Liverpool and New York began. Parkinson's Disease is named after surgeon James Parkinson.

The first Church history of Bamford Chapel was recorded by Thomas Jackson in 1837. From that record, we read: *“By the humble piety and Christian affection which Mr Gray manifested to his people, he succeeded in conciliating their esteem and love in a very eminent manner. The Church increased, and he had a prospect of much usefulness. But his health began to decline in a few years, and in spite of all medical aid, his complaint (Fistula) increased so that his acceptable labours were closed on the first Sabbath in November 1817, when for the last time, he administered the ordinance of the Lord's Supper to his afflicted Church at Bamford. He continued to linger till the spring of 1818, and fell asleep in Jesus on the eleventh of April, leaving his disconsolate widow to bemoan her loss. Averse to monumental ostentation, it was with considerable difficulty his permission could be obtained for a stone to be placed over his mortal remains. The only inscription he would allow is this “1818 - a sinner saved by grace”.*

1818 John Nash builds Regent Street in London and the Royal Pavilion in Brighton. In Rochdale, the Savings Bank was opened. There were by now 16 Sunday Schools in town.

When Mr Gray died in 1818 he left about 33 members in the church. Some of his more recent additions had been James Grindrod, James and Sarah Leach, Rachel Fitton, James and Ann Howarth and John and James Hoyle. The records describe some members as being “dismissed”. This was not out of any discipline imposed, rather they were being “sent out” with God's blessing to begin belonging to another church congregation.

For a few months the pulpit was supplied by a variety of ministers until on October 18th 1818 one Rev Thomas Jackson of Wharton near Bolton conducted the service. The arrival of Thomas Jackson was to prove another milestone in the life of our young church. There were however a few hiccups when he arrived at Bamford. He is quoted as saying: *“I cannot approve of the manner in which some of the Sunday Schools conduct their anniversaries. Though I have no objection to some instruments to aid children singing upon those occasions, yet I think the children's voices should be the principal music, and nothing should be sung but plain hymns, and not those pieces which render a place of worship more like a playhouse than a house of God.”* He also objected to “Sunday Writing” being carried out in Sunday School, and obtained a promise from the church that this would cease. To get around the problem, the boys were taught writing on Saturday, and the girls on Monday evening. Because of these differences (and a few others concerning doctrine), several of the church members “separated” themselves from the church. In other words, they left! These included James Ashworth, Abraham and Alice Leach, Edward Lord, John and James Howarth, Mary Wilson, William Smith and several others.

1819 60,000 people turned up at St Peter's Fields, Manchester protesting for reform. Many were injured including two from Rochdale. The steamship "Savannah" crossed from Georgia to Liverpool in 26 days. Walter Scott published "Ivanhoe".

Struggles to reconcile the factions at Bamford Chapel continued for some years, and it wasn't really until about 1821 that "peace and harmony in a tolerable degree was obtained and more comfort experienced". Mind you, comfort wasn't always a priority in any form at Bamford in those days. The pews were straight-backed and bare-seated, certainly no carpets or cushions in church. All the pews had doors, many of the larger pews being in the form of boxes. The larger of these box pews had each a little table in the centre for bibles and other books. All the right hand side of the church was reserved for the Fenton family and their servants - Joseph and Ann Fenton sitting in the back corner in Pew No 1. We can hardly begin to imagine how cold and dark the chapel was, being hardly heated at all, with only a handful of oil lamps available for lighting.

1820 After years of seclusion, George III died, blind and insane. The last bull-bait was held in the Roche. During the event, the river wall collapsed and seven people were killed.

1821 Napoleon died in St Helena. Queen Caroline, wife of George IV died. Michael Faraday invented an electric motor. Heywood's population had grown by two thousand in the last 20 years to 6,552.

Another major event occurred in 1821 when Robert Kay, who along with his sister's family had helped to found Bamford Chapel, came from Manchester with his family to reside at Meadowcroft in Bamford. *"His eldest son, James Phillips Kay, well versed in the instruction practised in Manchester, took the superintendence of the Boys' School, and in a little time such improvement took place, that it was agreed to enlarge the school which was done in 1822."* We understand that at this time, the Girls' School was in a room (long since removed) at the side of the church (inaccessible from the church), whilst the boys were taught downstairs in what can only be described as a cellar. These rooms were known as the Upper School and the Lower School, and most children in Bamford were taught to read and write in those surroundings, with little heat or light.

1822 Franz Liszt, aged 11, makes his piano debut. California becomes part of Mexico. In Rochdale, the town stocks are used for the last time.

1823 William Ellis invents the game of rugby. Home Secretary Robert Peel reforms the prison system. Charles MacIntosh creates his new raincoat in Manchester.

"After the alteration to the school, a course of lectures on historical subjects were delivered in the Upper Schoolroom on Sabbath evenings, which attracted much attention, especially among the young. A better spirit seemed slowly but gradually to pervade the congregation and there were some indications of returning prosperity. In this state of things, for several years the Sunday School and congregation kept improving, though with but few accessions of members to the church. About the end of 1826, the erection of a gallery in front of the pulpit was thought desirable and subscriptions were entered into for the same purpose. In consequence of a large cotton mill, erected by Messrs Fenton and Schofield at Hooley Bridge, and other changes in trade, there was a rapid increase of population in the neighbourhood."

Just how instrumental the Fenton family were in the growth of the Congregational Church in this area can never be exaggerated. *“In April 1821, Mrs Ann Fenton authorised the Rev Thomas Jackson to open preaching rooms at Heywood at her expense, in which he preached on Sunday evenings.”*

1824 A penal colony was founded in Brisbane. A British law is passed, recognising the right to strike. Rochdale Cricket Club was now in existence.

1825 The first public railway was opened from Stockton to Darlington. The “Diary of Samuel Pepys” is published. Twelve “watchmen” were appointed to watch over Rochdale.

Thomas Jackson conducted his first baptism at Bamford on January 31st 1819 and over the next four years, he had a further forty such baptisms. However, there were occasions when he was neither expected nor invited to conduct baptisms, such as in 1822, when little Sarah Fenton, daughter of John and Elizabeth Fenton of Crimble Hall was baptised by the famed Dr Joseph Fletcher of Manchester. Mind you, it was nothing personal - it happened before in 1817 when Joseph, Sarah’s older brother was baptised at Bamford Chapel. Once again the illustrious Dr Fletcher officiated.

Not many people joined the church, indeed only 14 in the 8 years from 1819 to 1827. They were the Rev Thomas and Mary Jackson (1819), Jane Alston and Naomi Edmonds (1821), Robert and Hannah Kay (1822), James Metcalf (1822), William Alston (1823), John Leach (1824), Caroline Knutzen and Ann Ludlam (1825), Mary Grindrod (1826) and James and Mary Knowles (1827).

1826 Aluminium is invented in Denmark. Carl Weber, the composer, died in London, aged 39. Fenton’s Hooley Bridge mill opened.

1827 Beethoven died in Vienna, aged 56. The Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool resigned after 15 years in office.

In 1826, the first recognised and recorded burials took place in the chapel churchyard, though there seem to have been occasional private burials, like that of the late minister John Gray, previously mentioned, in 1818. The first recorded burial took place at Bamford Chapel on June 7th 1826, at the funeral of James Hall of Bagslate. He was 82 and he was by far the oldest person to be buried at Bamford Chapel for the next 11 years.

And here, we unveil another side of life in the 19th century Bamford, previously only hinted at. Of the nine burials in 1826 that the Rev Thomas Jackson conducted, one was an infant and three were teenagers! The following year, out of 16 burials, 3 were infants, 2 were children, 3 were teenagers and 2 were in their twenties. It was the pattern of the times, and much worse was to come. 1828 was a comparatively happy year, with only 4 children dying, but in the next two years, the figures were 8 infants, 3 children, and 3 teenagers, out of 24 burials. Indeed in the first five years of funerals at Bamford Chapel, out of 160 burials, only 6 people were aged over 70 years! One hundred and five funerals were of people aged under 20 years (66%).

Why was this? Basically life was extremely hard, and especially so for the young. Working conditions were poor, and hours long, and practically every child worked. On the land, in the mills, down the pits. Food was scarce and porridge was the normal daily diet. Living conditions were extremely basic and everyone lived in insanitary conditions. Diseases like typhoid and cholera killed hundreds of thousands every year in Britain. Bamford was no exception, and both village and chapel bore its share of the national death toll.

1828 The Duke of Wellington became the new Prime Minister. The Catholic Emancipation Bill was passed, and Catholics were now allowed to hold public office. In Rochdale, the last public cock fight took place at Bagslate. Over 40,000 people saw the steam engine "The Lancashire Witch" take part in the opening of the Bolton-Leigh railway.

In 1828, due to the increase in local population, a gallery was built in the chapel and opened on Christmas Day, with a Missionary Sermon by the renowned Rev R S M'All of Mosley Street Congregational Church in Manchester, which was followed by the first public meeting ever held in Bamford on behalf of world missions. (Remember, the London Missionary Society was just 33 years old, Robert Moffat had sailed for South Africa and John Williams for the South Seas in 1816. It was just nine years before the martyrdom of John Williams). The collections and subscriptions, which had not previously exceeded £22, were on this occasion £59/3/1³/₄d.

1829 The first Boat Race took place on the Thames. The first horse-drawn bus appeared on the streets of London. There was a riot in Rochdale when thousands of local weavers protested against power looms being used in the mills. Ten men died. George Stephenson's steam engine "The Rocket" won the competition organised by the Liverpool-Manchester Railway.

After the opening of the new gallery, many joined the congregation and in 1829, 7 new members were added to the church roll. Meanwhile, no family, wealthy or poor, was immune from the wave of child mortality. Number 30 in the Bamford Chapel Burial Register is John Fenton of Crimble, aged 13 (once again the famed Dr Joseph Fletcher, now of London, conducted the service). Whilst Number 53 was 14 year old Ellen Fenton, again of Crimble.

1830 Cholera was spreading westwards from Asia to Europe. The Liverpool-Manchester railway line opened, and over half a million people saw the Prime Minister, the Duke of Wellington perform the ceremony. There was a great strike in the woollen trade.

Robert Kay and his family moved to Brookshaw House near Bury in 1830 and Robert died there in 1834. His influence on the church at Bamford is immeasurable. He had supported the work from the very beginning, under his guidance the school had been enlarged and from all accounts the erection of the gallery in 1828 was due to his efforts. His father, James Kay of Bass Lane in Bury had helped found the church in Bury, and whilst in Manchester, Robert Kay had been a leading member of William Roby's church. From 1808-1817 Robert Kay had been the Treasurer of the Lancashire Congregational Union. Without Robert Kay, Bamford Chapel would neither be where it is, nor what it is

today. He is unique in being the only person to be buried inside the church, under the family pew where he always sat, among the Fenton family.

1831 War broke out between Poland and Russia. There was widespread rioting in England, in favour of electoral reform. Heywood's population was now 10,429.

The year after the Kays left Meadowcroft, Robert's sister Ann Fenton died, aged 69. Again, we quote from Thomas Jackson's early record: "*Mrs Ann Fenton, wife of Joseph Fenton, Esq of Bamford Hall, who was truly "a mother in Israel" began to decline in health, though nearly to the last, she persisted in her attendance at the House of God, after which her soul longed. On the 2nd May 1831, she entered into that rest which remaineth for the people of God. Aged 69, her loss was much felt and deplored by her fellow members, as she had been a principle cause in the erection of the Chapel at Bamford, and had ever watched over its prosperity with intense anxiety, and exerted all her energies and influence, in the promotion of its best interests.*"

"Nor was her pious benevolence confined to her own society. She felt for all around her, and was indefatigable in her labour, as collector for Bibles, amongst the poor, and very many by her efforts were supplied with the word of God, who otherwise would long have remained destitute. The Sunday School and the Library attached thereto, were also greatly indebted to her kind generosity. Her works of piety, and Christian love will long be had in remembrance, and her memory be affectionately cherished."

1832 Walter Scott, the most popular British writer, died. Property owners and tenant farmers were given the vote. Now one in every five males in Britain has the vote. At the General Election, John Fenton of Crimble Hall, son of Joseph and Ann Fenton, was elected as Rochdale's first MP.

Six months after Ann Fenton's death, Deacon John Crabtree died, aged 51. "*He had honourably and usefully discharged the duties devolving upon him in the Church. And his clear and correct judgement, united with mildness and firmness of disposition rendered dear and valuable in the estimation of all his friends. Being occasionally in the habit of preaching, he went on November 6th to supply at Bethel Chapel, Bury. In returning home at night, the weather proving extremely unfavourable, he took a cold which brought on a most violent pain in his head, that grew worse till about November 21st, when he finished his mortal course. His remains were interred at Bamford on November 26th. He died in the 52nd year of his age, and was succeeded in his office of Deacon by Robert Porter, who had long been honourably employed as the Superintendent of the Girls' School. By the good blessings of God on the labours of his servants employed in the Sabbath School, many seemed to be under serious impressions. The books of the Library were perused, and very many periodical works read with seeming advantage. In the year 1833, eight members were joined to the Church, four of whom were teachers in the Sabbath School, and two of whom had been instructed there only. This gave great encouragement to all who wished the prosperity of Zion, and strengthened their hands in the good work of the Lord.*"

1833 A new children's employment law limits 9-12 year olds to working only 9 hours, and teenagers to only 12 hours a day. Cotton spinners could now earn 27/- a week, whilst the humble handloom weaver worked all week for 5/6d.

1834 Slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire. Six "Tolpuddle Martyrs" were sentenced to 7 years deportation. Poor Law relief is abolished in Britain, in favour of workhouses. The Heywood Canal was opened.

"In the year 1834, a monthly prayer meeting of the Teachers was begun on the second Sabbath morning in each month, and seemed to be useful and interesting. In May, a meeting every Monday night of the male Teachers, for prayer and mutual improvement was commenced." Perhaps, we ought to mention at this time of how other Congregational churches were gradually appearing in the area - Providence, Rochdale 1814, Heywood 1824, Smallbridge 1824, Summit 1825, and Providence, Middleton 1836.

And Bamford too, was gradually increasing in size and in influence in the area. The eight members who joined in 1833 were Samuel Whitworth, Mary Healey, Marianne Parsons, Mary Ashworth, Alice Clough, Betty Ashworth, Thomas Porter and Sarah Stott. Another seven people became members in 1834 - Martina Stott, Ellen Potts, Martha Lord, Joseph Butterworth, Ann Lord and James and Phoebe Shepherd. Interestingly, in the church register, men and women are listed in two separate columns, and the women outnumber the men, more than two to one. This is reflected in 1835 when the ladies joining were Mary Ashworth, Alice Butterworth, Betty Hardman, Betty Shepherd, Sally Clough, Mary Greenwood and Alice Ramsbottom, whilst the two men were James Spencer and Charles Nelson.

1835 Robert Peel resigned as Prime Minister and Lord Melbourne took over. Charles Dickens had his first works published. Fish were caught for the last time in the Roche. The stagecoach overturned in Rochdale and several people were seriously injured. Hundreds of pauper families were moved from the South to industrial Bury and Heywood.

1836 The Alamo fort in Texas fell to the Mexicans. Steam trains were limited to 5mph with a man carrying a red flag walking ahead.

Thomas Jackson continued to write on Saturday March 7th 1835: *"Since the commencement of 1834, ten members have been added to the church, 9 of whom are from the Sabbath School, and seven of this number have been trained up in it from childhood. The weekly regular prayer meetings exhibit an improvement in attendance and interest, but especially the Church Meetings which in former days could not number 20 have recently numbered nearly 60. The present prospect is cheering, peace and unity are enjoyed, a spirit of prayer and of serious inquiry prevails, and we in gratitude exclaim this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."*

1837 In Britain, Isaac Pitman invented shorthand, whilst in the USA, Samuel Morse invented the Morse Code. The painter, John Constable died. On the death of her uncle, William IV, Princess Victoria became Queen. At the General Election, John Fenton of Crimble was again elected as MP for Rochdale.

On February 13th 1837 Thomas Jackson wrote: *“Since March 1835, there has been no great change in the general aspect of things. The congregation is full as large. The Schools well attended. The prayer meetings attended in general much the same as before. In addition to the service at Hooley Bridge on Sabbath evenings, a prayer meeting is held at some place in the neighbourhood. The attendance on these meetings is seldom numerous. The Church has received an addition of 14 members, 4 of whom had been instructed in this Sabbath School, and 4 others advanced in life. The other 6 in middle age. We have had one member removed by death, and another dismissed to a neighbouring Church, leaving an increase of 12. Peace and concord dwell, and upon the whole, much reason for gratitude to God.”*

On Good Friday 1835, Joseph Fenton (who had only become a church member at Bamford Chapel in August 1831 after the death of his wife Ann) laid the foundation stone of a new Congregational Church in Heywood. Until now, the history of Bamford Chapel had been recorded by just two people, Ebenezer White, mentioned earlier, and Thomas Jackson, the son of the current minister, the Rev Thomas Jackson. But after several years of optimistic reports, Thomas Jackson’s history suddenly takes on a sadder tone.

“The ways of Jehovah are dark and mysterious. His ways are not our ways, nor his thought as ours. Often when we imagine the prospect is cheering, and fondly anticipate an uninterrupted season of peace and prosperity; or are anxiously looking forward to some time of peculiar delight in Christian society; we are called upon by the voice of Divine Providence, to remember that this is not our rest, and that here we must ever rejoice as though we rejoiced not, holding the dearest creature comforts and earthly enjoyments, with a loose hand.” What was the reason for this change of tone? Read on.

“For many years, the season of Whitsuntide had been observed as a Festival for the Teachers and Scholars at Bamford, and the Friday of Whit week 1837 was expected to surpass all its predecessors in social harmony and improving intercourse. Ah! Little did any anticipate that their then dear Pastor would have resigned his charge, and be sleeping beneath the clods of the dust, yet this was the case.”

“Mr Jackson had suffered during the winter, which had been unusually severe and long, from colds and a degree of asthma to which he was always subject, but he seemed to have got well through, and no-one entertained any apprehension of his approaching dissolution. On Lord’s Day May 7th he preached in the morning from Job 42 vv 5-6, and in the afternoon from 2 Timothy 1 and 7, at the close of which service, he administered the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper to his church. Feeling some anxiety respecting the service at Hooley Bridge in the evening, he went there and conducted it himself, which he had not done during the winter. He seemed well for two days after, and on Wednesday went again to Hooley Bridge purposing to attend the prayer meeting, but feeling unwell and the evening being damp, he returned before the time of the meeting. He took some medicine, which operated strongly, sat and read most of Thursday, in the night was seized with acute and violent pain of the bowels, he suspected inflammation, and on the Friday a surgeon was sent for who confirmed his supposition. Leeches and a blister were applied and the acute pain subdued, and little danger was apprehended.”

“The Sabbath May 14th was the first he had passed in bed, and the third he had omitted preaching in 30 years. One of his Deacons who visited him on the Sabbath expressed his

hope that he might be spared yet further usefulness. He replied "If my master has any more work for me to do he will raise me up again, but I have no new doctrine to preach." On being asked what he thought of his complaint, he answered; he thought it not improbable that it might be his last. But often said "I am in the Lord's hand and he does all things well. It is all in mercy."

"On Monday the complaint seeming unabated and the obstruction of the bowels remaining obstinate, much danger was apprehended and the most powerful remedies used, both externally and internally, but without any beneficial effect. But amidst all his complaints, no murmuring word ever escaped his lips, in his patience, he possessed his soul. And ever exhibited a mind possessing as he said "the peace of God which passeth all understanding". Being asked the state of mind he said "I am living by faith on the Son of God". During the Monday several of his congregation saw him and also in the evening, to whom he spoke with much feeling and expressed his pleasure at seeing them around him. From 10 o'clock in the evening he became more restless and frequently required toast and water, and to have his posture changed. A short time before his death, being raised up and feeling relieved, he said this has been a merciful time and then added:

*"There's mercy in every place,
And mercy encouraging thought
Gives even affliction a grace,
And reconciles man to his lot."*

3. GROWTH AND TRAGEDY

When Mr Jackson died in 1837, he left 63 members in the church, all of whom except 8 had been added under his ministry. Those 8 oldest members were the Deacon Robert Ashworth of Spotland, the Deacon Robert Porter of Hooley Bridge and John Woolstenholme, also of Hooley Bridge. These three men dated back to 1803. There were also Ann Porter of Hooley Bridge, Elizabeth Goodwin of Bamford Hall, James Grindrod of Bamford Hall, Abraham Ashworth of Hall Street, Hooley Bridge and Mary Jackson of Butterworth Fold. During his ministry at Bamford, Thomas Jackson had baptised 150 children. We have records that 90 of these he later buried in the last 10 years of his ministry, and surely dozens more, prior to Bamford records being started.

The Rev Thomas Jackson left two sons at Bamford. One, Thomas, we are indebted to for recording the early history of the church. The other son, James, lived on in Bamford for another 30 years, dying in December 1868. For a long period, he was a Deacon, for 30 years Superintendent of the Sabbath School, and he was also the first public Registrar of births and deaths for the Birtle District, which he did for 30 years. Most certainly, the Jackson family had a great influence on the life of Bamford and its chapel for the fifty years from 1819-1868.

<p>1838 “Pickwick Papers” was published by Dickens. “Oliver Twist” followed soon afterwards. Brunel’s paddle ship “Great Western” took 15 days to cross the Atlantic. In Rochdale, Spotland Bridge was washed away due to the heavy storms.</p>
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It was not long before Bamford Chapel found a successor to Mr Jackson in the ministry. On the first Sunday of 1838, the Rev William Blackburn, who had previously ministered for over 17 years at Whitby, began his ministry in Bamford. From this time, the church began to grow rapidly.

1838 proved to be a very sad year in the life of Bamford and the Chapel. The burials in the church graveyard mounted to 34 in the year, one every ten days. Of the 34, only ten were aged over 20, and of these, only four were aged over 50. Of the rest (24), 12 were infants, 4 were children under 10 years, and 8 were teenagers. Six died in April, five in May and 8 in June. Nearly all children. One can only imagine the small groups of local families, all neighbours of each other, gathering week by week, standing around the open graves in our churchyard.

What was life like for the Blackburn family in the manse, or as it was known then, the parsonage? Hard, no doubt, but certainly a little easier than for the average member of the small community and congregation. William Blackburn’s salary was something like £50 per year, but even from that, they could afford a servant. Near to the manse, to this day, lies the grave of one such servant -

Mary Sample of Kirby Moor, Yorkshire, nearly 8 years
the faithful servant of the Rev William Blackburn, minister
of this Church. She died in 1844, aged 32 years.

1839 John Williams, the LMS missionary, was killed at Erromanga. The artist Turner was painting in London, the author Edgar Allen Poe writing in the USA, and Frederic Chopin published his 24 Preludes. An earthquake was felt in Rochdale.

William Blackburn had 32 funerals in the chapel graveyard in 1840. Once again, 20 were infants, children and teenagers. But of all the familiar local names that tragically appear - 3 year old Sarah Grindrod, sisters Sarah Lee (aged 20 years) and Mary Anne Lee (aged 7 weeks) and brother and sister George and Mary Widdup, aged 9 months and three years (buried within a month of each other), the oldest person to die that year was Joseph Fenton of Bamford Hall, by now the senior member of the Fenton family. Joseph died on June 23rd 1840, aged 75 years.

However, on a brighter note, 22 members were added to the church in 1838, more than in any year so far in the church's history. We can put this down to the new minister's arrival. There were another 9 in 1839 and a further 20 in 1840. Among this influx of new church members were many old familiar local names - Martha Holt of Dixon Fold, Mary Ashworth of Hooley Bridge, as well as Hannah and Sarah Fenton of Crimble Hall. However, new names were also appearing, names like Tattersall and Jay.

1840 Rowland Hill introduced the Penny Post. New Zealand became British. Queen Victoria married her first cousin, Prince Albert, and the wedding was observed in towns like Rochdale.

It seems that the custom of paying pew rents started in the late 1830's. Records show how the Fenton family occupied all the pews on the right hand side of the church. Joseph Fenton sat alone right at the back in Pew No 1. His son, John MP for Rochdale sat in front of him in No 2, William Fenton had No 3, Joseph Fenton's servants occupied No 4, James Fenton sat in No 5, John Fenton's servants were in Pew No 6, and so it went on!

How much did they pay? Our earliest records show 1/3d per month per seat. The average was five people in a pew, totalling 6/3d per month. Examples of this were the six folk who sat in Pew No 15 - Betty Howard, Joseph Woolstenholme and young Robert Woolstenholme, all of Hooley Bridge, Hannah Butterworth (Cottage), John Meadowcroft (Dixon Fold) and Alice Ashworth (Wood Top) contributed 7/6d per month, whilst in Pew No 17, Martha Kershaw, M A Ashworth, James and Alice Howard and Sarah Rammell (all of Hooley Bridge) paid 6/3d per month.

Curiously, gallery pews seemed to vary, some going as cheaply as 6d per month. Twice as many pews were rented in the gallery (over 110) compared to just over fifty downstairs; obviously, the employers and well to do's were downstairs, whilst the workers were upstairs. This of course was the main form of income, far outstripping the weekly collections. It guaranteed a regular form of income, because you paid for your pew whether you were there or not. It was the equivalent of what we might call a season ticket today.

Gradually the rent increased and by the 1870's the Fentons were paying £1 per month, whilst others like the Leach's (an old established Bamford family) were paying 7/6d. The Porritts were also paying £1 per seat, whilst the folks upstairs were still getting away with

1/6d! There were also several 9d's - were these the children paying half? You can still see the numbers on the pews, because the tradition of pew rents carried on well into the 20th century. One positive effect was that it encouraged church attendance - you had already paid for your seat, but on the other side of the scales, its negative effect is still with us whenever people say "You're in my seat!"

1841 The Australian interior was being explored for the first time. Thomas Cook began his travel organisation and an "Opium War" was being fought between Britain and China. In Rochdale and district, oil lamps were being used for street lighting. Heywood's population now stood at 14,763.

The number of youngsters' deaths continued to rise. In his first five years at Bamford, the Rev William Blackburn conducted the funerals of 120 children and young people. They included 68 babies, 31 children under 10, and 21 teenagers. It was a tragedy on the scale of the 1966 Aberfan disaster, happening every five years in Bamford, a much smaller village. That small patch of land that houses our chapel graveyard has witnessed as much personal tragedy as any other corner of Britain. In April 1840, 3 children were buried in 6 days, 4 in 9 days in January, 4 in a fortnight in 1841 (the oldest being 20), 3 children in the first week of January 1842, and 7 children (the oldest of whom was 19 months) in February 1842.

1842 "Punch", the satirical magazine was first published. The USA and Britain agreed upon the Canadian border. The Miners' Union was formed. In Rochdale the police force was founded.

The almost cold statistics of our yellowing burial register can turn the hardest person to tears - 3 children were buried within 3 weeks in May 1842, 10, 1 and 4 years old. They were all brothers and sisters - William, Sarah Anne and Alice Richardson of Hooley Bridge. In those days, during the ministry of the Rev William Blackburn, the children in the village died in their dozens, with the minister often conducting 2 funerals on one day, like on May 15th 1842, when little Alice Richardson, aged 4 and little Leah Jackson, aged 3 were buried.

1843 Natal in South Africa and Hong Kong became British territories. Charles Dickens published "A Christmas Carol". The Mines Act prohibited the employment of girls under 10 years of age. Once again, Rochdale experienced the tremors of an earthquake.

4 children were buried in 3 days in May 1843 - John Crabtree (20) of Wheelbarrow Lane, Thomas Leach (10) of Hooley Bridge, 5 month old Mary Ashworth of Gnat Bank, and young Thomas Lees (3½ years old) of Butterworth Fold. A month later, the twins Jacob and Rachel Clegg were buried aged 11 and 12 days.

1844 Alexandre Dumas wrote "The Three Musketeers". The Rochdale Pioneers formed the first Co-operative Society. Bagslate Races were re-opened.

Mr Blackburn continued his grim duties, as he conducted 6 funerals in the first 17 days of 1844. The aforesaid servant at the Manse, Mary Sample died, aged 32 in February. It would seem, quite naturally, that the Blackburns were the chief mourners for the young

lady as for the only time in his Bamford ministry, the Rev Blackburn did not conduct the funeral.

1845 The Irish potato famine was at its height. Robert Peel became Prime Minister once again. Air filled tyres were invented. The first iron ship "The Great Britain" sailed from Liverpool to New York.

1845 started like 1844 with 6 funerals in the month of January. All were of children under 5 years, and the sixth one was 5 month old Anne Richardson of Hooley Bridge, baby sister of the 3 who had died 3 years before. Not a family in the village was spared their grief, as day after day and week after week, the children of Bamford died. The Fenton family shared in the village mourning, as their children Anne Fenton, aged 19 and Joseph Fenton, aged 8 months both died within a year of each other at Crimble Hall.

From our viewpoint in history, many of the names of that time sound quaint and curious - Silence Meadowcroft of Dixon Fold, Ezekiel Foster of Hooley Bridge, Amos Whitworth of Hooley Bridge and Enoch Smith of Heywood. Occasionally, because of their delightful names, their little characters call out to us across the years, like the Melladews of Kenyon Fold. Little Thomas Melladew, aged 9 months died in 1837, tiny Catherine Melladew, aged 8 months died in 1839, young Sally Melladew, aged 11 years died in 1841 and their mother, 31 year old Hannah Melladew died in 1841. That same year, 16 year old Catherine Melladew and 6 month old John Melladew were both buried. When William Melladew, aged 42 died in 1844 he was the seventh Melladew to be buried from Kenyon Fold in the last 7 years at Bamford Chapel. And if William was the father of that family, he must have died of a broken heart.

Sometimes, it's their addresses that catch the eye, like Mine Street in Hooley Bridge. 7 children from Mine Street died in 3 months from March to June 1838, the oldest of whom was 17 year old Anne Whitehead. And so it continued till the end of his ministry. In his last 30 days at Bamford, William Blackburn conducted 8 funerals. His 8 year long ministry had seen 107 baptisms, 245 funerals and 86 new church members. Since his arrival in January 1838, the church had grown from 63 members to 117 members in April 1846.

A mention should be made here of the numerous baptisms, from which so many young lives were to end so tragically early. The baptismal records tell us of the father's occupation, and so here we record some of the fathers and their jobs in the early 1840's in Bamford.

John Ramsbottom, Cotton Spinner, Clay Lane
Edmond Clayton, Mechanic, Kenyon Fold
James Howard, Carter, Clough Stile
Joseph Butterworth, Spinner, Hooley Bridge
James Jackson, Shoemaker, Hooley Bridge
John Tattersall, Butcher, Bowling Green
Charles Barker, Carder, Gnat Bank
George Taylor, Weaver, Hooley Bridge
Abraham Ashworth, Gardener, Sandhole

Thomas Shepherd, Weaver, Dixon Fold
John Fenton, Member of Parliament, Crimble Hall

The last 4 baptisms performed by William Blackburn were James, John, Ann and Mary, the children aged 6, 4, 2 and 2 months of John and Mary Clegg of Dixon Fold. Families were large, bordering on huge. Leading the way was John Fenton, MP, by now the senior member of the Fenton dynasty. John married Elizabeth in 1814 and in their next 10 years she bore 7 children. Elizabeth died in 1829 and John remarried Hannah the year after. Hannah bore a further 10 children over the next 15 years. In between raising such a family, John Fenton of Crimble Hall, a Bamford Chapel man all of his life, became Rochdale's first elected Member of Parliament in 1832.

4. HARD TIMES

1846 Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel was forced to resign. The planet Neptune was discovered in the solar system. The U.S.A. and Mexico went to war over California. A new kind of verse swept like wildfire through the adults of the country, - the limerick.

William Blackburn left Bamford in 1846 to join the Manchester City Mission and his place was somewhat quickly filled by James Bruce. Like William Blackburn, he had been trained at the Rotherham College. He had held pastorates at Lofthouse and Howden before arriving at Bamford in July 1846.

1847 The composer Felix Mendelssohn died, aged 38. Ether was used as an anaesthetic for the first time in the USA. "Jane Eyre" and "Wuthering Heights" were published, though no-one knew the authors.

Once again, we rely heavily upon one of our several church historians for some of the following insights.

“One of the pastors at Bamford Chapel, the Rev James Bruce, who commenced his pastorate about 1846, wishful to help a number of the young men of the neighbourhood educationally, opened a night school in the basement of the old school. The room, then known as the Lower School, was reached by a flight of stone steps out of doors, and had a flagged floor, which was of course minus such refinements as matting or carpets. There, month after month, on certain evenings of the week, the good man laboured among his numerous pupils, who followed their tasks by what we should consider the dim and uncertain light of candles. In most instances, this was the only schooling the first generation of his scholars ever received, and in after life, every one of them did him credit. Mr Bruce not only had the thought for secular education, but also invaded the sphere of medicine. He had considerable knowledge of homeopathy, and prescribed for any members of his flock who were ill.”

“Close to the top of the flight of stone steps leading down to the lower school was a little room where, had we entered on a Sunday morning, while service was in progress in the Chapel, we should have seen a collection of dinners and an array of crockery. Many of the worshippers lived too far from the chapel to be able to go home in the dinner interval, and therefore brought with them food, which was eaten cold with cups of tea or coffee. As regards hours, the day’s programme was as follows: they started at 9am with Sunday School, the chapel service followed and went on until something after twelve according to the length of the sermon (sometimes the sermon was not over by noon). School restarted at half past one and continued until half past two, and then there was a service in the chapel, concluding about four o’clock. It must not be supposed however, that the day’s devotions ended for everybody at that early hour. The most zealous looked forward to a prayer meeting at the home of one or other member of the church.”

“Those were not easy days for the young folks; there was no greater percentage of passivism in the temperament of boys and girls than there is now, but they had to sit through the entire programme until four o’clock came. Those families who lived within a moderate radius from the chapel had dinner at home, hurrying across the fields to their

houses, the moment service was over. Asked recently, how children could cover some of the distances traversed in that way, a veteran replied that the children did not need many minutes to eat their dinner, for it consisted only of flour porridge, sweetened with treacle."

"The conditions of life in the old days helped to produce characters more rugged and markedly original than are usually met with today, and some of the men and women at Bamford are worthy of the pen of a Dickens. For instance, there was James Jackson, who played a bass fiddle in the chapel orchestra, was leader of that band of musicians, and had a name for being an authority on things musical. James was not unconscious of the position he occupied, and was something of an autocrat. So far as the chapel music went, what James thought was the right thing, had to be. One surmises he was short of stature, for in order to play the bass fiddle in comfort, he used to perch on the top of the front pew. His ascent and descent awakened not only interest but also emulatory longings in the minds of the row of youngsters in the pew at his back. When the stealthy conversations carried on among these juveniles became too audible, James used to turn round and tap one or two of them on the head with the end of his bow, as one who remembers the event remarked: "He didn't always hit the right one."

"Then there was Thomas Jackson, for many years Superintendent of the Sunday School, a class leader, and a local preacher. Tom had a real strain of the old Puritans in his make-up. Although he was lame, he always walked to the place where he was preaching on the Sunday School, because he considered labour on that day sinful. If his destination was too far for him to walk there on the Sunday morning, he did the journey on the Saturday. His regard for Sabbath observance is illustrated by another story. On one occasion, when walking home from a Sunday engagement, he picked up several pieces of wood alongside the way, thinking they would light his fire, but when he remembered that it was Sunday, he at once threw the wood down and went on his way empty-handed."

This off the record memory is supported by this piece taken from Mr Bruce's obituary notice in the Congregational Year Book for 1874: *"He quickly won the confidence and love of his people. He possessed in a remarkable degree the art of attaching the young to himself. He was surrounded by a large body of young people. These he gathered into classes, and spent hours every week in their instruction. Out of these classes, he had the gratification of receiving a large number into the church. The ten years Mr Bruce spent at Bamford were marked by peace and prosperity in the church."*

<p>1848 "The Communist Manifesto" was written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Riots in Italy (where they drove out the Austrians), Hungary (against the Habsburgs) and France (where the King fled to England). Even the Pope fled from the Vatican. The Manchester to Bury railway line opened. There were seven trains a day each way, and no tunnels!</p>
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From September 1848, we begin to have detailed minutes of the church meetings:

Sept 27th 1848. This evening, in the Girls' School Room, a Meeting of the Members of the Church of Christ, usually assembling in the Chapel at Bamford, was held; prayer having been offered by brother James Ashton. Ann Schofield of Hooley Bridge was

regularly admitted a member of the Church. The visitors appointed by the Church having been Mr Robert Porter (Deacon) and James Ashton.

Nov 1st 1848. A meeting of the Church was held this evening in the Girls' School Room. Prayer was offered, after the reading of the Scriptures by the Minister, by Brother James Jackson. After which an address was given by the Pastor from Psalm 87. 5-7.

Nov 29th 1848. This evening in the Girls' School Room, a meeting of the Church was held at which prayers were offered by the brethren Thomas Holt and Samuel Broadbent. An address by the Minister was then delivered from the words of 1 Peter 1. 8 "Whom having not seen we love".

1849 The cause of cholera was discovered: polluted drinking water. Frederic Chopin died, aged 38. The greatest ever gold-rush is underway in California. Edgar Allan Poe, the author, died, aged 40.

The Church meetings at Bamford Chapel were mainly of a devotional nature, but from time to time, matters of Church discipline were discussed, as on January 31st 1849. *"John Lees of Lower Crimble was accused of having been seen under the undue influence of liquor. The case was sifted, when it was found that from some imperfection in the evidence, the fact could not be fully proven, though great indiscretion had by him been evinced, it was therefore concluded as this was not the first instance in which similar allegations had been brought against him, that he be admonished at the next Church meeting by the Minister."*

There was another occasion for church discipline the following November: *"On a former occasion it was affirmed by several of the junior members of the church that Ann Hamer, one of the members, had not been sufficiently guarded in her conversation with one of the male workers with her in the mill at Hooley Bridge. Nothing however could be proved against her; and it appeared that instead of speaking to her on her apparent inconsideration as required in such cases by the rule of Christ (Matthew 18.15-17), they came at once to the Pastor, and in not the very best way, they appearing to want meekness and consideration in bringing a supposed charge. For this, they were admonished at the time. Two or three were appointed to see Ann Hamer and make enquiry, but she was acquitted of all charge except a slight imprudence in conversing in the mill, in the presence of others, too freely with a man, not a Believer."* And later in the same meeting: *"After a considerable interval, another charge was brought by the members against Ann Hamer. They first spoke to herself and then to the Pastor. As this involved much greater impropriety if not guilt, she was, in consideration of her being an orphan, though of age being about 23, allowed to retire from the Church."*

1850 Railways were spreading. An express train can now travel the 175 miles from London to Exeter in less than 7 hours, three times faster than a stage-coach. The poet, William Wordsworth died, aged 80. Another gold rush began in Australia.

At Bamford it was decided to elect two further Deacons to join Robert Ashworth of Spotland and Robert Porter of Hooley Bridge. These two men had been church members for 46 years, and Robert Ashworth had been one of the original ten to sign the Covenant.

At the election, the first of its kind at Bamford Chapel, ten men offered their services and the result of voting was as follows:

Charles Nelson (11), Thomas Jackson (98), James Knowles (35), William Kershaw (35), Abraham Ashworth, Mine Street (28), Abraham Ashworth, Hall Street (18), James Jackson (15), Thomas Holt (4), Samuel Whitworth (1), Samuel Broadbent (1).

Two of these being equal and only two Deacons being called for, James Knowles stood down, and the two elected Deacons were Thomas Jackson and William Kershaw.

There were now four services every Sunday. A Missionary Meeting was decided to be held monthly after evening communion (thus making five Sunday meetings!) and the Prayer Meeting "*for prosperity in the Sabbath Schools*" was to be held on the alternate Sunday evenings. Incidentally, 150 years ago, the word "Sunday" was rarely used, rather "the Sabbath".

1851 People from Rochdale travelled to London to see the Great Exhibition at the "Crystal Palace" in Hyde Park. Isaac Singer in the USA invented the sewing machine. And despite emigration to the USA, the population in Britain had risen from 15 million in 1800 to 27 million in 1850.

However, the death rate in the little village remained high. In his first two years at Bamford Chapel, the Rev James Bruce conducted 80 funerals. The only funeral he didn't conduct in two years was at Christmas 1848, when his own son, Edward Campbell Bruce died, aged 5 months. In 1850, the minister had 40 funerals, the highest annual figure so far. And it was to remain at a similar level for the next decade. Indeed, in his ten year period at Bamford, the Rev James Bruce conducted over 350 funerals.

The tragedies and the numbers were now far greater than anything that the previous ministers, Jackson and Blackburn, had encountered. Mr Bruce conducted 7 funerals in 9 days in March 1852, and another 7 in a fortnight in May. Three young men and a girl (two of them aged 14) were buried on the same day, after being killed in a boiler explosion at Pitfield Mill. The four included brothers James and John Kershaw of Clay Lane. And so the death roll continued, week after week, year after year.

1852 The Duke of Wellington died. The book "Uncle Tom's Cabin" stirred the conscience of America and rocked the slave trade. Russia and France were on the brink of war over the ownership of holy shrines in Bethlehem.

Meanwhile, in Bamford in 1852, two further Deacons were elected, thus making six. The two elected were Timothy Hodgkinson and Abraham Ashworth of Mine Street. The same year Robert Porter, still a Deacon, stood down from his role of Superintendent of the Girls' School. He had been there for fifty years, since the school had first opened in 1801.

Many new people were becoming members at this time. After being nominated by current members, the candidates were visited by two elected church visitors who interviewed them and then reported back on their suitability. But people were not only

admitted into church membership, some were also ejected. From the Church Meeting minutes of Feb 2nd 1854 we read: "*Martha Lord and her sister, Sarah Lord, having absented themselves from the Lord's Supper for a great number of times, and when having been remonstrated with, evinced an increase of temper and naughtiness, rather than receive with meekness either advice or exhortation - fastening upon their best friend the very efforts kindly made to bring them to a better mind as fresh grounds of accusation. Seeing there was no prospect of restoring them to a more Christian Spirit, their case was brought before the Church. Mr Jackson proposed that they should be separated from the Communion they so little valued; this being unanimously carried so far as could be ascertained, they were cut off.*"

1853 In a speech protesting against women having to cover their legs in the USA, Amelia Jenks Bloomer wore a pair of Turkish style pantaloons. Levi Strauss invented jeans for Californian gold-miners. The Pope declared that the Virgin Mary was free of original sin.

What was life like 150 years ago? Weavers at Fenton's Mill could earn up to 16/- a week, but in some years, this fell to 6/- per week. A house could be rented for £3 per year, rates amounted to 12/- a year. The main food was always porridge, made from oatmeal and skimmed milk. The other staple food was bread, which villagers made in their own homes. Heating and lighting were luxuries, coal cost 1/4d per load and oil 10d per quart. Candles were used more than oil. Iron candlesticks could be bought at 4d each.

Other luxuries which helped vary the monotony of porridge and skimmed milk were tea at 7/- per pound, coffee at 2½d an oz. Sugar used in jam making as well as for the table cost 9d a pound in 1820. Fruit for the jam would be grown in back gardens or picked from wild bushes. Few potatoes were eaten and fresh meat was a very rare luxury. Home brewed beer made from malt and hops was a necessity. We can only imagine the type of meals an average Bamford family might share each day. For breakfast, porridge and skimmed milk in plenty, bread and treacle in smaller quantities; for dinner, more porridge and oatcakes, an occasional potato and rarely a vegetable from the garden; for tea or supper, tea, more porridge, bread and on special occasions cake or jam.

In the 1830's and 1840's there was a depression in the cotton trade and many people simply starved. Even the porridge had to be thinned down. Meals were reduced to one a day, and then it became alternate days. Many families kept themselves alive by boiling nettles. Curiously, efforts were made, despite this abject poverty, to wear a decent set of clothes for Sundays and special occasions. Clogs were commonplace and shoes were a rare luxury in many homes. In most homes, the greatest luxury might be a clock, but only "might be". Personal cleanliness was not a high priority, gauging from the small amounts of soap bought and sold. At the bottom of the scale for the poor and the homeless was the workhouse, down "Poorhouse Lane" in Spotland.

Morality was almost non-existent, and many social graces and rules for public behaviour were established by the churches and the Sunday School, such as we had at Bamford Chapel. The rules were very narrow-minded, but they served the purpose of fixing standards to be observed in an age when moral restrictions were too few, e.g. no young

people must go courting on Sundays and no single people must walk arm in arm in the street at any time, nor must they stand talking together at street corners; girl singers in the choir must not wear bows on their bonnets. Sunday Schools like Bamford worked hard to encourage respect for old people, hatred of cruelty, and a love of virtues that had almost been forgotten in the previous century.

1854 Britain went to war with Russia, in support of the Turkish Empire. The Light Brigade was destroyed at Balaclava. Bamford-born Roger Fenton became the first photographer to take pictures of the British army in the Crimea. Florence Nightingale led the medical work of nursing British soldiers.

In 1854 the Sabbath School at Bamford voted to teach Sacred Music to young people, James Leach being employed fortnightly at 2/6d per evening he taught. In September, a Harvest Service was held for the first time at Bamford, along with a special Cholera Day of Thanksgiving. The sermon was from Acts 14.17 and the church minutes record: *“People seemed very solemn and prayerful in the afternoon, and a very full attendance with great solemnity at the Prayer Meeting in the evening.”*

One of the church members, Robert Shepherd had gone away to be trained for the ministry, and he was currently at Bedford, preparing with the London Missionary Society. After a time at Bedford, he went for further ministerial training at Rotherham College. The Rev James Bruce was called to minister at Cannon Street Congregational Church in Manchester, and he left Bamford in May 1856. During his eight years at Bamford Chapel, he had received in 96 new members. But something else began during his ministry at Bamford - weddings! The first wedding took place at Bamford Chapel on February 25th 1847, when Schoolmaster Joshua Fielding married Millie Howarth of War Office. It was the first of the 26 weddings that James Bruce conducted for Bamford folk.

1855 Victoria Falls was named after the Queen, by explorer David Livingstone. The British and French armies captured Sevastopol, the Russian naval base, after a 12 month campaign. Louis Pasteur was experimenting with bacteria. London's first 1d newspaper "The Daily Telegraph" was first published. Locally, the "Heywood Advertiser" first saw the light of day.

Among items of business carried out at the monthly church meetings at Bamford Chapel, the new Congregational Hymn Book was being considered. Prior to this, for over half a century of the Chapel's existence, worshippers had sung hymns line by line, lead by a precentor such as Thomas Jackson. And remember, there was still no organ in church. There was another note of discipline: *“Joshua Richardson is accused of inebriation from being supplied with beer while at a heavy job in connection with the factory. His case is being considered. There is much to mitigate it. Yet it is desirable to mark our displeasure and he is suspended for two months from November till February.”* Those who rented pews, known as “seatholders” could buy a grave in the chapel churchyard for 15/-, whilst non-seatholders had to pay 30/-. This must have been considered a perk!

1856-1857 New Zealand became self-governing. Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, is made Prince Consort. After 16 years in Africa, David Livingstone returned to Britain to plead for help with missions. "Tom Brown's Schooldays" is published. Isambard

Kingdom Brunel's ship "Great Eastern", the largest ship in the world, makes her maiden voyage to New York.

From 1856 to 1858 there was a vacancy in the Bamford ministry until, in January 1858, an invitation was extended to the Rev James Browne of Ulverston. He began his ministry at Bamford on April 14th. The number of Deacons was increased to 8, when James Jackson and James Leach were appointed. During the vacancy in the ministry, the saddest event for the chapel at Bamford was the death of Robert Porter. He had been a member since the earliest days at the start of the century. The following tribute was paid in the church meeting minutes: *"It having pleased God since our last meeting to remove from the world our late fellow member, Mr Robert Porter, this church deems it its duty to place some slight tribute to his memory on the record of its proceedings. For the space of ... years, our late friend held the office of Deacon among us, and whilst his strength and abilities remained unimpaired, he was zealous in the discharge of those duties of that office and occupied his trust with great usefulness to the church. Mr Porter likewise was Superintendent of the Sabbath School for ... years, in which his labours are still remembered with pleasing recognition of their worth. His health had lately been greatly shaken, and the troubles of this life were multiplying on him in a manner that deprived life of its blessedness - from these the Lord has removed him and taken him to himself. His removal from us is no loss to himself, rather he is to be congratulated on the blessed promotion in which his Lord has honoured him. His memory, his piety, his activity and his love for God's Church and his house will long remain in the affectionate remembrance of this church."* (The two gaps were left we imagine for the minister to fill in after consulting members and church records. However, the task was not completed and the gaps remain.)

1858 Lord Palmerston became Prime Minister for the second time. The British and French forces attack China, in a renewal of the Opium War. Bernadette Soubirous had a vision of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes.

A minute at Bamford Chapel on June 9th 1858 says: *"It was resolved that a committee of the Deacons be appointed to consider the propriety of introducing an organ into the chapel, together with such questions as may arise from the same."* And a hint of those who were looked upon as leading members of the church, is given in the minutes of 1858 when new trustees for the church property were elected. They were:

John Fenton of Crimble, Robert Porter of Hooley Bridge, Abraham Ashworth of Hooley Bridge, Thomas Jackson of Bamford, Joseph Fenton of Crimble, William Fenton of Meadowcroft, William Kershaw of Hooley Bridge, Robert Ashworth of Daisy Bank, John Fenton Junior of Crimble, Abraham Ashworth of Mine Street, Samuel Leach of Hooley Bridge, James Ashton of Pitfield, James Tattersall of Pitfield, William Howard of Simpson Clough, James Leach of Hooley Bridge, Samuel Broadbent of Heywood, William Howarth of Hooley Bridge.

1859 Tennyson published the first part of a long poem on the legend of King Arthur. He is the most widely read of all present English poets. Slave abolitionist John Brown was hanged in Virginia, USA.

Robert Ashworth was elected as a Deacon in 1859, which curiously ensured that two Robert Ashworths were now Deacons. The older one and the last surviving member of the original church in 1801 finally died, aged 84 in 1861.

It is a fact that by now people were living longer. In the 10 years of James Browne's ministry, he conducted over 375 funerals. 8 in May 1858, 7 in January 1862, 7 in April 1863, 10 in February 1864 and 8 the next month. Every year for ten years, between 30 and 40 funerals were held in Bamford Chapel graveyard. Of these 375 funerals, just over 150 were of children and young people (40%), a significant decline in child mortality since the days of 40 years before, when the figure had been 66%.

Little Elizabeth Fenton aged just 6¾ died at Christmas 1858, 3 year old Harold Fenton died at Meadowcroft in June 1861, his brother Edgar Fenton aged 2½ died the following February and old John Fenton, MP died at Crimble Hall in July 1863. His nephew John Fenton aged 19 died at Meadowcroft in May 1864 and the infant Emily Fenton died at Plumpton Hall in October 1864. Yes, even the wealthy continued to die in their numbers alongside the poverty stricken.

1860 Florence Nightingale became a national British heroine. Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the USA. The first American pony-express galloped 2,000 miles in 11 days. Beijing and the Emperor's Palace fell to the British and French forces. Bare-fist fighting came to an end in Britain.

1861 The American Civil War began. Britain declared itself neutral. Prince Albert died of typhoid. Charles Dickens publishes the first chapters of "Great Expectations". The velocipede is invented in France, a two-wheeled vehicle which the rider sits astride and propels with his feet.

Mention of the poor reminds us that in December 1862, John Stott was buried at Bamford Chapel, a resident of the Spotland Workhouse. The Workhouse had been there for over a century, and by the 1860's there were over 130 residents. But as usual the burial records are full of the ordinary family names of Bamford - Woolstenholme, Clegg, Ashworth, Richardson, Meadowcroft, Butterworth and Holt.

In 1860 *"the question of painting and decorating the Chapel was introduced by Mr William Kershaw, who stated the strong necessity and desirableness of proceeding with it immediately. An estimate was presented from Mr Best of Rochdale, who offered to take the work for £43 - the insides of the pews not being grained or varnished, and to do the latter also for £13 additional. It was resolved that the estimate of £43 be adopted."* It was also decided to begin the custom of placing collection boxes near the chapel doors for the practice of making weekly offerings.

In 1861 the old Sunday School building was pulled down and the present one erected. This is only mentioned in passing in the church minutes. February 1861: *"this meeting was held in the chapel in consequence of the School being pulled down, and the work being in progress for a new building. The cornerstone of the new building was laid on Whit Friday 24th May 1861, by Mrs Fenton of Crimble, in the presence of a large assembly."*

Later that year, Thomas Jackson, the son of the late minister and Deacon of the Chapel died. The following tribute was made in the Church meeting minutes:

“During the past month, it has pleased God to remove from our midst, our fellow member, Mr Thomas Jackson, who for a period of 30 years has held fast his profession amongst us. In this period, he has had a good report of all men, and of the truth itself, and the assiduity with which he has followed the things that make for peace and edification, claims from us a recognition of God’s grace in him which emphatically made him what he was, and enables many yet to hear his voice, though he is not more with us. In all the departments of our Church effort, he was abounding in zeal and labours; from early youth he devoted himself to the instruction of the young around him; for some years he held the office of Superintendent in the school; more lately and to his death, he laboured faithfully as an occasional preacher of God’s word, and many churches including our own, have availed themselves of his acceptable services. The esteem in which he was held during life, both by members of the communion and others has been already abundantly testified, and as the expression of our estimate of his long and valuable services, and of his irreproachable Christian integrity, we order this notice respecting him to be inserted among the minutes of the church.”

James Ashton was later elected in his place as Deacon. Three years later during 1865, William Kershaw, Robert Ashworth, James Ashton and James Leach all stood down as Deacons, whilst William Howard was elected as Deacon. It should be noted that in those far-off days, there were no such appointments as Church Secretary or Church Treasurer. The minister always acted as Secretary, whilst all financial duties were performed by the Deacons, business which was quite unknown to the average church member.

1862 Victor Hugo published "Les Miserables" in Paris. By now, because of the American Civil War, a Cotton Famine had begun in Lancashire, and many mills were forced to close. Slaves won their freedom in the USA. The Football Association outlawed handling the ball, thus distinguishing football from rugby.

The 1860's were difficult days for many folk in Bamford. Fenton's mill at Hooley Bridge ceased to function soon after 1861, details of which are recorded elsewhere, but this caused huge unemployment in the area. However, matters brightened up in the late 60's, when a new cotton mill was built and opened in the district close to the chapel on Norden Road. The new mill was owned by the Porritt family, a family which had been very enthusiastic and generous in the establishing of Congregational churches at Park, Ramsbottom, and later Stubbins. And much to the benefit of both chapel and village, as the Fentons moved away from the area, so the Porritts arrived.

1863 The London Underground railway opened. William Makepeace Thackeray died, aged 52. After Dickens, he was the most popular British author.

1864 President Lincoln re-elected for a second term of office. General Sherman burns Atlanta to the ground.

1865 Lewis Carroll writes his fantasy "Alice in Wonderland". Edward Whymper is the first to climb the Matterhorn. President Lincoln is assassinated in Washington. Lord Palmerston died. He had been Secretary for War, Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister.

1866 Thanks to the new transatlantic cable, Britain could communicate with the USA, other than by sea. Alfred Nobel creates dynamite in Sweden.

In June 1866, a communication from the church at Stubbins was presented to the church meeting at Bamford, by which Mr and Mrs Samuel Porritt were transferred to the fellowship of the church. More Porritts arrived, when Mr and Mrs Joseph Porritt were transferred to Bamford Chapel from Castlecroft Church in Bury, while three months later, Jonas Porritt was transferred from Stubbins Church. He was the last member to be received during the ministry of the Rev James Browne, and it was in many ways, the start of a new era at Bamford Chapel. Within six months of their arrival, Samuel Porritt was representing Bamford Chapel at the annual meeting of the Lancashire Congregational Union.

Money was being distributed nationally from the Congregational Union Central Committee for the relief of Distressed Congregationalists. This was due to the hardship and destitution of many people in the churches. Money was received monthly from the Union and distributed locally, usually amounting to about 5/- each. After much debate, the church finally resolved (via the Deacons) that it was desirable to introduce the new Congregational Hymn Book - it had been debated throughout the ministry of Mr Browne.

A special communion service was held at the church meeting to commemorate the departure of the Rev James Browne, who was going to the Congregational Church at Barnsley. During his ministry at Bamford, he had conducted 92 weddings and 54 new church members had been added. One noticeable fact is that during Mr Browne's ministry, there were fewer and fewer people from Bamford getting married at Bamford Chapel - indeed they were almost a rarity! Of the last 100 people married, 72 were from out of Bamford. In those 50 weddings, Bamford is only mentioned as a place of residence nine times, and then it is 'watered down', eg 'Birtle-cum-Bamford', or 'Bamford, Heap'. In the main, people seemed to be coming from Heywood and Rochdale, Bury and Radcliffe.

Just to give you a flavour of those weddings long since passed, on December 20th 1866, Edwin Davis, a 24 year old schoolmaster married 19 year old Alice Jackson at Bamford Chapel. They both lived on Spring Hill in Bamford and Alice was the daughter of the late Thomas Jackson, the old Deacon, which makes her the granddaughter of the Rev Thomas Jackson, an earlier minister. Indeed, her Uncle James was the Registrar, and the witnesses were her sister Mary, and the minister's wife, Rosa Browne. The Rev James Browne conducted the service.

1867 The Reform Bill was passed, giving the vote to the working classes. Austria and Hungary came together under one monarch, Emperor Franz Joseph. The USA bought Alaska from Russia. Joseph Lister was developing his work in sterilisation in Glasgow. Johann Strauss composed "The Blue Danube".

1868 Lord Derby resigns as Prime Minister, due to ill health. He is succeeded as Conservative Prime Minister by Benjamin Disraeli. The first patent is granted for a typewriter.

In 1869 on March 1st, the Rev Robert Ashcroft of Adlington began what was to be one of the shortest ministries in the Chapel's history. On Thursday July 29th the Ordination Service took place and the following is a report given in the Church meeting minutes:

“On the above date, your Pastor was publicly recognised and ordained as your servant in Christ Jesus. The very unfortunate state of the weather did not prevent a numerous attendance, both of ministers of neighbouring churches, and of other friends from a distance who felt interested in the occasion, besides the members of our own congregation. The service was opened by the Rev William Roseman of Bury, the Rev John Younge of Heywood delivering an admirable address on “Congregational Principles”. The Rev W R Thorburn, MA asked the Pastor the usual questions relating to Personal Religion, Doctrinal Views, Call to the Ministry in connection with Congregational Independency, and views of the work of the Pastorate. The reply to these questions being declared satisfactory, the Rev James Gwyther of Manchester offered the Ordination Prayer, which was accompanied by the imposition of hands, and succeeded by “a charge” to the newly ordained, delivered by the Rev R M Davies of Oldham. The services throughout were of a most interesting and impressive character, and there were not wanting very clear tokens of the Divine presence, which will cause the evening to be remembered in the history of the Church. The Charge to the People was delivered by the Rev James Browne of Barnsley, the late Pastor of the Church, on the following Sabbath morning.”

Among the various improvements to the chapel building that year, it was suggested that the church “warming” system be attended to, a new vestry be constructed, and blinds be provided for the lower part of the windows behind the pulpit. On June 25th, just 11 months after his ordination, the Minister Robert Ashcroft intimated to the church that he had accepted a call to be the Minister at Rockferry in Cheshire. The church meeting recorded: *“His departure from our midst pained the hearts of many and it was regarded by most as a step characterised by some degree of imprudence.”* However, in his short stay, 44 people had been added to the church membership roll. These included several Bamford families like the Butterworths, the Shepherds, the Rostrons and the Cleggs.

1869 Tolstoy writes "War and Peace". It had taken him seven years. The Suez Canal opens. Women's Rights grows in Britain. Jules Verne writes "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea".

1870 By now, hand looms were almost non-existent in Lancashire, whilst the water-wheel was a comparative rarity. Steam it seemed had conquered King Cotton. Charles Dickens died suddenly.

1871 David Livingstone, presumed dead for four years, was traced by journalist Henry Stanley in Central Africa. Verdi composes "Aida". Jules Verne writes "Around the World in 80 days".

1872 The FA Cup was first played in football. The Ballot Act is passed in Britain, providing for secret ballots at elections. Until now, most elections had been by show of hands.

Until now at Bamford, the chapel keeper had combined his tasks with that of gravedigger for £18 per year. John Leach, who had done the job before, was re-employed for £33 per year, plus the promise of a job at Porritt's Mill. Mr Porritt was chosen to be the first Church Treasurer. At the end of the year he reported that *“he was out of pocket £13.”*

Two years later the church meeting at Bamford Chapel wrote to Mr John Wilson a student at the Airedale College in Bradford. *“Being without a settled pastor amongst us*

and feeling convinced that you are called to the Christian ministry and well adapted to take the oversight of us in the Lord, we hereby ask you to accept the pastorate of the church and congregation at Bamford.” Among the duties outlined were “you may be expected to preach twice on the Sabbath day and give a short sermon at a weeknight meeting, also to attend to the various duties connected with the office, and devote some time to the important work of pastoral visitation. And may we further ask your kind attention to the Sabbath School and young people connected with the congregation. Regarding the Labourer as worthy of his hire, we are enabled to say that you may expect from us at least one hundred and sixty pounds per annum, together with the use of the Parsonage house.”

1873 David Livingstone dies in Africa, aged 60.

It was agreed in 1873 “that the chapel be beautified and repaired and painted both inside and out.” Whilst this was being done, the services were held in the Sunday School, whilst the Sunday School classes were held in the Minister’s house. Before Mr Wilson arrived on July 20th 1873, steps outside the church and a doorway on each side of the chapel porch were created, making the entrance as wide as possible.

As usual, a tea meeting was held for members and friends at Bamford Chapel on Christmas Day, as it had been for several years. The Fentons were approached for more land to extend the burial ground, but “Mr Fenton stated that he, James Fenton, was quite opposed to burial grounds in connection with a place of worship.” It was certainly a different attitude to that of his predecessors, especially as most of those predecessors were already buried in that self-same plot of land. But times had changed radically for the Fentons, and in the 1870’s they were in the process of selling everything they had from land and property to houses and contents.

1874 Benjamin Disraeli became Prime Minister for the second time, when he defeated William Gladstone at the General Election. The Factory Act limits the number of working hours to 56 each week.

John Wilson was ordained at Bamford on March 25th 1874, and soon afterwards, a large influx of members joined the fellowship. These included in April 1874, Ambrose Shepherd, followed by more Porritts, the Schofields, the Leach’s and the Forresters. Within six months of becoming a member, Ambrose Shepherd was commended to the Rotherham College as a suitable candidate for the ministry. And then just over a year after his ordination, the Rev John Wilson resigned his ministry at Bamford Chapel. It had been a most eventful year, with 41 members being added to the church during his short ministry.

Before he left in May, the church held a special month of services in April to attract newcomers. The two main attractions were: 1. That visitors would be handed hymn books for their use (prior to this, every member had to buy their own hymn book and none were provided for visitors!), and 2. All seats in the chapel would be free (thus all pew rents were waived, which must have been a popular decision!).

1875 Captain Webb became the first person to swim the English Channel. Georges Bizet, the composer of "Carmen" died, aged 37.

Less than 2 months later, Bamford Chapel sent out an invitation to the Rev William McIntosh Arthur of Thornton, Bradford to become their Minister. The invitation, signed by Deacons Abraham Ashworth, Samuel Porritt, James Ashton and Richard Tattersall was sent on August 8th 1875. Ten days later, Mr Arthur replied accepting the call.

5. THE DAYS OF McINTOSH ARTHUR

The ministry of the Rev William McIntosh Arthur was to be the longest in the church's history. One of the first new trends was the upturn in the number of weddings - some 35 in the first year of Mr Arthur's ministry and 38 the following year. A system of communion tickets was begun, so that attendances could be recorded at the regular communion services. The main social activities were tea parties - always one at Christmas and another in September (1876) to commemorate the first anniversary of the arrival of Mr Arthur. Over 100 people came to tea at the Chapel that afternoon. After tea, the Minister reviewed his first year at Bamford "congratulating the Church on the spirit of peace and harmony that prevailed". The number of members had increased by two in that year to 132. Because of the communion system, they were able to give the average attendance at communion as 81.3. It was recorded in the Church minute book: "that upon a survey of the past year, this church is grateful to God for the peace and harmony which have prevailed within its borders, and for the signs of prosperity with which God has blessed it".

1876 Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone in the USA. Custer's "last-stand" at the Battle of Little Big Horn. Queen Victoria is appointed Empress of India.

1877 Thomas Edison invented the phonograph. A French inventor makes an electric battery.

1878 Thomas Edison is working on his Electric Light Company in New York. Gilbert & Sullivan are working together. William Booth founds the Salvation Army.

At Bamford however, church meetings were so poorly attended, that it was decided to hold meetings immediately after the midweek service on a Wednesday, and the monthly meetings became quarterly. Once again, a tea party was held to celebrate the second anniversary of Mr Arthur's arrival, with about 100 sitting down for tea "but the attendance at the meeting afterwards was far in advance of this number". Again, Mr Arthur reviewed the year, saying that membership had fallen to 120, but attendance at the Lord's Supper had increased to 93. For the first time, an annual report and a finance report were printed for public use. We are fortunate to have a copy of the 1878 Annual Report, so we can quote directly from it.

There were just the four Deacons now - James Ashton (Pitfield), Abraham Ashworth (South View, Bamford), Samuel Porritt (Crimble Cottage) and Richard Tattersall (Bagslate). The largest income came from Pew Rents (£203) which were six times bigger than annual offerings (£33). In the Sunday School, numbers were high. Thirty-two teachers had responsibility for 327 children. New cushions had been bought for church (£17), new pews had been fitted in the gallery (£135), and the chapel choir held a trip to Southport. A full list of church members is given, and we see that there were 9 Ashworths, 9 Porritts, 7 Howards and 7 Schofields belonging to the church.

The Chapel elected extra Trustees to take care of the building, and their names once again give us a good idea of the leading members at the time: Abraham Ashworth (South View), James Ashton (Pitfield), William Fenton (Longridge), James Leach (Hooley Brow), Sam Leach (Coalpit Lane), William Howarth (King Street), Joseph Porritt

(Beechfield), Charles Porritt (Chasewood), T F Mackison (The Hollies), Richard Tattersall (Pitfield), I Ramsbottom (Clay Lane), F Howard (South View), J S Porter (Pitfield), and James Leach (War Office).

The Rev McIntosh Arthur suffered a serious illness in 1878, which compelled him to be absent for several months. In his report for the year he mentioned that “death has been to a large extent among us”. Membership was now 125, the Choir trip was to Bolton Abbey, and we can read that in the accounts, the organ blower received 1/- per week. Mr Porritt stood down as Treasurer, and he was succeeded by a Finance Committee consisting mainly of the Deacons. T F Mackison took over as Church Treasurer and James Leach of Hooley Brow became a Deacon.

Looking back on 1879, Mr Arthur recorded that “*it has been to the experience of many, a year of depression and trouble and anxiety and death*”. He urged people to pay their Pew Rents in advance, rather than “behind-hand”. Incidentally, the church paid £10.16/- to Dr Watson for tending to Mr Arthur when he was ill.

1879 The first European telephone exchange is opened in Paris. The Boers assert their independence in the Transvaal.

1880 Following a Liberal election victory, William Gladstone takes over from Benjamin Disraeli as Prime Minister. The new novel "Ben Hur" is a best seller in the USA.

1881 Benjamin Disraeli dies, and Lord Salisbury is chosen as the leader of the Conservative Party. Billy the Kid is shot dead in the USA.

For six months in 1881, the Church at Bamford was closed whilst rebuilding took place. This was due to dampness in the church, which was affecting the organ. It was resolved to spend £350 on building a new chancel. In the end, the cost came to over £500. The church was re-opened with a special service conducted by Dr Hannay, Secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. It was also agreed after the re-opening of the church to purchase the field at the front of the chapel and some land at the back for 20 guineas, plus 1d per yard.

The organ blower got a raise in 1881 to 1/6d per week, and for the first time in the chapel's history, the weekly offerings topped £1 per week! This came to £64 for the year, compared with £318 for the Pew Rents. The Christmas tea was enjoyed on Boxing Day (Christmas being a Sunday, and it was obviously felt that social occasions should not be held on Sundays!). In its place the previous night, the church choir, led by Charles Porritt performed selections from “The Messiah”.

1882 Jesse James is shot dead in the USA. The British fleet bombards Alexandria.

Month by month new members at Bamford Chapel were interviewed and received. The church meeting in March 1882 was particularly interesting, as the Wood family were commended for church membership - William Wood, John Wood, Betsy Wood and Rachel Wood. The Wood family were to have a great effect upon Bamford Chapel. It was also recorded at that same meeting: “*The two Miss Fittons were then unanimously admitted to church membership upon their having been in full Christian communion with the Baptist Church in Water Street, Rochdale, which Baptist Community refused to give*

them any transfer to our communion here, not considering that any other so called Christian body was particular enough to receive their communicants."

1883 Horlicks Malted Milk is first sold in the USA. Karl Marx dies. Thomas Finlayson Mackison became only the second Mayor of Heywood. He helped to build the Clay Lane reservoir, and he was the Treasurer at Bamford Chapel.

From February 1883, we have a report on the Annual Congregational Meeting, which had now moved from the Minister's Anniversary in September to every February. "*February 10th 1883. This night was held a most interesting Annual Meeting, Tea was on the tables at 5 o'clock, and the tables and room generally were beautifully decorated with flowers and plants sent by two or three gentlemen for the occasion. After tea, the meeting was held when Mr Arthur as Pastor occupied the chair*". During the evening, Mr Arthur reported that during the last six and a half years, fifty members had been added to the church, and during the same time, there had been raised both by the Church and the Sunday School close upon £3,500. It was that evening, that the Chapel decided to begin holding a Church Anniversary each September to celebrate September 30th, the very day that Bamford Chapel was opened in 1801.

1884 Maxim invents a new weapon in London, the machine gun. Lewis Waterman invents the first ink-storing pen in New York City.

Charles Porritt being the organist, it was agreed in 1883 to appoint David Clegg as Deputy Organist for £10 per year. Meanwhile, Ben Schofield and John Ramsbottom were elected as Deacons to serve for three years. The annual report given by Mr Arthur in 1884 gave the fact that the membership had risen to 135. For several years now, services had been held, morning and afternoon, but in 1884, there was a firm proposal by members to change the afternoon to an evening service. However, after six months, the church returned to an afternoon service. It was in 1885 that the Congregational Church at Norden was formed, and the 84 year old Bamford Chapel sent the young church its best wishes. Mr and Mrs Charles Milnes were received into the church on transfer from Milnrow, and again their arrival was to have a lasting effect on the Chapel.

1885 Karl Benz and Gottlieb Daimler are both working in Germany, trying to design horseless carriages. Victor Hugo dies. The Statue of Liberty is erected in the USA. General Gordon is killed at Khartoum.

Reading the Bamford Chapel accounts for 1885, we find that the minister was paid £4 per week, the Chapel Keeper 8/- per week and the Organ Blower had been reduced again to 1/- per week. On the income side, the pew rents were still more than six times the weekly offerings. An entirely new venture at Bamford Chapel was the Bamford Brass Band, which helped provide people with instruments, as well as teaching them to play. The Bamford folk obviously took their music seriously, because in 1884, it cost more to run the band (£287) than it did to run the church (£281). Without doubt, the major event in the band year would seem to be the Whit Friday walk.

1886 Franz Liszt, the greatest living pianist, died aged 74. William Gladstone ceased to be Prime Minister, after only six months. He was defeated on the Irish question.

Curiously, the Bamford Christmas Tea Party on Christmas Day developed into a Sale of Work and Tea Party! It was resolved that the Church Anniversary in 1886 should take the form of an Old Teachers and Scholars Reunion, and that the ex-minister, the Rev R Ashcroft be invited to preach. By now, it was a regular feature each Christmas to sing excerpts from "The Messiah" on the Sunday night before Christmas, and have the Sale of Work and Tea on Christmas Day. Mrs Porritt placed a memorial window in the chancel in memory of her late husband, Samuel Porritt. In 1887, the following were elected as Deacons: Ben Schofield, John Wood, Thomas Mackison and John Ramsbottom. Because of his long service, John Ashton was nominated to serve as an honorary Deacon.

1887 Queen Victoria celebrated her Golden Jubilee as Queen and the nation rejoiced.

Verdi writes "Othello" and Tchaikovsky composes "Swan Lake".

1888 George Eastman perfects the first Kodak camera. Cecil Rhodes controls the South African diamond market at Kimberley. Coca Cola is invented in the USA. The German, Hertz discovers electromagnetic waves.

Another social activity in those days at Bamford was the Mutual Improvement Class. There was also the Sewing Class which had been in operation as a fund-raising committee for many years. And the choir held an outing to Worksop, of all places! In 1887, the Chapel was updated and "beautified" in various ways. Many of the pews were replaced, lino was laid down the aisles, door mats provided. Over £800 was spent on these new facilities in 1887. We should also note that every year on the credit side of the church balance sheet, there was an item "Sale of hymn books", which suggests that everyone had to buy their own hymn books. Which accounts for several old hymn books being found only this year in church, with different individual's names in them.

As well as buying their own hymn books, 197 people paid pew rents for their own pew in 1887 - far more than ever came to church. The rates varied so much that it is difficult to gauge what the rent actually was - the average seems to have settled at approx 2/6d per month. Mr Mackison, a leading figure at Tattersall's Mill was paying £2.10/- per month, as were the four members of the Porritt family (Mrs Porritt had inherited Pew No 1 from the Fentons). Mrs Tattersall of Spring Bank paid £3.15/- per month for the back pew in the other corner from Mrs Porritt, and the Sabbath School paid £2.10/- each month for a pew. It all amounted to £51 per month from pew rents. The discrepancies between amounts due and amounts received suggest that it was a bit of a chore on the part of certain people collecting these rents each month. Equally as interesting are the names of church members and attenders. In 1887, there were 21 Holts, 10 Leaches, 8 Schofields, 11 Howards and 15 Ashworths!

We must pause awhile and catch up now with the workings of the Sunday School. For many years, the Sunday School had operated under "the umbrella" of the church - the Sunday School had paid for their pews, bought their own hymn books and paid the church for gas and water. By 1868 when Joseph Porritt was the Superintendent, Whit Friday had been for many years the social highlight of the year, certainly as far as the children of the Sunday School were concerned. It involved a band and a procession around the district followed by a tea party. In 1868, 400 1d buns were ordered, along with 240 pints of milk! That hints at the size of the occasion! Occasionally, during the

year, as an extra special treat the scholars (several hundred) were provided with a free tea. In 1868 Abel Ashworth and Joseph Porritt were requested to provide the tea and entertainment, and tickets for parents and friends were 6d each. A flag (banner?) was bought for £10 for the 1868 Whit Friday procession. The following year the number of buns ordered increased to 600! Messrs Schofield, Ashton and Leach, the Chapel Keeper, were nominated to distribute the milk and buns.

All this time and for many years now, a Day School had run alongside the Sunday School. It was still the only place locally where children were taught reading and writing. Occasionally, there were clashes of opinion and policy between the two bodies. The tea parties continued unabated. We get a sense of the structure of the Sunday School in October 1869, when teachers and senior classes had to pay 6d for a tea party, Scripture and Elementary classes 4d and Infants were free.

Just as did the Church, the Sunday School had its own officers and meetings, at which minutes were taken. 1869: *“The behaviour of several scholars during the Divine service in the adjoining Sanctuary being deemed very unsatisfactory, the Rev Ashcroft volunteered to draw attention to the matter, when an opportunity presented itself, which it is hoped will greatly abate the cause of this complaint.”* Long before the Church organised its Christmas Tea, the Sunday School were organising their own Christmas Day Tea, price 1/- each. Often there would be an entertainment by the Magic Lantern (owned by Mr Andrews of the Sunday School). After the new Sunday School building was erected in 1861, a platform upstairs was provided for the teachers.

Complaints continued to be received about scholars' behaviour, and then the controversial topic became the manner in which hymns in school were being badly and carelessly sung. In 1870 the Whit Friday bun order had increased to 700. The route of the Whit Friday procession was discussed because it was felt *“it was too long for the little ones”*. So, it was decided *“that we go upto Tattersall's Mill and upto Mr Tattersall's house, then across the moor to Mr John Fenton's, round by Crimble, back through War Office to Mr John Fenton's, and from there onto the field.”* Even we, standing where we are more than a century later can see that the procession of several hundred little children from the village was a tour of the houses of local wealthy mill owners, interspersed with various bouts of hymn singing. A string band was formed in the Sunday School from Joseph Porritt's class, but within a year, complaints were voiced that some of the band were receiving music lessons on a Sunday morning!

In 1871 *“Each teacher shall see to the attendance of his or her scholars, and that if absent, shall enquire into the cause, and see that the parents know of the same.”* Starting that year, it became the custom to buy four balloons for each Whit Friday(!)

In 1872 Superintendent Jonas Porritt died, and in his place Mr Joseph Porritt was elected. The Sunday School remained responsible for all the cleaning of the building, painting and decorating. In 1872, the order for buns rose to 800 at 1d each. The route that year was Hooley Bridge to Crimble to Beaumonts, Spring Bank, before returning to school for refreshments, and then adjourning to the field. About six young people each year “moved up” to the church.

In 1874 £5 was to be spent on books for prizes to scholars for behaviour and attendance. This however was to be competitive and only two prizes per class were allowed. Singing was held before the Sunday School, and it was agreed that scholars should have a full mark if they were present before the singing, but only half a mark if they were not present for the singing.

In 1875 Abel Ashworth was elected Superintendent in place of Mr Porritt. There was a discipline and a formality about everything in the Sunday School. Teachers' meetings were held every fortnight with very senior members of the church and Sunday School being elected each year, to distribute the hymn sheets and take up the collection at the Anniversary. By 1875, the Sunday School was so large that the teachers proposed to the chapel that a new parsonage be built and the old one used for teaching children.

It appears that there were special pews for the Sunday School children in church, ie in October 1875 "*We wish to secure the consent of the Chapel Trustees for the forms now occupied by the scholars being made into ordinary pews, and to move the children to another part of the chapel.*"

Up to 1875, Whit Friday had always been a Bamford Chapel occasion, but that year it was suggested that the three Sunday Schools in Bamford unite for the procession, the three being the Wesleyan Methodists, the Primitive Methodists and Bamford Chapel. The sheer size of the whole event of Whit Friday in Bamford can be gauged by the fact that in 1876, the Cornholme Brass Band were engaged to play on the day from 9am to 6pm for the sum of £10!

In 1876 John Wood took over as Superintendent. A fire was provided in one of the School rooms for those children who had travelled from a distance. That year, it rained on Whit Friday. From all reports, it seems that the scholars continued their walk and the band played on, whilst afterwards all the children gathered inside at Porritt's Mill to dry out. However, because the children had missed their annual treat, it was later announced that "the field provided for Whit Friday last will be open to scholars for their recreation on Saturday July 15th, or weather not permitting, upon the first favourable Saturday afterwards."

In 1877, coffee was provided on the field for the first time - the Chapel Keeper to make the coffee. It was proposed that 600 hymn papers be printed for hymn singing at a Scholars' Tea meeting. Four children had a mark taken from their attendance record in 1878 for an attack on Mr Hall, a teacher; their names were to be read out from the platform, morning and afternoon the next Sunday, and their parents visited. In 1878, the band was paid £11 to play from 9am till 8pm, whilst Mr Cocker of Crimble Hall Farm gave his field for the recreation afterwards.

The Church membership roll was revised in 1877, soon after Mr Arthur's arrival. At that time, the oldest church members were Mr and Mrs Abraham Ashworth of South View (admitted 1830 June), Mrs Ashworth of Coalpit Lane (1833), Miss Ann Lord of Pilsworth (1834), James Ashton of Pitfield (1836), Mrs Fenton of Crimble Hall (1838), Mary Clegg of King Street, Hooley Bridge (1838), Mr and Mrs Ben Schofield of Pitfield (1838), Mrs Wolstenholme of Heywood (1839) and Robert Jay of Folly (1840). The number of baptisms suggests that the local birth rate had decreased - figures in the 1890's were

down to less than ten infant baptisms each year. Weddings at the Chapel continued to be on the increase, with 47 conducted in 1882, including ten in December alone. (It was very much the custom to have Christmas weddings!)

Weekly collections were very poor. In 1878, the total weekly amount was often under 10/- and on one occasion dropped to 4/1d. In 1882 the weekly amount only topped £1 seven times in the year, whilst one Sunday it fell as low as 3/4d!

1889 Because of the organised Labour movement, Unions were coming into their own, and strikes were becoming more common. 10,000 men went on strike with the London dockers, in their claim for a wage of 6d per hour. The strike lasted a month.

John Wood, Joseph Porritt, William Hall and George Ashworth were elected Deacons at Bamford Chapel in 1890. Once again that year the Anniversary took the form of an Old Scholars' Reunion. That was also the year that Mr and Mrs Hardman joined the church. By now the choir were holding annual trips - 1889 to York, 1890 to Chatsworth, 1891 to Worksop and 1892 to Ingleton.

1890 Germany gave Britain Zanzibar in East Africa, and in return, Queen Victoria gave her grandson, the Kaiser, Mount Kilimanjaro! The artist Van Gogh committed suicide.

1891 Oscar Wilde, Arthur Conan Doyle and Thomas Hardy were all at the height of their writing prowess. The zip fastener is invented.

1892 Leoncavallo presents his opera "I Pagliacci". William Gladstone forms his fourth Liberal government after defeating Lord Salisbury's Tories. The poet, Lord Tennyson dies.

It was in 1892 that new thoughts began to emerge concerning worship at Bamford Chapel. The afternoon service was changed to an evening service, and it was suggested that this new service "be partially taken part in by the congregation". However, it seems the average church member reacted a little against this progressiveness, according to the church meeting. "*The congregation prefers to adhere to the usual order of public worship for the evening service.*" The Christmas Day event had now expanded to "The Christmas Sale of Work, the Christmas Tree, Tea Party and annual Congregational entertainment". Major repairs were made to the manse, the chapel and the organ in 1892. These came to over £500, of which the organ share was over £300.

1893 Keir Hardie became the first Labour MP. On his first day at Westminster, he shocked everyone by wearing yellow tweed trousers, a serge jacket, and a flat cap. The composer, Tchaikovsky died from cholera, aged 53. Dvorak performed "From the New World" in New York.

John Leach, the old chapel keeper died and the new one was John Stansfield. The oldest member at Bamford Chapel, Abraham Ashworth died in March 1894. He was 90. Incidentally, he was only the third person to have reached that good age at Bamford Chapel in the previous century! Infant mortality was by now almost a thing of the past. Only three children died in 1890, ten in 1891, one in 1892, 3 in 1893, 6 in 1894 and 3 in 1895. Indeed, the average age of those who died in the 1890's at Bamford Chapel was well into the fifties.

1894 William Gladstone resigned as Prime Minister, following his failure to establish Irish home rule. He is succeeded by another Liberal, Lord Roseberry. Rudyard Kipling writes "The Jungle Book". Blackpool Tower opens, as well as the town's Grand Theatre.

At Bamford, in 1894, a small piece of land in the church graveyard known as "John Fenton's burying place", but still unused, was passed over to the church for their use. It was the space of eight graves and the Deacons resolved "to give two of them to Mr George Ashworth as an acknowledgement of his having, at his own expense for several years, kept the said piece of land in good order". The same year, the Deacons also made a political statement backing up British government action in Armenia. A hundred years ago, the authority of the Deacons was not to be questioned. They directed the congregation, they instructed the minister, they held the financial purse strings and they were rarely contradicted. And as well as making political statements on behalf of the Chapel, they made all the lesser important decisions like decorating the chapel, school and manse. The bill for decorating the exterior of the church in 1895 came to just £10, "with the understanding by the Deacons, that the Sunday School would as usual bear their part of the expense".

1895 Oscar Wilde was imprisoned in Reading jail. Lord Roseberry's government falls, and Lord Salisbury forms a Liberal-Conservative coalition government.

1896 Gas is becoming daily more popular for heating, lighting and cooking. Gas meters and gas mantles are selling in their hundreds of thousands. "The Daily Mail" begins publication. Athens revives the Olympic Games. Moving picture shows or "flickers" begin to be shown in the USA.

By 1896 "the annual Congregational Sale of Work, Toy Stall, Tea Party and Christmas Entertainment" was held on the afternoon and evening of the Saturday prior to Christmas. "The Sewing Class and the Teachers of the Sunday School be requested to make all arrangements for the same". The young people of the Chapel asked the Deacons if they could hold an Easter Fair for two days in April, to help pay for the decoration of the chapel.

1897 Queen Victoria celebrates her Diamond Jubilee, 60 years as Queen. Marconi makes the first communication by wireless telegraphy.

1898 William Gladstone dies. H.G.Wells publishes "The War of the Worlds". The Curies discover radium.

A wave of influenza spread through the village in January 1898. The minister, Mr Arthur was laid low for five weeks and Mr Mackison, the Deacon died. Charles Milnes took over his place on the diaconate. As the church at Bamford prepared to enter the new century, debt hovered over its head. The chapel was over £100 in debt, with weekly collections very rarely reaching £1. The main source of income was still pew rents, which had also dropped to £175 per year. One of the last baptisms of the 19th century at Bamford Chapel was that of two year old Elizabeth Stott, daughter of Benjamin and Sarah Stott. Beth, born on August 4th 1897 was baptised by the Rev William McIntosh Arthur on August 9th 1899. A century and more later she was still with us.

1899 The Boer War breaks out in South Africa. Many thousands of British soldiers were killed as Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking are besieged.

6. THE NEW CENTURY

1900 Lord Salisbury's Tory Government is re-elected. Arthur Sullivan, the composer, dies. Oscar Wilde, the author, dies. Count Zeppelin flies his 420 foot long "airship".

At Bamford, the arrival of the 20th century was somewhat overshadowed in 1900 by the celebrations of the Chapel's Centenary in 1901. To commemorate the event, a brass tablet was placed in church which is there to this day, one hundred years later. A Centenary Bazaar was also held over three days in 1901.

The object of this Bazaar: *"Is to raise a sum of £400, and as much more as we possibly can. This year, 1901, is the Centenary Year of Bamford Chapel, and we mean to celebrate this event in a suitable manner – principally by putting our premises in good condition. The Chapel has just been painted and re-decorated throughout, the lighting appliances and ventilating attended to, and the organ cleaned, whilst due attention must next be paid to the minister's house, the school, and the surrounding grounds. The object then of this Bazaar is to pay for improvements in all those directions. During the last twenty-five years we have, along with help from a few outsiders, raised **considerably over £3,000** for alterations and improvements at Bamford Chapel and grounds, and now we ask our many friends to help us to raise the amount we require. If we obtain such help we shall have much encouragement in still attempting to maintain the usefulness and prosperity of Bamford Chapel."*

We still have the 72 page programme, which tells us a great deal of what life was like in our Chapel a hundred years ago. To give everyone a sample of the occasion we reprint the Guide to the Bazaar as contained in the programme:

All visitors who have not already secured their tickets for the Bazaar, may obtain them near the front Entrance Gates to the Chapel Yard, they will then enter the Bazaar by the front door and porch of the School. Proceeding along the corridor and up the staircase will be found the main room of the Bazaar, which has been gorgeously decorated for the occasion by Mr W H Best, of Rochdale. The room contains the following Stalls:- "Congregational", "Choir", "School (Young Ladies)", "School (Young Men)", "Doll and Toy", "Ice Cream", "Fruit, Flower and Sweets", and "Refreshment Stalls", which are replete with Useful, Novel, and Ornamental Articles of "Virtu", Art &c, making a most complete and pretty display, and which will be sold at reasonable prices.

Busy fingers have been hard at work for several months to provide a beautiful assortment of goods of every kind. There are specimens of Fine Needlework, Embroidery, Pottery, Paintings, Photographs, and Nicknacks of every description (including Live Stock), in fact the visitors can hardly ask for the wrong thing, and if they do not see what they want, "Please ask for it and see that they get it".

The "Flower, Fruit and Sweets", and "Refreshment" Stalls will be particularly well and daintily provided.

Descending the staircase the visitors will find at the foot on the right, the Museum of Science, Art and Curios, the admission to which will be One Penny each.

Adjoining this is the Tea Room, but we had better first visit the "Café Chantant" in the grounds. This will be found in the large marquee opposite the Schools, where,

besides being able to obtain delicious cups of tea or coffee, with roll of bread and butter, &c (for which a charge of Sixpence will be made, or as much more as the generosity of the customers prompt) the visitors will be treated to a selection of Music, vocal and instrumental, by Lady and Gentleman friends, until Six pm, after which the Concerts and Entertainments will be given. Selections of Music will also be given each evening in the school..

In the grounds, amongst other attractions, will be found a Shooting Jungle, where steadiness of aim may be practised at moving and stationery objects or targets, at the reasonable price of One Penny per shot.

Returning to the School, in the Refreshment Room (1st Young Ladies' Classroom), a good substantial tea may be obtained, and "Conundrum" Suppers may also be had in the room adjoining (1st Young Men's Classroom). Having satisfied the cravings of hunger and paid the bill, the visitors will be well repaid by visiting the grounds, which will (weather permitting) present a bright and fairy like scene, being brilliantly illuminated by Electric Light, Coloured Lights, Chinese and Japanese Lanterns, &c.

Space will not permit us to describe more fully the beauties (animate and inanimate), to be found in the Bazaar, and we strongly advise all to come and judge for themselves.

To give us a sense of the sheer size of the occasion, the programme has 58 advertisers, lists 50 patrons, lists ten committees and has details of ten stalls, an outside marquee and various other attractions including an exhibition, a magician, a shooting gallery, illuminations and four bands!

It appears that the object of the Bazaar was achieved and in addition to the brass tablet, a stained glass window was donated by the Porritt family. The Deacons at the turn of the century were Mr Porritt, Mr Milnes, Mr R Wood and Mr Sharples.

1901 Queen Victoria died, aged 81. President McKinley was assassinated in Washington. The first Nobel prizes were awarded.

1902 International motor races are all the rage, and Marcel Renault wins the first Paris-Vienna race. Arthur Balfour succeeds Lord Salisbury as Tory Prime Minister. Beatrix Potter first writes of Peter Rabbit.

By 1902 the church was so financially stretched that the minister McIntosh Arthur, now in his 27th year at Bamford, handed in his resignation which was accepted. The position was resolved when he agreed to continue on a reduced stipend of £3 per week. Three more Deacons were elected - John Ashworth, George Ashworth and Richard Tattersall. For one of the first occasions, it was agreed to purchase 25 new hymn books, solely for the use of visitors. By now the first Sunday of July was regarded as the Old Scholars' Reunion, whilst August 10th 1902 was observed as Coronation Sunday and the choir gave special items.

That year, a request was made to the Deacons for the possibility of "more activity and life being shown at Bamford Chapel during the coming winter". In response, John Ashworth and Mr Arthur arranged the following programme: three Lectures and three Sunday afternoon meetings for Men in the Chapel. The Lectures would be on Tuesday evenings with the subjects: "Rome", "The Indian Durbar" and "The National Spirit in Literature

and Life". In January 1904 the Porritts were in the news - Charles Porritt stood down as Choir Master, whilst Joseph Porritt the Deacon died.

1903 Marie Curie is the first woman Nobel prize winner. Orville and Wilbur Wright take to the air for 12 seconds in North Carolina. Lenin emerges as the leader of the Bolsheviks in Russia. Mrs Pankhurst forms the Women's Social & Political Union in Manchester.

1904 Rolls and Royce agree to build motor cars. London's first electric underground railway begins. George Bernard Shaw is the toast of the London stage. James Barrie's play "Peter Pan" opens.

At the Deacons' election in Bamford, the following six were chosen - George Ashworth, Richard Tattersall, William Sharples, John Ashworth, William Hall and Thomas Ashton. Mr Sharples and Mr Ashton declined to serve, but later Mr Sharples consented. A hint of what was to happen some 70 years later occurred when Mr Ross, the Rochdale Presbyterian Minister conducted the service for the Old Scholars' Reunion - a short communion service at 11am, followed by services at 2.30pm and 6pm. Once again, the church took social action when Deacons signed a petition to the local MP, Col Kemp, against the licensing bill then before Parliament. There was very keen feeling in the Chapel regarding drinking and its effect, and a Band of Hope was mooted amongst the young people of the Sunday School.

There was obviously a growing market in the village in the sale of unused graves at the chapel, which the Deacons of the chapel were keen to quell, so the chapel endeavoured to approach local land owners with a view to obtaining more land. By now, an annual Choir Sunday was being held (mainly to raise money for the choir!). The old Sunday School scholar, now Rev Dr Ambrose Shepherd, was invited to conduct the Chapel Anniversary in 1905, but he had to decline. However, he agreed to conduct a weekday evening service in July, which excited great local interest.

1905 The Wright brothers made their longest flight, 38 minutes. "Madame Butterfly" is first produced in London. Campbell-Bannerman, the Liberal leader is invited by King Edward to form a government, after Arthur Balfour resigns.

1906 HMS Dreadnought, the most powerful warship in the world is launched in Britain. A major earthquake destroys most of San Francisco. The Liberals win the latest General Election. The six year old Labour Party wins 54 seats. The Irish Nationalists have 83 MP's.

At this period in the church's life the number of members was down and money was extremely short, so it was decided to sell programmes for the "Messiah" at Christmas (never before charged for - 6d each!) and have a collection as well! A bill was paid for 13/- "for the doing up of the kitchen and the dining room of the parsonage house". It was also in 1905 that insurance, especially fire insurance, for the church building was first sought. Mentioning such things reminds us of some of the costs of the day and bills paid - Organ Blower £1.6/- (for 6 months), chimney sweep 1/6d, tapers 1/-, church insurance £2.2/-, repairs to parsonage £1.3/-, painting manse 9/3d, and painting fire escape 13/-.

At Christmas 1905, the young people gave an evening's entertainment - "Yuletide at Home", which proved a great success. An item in the Deacons' meeting read: "that the cold draughts in the chapel having of late proved very uncomfortable and the cause of much complaint, Mr W Hall be requested to look into the matter, and if necessary have the ventilators lately put in the roof, closed up". It was agreed to paint the outside of the chapel, school and parsonage house, and the estimate accepted was for £12.10/-. There was much debate about the possibility of having hymn boards, but this was decided against, instead the alternative was decided "to let those of our elderly friends who cannot hear, have on Sundays, a list of the hymns put in their pews".

The Church Anniversary in 1906 was extra special, in that Miss Sarah Berry, an ex Sunday School scholar, now with a growing reputation as a singer, would be present to sing. In 1907 John E Porritt asked the Deacons "for permission to affix a door to his pew - a door similar to that which was on Mrs Tattersall's pew on the other side of the chapel". His request was granted, provided that he provided the pew with an exact matching door and at his own expense.

1907 The suffragette movement was growing each year; 57 women sent to prison in February. The Lusitania created a new record for the Transatlantic crossing of four days, 19 hours. Edward Grieg dies.
1908 Edward Elgar is now at the height of his fame. Black boxer Jack Johnson becomes heavyweight champion of the world. "Wind in the Willows" is published.

At the annual Deacons' election, the following six were elected: William Hall, George Ashworth, Richard Tattersall, William Howarth, William Sharples and James Williamson, but Mr Sharples declined due to his deafness. Mr Arthur the minister gave six months notice of his decision to retire from the Bamford Chapel pastorate, due to ill health. During his 32 year long ministry, the Rev William McIntosh Arthur had conducted over 900 weddings in the chapel.

The chapel was lit in those days by 20 incandescent gas burners. We know this by the bill from Heywood Corporation to clean them, 1d each for the first six, and 14 others at ½d each. Members were now down to 84 in number, and the approximate income from pew rents would be as low as £110. The following year, 8 ministers offered to "preach with a view" at Bamford Chapel, from as far apart as London and Glasgow. It was agreed by the Deacons that the new minister would be offered £2 per week, plus whatever the pew rents realised, over £120. In other words, the more members the new minister obtained, the more he would be paid!

In February 1908 the Rev George Chamberlain of Berwick on Tweed was invited to the pastorate of Bamford Chapel. As part of the preparations for the arrival of Mr Chamberlain, electric bells were put in the manse for the first time, at a cost of £3. Reading the minutes of the church meeting, there was definitely a new spirit of enthusiasm about the chapel, after the arrival of Mr Chamberlain in Bamford. A Ladies' Sewing Party was begun again, several people including a young man called Walter Abel Ashworth applied to become church members, and a new weeknight service was begun each Tuesday.

A minute was passed at the Deacons' meeting: "That this meeting cordially approves of the Licensing Bill as a just and beneficent measure, and assures His Majesty's Government of its strenuous support in their efforts to pass this Bill into Law".

Meanwhile, locally, concern was expressed about the alcoholic content in the communion wine, and as to whether or not to adopt individual communion glasses. Copies of the letter regarding the Licensing Bill were sent to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Home Secretary (Winston Churchill).

A door was constructed between the chapel and the school. Previously all scholars had to go outside in order to come and go into the school. Curiously in those days, the Secretary of the church, William Wood, was not a Deacon. About this time, Bamford Chapel was asked by the Norden Congregational Church if Mr Chamberlain could help them out, and he began to serve them one Sunday a month, along with pastoral duties. For this, Mr Chamberlain was paid £50 per year (£20 from Norden and £30 from the Lancashire Congregational Union). Incidentally, we read from Deacons' meetings that the various duties the minister performed at communion included purchasing the wine, providing the bread, laying the table, presiding at the service, marking the register of attendance, and paying all expenses from the communion collection!

1909 Men and women over 70 drew their first pension. Imprisoned suffragettes are being force-fed.

1910 Tories and Liberals tie in the General Election. King Edward died from pneumonia. Captain Scott sets out to conquer the South Pole. Florence Nightingale dies, aged 90. The world's largest liner "Olympic" is launched in Britain. A second General Election results in a second tie. Herbert Asquith is the new Prime Minister.

At Bamford Chapel, a Men's Institute was begun, which included a football club. The Institute which took place on Thursdays, also included a gymnasium for boys. For almost half a century, the chapel had set aside special Sundays each year for particular collections. In 1910, they were: January, London Missionary School; February, Rochdale Infirmary; March, Choir Sermons; May, Sunday School Anniversary; June, Lancashire College; September, Chapel Anniversary; November, Lancashire Congregational Union; December, Messiah Service.

February 1910 saw the annual election of Deacons, 26 people were voted for (all men!) and the following are the results: George Ashworth (80), Richard Tattersall (77), William Howarth (61), William Wood (42), Bertram Porritt (38), Edward Tattersall (36), James Williamson (32), Arthur Ashworth (28), Edward Holt (23), William Hall (22), Thomas Ashton (20), Ernest Ashworth (16), Fred Howard (15), Edward Rostron (15), Walter Abel Ashworth (15), Charles Stott (13), William Sharples (10), John Shepherd (10), Tom Milnes (10), John Porritt (5), John Wood (3), Harry Maden (2), Joseph Wood (1), John Leach (0) and Frank Millward (0).

The officers of the church in 1910 were as follows: Sunday School Superintendent, Ernest Ashworth; Choirmaster, Edward Tattersall; Organist, Walter Abel Ashworth; Band of Hope President, Richard Tattersall; Church Treasurer, Bertram Porritt; Church Secretary, William Wood; Caretaker, Mr W Wolstenholme. The church was once again printing a manual each year, and from it in 1910 we learn that pew rents were still only

£110 and offerings at £48 for the year, averaged less than £1 per week. On the expenses side, the Minister now received £2.10/- a week, the caretaker 17/6d per week, and the second highest expense after repairs (£28) was the running of the football team (£19)!

By now the Sunday School was working much closer with the church; afternoon school, with 203 scholars, began and ended in the church, and because of the shortage of space, the Primary Department was using the area between the pulpit and the front pew for teaching. Individual communion cups were used for the first time on September 4th 1910, and later in the year the Christmas festivities took a slightly different form - "A Sale of Work and At Home" on Thursday December 15th and a "Tea Party and Drama" on Saturday December 17th.

<p>1911 Ramsay MacDonald became leader of the Labour Party, and Bonar Law, the leader of the Tory Party. Winston Churchill is appointed First Lord of the Admiralty. W.S. Gilbert dies. Roald Amundsen beats Captain Scott to the South Pole. The National Insurance Bill, inspired by Lloyd George, is passed by Parliament. Rail and dock strikes bring Britain to a halt.</p>

1911 saw a few changes in the outward appearance of the chapel at Bamford. A fire escape from the Sunday School was erected (£25) and a new boundary wall was built around church and school (£38). Also, until then, most of the graves had high metal railings around them and these were being gradually removed, due to the danger they imposed.

On Saturday June 18th 1911 special services were held with reference to the Coronation of King George V. Mr Chamberlain was the preacher, and a special Order of Service, published by the Congregational Union of England and Wales, was used. When Mr Chamberlain arrived at Bamford in 1908 he found 82 church members. The oldest serving members were Mr and Mrs John Wood of 19 South View. They had been members since 1856. Mrs Richard Tattersall of Willow Bank on Norden Road, also dated back as a member to 1856. As well as the 82 members, there were another 76 who were seat-holders, and a list "B" of adherents, numbering a further 17. By 1911 the church membership had risen to 105.

Maybe because of a new approach on behalf of the minister, there were much fewer baptisms these days at the chapel, and Mr Chamberlain conducted only his 24th in the last four years. It was a big contrast to the days of twenty and thirty baptisms a year half a century earlier. It was also during the ministry of George Chamberlain that the church appointed an Authorised Person for weddings (until then the Registrar had always been present).

The Rev William McIntosh Arthur, the previous minister had conducted the Chapel Anniversary in September 1910, but sadly he died at Epping aged 69 in November 1911. On his retirement, the Chapel had presented him with the old communion jug. These were certainly days of change - an evening of slides took place one Sunday evening in October 1911, when a lady spoke on "Palestine". Because of Sunday observance, that would never have been considered twenty years previously, whilst another Sunday evening service was actually cancelled "on account of the holidays" (20th August 1911).

Once again, the Chapel Anniversary took the form of an Old Scholars' Reunion, and leading up to this event, Mr Chamberlain visited 40 lapsed church attenders and urged them to renew their fellowship.

"A very good attendance" were present for the Annual Meeting of the Church and Congregation on Saturday 27th January 1912. The minutes record: "After the general business of the meeting, a most instructive address was given by Mr Chamberlain, and the rest of the evening was spent in a most social manner, musical selections were given at intervals by the choir, and light refreshments were served during the evening. The party were dismissed about 9.30, having been one of the pleasantest gatherings held for a number of years."

Three teachers in the Sunday School were eligible to receive long service certificates from the Sunday School Union - Elizabeth Schofield 41 years, William Wood 32 years and John Wood 26 years. And then in 1912, after over 110 years of working separately, it was agreed to merge the finances of church and Sunday School with all officers, other than Deacons, being elected at the same meeting.

"On Saturday morning 12th October 1912 about 8.30am, Mr Chamberlain discovered that the coke in the cellar under the chancel was on fire, and that the Chapel was quite full of smoke. Mr Chamberlain promptly gave an alarm by going to Messrs Porritt's mill and informing Mr Bertram Porritt of what had occurred. Mr Porritt ordered the mill Brigade to turn out at once, and in about 7 minutes from Mr Chamberlain first discovering the fire, water was being poured onto the fire, and in a very few minutes all danger was over as regards the fire; the Brigade working very well indeed. This fire was caused through a load of coke, being unknowingly put in "too fresh", and which set on fire during the Friday night. The valuable organ, which is in the chancel immediately above where the fire was, was in great danger of being ruined."

"It was first thought that not much damage had been done, as the fire had been confined to the cellar, but on the following day (Sunday), it was discovered that the smoke and sulphur had worked havoc with the painting, etc, and that the damage done was by far more extensive than was at first anticipated. During the following week, Messrs Best, decorators of Rochdale were consulted as to the damage done to the decorations, painting, etc. Mr Joseph McCulloch, Organ Builder Manchester, who has a yearly contract for tuning and regulating the organ, was also consulted, and after a thorough examination of the interior of the organ, reported that in order to put the instrument right, it would take about four weeks work. The estimated damage to chapel and organ being over £60. It was resolved that the Deacons recommend the Finance Committee to grant the sum of one pound to the Porritt's Mill Fire Brigade Excursion Fund for their services at the fire."

A joint church magazine was suggested between the two Bamford and Norden churches and Mr Chamberlain was asked to edit it. *"A letter was read from the Secretary of the Institute asking for the approval of the Deacons to put a billiard table in one of the lower rooms. The question was discussed, after which the Deacons decided that they cannot see their way to grant such a request."* A month later, the Deacons received the following curt reply: *"I put the Deacons' reply before the Institute Committee, and they wished me to write and ask on what grounds our application was refused."*

William Wood, the Church Secretary replied rather wordily: *“Replying to your letter of the 2nd inst. , which was laid before the Deacons the same evening, I can only say that the discussion communicated in my previous letter represents the conclusions of the Deacons, after consideration of the matter as to the advisability of the proposals made, and am therefore not in a position to make any further communication.”*

1912 Joseph Lister, the pioneer of antiseptic, dies. The White Star liner "Titanic" sinks on her maiden voyage.

1913 Captain Scott dies on his way back from the South Pole. Mrs Pankhurst is jailed for three years. Cars are being mass produced by Henry Ford, for the first time.

It was 1913 and it was decided to elect seven Deacons to serve the church over the next three years. Official printed voting papers were distributed with the names of the 25 candidates. The results were: George Ashworth (69), Richard Tattersall (69), William Wood (65), Bertram Porritt (65), Edward Tattersall (65), Walter A Ashworth (39), Tom Milnes (34), Ernest Ashworth (19), Arthur Ashworth (19), Joseph Wood (14), William Hall (12), Charles Stott (12), Thomas Ashton (7) and John Wood (5). The remaining 11 candidates shared 15 votes between them.

A special day of services was held in March 1913 to celebrate the 5th Anniversary of the arrival of Mr Chamberlain. This also coincided with the reopening of the chapel after the extensive redecoration since the fire. It would seem that Mr Chamberlain was a preacher of some repute, as rarely two months went by without him travelling quite a distance to conduct worship elsewhere - as far apart as Leeds and Portsmouth during 1913. It was on June 5th 1913 that Mr Chamberlain informed the members of Bamford Chapel that he had received a unanimous call to become the pastor at Park Hill Congregational Church in Nottingham.

In a farewell letter to the church, Mr Chamberlain said: *Looking back upon the past five years, while perhaps it may truly be said that we have not seen all our expectations fulfilled, yet you will remember that much has been done, many obstacles overcome and difficult situations met in a proper Christian spirit.”*

“The wall of partition that existed for many years between the chapel and school has been broken down, and a continuance of that good will which brought this about will doubtless make the union a source of strength and peace. It is gratifying to be able to say at this time that my labours among the young men have resulted in a wider interpretation and a better understanding of the Holy Bible. I shall always look with a sense of pride to the special provision made for teaching the children in the Primary Department. May God richly bless and reward you for your help and faithfulness.”

“Mr Chamberlain preached his farewell sermons on Sunday August 31st. There was a fairly good congregation at the morning service. Mr Chamberlain took as his subject “Some Essentials of Today”, based on St Matthew, 16th Chapter and 16th and 18th verses. The service opened with the anthem “Therefore with Angels” (Novello). There was a larger congregation at the Evening Service. The service opened with the Sanctus “Holy, Holy, Holy”. During the service, the choir gave Maunder’s anthem “O Worship

the King". Miss Maggie Hammon, a member of the choir sang very nicely the sacred solo "The Priceless Gift" (Gray). Mr Chamberlain's subject was "The Indestructibility of Right" taken from the text "And this is the Father's will that sent me".

At the close of the service, the Church Secretary, Mr William Wood said: *"that as a result of the subscriptions list opened some weeks ago, a roll top desk has been purchased and forwarded to Mr Chamberlain's new home. The desk has a plate on which is inscribed "Presented to Rev G Chamberlain, in recognition of his services as Pastor at Bamford 1908-1913".*

Bamford Chapel was quite different before and after the ministry of George Chamberlain. There was a new openness, new attitudes in worship, more social activity in the church, closer relationships between church and Sunday School. Good Friday rambles around Carr Wood, Whitworth or Birtle were now an accepted feature; a Shrove Tuesday social evening became popular, as it involved dancing (to the piano). Whilst the Sunday School Anniversary had now become an event to rival Whit Friday, with rehearsals taking place weeks in advance.

Though not as big as in the 1800's, the Whit Friday proceedings still took the best part of a year to organise. Now Bamford Chapel joined with the Wesleyans and the Primitive Methodists, and the order of walking and the selection of hymns to be sung were deemed of great importance. 400 sandwiches and 30 dozen buns were ordered in 1913 - with a special note made in the minutes, that the sandwiches were to be cut in halves! Banner carriers were named a month before the day, as were the banner string carriers. Also ordered for Whit Friday 1913 were 46 pints of milk, 16 pounds of sugar and 3 pounds of coffee. Even the band (Walsden Band) had to come weeks before to practise with the children. After the procession, the Sunday School organised a Sports Day in the field, with nine listed races. The starter for the races was named in the minutes, the handicapper for the races was announced, as well as the judges at the finishing line. They obviously took their sports seriously!

It was in 1913 that Bamford Chapel first entered the NSSU Scripture Examination, and the Rochdale SSU provided a shield for which to compete. The children's tea parties of the previous century were still being held, such as the one on October 11th 1913, when the prices were: over 18's 1/-, 9-18's 6d, 6-9's 3d and under 6's free. A concert was performed and the annual prizes for Sunday School attendance were presented. A Fairy Play for girls each year became an established form of entertainment from 1907. In 1908 the children of the Sunday School performed a Japanese Operetta.

Discipline was still to the fore, even in the Edwardian era. In Sunday School, the doors were open at 9.20. A bell was rung at 9.30. Anyone entering after the bell, lost their attendance mark, and had to stand outside until the opening devotions were completed. A move in 1908 to change the form of Sunday School teaching was defeated on the grounds that it would mean teaching males and females in the same classes! A few snippets illustrate the times: *"It was agreed that a notice be hung on the staircase, asking scholars not to enter during prayers or hymns", and "The late marks of last Sunday be allowed full, as the School was accidentally opened early, thus making many scholars late."*

Preachers of the day were highly rated, and in preparing for both Church Anniversaries and Sunday School Anniversaries, a "Top Ten" was usually produced of desirable preachers. Sunday School teachers' meetings were held every month, and such was the detail and organisation, that rarely less than ten resolutions were made each month.

Every year, the chapel printed a formal Manual for Bamford Chapel, giving all annual reports, officers, and financial details. We are fortunate to have an almost complete set of these over the years. Pew rents decreased from £110 to £88 per year in the five years of Mr Chamberlain's ministry. Weekly offerings also declined from £50 to £44. But the annual income of the church more than doubled, thanks to the Sunday School Anniversary (£41), the Garden Party (£48), the Christmas Sale (£48) and special services in church which accumulated over £30. Church membership had increased by just two in the past five years, but the greatest drop was in the numbers attending Sunday School. Though in 1912 it was claimed that there were 330 scholars in regular attendance, the average morning attendance was just 51, and the average afternoon attendance was 123.

During the vacancy that followed Mr Chamberlain's departure, Edward Tattersall was elected Chairman of the Deacons. The church met with the Lancashire Congregational Union and agreed to have a joint pastorate with Norden, with Bamford choosing the minister. Bamford would pay £120 a year and Norden £50, amounting to £3.10/- per week. This was still 10/- less than Mr Arthur had received twelve years earlier.

Edward Tattersall and Thomas Milnes visited Carnforth Congregational Church to hear the Rev Robert Richley preach in his own church. On their recommendation, the church called Robert Richley to be their new Minister, and this invitation was accepted. The last resolution passed at the church meeting before Mr Richley's arrival read: "*that on and after Sunday March 1st 1914, the singing of "Amens" at the end of hymns be discontinued*". Amen!

7. WAR AND PEACE

1914 Britain and Germany went to war. Ulster was on the verge of crisis. Germany defeats Belgium, and King Albert flees to Britain. Planes were used for the first time in war.

The ministry of the Rev Robert Richley, which was to be the second longest in Bamford Chapel history, began on March 1st 1914. In addition to the minister's usual communion duties, his wife was asked to provide the bread, and look after the communion cups. (Incidentally, it was agreed that the old communion cups should have tops fitted to them, so they could be used as rose bowls.) Three hymn boards were purchased for the first time. And it was agreed that any person admitted to membership of the church between the ages of 16 and 21 should be viewed as a "Junior Member" - with no voting rights.

By now, a Finance Committee had been formed, which consisted of the Deacons and a similar number of church members. Curiously, in the Manual published each year, the attendance at Finance Committee meetings was recorded. In the three years, 1912, 1913 and 1914 there were 24 Finance meetings, and here are the "scores": William Wood, Church Secretary (24), Walter Abel Ashworth (23), Tom Milnes (23), Edward Tattersall (23). Strangely these were all Deacons. The attendances decline to: J Nuttall (8), F T Howard (2) and J S Porter (0). Little did Mr Porter realise that his failure to attend one meeting in three years would be read by hundreds of people 85 years later! Incidentally, John Porter was still on the Finance Committee ten years later in 1925, and he still hadn't attended a meeting! However, to his credit, we understand that it was the same Mr Porter who paid for the centenary brass tablet in 1901.

In the 1914 Manual, the Finance Committee detailed the extra expenditure over the previous five years, which had totalled over £500. These items were:

Taking down and rebuilding Chapel porch	£21
New boundary wall and fire escape	£69
New radiators, new windows, outside painting	£65
Relighting chapel and school, new water pipes, new room over platform in school, new boiler, organ repairs	£231
Beautifying school and parsonage, repairs to cushions	£116

By 1914 the Garden Party was a well-established feature and the proceeds usually topped £30. The Christmas Sale of Work was much bigger, usually raising £50. At the beginning of the War, the Deacons at Bamford were George Ashworth, Walter Abel Ashworth, Richard Tattersall, Tom Milnes, Edward Tattersall, Bertram Porritt (Treasurer) and William Wood (Secretary).

1915 The Lusitania is sunk. Over 25,000 die at Gallipoli, 76,000 wounded and 13,000 missing. Poison gas is introduced by the Germans.

At Bamford, in 1915 the school approached the Chapel with a view to erecting a stage at the Sunday School Anniversary and other occasions on the sides of the pulpit. This was quite a major suggestion for the Sunday School to make. By now past and present Bamford Chapel Sunday School scholars were serving their country in the army. They were:

Sam Bardsley	Leonard Howarth	James Millward
James Blackshaw	David Lloyd	James Nuttall
Ernest Caffrey	Harry Lloyd	Walter Nicholson
Edmund Chadwick	Owen Lloyd	James Pickup
Edward Chadwick	James Lomax	William Murrary Porritt
Joseph Chadwick	Percy Lomax	Arthur Redfern
George Cocker	Fred Lord	Ben Scholes
William Earnshaw	Richard Martin	Arthur Shepherd
William Hartley	Tom Martin	Walter Shepherd
		Bert Thornley

The list of young Bamford lads included two who were killed in action - Private Walter Shepherd, aged 29 and Lt William Murray Porritt, aged 21. Another ex-Bamford person who died in 1914 was the Rev Ambrose Shepherd, DD aged 63. Since his days in the Sunday School at Bamford, he had had a fine ministry.

1916 The Battle of the Somme dominated the year (60,000 British soldiers died in one day). The greatest naval battle in history took place at Jutland. Lord Kitchener dies. Revolts against British rule break out in Dublin. Lloyd George becomes Prime Minister after Herbert Asquith. Half a million Germans died at Verdun.

In 1916, the War was given its first mention in Church meeting minutes when it was recorded: *“that we insure the premises against damage done by aircraft (Zeppelin) to the same amount as the Fire Policy.”* Bertram Porritt stood down as Church Treasurer after 14 years. And the Church purchased copies of the new Congregational Hymn Book, the Congregational Hymnary, in order to sell them to the congregation.

The Church meeting recorded in November 1916: *“Since our last Meeting, we have lost by death, a Brother Deacon and Trustee, George Ashworth, who passed away in the early morning of Monday, Nov 20th, at the age of 73 years. For over 40 years, Mr Ashworth was a member of this church, and served most of that time as a Deacon and a Trustee. He was also at one period a most useful member of the Choir and for some time officiated in the office of Choirmaster. He will be remembered by us, for his common-sense and practical knowledge, but most of all by his largeness of heart, and by his generosity to the Church and Sunday School.”*

“His death has removed from the district a well known and picturesque figure. By all, both old and young, he was held in affection and esteem. He will be missed for his rich and broad humour, for his knowledge of local history, for his simplicity and humility of character and for those unobtrusive acts of kindness, which it was his delight to render to his fellow men, his religion being of a most practical character.”

“A couple of hymns were sung at the service, under the direction of Mr Edward Tattersall. Mr B C Crossley of Rochdale (an old friend of the family) presided at the organ, and played some appropriate music, as the body was conveyed out of the church. The Deacons were represented at the funeral by the Secretary, Mr Wood, other Deacons present were Mr Edward Tattersall and Mr Bertram Porritt.”

“On the following Sunday morning, special reference to the death of Mr Ashworth was made, and special hymns were sung, which included one of Mr Ashworth’s favourites “There is a land of pure delight” to the good old tune “University”. The Choir also sang the anthem “What are these, that are arrayed in white robes” (Stainer) at the close of the service. The Dead March was played as a closing voluntary.”

At the close of 1916, the Church Trustees were revised as follows: Surviving Trustees: Richard Tattersall, Fred Howard, John Ramsbottom, John S Porter, Charles Porritt, James Leach and John Schofield; the five Deacons: William Wood, Edward Tattersall, Bertram Porritt, Walter S Ashworth and Thomas Milnes plus Ernest Ashworth; James Clegg, Harry Maden, Norman Rostron, Mark Nuttall, Henry Ashworth, James Schofield, Arthur Ashworth, Joseph Wood, Frank Millward, George Cocker, Arthur Redfern and Ben Scholes (25 Trustees in all).

1917 Czar Nicholas abdicates in Russia, before the November revolution. Jerusalem is captured by Allenby. The USA enters the war.

In 1917, Mr Richley was working with the YMCA, and concern was expressed by the Deacons that he was often away from home. It was suggested that if he could work in Manchester, it would be much better for both church and family. Mr and Mrs Arthur Ashworth presented Bamford Chapel with a bath chair “for the use of invalids”. These were quite special, and it was placed in the hands of the minister to decide who should have the use of the chair.

1918 End of war. Lawrence leads the Arab army into Damascus. Married women over 30 win the vote in Britain. The R.A.F. is formed.

In 1918 Mr Richley received a rise of stipend of a further 10/-, thus giving him £3 per week. It was still £1 less than Mr Arthur had been paid 33 years earlier! Following George Ashworth’s death in 1916, the Chapel suffered two further bereavements in the same week in 1918, in the deaths of Richard Tattersall and Fred Howard.

“Since our last meeting, we have lost by death another Brother Deacon and Trustee, Richard Tattersall who passed away on July 4th at the good old age of 82 years. We understand that in his younger days, he was connected with the Wesleyan Sunday School. Later in life, he transferred himself to this place of worship, filling the various offices of teacher, Secretary, Pew Steward, Member of Finance Committee, Trustee and Deacon, holding the last three offices at the time of his death. He was the first President of the Band of Hope, being a life long abstainer and non-smoker. He took an active part in the purchase of the triangular piece of land in front of the premises, along with the late George Ashworth, Joseph Porritt and others, Mr Tattersall being Secretary at that time.

Mr Tattersall was also very well known in commercial circles, and also in the neighbourhood generally, taking an active part in the general welfare of the locality."

"Another old servant, Mr Frederick Thomas Howard passed away a week later, at the age of 77 years. Mr Howard had also a lifelong connection with church and Sunday School, serving in the capacity of teacher, librarian, Trustee, Member of the Finance Committee, but his chief and particular calling was in connection with the musical part of the church. If he had lived till October, he would have completed a membership of the choir of 60 years. During a long period, he held the position of choir-master."

Towards the end of 1918, it was agreed that a small tablet be placed on the organ to commemorate the long service of Charles Porritt as chapel organist. The family of Mr and Mrs Richard Tattersall also requested to place a memorial to their parents in the outside wall of the School.

<p>1919 Over 20 million people die with the Spanish flu. The Great War had claimed 10 million lives. Lloyd George's coalition government is returned to power, with the first woman MP being a Sinn Fein candidate who refused to take her seat.</p>

The major event at Bamford Chapel in 1919 was the formation of the League of Workers. To quote the Church Manual that year: *"It began in an attempt to centralise authority and to co-ordinate existing organisations. Its management is invested in the Council, consisting of the five Deacons, along with five representatives from the young people. Branching out on either side are our different organisations - Men's League, Women's League, Dramatic Society and Tennis Committee. The opening of a playing field for members of the League has already proved a great asset to our fellowship and work."* (Incidentally, this field was not near the chapel, but on what is now Bamford Cricket Club land.) The Balance Sheet for 1919 gives us a little idea of what the field was like - it was rented at £15 for the year, whilst the church paid £4 for fencing, and erected a changing hut for £30. Goal posts (and a see-saw!) cost £25, whilst cricket and tennis "outfits" were the most expensive item at £33.

In February, there was the annual election of Deacons, resulting in the following number of votes:

Walter A Ashworth (60), Edward Tattersall (59), Thomas Milnes (60), William Wood (55), Bertram Porritt (37), Joseph Wood (26), Arthur Ashworth (25), Ernest Ashworth (20) and Tom Watson (19). The other 15 candidates totalled 30 votes between them. However, Bertram Porritt declined to accept office, as also did Arthur Ashworth, the next in order. So the diaconate was five in number instead of six.

Mr Richley had a further increase in stipend to £180 per year (plus a further £50 from Norden). A new venture altogether happened in May, when 16 "young persons" were admitted to church membership "under the conditions passed in May 1914, agreeing that they should not vote". The 16 in question were: James Nuttall, Walter Scott, Sam Nuttall, Francis Whatmough, William Ashworth, Leonard Howarth, Harold Shepherd, Joseph Hardman, Millie Lloyd, Doris Millward, Annie Tattersall, Hilda Ashworth, Anne Fitton, Ethel Ashworth, Edith Shepherd and Martha Redfern.

We should make mention that at practically every Deacons' meeting and church meeting for the previous hundred years, graves were mentioned - the purchase, the use, the stones, the transfer of ownership, grave diggers, fees, keeping graves tidy, disputes in families as to who should be buried there, state of grave yard, maintenance of graves, etc. Until 1919 graves were still right up to the front of the church and people had to walk through them in order to get to church on Sundays.

During the war, the ladies had held a very successful evening which they had called "Ladies Sing". In 1919 the men formed a Men's Guild and they asked the Deacons if they could hold a Men's Sing" (permission granted!).

Though the war had ended in 1918 it still received mention in chapel minutes in 1919 when a War Memorial was erected in the church in honour of those who had fought and died. In the manual for 1919 the Roll of Honour contains the names of 82 young men from Bamford Chapel who had served King and country. (Curiously, 11 of them were called Ashworth!). Nine of those 82 men from the chapel had died, such was the toll in one small chapel in a small English village. Those who died were Thomas Ashworth, Edmund Chadwick, James Crompton, Richard Martin, Tom Martin, William Murray Porritt, Arthur Shepherd, Walter Shepherd and John Thornley. The War Memorial was unveiled by Charles Milnes on Sunday August 8th 1920.

Also at a church meeting in 1919 "*a circular was read from the Clerk of the Parish Council, asking that we should send representatives to a meeting to discuss the question, as to how to celebrate peace in the locality. After some discussion, it was decided that we take no active part in any local efforts, with the understanding that we consider the question later, with reference to our own people only.*"

<p>1920 Professor Rutherford splits the atom at Manchester University. Jazz, the rage in the USA arrives in Britain. Alcock and Brown successfully fly the Atlantic in 16 hours.</p>

At Bamford, in 1920, there was obviously a new post-war spirit among the young, as is shown by this minute recorded by the Deacons' meeting. "*A letter was received on behalf of the young people, asking permission for a social to be held on February 8th for the benefit of the "Save the Children" Fund. There was a request for it to be carried on until 11pm*". The Deacons unanimously decided that they could not see their way to grant such an extension of time, and they agreed that the social in question should close promptly at 10.30. Obviously, the new post-war spirit did not extend among the Deacons!

Another change was beginning to take place, as society took new directions after the war. "*An outside application having come to the Deacons, requesting the use of a room in the School for two nights per week, for other than religious teaching.*" The Deacons decided that "*it was not our custom to let the school or rooms for outside continuous functions.*" Consequently, they could not see their way to grant such a request. (The request came from Joseph Fenton of Pitfield, who wanted to hold a class for gymnasium training).

1920 saw Bamford Chapel adopt the new hymn book "Congregational Hymnary". Actually, it was now five years old, but the Chapel had dragged its heels before making

the change. The church first agreed to have the hymn book in 1920, but it was 1921 before they were purchased. Even then, the Deacons wrote to the Congregational Union complaining that there should be some allowance when purchasing a quantity. By the time September came, it was resolved that twenty new hymn books be presented to new seat holders - in other words, if you would begin to pay rent for a pew, you would receive a new hymn book. The choir were to have three music copies (shared between 30 of them!). The Sunday School Superintendent would be responsible for hymn books being used by scholars sitting in the gallery, whilst the caretaker would be responsible for the "Visitors' hymn books". Mr and Mrs Tweedale of "Beaumonts" paid for all these new books. Meanwhile, the remainder of the congregation still had to buy their own copies!

1921 Prohibition of alcohol becomes law in the USA. The voice of Dame Nellie Melba is heard all over Europe, thanks to the wireless. Film star Mary Pickford is titled "The World's Sweetheart".

Browsing through the 1922 Bamford Chapel Manual, we can gain a fair picture of Chapel life. A League of Young Worshippers had been formed, and those young people with 49 weekly attendances at Chapel in the year were presented with a Bible, to the value of 1/3d each. The church membership now stood at 124, and the average attendance at Sunday School was 56 in the morning and 119 in the afternoon. The pew rents still easily exceeded the weekly offerings, which were still about £1.10/- per week. The 1921 Garden Party raised £30, whilst a "Country Fair" raised £203. This was another name for the Christmas Fair, held on two days in December.

Church Meetings continued to be dominated by discussions regarding graves. "*After some discussion on the subject of opening and reopening graves, removal and replacement of headstones, etc, it was resolved that we double our present charges all round. New charges being:*

For opening a new grave 18/- Minister's Fee 5/-

For re-opening a grave 14/- Minister's Fee 5/-

Caretaker's allowance to be increased from 2/6d to 5/-."

In addition to this discussion, Arthur Smith was asked to draw up a new plan of the graveyard, which can still be seen to this day.

1922 Mussolini has taken power in Italy. Gandhi is jailed for six years in India, for sedition. Agatha Christie writes her first novel.

Edward Tattersall stood down after 27 years as Choir Master at Bamford, and his place was taken by Ernest Ashworth. About this time in 1922, Bamford Primitive Methodist Church closed, and Bamford Chapel issued an invitation to any of their members and scholars to join the Chapel or Sunday School. Organist Walter Abel Ashworth caused a minor stir when he suggested chanting the Lord's Prayer, instead of saying it at worship.

1923 The London broadcasting station 2LO went on the air. The Tories win the General Election. Andrew Bonar Law is Prime Minister. Japan had its worst earthquake ever. The first broadcast from England to America is made.

On July 1st 1923, 33 young people were received into junior membership. These included a young man called Frank Shepherd and his sister Emily. Many of those young people were to have a strong influence on the future life of Bamford Chapel, but maybe not as much as a letter received by the Trustees of Bamford Chapel on Christmas Day 1923 from Percy V Barker of Barker Brothers Ltd, Bleachers, Dyers and Finishers at Simpson Clough Mill, Heywood:

“Mr Walter Ashworth has approached us concerning a difficulty you have, through having no road behind Bamford Chapel, and asked us if we would be willing to part with as much land as to form a roadway, which would relieve you of having to trespass to get to your outhouses.

During the conversation on this matter, it came to our knowledge, that the tennis ground you now occupy, is in jeopardy of being involved in a housing scheme, and in giving consideration to the former matter of the road, it occurred to us that it might be more convenient to you to have a tennis ground close to the chapel.

We have given both these matters consideration, and offer you as a gift, (subject to your fencing it off in a satisfactory manner, before making any use of it, - so as to prevent trespass on the adjoining land), a plot of land adjoining Bamford Chapel approximately 4706 square yards. We would also bear all costs of conveyance to you.”

Curiously, it took over three weeks before Church Secretary William Wood replied on behalf of the Trustees accepting the kind gift.

Six months later, William Wood wrote another letter, which was to have a great effect on many lives, in and beyond Bamford. This was to Principal Greave at the Lancashire Independent College:

“We, the Deacons of Bamford Chapel, have very great pleasure, in recommending Mr Frank Shepherd, to the Committee of the Lancashire Independent College, to be trained as a minister of the Congregational Church. Although but sixteen and a half years of age, Mr Shepherd has long shown evidence of a high Christian character, and preaching ability. He shows the promise of a very rich and beautiful personality, and will, we are sure, develop into a very able minister of Jesus Christ.

It is therefore with great confidence we heartily recommend him to the committee, praying God that he may be abundantly useful in his day and generation.”

The letter was written, just a year after Frank's reception into church membership.

However, not all the young people at Bamford received such great encouragement. This feeling comes from the young people applying to the Deacons for permission for an extension to their party, to which they received this somewhat begrudging reply: *“An application having come from the young people asking for an extension of time, from 10.30 to 11 o'clock, in connection with a social party to be held on Saturday November 1st. This was discussed at some length, finally the Deacons decided to grant such application, with the understanding that it should not be taken as a precedent, and it is hoped that they (the Deacons) will not be put in a similar position in the future, in having to deal with such an application.”*

1924 Lenin dies. James Ramsay MacDonald became the first Labour Prime Minister (his government lasted nine months). The Tories win a huge majority at the second election.

Plans were being made in 1924, well in advance for 1926, which would be the 125th Church Anniversary. After 15 years as a Deacon, Edward Tattersall stood down, and was replaced by Thomas Watson. The six serving Deacons in 1925 were Ernest Ashworth, Walter Abel Ashworth, Thomas Milnes, Joseph Wood, William Wood and Thomas Watson. At about the same time, Edith Shepherd and Herbert Morley were received into church membership.

Mention should be given here of the Dramatic Society, which was now a lively part of the Chapel social life. The first play ever presented at Bamford Chapel was entitled "Charles O'Malley's", which the members of St Paul's at Norden gave in 1902. In 1905, a number of Bamford Chapel Sunday School scholars presented "Uncle Tom's Cabin", but it wasn't until 1919 that another generation formed the Dramatic Society, and presented the play "Proof" on November 8th. "Sweet Lavender" and "The Idler" were produced in 1920 and 1921 (proceeds £27), "The Man who stayed at Home" (1922) and "I'll Leave it to You" (1922), and a drama "The Naked Truth" and an operetta "Prince and the Pedlar" in 1923. The operetta raised £29 compared to the drama's £9. Emmeline Milnes was the producer of most of the first plays, and the programmes tell us that regular performers included Edith Shepherd, Joseph Hardman, Vernon Greaves and Herbert Morley.

Certainly the social life of the chapel was at an all-time high. The children's "Fairy Plays", begun a quarter of a century earlier, were still an annual feature, and were performed each year at the Sunday School Tea Party and Distribution of Prizes (held each October). To help give you a flavour of those bygone days of three-quarters of a century ago, three imps in "The Butterfly Queen" in 1921 were Joe Morley, Albert Morley and Fred Kershaw! Whilst Dorothy Leach (Park) was a Fairy! Mrs Milnes presented the prizes in 1922, Mrs Millward in 1923, and Mrs Joseph Wood in 1924. Always the same opening hymn "From Year to Year" and the same closing hymn "Childhood's Year".

When there wasn't a fairy play, as in 1926, there was a full-blown concert with twenty-two items by the children. The tennis club and the cricket club thrived, the Whit Friday festivities continued, two Garden Parties each year (which were only overshadowed by the Christmas Fair) and each year, the Choir held a trip, Llangollen (1923), Colwyn Bay (1924), and Grange (1925).

But the greatest social highlight of 1925 was surely the opening of the new grounds on Saturday June 27th 1926. Fred Barker opened the grounds, which included three tennis courts. There was maypole dancing, a children's entertainer "Osmond" from Manchester, and the Heywood Brotherhood Orchestra played throughout the afternoon and evening.

The Church minutes of 1925 record: "*Since the gift of the land by Messrs Barker Bros Ltd of Simpson Clough Mills, the land has been levelled, fenced round and beautifully laid out, under the supervision of Mr Walter Abel Ashworth, who had been entrusted with all the arrangements with Messrs Barker Bros. The grounds comprise two shale and one*

grass tennis courts, also a large plot suitable for general recreation. Swings, etc, are provided for the use of the young folks. Terraces and flowerbeds surround the ground, with a couple of shelters. The place is certainly ideal for outdoor, healthy recreation.

The grounds were opened on June 27th 1925 by Mr Fred Barker, one of the donors of the land, with Mr Walter A Ashworth presiding. A temporary platform was erected behind the parsonage for the opening ceremony, which took the following order: Hymn, Prayer by Mr Richley, Chairman's remarks, who introduced Mr Barker, Opener's speech, Vote of thanks to Opener, proposed by John S Porter, seconded by Mark Nuttall, and supported by Charles Porritt.

Vote of thanks to Chairman, proposed by Thomas Milnes, seconded by William Wood. Mr Barker and Mr Ashworth having replied, Mr Barker cut the ribbon and opened the gates, and then entered the new ground. He was immediately followed by the large company which had assembled to witness the opening ceremony. A flag staff had been erected, the gift of Mr John S Porter, along with a flag bearing the initials B.C. and S.S. This flag was now unfurled by the two oldest ladies connected with the Chapel, Mrs Fred Howard and Mrs Ebenezer Rostron.

The three tennis courts were then opened by different people: No 1 by the Barkers and the Ashworths, No 2 by Charles Porritt and Mark Nuttall, No 3 by William Wood and Mr Richley. Afterwards, games, entertainment, and band selections were enjoyed, tea being eventually served in the school."

A member of Bamford Chapel, James G Millward had undergone ministerial training and was ordained at Marsh Street Congregational Church in Bootle in November 1925. The Men's Guild applied to the Deacons for permission to extend the time from 10.30 pm to 11 o'clock, but they were not as fortunate as the young people had been previously, and they were turned down: "*We cannot see our way to grant such a request*".

And so the Church came to its 125th Anniversary, celebrated during September 1926. A booklet was produced, with some 800 copies being printed. On the first Sunday of September 1926, the services were conducted by the present minister of the Chapel, the Rev Robert Richley, now in his 12th year at Bamford. On the second Sunday, the guest preacher was the Rev George Chamberlain of Nottingham, who had ministered at Bamford from 1908 to 1913. On the third Sunday, the guest preacher was the Rev James Shepherd of Beverley. Mr Shepherd was the son of the former member of the church and Sunday School, the Rev Robert Shepherd, also of Beverley. And on the fourth Sunday, which was the 125th Church Anniversary, the Rev A Henry Evans of Swansea was the guest preacher. There were large congregations, both morning and evening. In the afternoon, Mr Richley presided at a Communion Service, when he read a portion of the 1801 Covenant, setting forth some of the Congregational principles.

"A Gift Bazaar was held on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, September 16th-18th 1926. This was a great success in every way. We had beautiful weather on all three days, and consequently, there were large gatherings of people. The Bazaar proper was in the top schoolroom, which presented a most bright and attractive appearance, the downstairs rooms being used for other purposes. Two large marquees were erected on the new grounds, which were used for concerts, café, and tearooms. The grounds were

beautifully illuminated at dusk each evening, by a large number of fairy lamps and electric lights. The opening ceremony on the first day, was performed by Mr Hindle of Blackburn, Treasurer of the Lancashire Congregational Union, with the Secretary of the LCU, the Rev T L James, in the chair. On the second day, the opener was Mrs Hartley of Crimble Hall, with Mr Bertram Porritt in the chair. On the third day, Mr Samuel Lamb of Bowden was the opener, with Mr Charles Milnes presiding. It will be in the memory of most of us that Mr Lamb was one of the openers of the Centenary Bazaar, held in September 1901. Mr Milnes now resident in America, had left Bamford in the year of the Centenary, 1901." The Bazaar in 1926 proved a great success, and made a profit of over £1,150, a previously unbelievable amount.

As a result of the 125th Anniversary, the Chapel discovered that it had more money than it had ever had before, indeed for the first time in its history, well over £1,000 in the bank. The new grounds had cost over £800. Now, another £500 was given to build a new Primary Department and toilets - the main part of the building that we have now. And in 1927, electricity arrived at Bamford Chapel. Nearly £200 was spent on this new innovation. Remember, until then, the chapel had been lit by gas, and the church was much darker than we can imagine. However, all was not well with electricity because in June 1927, there were complaints to the Deacons "*respecting the darkness behind the pulpit, when the chancel lights are switched off, and the minister cannot be clearly seen.*" There were many alterations to the chapel and school buildings in 1927, and among them, a doorway was built between the school and chapel.

1925 Hitler writes "Mein Kampf". A month long coal strike in Britain. Jack Hobbs surpasses W.G. Grace's record of 126 centuries in top class cricket. Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin helps to establish the border between Ulster and Eire.

1926 The Charleston is all the fashion. John Logie Baird is experimenting with television. The British Empire became the Commonwealth of Nations. The General Strike takes place in Britain. The B.B.C. is founded. I.C.I. is formed. "Winnie the Pooh" is published. Malcolm Campbell sets a world land speed record in "Bluebird".

1927 Charles Lindbergh makes a solo flight across the Atlantic. Al Jolson introduces "talkies" in "The Jazz Singer". Duke Ellington is the most popular jazz musician in the USA. "Showboat" opens in New York.

Another dozen young people were added to the church membership in 1927, including Noel Richley, Dorothy Milnes and Edith Shepherd. Church membership was now at an all time high of 184, but this was a very false figure. William Wood, the Church Secretary sensed the problem when he analysed the attendance figures of each member (we can only surmise that he did this from communion cards). With 12 communions in the year, and spread over five years (1925-1929), there were sixty possible communion attendances for each person. 42 church members didn't come once in those five years! Another 20 members came less than 10 times. Well over half the members came less than 50% of the time, and only 7 members had 50 attendances out of 60. Just one of the 184 members attended every communion service in those five years. It was a long way from the previous century, when more than half the members would have been struck off the register. It was a total change in the attitude towards church attendance and membership. Indeed, not until 1948 is there a record of anyone being removed from the

registers, and then all of a sudden - 28! It was probably well before the First World War when the last church member had been taken off the membership roll for poor attendance.

“The opening of the new Primary School took place on Saturday afternoon March 31st 1928, which was a very grand affair. Everything worked out exactly as arranged, as to speakers. The proceedings commenced in the Chapel about 3.30. The opening hymn being 646 in the Congregational Hymnary, followed by prayer by Mr Richley. Mr Walter A Ashworth here presented a brief statement of what had taken place in connection with the Primary Department, since the commencement in 1909, remarking that the children had subscribed the sum of £35 towards their new school. The amount had been collected in pennies.

The opening ceremony was performed by Miss Elizabeth Chadwick of Fairhaven, with Mrs Frank Millward in the chair. The ladies were the first Superintendents in the Primary Department. The Chairman referred to the fact that Miss Martha Wood had retained her position as pianist right from the commencement in 1909. Those on the platform, besides the two ladies referred to, were the Rev R Richley and the Mayor of Heywood, Alderman Berry, Mrs George Cocker and Mrs Harry Lloyd, former Superintendents, and William Wood. After singing Hymn No 644, an adjournment was made to the new school, Miss Chadwick unlocking the door, when the Hymn 643 was sung, followed by prayer by Mr Richley. Votes of thanks were given, followed by the singing of the doxology.

Tea was served in the schoolroom to about 150 persons, followed by a most successful concert. On the Sunday, we had another good day. In the afternoon, we had a delightful little service given by the children, entitled “An object lesson on building character”, which had been arranged by Mrs Richley. The final proceeds for the weekend were very good, coming to £21.13/-.”

1928 Stalin is now seeking to transform Russia. A young woman called Anastasia is claiming to be the daughter of the murdered Czar, Nicholas. Mickey Mouse arrives on the screen. Alexander Fleming makes a break through with penicillin. Women over 21 are now allowed to vote in Britain.

1929 Janet Gaynor was the first film star to receive an Oscar. Britain got its first woman cabinet minister, Margaret Bondfield in the second Labour government. The Wall Street Crash in New York.

Frank Millward stood down in 1929 as Pew Steward - pews were still being rented at Bamford Chapel. The amounts had now declined to about £2 per week, but they still surpassed the weekly offerings which came to approximately £1 17s 6d per Sunday. It wasn't until 1941 that the amount of weekly offerings topped the amount of pew rents in the balance sheet. In 1942, they were described as “pew subs” and in 1946, they became “monthly gifts”, obviously by then being given out of generosity and tradition. Also in 1929, it was agreed to begin the morning service with the singing of a short introit, but only once a quarter! The children of the Sunday School Primary Department were asked to choose the children's hymn each Sunday.

8. THE THIRTIES AND FORTIES

Bamford Chapel entered the new decade with 184 church members. The average morning attendance at Sunday School was 46, whilst the afternoon attendance numbered 101. The Rev Robert Richley had been at Bamford 16 years, and the Deacons were William Wood (Secretary), Walter A Ashworth, Ernest Ashworth, Tom Watson, Herbert Diggle and Tom Milnes (Treasurer). Vernon Greaves was the Sunday School Secretary and Ernest Ashworth was the Superintendent.

The Church Secretary, William Wood analysed numbers worshipping each Sunday, and the average came to 52 people per week. He seemed quite adept with statistics, and he also reported that the years 1913-1929 had seen a loss of £3 17s 3d on the running of the church magazine. This was seen by the Deacons as a cause for concern, and the Treasurer Tom Milnes was asked to see the Magazine Secretary, John Leach, respecting this.

Several repairs and renewals had taken place during 1929, including the renovation of the organ, new curtains to the doors, the screen in front of the organ, new seating for the children's pews, and a new carpet in the vestry. Still to be tackled was the cost of new carpets and recushioning the side pews in the Chapel, as well as the re-decoration of Chapel, School and Parsonage.

But nationally, things were not quite as comfortable for the churches as they had been in previous decades. Hundreds of thousands of people had died in the First World War, and the full effects of this were now being felt. A report on ninety one churches in the North West (including Bamford Chapel) covering the years from 1929-1931 showed that Sunday morning congregations were dwindling, adolescents were leaving, Church meetings were being attended by diminishing numbers and that the finances of most of the churches were in a critical condition.

Churches were being compelled to work closer together, sometimes for the first time. Though there had been joint Whit Friday walks for many years, there was really no ecumenical action at all in Bamford of any note. However, little ripples appeared in 1930 when the Wesleyan and the Congregational churches in Bamford talked of the possibility of holding a united service on July 20th, which was Rochdale Holiday Sunday. But after much discussion, instead of uniting, both churches decided to close for the day! Things moved a little closer, when Bamford Chapel took an active part in the "Heywood for Christ" campaign. In the November of 1930, *"Mr Watson mentioned that he had had a friendly interview with our Wesleyan friends, who had suggested that we should have a couple of united services, the first of these services to be held in the Wesleyan Church on Sunday evening December 14th, the second to be held in our own Church (or School) on a Sunday evening in January 1931. This service to be held in connection with the "Heywood for Christ" campaign. It was later suggested "that it would not be out of place to ask the Vicar of Bamford to preside."*

Probably because of the number of children involved, the Sunday most anticipated each year was the Sunday School Anniversary. For weeks previously, the scholars rehearsed the hymns, and the preacher was often invited some years in advance. The Rev J G McKenzie of Nottingham seemed to be a particular favourite at the Chapel, because he

spoke three times in the 1930's - 1930, 1933 and 1938 (always the third Sunday in May). The offerings for the day were by far the largest of the year, indeed most years, it was a larger amount than all the other Sundays added together!

1930 Amy Johnson flew from England to Australia. Uruguay win the first ever World Cup at football. Among the deaths that year are novelist D.H. Lawrence, ex-Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, poet-laureate Robert Bridges, writer Conan Doyle, and ballet dancer Anna Pavlova.

1931 Once again, the Labour government falls. An all-party national government is formed under Ramsay MacDonald. Hitler becomes a German citizen.

An open-air service was held at the Chapel on the evening of May 24th 1931 as part of the "Heywood for Christ" campaign. William Wood stood down from his office as Church Secretary. He had served 23 years as Church Secretary from 1908-1931, as well as being Secretary to the Finance Committee from 1902 to 1925. Strangely, he had occupied both these roles long before he was elected as Deacon in 1910. The new Church Secretary was Harold Shepherd.

Once more, the chapel entered into a period of redecoration and improvements - £150 was spent on the chapel and parsonage, and over £100 on a new floor and classroom alterations in the Sunday School. The church, as it entered the 1930's was holding far more social events than ever before. A glance at the 1930 Financial Report gives an indication of some of the many social activities: an American Tea (£20), a Bargain Sale (£9), a Jug Shower (£1), a Cake Shower (£5), a Gift Tea (18/-), a Gift Supper (£4), a Jumble Sale (£8), a Dutch Fair (£160), the Scholars' Tea Party (£4), the Men's Sing (£10), two dramas "9.45" and "Paddy, the next best thing" (£50) and a Garden Party (£42). And that was just 1930! Already planned for 1931 were two Garden Parties, an Empire Sale and two more Drama productions. Even the children were performing sophisticated productions. At their annual Tea Party held on October 18th 1930, there was a "nursery rondeau", entitled "Princess Tiny Tot" and "Peach Blossom", a children's operetta. Among the fifty children taking part were Edna Butterworth (Mother Redcap), Marjory Stuttard (Bo Beep), Joan Stuttard as a blackbird, and Eric Clegg as one of the Five Little Piggies!

In 1930, the pew subscriptions came to just £2 per week. But that was still 2/6d more than the weekly offerings. However, both amounts on the balance sheet were overshadowed by the £105 collection for the Sunday School Anniversary.

Fourteen new members joined the Church in 1931, including Florrie Clegg, Dorothy Leach and Fred Kershaw. The following year, Frank Shepherd finished his studies at the Lancashire Independent College in Manchester, and was ordained and inducted to Dursley Tabernacle in Gloucestershire. In between leaving college and his ordination, he was married to Edith Shore, a member at Hallford Church, Whitworth.

Perhaps it is time to reflect on the hundreds of funerals that had taken place in the last half-century or so at Bamford Chapel. Remember the Rev William Blackburn had approximately 250 funerals, the Rev James Bruce over 350 and the Rev James Browne over 375. But no Minister at Bamford ever had as many funerals as the Rev McIntosh

Arthur - approximately 750 altogether. As health and longevity increased, so the number of burials at Bamford Chapel decreased each year, from an average of 35 each year in the 1870's to less than ten a year in the early 20th century. The number of infant deaths rapidly declined too. In his first ten years at Bamford, McIntosh Arthur conducted the funerals of 95 babies, 26 children and 14 teenagers. These figures are horrific by our late 20th century standards, but compared to the tragic cholera clouded days of Blackburn, Bruce and Browne, they are much improved.

The worst year for funerals at Bamford during Mr Arthur's ministry was 1877, when the Minister conducted 45 funerals in the graveyard, the third highest annual number ever. In 1858, Mr Browne's first year at Bamford, there had been 49 funerals, whilst in 1856, Mr Bruce's last year, he had conducted 51 funerals. The worst time in 1877 was December, when there were 9 funerals, including four the week before Christmas and two the week afterwards. To help these statistics live, the four who were buried at Bamford Chapel in Christmas week 1877 were Elizabeth Dawson, aged 71, who owned the Dog & Partridge pub; the day after, December 20th, Mr Arthur conducted the funeral of 78 year old James Kershaw of Clay Lane; 2 days later on the 22nd, Frank Ashworth of Smallbridge, just 15 months old was buried; and on Christmas Eve, the local folk of Bamford gathered in the graveyard once more for the burial of 11 year old Alfred Butterworth, of Gnat Bank.

During the 5 year ministry of George Chamberlain, only one baby died, aged 11 months, in 1910. Whilst Mr Richley was the last Minister to have over 100 funerals in the Bamford Chapel graveyard (140), in his 28 year ministry. In those 28 years, eight babies, one child and one teenager died. Times had much improved!

Similarly, we might reflect on infant baptisms. Once again, the long ministry of McIntosh Arthur, during which time he baptised 300 infants, far surpasses any other ministry. When he retired, the first baptism of the following minister, the Rev George Chamberlain was on April 5th 1908 - a little baby called Frank Shepherd! And Mr Chamberlain was followed by the 28 year ministry of the Rev Robert Richley, who carried out approximately 200 baptisms in his time, including such babies as Fred Kershaw, Bob Tunstall, Eileen Greaves and Dorothy Leach.

Being the oldest church in the area, Bamford Chapel has always had its fair share of weddings down the years. The very first one recorded was George Chippendale Healey, a gentleman from Lincolnshire to Elizabeth Fenton of Crimble House, the daughter of John Fenton, MP. That was on June 13th 1839 and the Rev William Blackburn officiated.

In his ten year ministry at Bamford, James Browne conducted 90 weddings, the first of which was that of Hannah Fenton of Crimble Hall, another daughter of John Fenton, MP to Joseph Armitage, a cotton manufacturer of Manchester. (The Fentons rarely married any local people!). Another of James Browne's weddings was that of Richard and Mary Tattersall in 1864. The Tattersalls were later to become local mill owners, like the Fentons and Porritts.

Scanning those old marriage registers is a fascinating exercise. It was very rare for young people to marry in the 19th century. The first teenager to be married at Bamford Chapel was 19 year old Elias Gee, who married 30 year old Mary Howarth in 1852. Another 12

years passed till 1864 when the next teenager was married, 19 year old Alice Richardson of Heywood. Most folk who came to be married at the Chapel were in their 20's, 30's and 40's, and occasionally "F.A." was entered under "Age", meaning "Full Adult". Such was the condition of James Jackson, a widower of Hooley Bridge, when he married a widow, Mary Sherwin of Spring Hill, Bamford in August 1867. James was a Deacon, the local Registrar and the surviving son of previous Minister, the Rev Thomas Jackson.

It must have been quite the talk of the village, 4 days later, when the villagers witnessed the first wedding in Bamford of two teenagers, 19 year old Samuel Mallanson of Smith Street, Heywood and 17 year old Charlotte Ann McLane of Chapel Street, Heywood. Indeed, in the first 1,000 weddings at Bamford Chapel, there were only 15 teenage couples! Weddings took place on any day of the week, and there was obviously no tradition of Saturday weddings, as there is now. Neither did couples opt to be married in the summer and the first fifty years of marriages at Bamford Chapel saw far more winter weddings than summer occasions. In 1875, there were six December weddings at Bamford Chapel in five days, including three on Christmas Day! Ten weddings took place in December 1882, and for many years in the late 19th century it was obviously the tradition of having weddings on Christmas Day. In his thirty plus years at Bamford Chapel, the Rev McIntosh Arthur conducted over 1,000 weddings, by far the highest total in our 200 year history.

Among various changes after Mr Arthur retired, Bamford Chapel appointed its own authorised person, so that weddings could be conducted without the presence of the Registrar. The Minister, George Chamberlain became that authorised person in 1910. The age of people being married was still fairly high; 21 year old Hannah Dodgson of Green Lane, Heywood was the youngest person to be married at Bamford Chapel in the first ten years of the century.

In his 28 year ministry, Robert Richley conducted 227 weddings. In his first thirty weddings, the average ages were, groom 32 years, bride 29 years. Approximately 50% of the men worked in the local mills, whilst 85% of the brides were weavers or spinners. No-one was divorced!

1932 The country was heading into deep industrial depression. "King Kong" hits the cinema screens. King George V makes the first Christmas Day broadcast.

1933 Bodyline bowling in Australia. Fires and riots in Hitler's Germany. Fourteen years of prohibition come to an end in the USA.

1934 Radar is being developed in Britain. Edward Elgar dies. Bonnie and Clyde are killed in the USA.

In 1934, William Wood stood down as Deacon, due to the persistent illness of Mrs Wood. Mr Richley duly wrote to thank him for his services over many years. In his letter he wrote: "*the church is poorer today in that you have been compelled through the circumstances of age, and the illness of Mrs Wood, to abandon a work so much loved by you ...*" In his reply, Mr Wood had to remind the Minister "*that I have had to withdraw from the work not on account of age as mentioned in his letter, but simply for circumstances over which I had no control*".

The Deacons proposed “*that we grant the sum of 2/6d towards the cost of opposing the extension of Drinking Hours in the Bury area*”. In 1935, a new communion table was presented to the church by Mrs Arthur Ashworth, in memory of her husband (this is the one used today 66 years later). Also at the same time, the communion rail was reduced in height. A special service was held on May 12th to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the King and Queen. Because Arthur Ashworth had been Sunday School Superintendent for many years, it was suggested that two Superintendents be appointed in his place, alternating each week, these were Tom Watson and Vernon Greaves.

Several church fees were revised: the opening of a grave 5/- for the Minister, 10/- for the caretaker and 10/- for the church; a Social Party (with no tea) 4/- for the caretaker, 15/- for the church; a Tea Party 6/- for the caretaker, 19/- for the church.

At the time, the Minister was paid £5 per week, and the caretaker £2.2/6d. In 1937 Mr Richley had a long spell of illness, and due to his continued absence, a visiting committee was formed. As a sign of the times, the Missionary Committee requested to hold a whist drive to raise funds, but permission was refused and the Deacons expressed their strong opposition. A new caretaker, Mr Stuttard, was employed at £2.2/6d plus an extra 7/6d per week during the summer for looking after the outside fields.

<p>1935 Lawrence of Arabia dies. Stanley Baldwin becomes Prime Minister on the retirement of Ramsay MacDonald, due to health reasons. Clement Atlee becomes the leader of the Labour Party. Anthony Eden becomes Foreign Secretary.</p>
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In 1935 Mr Richley was now in his 21st year at Bamford Chapel, and the church membership of 161 was at its lowest for over ten years. Numbers in Sunday School were decreasing too - 41 in the morning and 95 in the afternoon. The Deacons at the time were Walter A Ashworth, Herbert Diggle, Thomas Milnes (Treasurer), Harold Shepherd (Secretary) and Tom Watson. In 1936, Mr J R Horrocks was added to their number. The Rev Bert Hamilton of London, whose vision later helped found “Family Church”, conducted the Sunday School Anniversary in 1936.

<p>1936 King George V dies. Edward is proclaimed King. The Berlin Olympics. Edward VIII abdicates, and King George VI becomes King.</p>
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<p>1937 Nylon is created in the USA. The German airship "Hindenburg" exploded in New Jersey. King George VI and Queen Elizabeth are crowned. Neville Chamberlain becomes Prime Minister after Stanley Baldwin's retirement.</p>
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<p>1938 Frank Whittle builds the jet engine. Hitler blames the Jews for Crystal Night.</p>

In a special report in February 1937, the Finance Committee wrote to the Church members:

Minister's Vestry. This is totally inadequate for the needs of visiting Ministers in particular. The recognised necessary conveniences are absent, and such service is dependent upon the Parsonage arrangements. The cost of adding the present wash-kitchen of the Parsonage and providing Lavatory accommodation would be about £100. Parsonage. This has been inspected by the Finance Committee and found really deplorable. The back roofs are sagging and the unlevel floors in the bedrooms show the

extent of the settling that has taken place. The walls are old and any great improvement of the structure is impossible. A scheme to build a small scullery on the ground floor, remove WC to level of bathroom, thus replacing the wash-kitchen taken for vestry, would cost about £200. A new building on the existing site or elsewhere is the only real solution.

Sewer. When the main sewer now being laid in Norden Road is completed, it will be necessary for all drainage from the place to be replanned and connected with the said sewer. Cost approximately £50.

Organ. The present instrument requires thorough overhauling and rebuilding before it deteriorates too far for this to be done satisfactorily. The last reconstruction was in 1892, - 45 years ago, and the present instrument has been kept going during the last 15 years by private outlay.

The building problems were urgent and the financial situation was serious; the church was £13 overdrawn at the bank.

There seemed to be a spiritual malaise in the late 1930's. Numbers at the Sunday School had declined now to 35 in the morning and 77 in the afternoon. Mr Richley wrote in his annual report: "*I want to express the satisfaction we all have in the fact certain of our people have made provision in the way of bequests to the Endowment Fund. While I express satisfaction for these things, I remind myself of our spiritual needs. Here in this field, I find less satisfaction than in the temporal. When I remember my 24 years among you and the burning desire that has so often been in my heart to help people to the Christian life, and compare this with what appears to be a meagre return of spiritual fruit, I feel constrained, as never before, to appeal for your co-operation and your prayers.*"

Certainly, a great deal of the work seemed to be falling on the shoulders of the Richley family. Not only was Robert the Minister, but his son Noel was the Secretary of the Missionary Committee, Mr Richley was the Chairman of the League of Workers, whilst another son Ronald was the Secretary. Mrs Richley was the President of the Ladies' Committee, whilst Miss M Richley was on the Dramatic Committee. Noel was the Sunday School Superintendent and his mother was the Primary Superintendent, and the Minister was the President of the Men's Bible Class. Among various other roles, Mr and Mrs Richley also represented the church at the annual Congregational Union meetings and the Rochdale Congregational Association.

The League of Workers again requested permission for a whist drive in 1939, and once again the Deacons refused to grant permission. It was agreed that a rota system be adopted in the election of Deacons, whereby two members would automatically withdraw their names for a period of 3 years. This could have been a congregational reaction to the fact that some Deacons had served nearly twenty years without a break! Walter Abel Ashworth and Tom Milnes were the first to withdraw their names, due to them being the oldest members. The newest Deacon, Mr Horrocks died in 1939.

1939 The start of the Second World War. "Gone With the Wind" is premiered.

The War began with no reference at all in the Deacons' meeting! The only hint of it came in a church meeting: that owing to the lighting restrictions, the evening services be discontinued after the end of September. However, there were many changes going on. The building work, spoken of earlier was completed, and the manse rebuilt in many ways. Mr Richley wrote: "*Your kindness has flourished again. That is how we feel about the new house. It is your token of affection. Needless to say, we are enjoying it, for it is not only brighter and more commodious, but very much more easily worked.*"

There were changes too in the officers of the church, three new Deacons were elected: Vernon Greaves, Leonard Howarth and John Clegg. A new caretaker appeared: Percy Chaplin, and Vernon Greaves became the Sunday School Superintendent. Perhaps it's time to recall several other names of folk who were central in the church fellowship at Bamford Chapel at the start of the war. Marion and Frank Lloyd were the magazine editors, Herbert Morley was the President of the League of Workers, Walter Ashworth was still the church organist, Albert Bigland had taken over the Whit Friday arrangements, and Martha Wood, John Clegg and Herbert Morley were the regular Sunday School pianists.

1940 Dunkirk. The Battle of Britain. Winston Churchill becomes Prime Minister. German troops enter Paris.
1941 Hitler invades Russia. The Japanese bomb Pearl Harbour. The USA enter the war.
1942 El Alamein. Film of the Year is "Casablanca". The Russians beat the Germans at Stalingrad.

The Rev Robert Richley completed 25 years at Bamford Chapel in 1940, and he was elected as Chairman of Lancashire Congregational Union, the only Bamford Chapel minister ever to be elected to that office. However, in 1942 after a period of ill health, Mr Richley stood down from the Bamford pastorate after 28 years. The Deacons' meeting records: "*That subject to the date being satisfactory to all parties, Mr Richley will terminate his ministry on the first Sunday of July 1942.*" The copy of the church magazine in August 1942 is the earliest copy we have, and it records: "*The affection in which Rev R Richley and Mrs Richley were held by us all was shown on Saturday and Sunday, July 4th and 5th. Unfortunately, the weather caused a postponement of the Garden Party in the afternoon of July 4th, but the gathering in the evening was crowded at the presentation to them of a cheque for £112, which was subscribed by young and old from far and near. Various other gifts were made to them by different sections of the church and school. It is hard to think of Bamford without Mr and Mrs Richley, for during their long residence, they have been guides, philosophers and friends to all in the district who needed help, advice or sympathy. In all departments of our work, we shall miss them, and we pray that they will be blessed and happy in their new sphere of service at Troutbeck. The services on Sunday, July 5th were well attended and the culminating communion service was attended by 114 communicants, many of whom the Deacons would like to see at service more often.*"

Reference was made in that same church magazine to the Reconstruction Scheme which the Congregational Union was organising nationally. Originally, there had been plans for a Forward Movement, which would have Church Extension as its main purpose. However, now the Union had to devote itself to the problems created by the war. Inside

the first year of the war, ninety-nine churches and manses had suffered damage nationally. So, the Congregational Union set itself to raise £500,000 from 1942 to 1945 to help restore the building damage. Of this, Rochdale District was expected to raise £2,000 and Bamford's share of this was fixed at £300. And this from a church whose weekly collection was £1.11/6d, the Sunday after Mr Richley left! Indeed, the church meeting was informed that the chapel would need a further £130 income that year, just to break even!

1943 Fats Waller dies. Beatrix Potter dies, aged 77. The Dambusters raid. The Germans occupy Rome.

1944 General Eisenhower oversees Allies preparation for the invasion of Europe. D.Day. Sir Henry Wood dies.

Within three months of Mr Richley's departure, a call had been extended to the Rev William Hodgkins from Manchester. This was signed by the six serving Deacons: Vernon Greaves, Leonard Howarth, Arthur Ashworth, John Clegg, Harold Shepherd and Herbert Diggle. Mr Hodgkins took up the work in a vigorous way, and he introduced many new ideas, as he endeavoured to reach out to a wider area than his local congregation. He did much in the district to sponsor the Workers' Educational Association, and he drew people from a wide area for meetings, lectures and discussions at Bamford Chapel.

Very early in his ministry, it was resolved "*that a committee be formed to determine the causes of the gradual falling off in church attendance and to endeavour to check this and restore the attendance.*" 1943 saw a major step forward for Bamford Chapel, when ladies were first appointed to the diaconate. The new diaconate comprised: V Greaves, L Howarth, A Ashworth, H W Shepherd, J Clegg, A Bigland, Mrs J Horrocks, Mrs Arthur Ashworth and Mrs Arthur Shepherd. However, the ladies still had their place, as we see in a minute from a 1943 church meeting: "*That the lady members of the Diaconate be responsible for serving tea on Saturday Feb 20th 1943.*"

In 1943 a letter was sent to the local MP "*requesting him to voice our disapproval of the attempt being made to secure the Sunday opening of theatres.*" Yet another new caretaker took over - Frank Stansfield. 23 new members were received into the church during 1942 and 1943, and these included Bob Tunstall, Terry Brierley and Marjorie Stuttard (Goodwin) all on the same day. Much discussion ensued at both Deacons' and church meetings regarding hearing aid "apparatus", and several items were purchased for church attenders. A number of special services were held - one "for those who we hope will benefit through the hearing aids", one "for the aged and the infirm" and one for those in the Forces.

A "Junior Diaconate" was formed among the Junior Church members, and Miss Marion Lloyd of the junior Deacons was accepted as a representative on the diaconate with a proviso "*that she be not allowed a vote for a period of six months*". Towards the end of 1943, Walter Abel Ashworth died, and recognition of his services to the church was recorded in the church meeting minutes. He had been a Deacon from 1913-1929, organist for 39 years, and a member of the Finance Committee for 41 years. He was also

a Trustee for 26 years and in his earlier years he held the offices of Pew Steward, Registrar for the Sunday School and pianist for the Sunday School.

The Junior Diaconate formed three clubs amongst the young people - a Boys' Club, a Junior Girls' Club and a Senior Girls' Club. Eileen Greaves was responsible for Physical Recreative Training. It was during the early 1940's that the weekly offerings overtook the pew rents for the first time in the history of the church. In 1940, pew rents had decreased to less than £100 (£91), but the weekly offerings were still only £82 per year.

However, within the first year of Mr Hodgkins' ministry, the weekly offering had topped the £2 mark for the first time ever, and by the end of 1943, the annual amount of weekly offering stood at £127. And very early in 1944, the £300 had been raised for the Reconstruction Fund. Things were beginning to look up!

<p>1945 The war ends. Lloyd George dies, aged 82. The Labour party wins a landslide majority at the General Election. USA drop atom bombs on Japan.</p>
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But because of the war, all was not smooth sailing! The church closed in 1945! We read in the church minutes: "*Due to the acute fuel situation, services are being held in the Primary Department until further notice.*" And the end of the war was hopefully anticipated by the Deacons' decision: "*That we hold a service on the day the cessation of hostilities in Europe is announced.*"

9. AFTER THE WAR

During the war, the chapel had established a Comforts Fund, the proceeds of which helped pay to send parcels, plus gloves and socks and postal orders to the value of 5/- away to Chapel Sunday School members, then serving in the armed forces. The list of those who received gifts is:

Charles Appleton William Bateson Joan Blakeley Edna Butterworth Eric Clegg
John Clegg Stanley Clegg Norman Cottam Arthur Emerson Arthur Gordon Harry
Houghton Clement Howarth John Howarth Albert Hoyle Margaret Ingham
Kenneth Johnson Fred Kershaw James Knapman Gilbert Livesey Harold Lord
Derek Menday Greta Menday Albert Morley Mary Ratcliffe William Ratcliffe
Peggy Richley Ronnie Richley Fred Robinson Stanley Robinson Sam Rowley
Sydney Scaife Herbert Shellard Joe Shepherd Fred Smith Robert Tunstall Gladys
Whalley Frank Wild Peter Wright

After the war, Tom Milnes retired after 30 years as Church Treasurer; Harold Shepherd took over as Treasurer, and Arthur Ashworth replaced him as Church Secretary. Rev Robert Richley revisited Bamford when he returned in September 1945 to conduct the Chapel Anniversary. Plans were afoot to level the chapel yard in front of the chapel, where the gravestones of the previous century still stood. Two church members, Edward Robinson and Tom Wigley were commended to the Lancashire Congregational Union for training at the Lancashire Independent College.

1946 Winston Churchill warns of "an iron curtain".

These were certainly days of "The Committee" at Bamford Chapel. The manual for 1946 speaks of an Education Committee, a House Committee, a Sports Committee, a Youth Committee, a Comforts Fund Committee, a Missionary Committee, a Dramatic Committee, a Flower Fund Committee, a Ladies Committee, a Catering Committee and a Finance Committee.

1947 Princess Elizabeth and Philip Mountbatten announce their engagement. The coldest winter this century. Coal strikes. Power cuts. In March, frozen rivers thawed, and caused floods in 31 counties.

The new diaconate in 1947 consisted of Edmund Leigh, Albert Bigland, Arthur Lloyd, John Clegg, Leonard Howarth, Harold Shepherd, Mrs Hargreaves, Mrs H Ashworth and Mrs Houghton. Bob Tunstall became the third Church Secretary in three years, Mrs Edward Ward was yet another caretaker, and John Clegg was the church organist. It was suggested that each Deacon might be responsible for certain parts of the District to report back on any cases of "sickness or non-attendance at church". The Lancashire Congregational Union came to Bamford for their autumnal meeting and that Christmas, three united carol services were held in the village, at St Michael's, Bamford Chapel and the Wesleyan Methodists.

1948 The National Health Service begins. "Mrs Dale's Diary" began. The British army left Palestine. The Olympic Games are held in England.

The Deacons began to find themselves responsible for all manner of everyday events in the life of the church. They found themselves organising the Garden Party, deciding who would look after the teas, the sideshows, Punch & Judy, the flower stall and the Tennis Tournament. They organised a girls' cricket match, appointed a gardener, expressed concern about tennis club subs not being paid, and complained about members of the football club not attending Sunday School. It was a far cry from the Deacons' meetings of fifty years before! At the October Deacons' meeting, Mr Hodgkins intimated his decision to terminate his ministry at Bamford Chapel, and accepted the pastorate offered by Southend Congregational Church.

1949 The Yangtze "incident" concerning HMS Amethyst.

Numbers had declined radically and at the start of 1949 there were 132 church members, 30 at morning Sunday School and 86 in the afternoon. Mundane matters seem to have swamped the spiritual at Deacons' meetings and a typical minute read: "*That in future all items sold at Jumble Sales should be collected by responsible persons only*", and the following month: "*that all items left over from Jumble Sales be burnt or otherwise disposed of by the caretaker.*"

Though the manual said 132 church members, only 38 attended the church meeting which invited the Rev Arthur Wilson of Sidcup in Kent to become the new minister at Bamford Chapel. Mrs Ward resigned as caretaker - more than a dozen had come and gone since the outbreak of war, and this seemed to be a role that Bamford Chapel couldn't solve. That same year, 1949, saw Eric Clegg, already Sunday School Secretary, become a church member.

As an encouragement to the new caretaker, Mrs Oxton and her husband, the Deacons recommended that electricity be installed in the caretaker's cottage. In 1949, the new minister Arthur Wilson and a Rev Tom Vause of South Street Congregational Church in Bacup shared in a pulpit exchange.

The traditional pew rents had now become a voluntary action, and were termed "monthly gifts". In 1949 they still totalled £2 per week. But the weekly offerings had much improved and topped £200 (£4 per week) for the first time in 1949. Nevertheless, the chapel was still over £200 overdrawn at the bank! The minister's stipend was still £5 per week, and the caretaker received £2.10/- each week, whilst paying 7/6d rent for the cottage.

Plans were already going ahead in 1949 to celebrate the Triple Jubilee Year in 1951. Among early suggestions were "*that the organ be opened on September 16th and an organ recital be given the following week*". "*That we consider having diaries for 1951*". "*That we have a two day Bazaar*". "*That the Rev Leslie Weatherhead be invited for September 23rd 1951*". "*And that a booklet of historical notes on Bamford Chapel be published*".

1950 The Conservative party, under Winston Churchill won the General Election. Princess Margaret is "the world's most eligible princess". George Bernard Shaw dies.

The West Indies beat England at cricket.

The new Deacons elected in 1950 consisted of A Bigland, H W Shepherd, L Howarth, J Clegg, E Pilling, R Tunstall, Mrs A Houghton, Mrs Fletcher and Mrs A J Shepherd. The services of Mr and Mrs Tom Milnes were recognised in the Deacons' meeting minutes.

It was planned to raise £3,500 for the Triple Jubilee, for three major projects:

Overhauling the organ.

Building another storey on the Primary

Beautifying the chapel and Sunday School.

Indeed, by the end of 1949, £1,500 had already been set aside, mainly by efforts to raise this sum. But other than these visions for the future, the Deacons' meetings seemed to get more mundane each month:-

"That a note be sent to all committee secretaries requesting that tradesmen be informed that deliveries to the chapel or school should be made via the back door and not over the graveyard."

"That young people attending other Sunday Schools, who apply for membership to the Tennis Club, may be accepted at the discretion of the Tennis Club."

"That we sell all serviceable playing strips belonging to the football club."

"That the schoolroom be reserved for the Senior Ladies' Jumble Sale on the evening of October 27th 1950."

In 1950, the minister's stipend was increased to £6 per week. The overdraft at the bank increased to £270; the weekly offerings had dropped to £173, and the Sunday School Anniversary still was by far the highest collection of the year (£93). One reason was that this Anniversary comprised three services at 10.30am, 2.30pm and 6.30pm. Every year a special preacher was invited, and their names bring back many memories: 1942 - T T James, 1943 - Howard Stanley, 1944 - J G MacKenzie (of Nottingham, a regular favourite), 1945 - Gordon Robinson, 1946 - William Hodgkins, 1947 - Stanley Herbert, 1948 - Bill Paxton, 1949 - Howard Stanley, 1950 - Nat McLellan of London. Similarly many notable names graced the Bamford Chapel pulpit on the occasion of the Church Anniversary held each September, and in 1950 Frank Shepherd, then in his fifth year at Cleveleys Congregational Church, returned to his home church at Bamford for the day.

More and more, the fields and premises were being used by other churches and Sunday Schools for their outings and picnics, so much so that the Deacons requested that its use for such purposes be limited to two occasions each year! Once again, there were more caretaker problems. Another one was sacked and then the rent for the cottage was increased to 8/6d per week.

1951 The Festival of Britain in London. "The glorious Gloucesters" distinguish themselves in the Korean War.

The organ was being renovated in time for the Triple Jubilee, and a special service of dedication had been arranged. And then the organ builders said that they could not complete the work in time. Because of the alterations, all church services were held for many weeks in the Primary rooms, and now all the special events for the re-opening were reorganised to be held a week later. In the end, all visiting preachers, and other chief

guests had to cancel due to the change of dates, and the main preacher for the Triple Jubilee Anniversary was the minister, the Rev Arthur Wilson. He was assisted by two ex Bamford members, Tom Wigley, then in training for the ministry, and Jim Millward, then minister at Brownhill, Blackburn. Harvey Smith of Rochdale gave an organ recital and the church choir sang "How amiable are thy tabernacles". Altogether the renovation of the organ cost £1,290, whilst the interior and exterior decoration of the church and school cost £660.

After a break of some years, a Christmas Fair was held again in 1951, over two days, and this raised £304, despite the interesting figure "Loss on Crockery Stall £12.13/ 9½d". Due to another caretaker resigning within a year, a rota of church members for stoking the boiler was drawn up. The Dramatic Society was now back in action after the war, and their numerous productions included "Love from a Stranger" (1947), "The Man from the Ministry" (1948), "Who Lies There?" (1949), "This Blessed Plot" (1950) and "Till Further Orders" (1951). Key figures in the Dramatic Society in those days were Fred Kershaw, Dorothy Park, Vernon Greaves, Eileen Seddon, Derek Brierley and Edna Butterworth.

<p>1952 King George VI dies. Elizabeth II succeeds him. In the Argentine, Eva Peron dies of cancer. King Farouk is deposed in Egypt.</p>

In 1952, Bamford Chapel considered leaving the Congregational Union of England and Wales as "*we regret the doubling of affiliation fees for 1952, and if the increased fee be obligatory, we shall have no alternative, but to withdraw from the Union*". And on a smaller scale, "*The Sunday School be asked to reconsider forwarding its contribution of 10/- towards the Young People's Work done by the Lancashire Congregational Union*". Caretakers continued to come and go every year, sometimes two and more each year. And decisions in the Deacons meeting continued to be mundane: "*That the Tennis Club be given permission to use the geyser, tea pot and cups when preparing refreshments*". "*That a set of keys for the crockery cupboard be made available to the chairman of the catering committee.*" "*That occasional checks of crockery be carried out by the chairman and caretaker*". Meanwhile discussions regarding erecting a new notice board outside Bamford Chapel had rambled on now for over 3 years.

The notice board saga ran on into its fourth year. Five tenders were received, and oak was decided upon. As promised the Congregational Union of England and Wales increased its annual fees and the Deacons duly recommended to the church that Bamford Chapel resign from the Union. Incidentally, the fees refused were £7.10/- per year. An issue arose concerning communion wine. It was not as might be expected: the issue of alcoholic or non-alcoholic. It was a debate as to whether Ribena or a non-alcoholic communion wine be used. The Deacons were obviously divided, as the discussions went on from month to month. Another caretaker came and went, and the Deacons responded by increasing the rent on the cottage!

<p>1953 Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tensing climb Mount Everest. The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth. Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas dies. Russian dicatator, Stalin dies.</p>

A minute from the Deacons' meeting in July 1953 says: "*That the lavatories be locked. A key to be held by the Tennis Committee who will be responsible for locking them up when used by them*". Caretaker, latest round. This time, church member Fred Kershaw was invited to take over as caretaker. A cleaner should also be employed, but be paid by Fred. The caretaker's salary was increased to 50 shillings, plus the cottage rent free. A Caretaker's Cottage Committee was elected to inspect the cottage. The "Ribena issue", along with caretaker's duties and the notice board certainly dominated Bamford Chapel during Coronation year!

1954 Roger Bannister breaks the 4 minute record for the mile. Britain's new aircraft, the Comet, makes its first flight.

Now in its fifth year of debate, the oak notice board was finally ordered in 1954 (£10.5/-) and the lettering was agreed upon (£3.15/-). However, the debate went on until March 1954, when the church meeting eventually agreed upon the text of the announcements to be displayed, with a further minute passed "*that the lettering be carried out in gold leaf with black shadows*". Now that the caretaker's issue seemed to be solved and the notice board erected, the Deacons were able to focus on more important issues. And so a long discussion began, and continued for well over 12 months about the advisability of holding occasional whist drives and dances!

1955 Anthony Eden becomes Prime Minister. Ruth Ellis is the last woman to be hanged in Britain. ITV arrived in Britain in September, with the first advert, Gibbs SR toothpaste!

The church magazine for January 1955 tells of a Gift Day, held in November which raised £87, and the serious illness of Mr Richley. The times were reflected by a series of articles called "Take a Tip", one or two are as follows:

"Clip a clothes peg to your wooden spoon when jam-making, and the spoon can be propped against the saucepan and will not fall in."

"Old pyjama legs pulled over the ironing board make excellent ironing cloths."

"Here's a way to beat that menace of the frozen lavatory cistern!" (a lengthy explanation followed involving salt, string and a canvas bag!).

"Old pieces of candle should be saved for they can grease your saws!"

By now the church magazine had the bold statement on its cover: "All seats are free and all are welcome". Church membership had dropped to 115. In order to pay for the Hepworth Silver Band from Huddersfield, which was booked for the Whit Friday Procession, a Dance and Whist Drive was held by the Joint Committee at St Michael's School.

The oldest church member, John H Wood, aged 93, died in April 1955 as did the old minister, the Rev Robert Richley. He was 79 years old when he died at Troutbeck Bridge. The same month, another ex-minister was recalled when the Rev William Hodgkins, now at Westcliffe on Sea, conducted the marriage of one of his members, Jean Davies to ex-Bamford Chapel member, the Rev Tom Wigley.

In the July issue of the church magazine, we get a colourful description of Whit Friday in the fifties:

After a glorious week of sunny days, we viewed with dismay the threatened break in the weather on the eve of Whit-Friday, and hopes that it would be fine and dry on June 3rd were dashed when we assembled in our various Schools ready to form our Annual Procession of Witness at 9am. However, in faith we started off, to arrive at St Michael's to form a United Procession under the direction of the Chief Marshal, Mr A Bigland. Our Minister, the Rev A Wilson, along with the Vicar's Warden of St Michael's, Mr T Beswick, followed our Banner which headed the Procession this year. Then followed the Primary children of the three schools accompanied by their teachers and St Michael's Parish Church Banner followed by the Hepworth Silver Band under their Bandmaster, Mr George Kay, BBMC, then came the Junior Scholars followed by the Methodist Banner, and then the Adult Members of the three congregations. On arrival at our first halting place, Pleasant Street, Hooley Bridge, a hymn was sung and prayer said by the Minister, who afterwards gave a short but stirring address. After singing a further hymn we retraced our route via Bury & Rochdale Old Road to Crimble Hall to receive our usual kind welcome from Colonel Hartley and his brother. Colonel Hartley spoke of the pleasure it gave him to once again receive the scholars and he expressed the hope that the tradition would be kept up as long as he lived.

After a short reply by Mr Beswick, the Procession left, and every child under 15 years of age received two new sixpences, the gift of Colonel & Mrs J B Gartside, JP of Crimble Cottage. Arriving at the War Office, further hymns were sung and then we proceeded along War Office Road to make a brief halt to sing a hymn for our old friend Mrs S A Clegg (who helped to minister to our needs on the Catering Committee for so long). The weather had shown some improvement by this time, and the roads were almost dry when we arrived at Pitfield, where, after singing two hymns, we returned to Hollin Lane, our last halting place before returning to the Chapel Yard to part company (after a final hymn and prayer) with the other schools.

Then to our appetising lunch in the school with delicious coffee and eatables to which we all did full justice. For the first time for several years we were able to take advantage of Mr & Mrs Fairclough's kindness and enjoy a Field Day in the afternoon, where stalls for the sale of ice cream, minerals and sweets were speedily short of supplies.

A number of races which had been well organised by a Committee of the combined schools, for young and old, gave a lot of pleasure and amusement, both to those who took part and the onlookers. Cricket was enjoyed by the youths, and many older folk sat and listened to the lively music of the band which played at intervals from 2.30 to 5pm when they returned to the St Michael's School for tea. Later, after the departure of the band, a whist drive and dance was held in St Michael's School.

The Procession was much better supported than last year, and we want to express thanks to the friends who rallied round on this happy day of witness. Mr A N Starkie once more conducted the hearty hymn singing at the various halting places, and Mr Stanley Beswick was the band steward. To those too, who supported us financially or in any way on this happy occasion, we are extremely grateful."

A new pavilion, built almost entirely by the minister, Arthur Wilson was opened, to replace the old tennis hut, which had been there since 1924. Edward Robinson, a former Sunday School scholar had completed his training at Carmarthen College, and he accepted a call to the pastorate of West End Congregational Church in Southport. Five years after its publication, Bamford Chapel purchased copies of "Congregational Praise", the denomination's hymn book. An estimate of the size of the congregation can be gauged by the fact that 25 choir books were purchased and 25 for church members. A further 25 were obtained for the use of visitors.

The Deacons in 1956 were: V Greaves, H W Shepherd, D Ogden, E Pilling, A I Shepherd, R Tunstall, Mrs A Houghton, Miss E Shepherd and Mrs M A Howarth. Meanwhile that year, the Methodist Church closed in Bamford, much to the regret of Chapel friends. (The foundation stone of this church is still to be seen in our Manse garden, to this day). The Lancashire Congregational Union was celebrating its 150th Anniversary. Meanwhile Bamford Chapel celebrated its 155th Church Anniversary, when the preacher was ex Bamford Chapel scholar, the Rev Jim Millward, currently ministering in Bury.

1957 Harold Macmillan becomes Prime Minister.

And so, life continued in a very regular routine at Bamford Chapel during the fifties. Mrs Howarth resigned from the diaconate and Mrs John Clegg was elected in her place. For years, it had been the custom to have a ramble on Good Friday, and a report of 1957's ramble follows:

On Good Friday afternoon we had our customary Ramble, and we left the Chapel in bright sunshine, and walked up Jowkin Lane to Shellfield via Springs, and descending into Norden were soon climbing up Woodhouse Lane towards Greenbooth, where we saw the preliminary preparations for the making of the new Reservoir which is soon to inundate the village. One cannot but feel sadness when one sees beautiful old trees felled, which have beautified this wooded edge of the Moors for hundreds of years, but the need for additional water supplies is great, and we must bow to progress. Proceeding on our way by Rainshore and 'Back-oth-Royds' we paused to hear the song of the larks and rest in the sunshine, as we approached Red Lumb. Coming down the road by Meadow Bank, Wolstenholme & Lee Holmes to Millcroft Tea Gardens, where everyone was ready for refreshments. After tea we returned home through Wolstenholme Fold, Coal Bank, past Carr Wood to our starting place. A lovely spring day, a nice walk, and happy comradeship, what more could we desire? Our thanks to Mr John Clegg who organised the Ramble and led us.

We can also find a full description of a 1950's Sunday School Anniversary in the June church magazine:

A cool morning on May 19th, did not mar our attendance at the Sunday School Anniversary, and the Service (for children of all ages) was notable for the number of young primary children present who sang "Praise Him, Praise Him All Ye Little Children" most appropriately. Later the Junior Scholars sang their hymn "We Thank Our Heavenly Father" very nicely. The preacher at all the services for the day was the

Rev W H Watson of Harrogate, who is Moderator of the Yorkshire Congregational Union, and he gave a most interesting address to the children on "Light in a Dark World". At the afternoon service, the Introit was Sanctus (Gamidge) and the Scholars Anthem "I Vow to Thee My Country" (music by Holst). Mr Watson gave a short address to the smaller children, and based his sermon on Matthew 11v3 and his subject "Remedy for our Doubt". The choir anthem was "Awake, Put on Thy Strength" (Jamouneau). The Introit which opened the Evening Service was Attwoods "Sanctus" and the preacher gave us another earnest and profound sermon on "The Light and Life of God". The choir rendered the anthem "I Saw a New Heaven" (peace). Solo parts being well taken by Miss Doreen Astin and Mr Herbert Morley. Our visiting soloist at this service was Miss Phyllis Hoyle of Rochdale, and she delighted us with the solo "Thanks Be to God" (Dickson) and "How Lovely Are Thy Dwellings" (Liddle). Mr John Clegg was the Musical Director at all services. The fine weather which improved during the day, enabled many of our old friends to once again reunite with us in worship to our mutual joy. For inspiring preaching and singing, we were very grateful, and to those who, by teaching the scholars or assisting us in various ways to make another memorable day, we render sincere thanks.

The church Dramatic Society was still in full flight, and in November 1957 they performed their 60th production: "Quiet Weekend". The play was produced by Vernon Greaves, and the performers included William Uren, Olive Brierley, Doreen Astin, Beryl Barnes, Irene Miller and Eileen Seddon. A condescension to the changing times was hinted at in the report of the 1957 Christmas party for the Sunday School, when it was said: "Rock and roll" music was more listened to than danced to, but all tastes were satisfied!

1958 The first USA satellite was launched. Riots in Notting Hill, London.
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In 1958, the weekly offerings were still the same as they had been in 1950, averaging less than £4 per week, and concern was expressed by the Deacons regarding the finances of the church. Various schemes, old and new, were agreed upon to raise money. One was a talent scheme where a postal order for a small amount of money was presented to members and friends of church and Sunday School with a request that they use the money to the best advantage to increase its value on behalf of the church. As a result of such concern and publicity, collections began to top the £4 mark, and fund raising came much to the fore. Coffee mornings became the vogue and Bring and Buy Sales became a regular feature.

At the annual election of Deacons in 1959, the following were elected: Bob Tunstall (Secretary), Harold Shepherd (Treasurer), John Clegg, Vernon Greaves, Arthur Shepherd, Alan Shepherd, Eunice Chadwick, Alice Houghton and Edith Shepherd. It used to be the Ashworths, but now the majority were Shepherds! In April 1959 the Rev Arthur Wilson celebrated his tenth year as minister at Bamford Chapel. Each Easter, four young people were chosen by the chapel to attend the Youth Conference organised by the Lancashire Congregational Union at Bangor in North Wales. The Rev Frank Shepherd made a return visit to his home church in August, whilst Harry Lloyd was presented with an electric clock by his fellow choir members in recognition of 60 years devoted service with the choir. The Drama Society celebrated another event, its 40th year of productions. The

play in 1959 was “The House by the Lake”. Once again Vernon Greaves was the producer and the cast included Fred Kershaw, Irene Miller, Jean Jackson and John Webb. Behind the scenes were folk like Joseph Hardman, Fred Butterworth and Alan Shepherd.

The previous minister, the Rev William Hodgkins was appointed Editor of “The Congregational Monthly” in 1959. As the country and the church prepared to enter the 1960’s, it was easily recognisable that there had been many changes in the 160 years of Congregationalism at Bamford. Nationally, the denomination had declined from 277,000 members in 1930 to 189,000 in 1960. Not only were members declining in numbers, ministers were too. In 1930, there were 400 students in training, in 1956 the number had decreased to 231. In 1960, it was declared that 230 ministers were needed at once in addition to the normal recruitment in order to prevent a catastrophic decline. When Bamford Chapel was in its infancy, there had been numerous theological training colleges: Rotherham, Idle, Bradford, Roby’s Academy, Blackburn, Manchester, now there was just one, the Northern Congregational College in Manchester. The church was far more liberal in its thinking and theology than it had been 160 years before. And much of the old independence upon which churches like Bamford had thrived was fading into a new inter-dependency. The Congregational Unions of the 1800’s were about to be succeeded by the Congregational Church of the 1960’s.

And the tiny chapel founded in 1801 in a Lancashire village was now very much a part of the world church. Working with the London Missionary Society, Bamford had helped spread the Gospel across the world. In 1959 the chapel had become involved in World Refugee Year. And there had been numerous social issues for the local church to wrestle with: temperance, pacifism, re-marriage and gambling. Bamford Chapel was going to have to keep pace with the changing world!

10. THE SIXTIES

During the previous twenty years, the church had been richly blessed by several financial endowments. These came from Mary Ashworth (1942), John Dakin (1943), Annie Jay (1945), Mrs Porritt (1945), Walter Ashworth (1945), Rachel Jay (1951), Wilfred Edge (1953), Herbert Diggle (1945), John H Wood (1959), Hannah Mills (1957), Mrs M J Wild (1958), Elizabeth Barker (1958), Elizabeth Porritt (1959), Miss G A Rostron (1959) and James Buckley (1960).

Bamford Chapel took part for the first time in the Christian Aid House to House collection in Rochdale, which coincided with the end of World Refugee Year. Several church members also shared in a United Good Friday service, held in Baillie Street Methodist Church - the first of its kind in Rochdale. The Rev Frank Shepherd, now minister at Olton Congregational Church revisited his home church at Bamford, and the 159th Church Anniversary in September 1960 was conducted by another of Bamford's "old boys", the Rev Jim Millward.

There was talk of moving the Whit Friday walk to Whit Sunday, due to local holiday arrangements. The Finance Committee purchased 150 canvas-seated self-stacking chairs, one of the main reasons being to comfortably seat the audiences coming to the Drama Society productions. Their latest production was "The Crooked Road". Sydney Fielden produced the play and among the cast were Irene Miller, Alice Pomfret, Hilda Goom and Fred Kershaw. Some of those chairs can still be seen 40 years later!

The Autumn Rally of the Rochdale Congregational Council was held at Bamford Chapel, and the speaker was Dr J Trevor Davies of Bournemouth, who was the Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. As the church entered the 1960's the membership stood at 148, and the Sunday School had fallen to 16 in the morning and 46 in the afternoon. It should be said that it was a custom to keep the figures high in the Year Book, as it presented a rosy picture to others, and especially to ministers when the church was seeking a new minister.

It was June 1961, and the North of England Crusade by Dr Billy Graham was well underway. A coach went from Bamford Chapel on several evenings. The Sunday School Union Scripture exam was growing in popularity, and 12 young people received their certificates at the annual Prize Giving in Rochdale: Susan Miller, Shirley Fairclough, Margaret Wilson, Margaret Uren, Susan Reeves, Frank Baron, David Seddon, John Miller, Peter Miller, Stephen Hargreaves, Brian Walkden and Paul Webb.

The well known Congregationalist, Dr Sydney Berry died aged 80 in London, and his visit to Bamford Chapel for the Sunday School Anniversary in 1931 was recalled. 1961 was the Chapel's 160th Anniversary, and the minister, Arthur Wilson conducted the day's services. Incidentally, it was in 1960 that a list of people was created "for the purpose of collecting at services and welcoming visitors and friends at the church door". A committee of five Deacons was drawn up to interview people to see if they were willing to do this work.

The church and school were rewired in late 1961, and along with a new boiler, the old place was much lighter and warmer now. Rev Frank Shepherd returned north, after a ten

year pastorate at Olton in Birmingham, when he took up the pastorate at Chorlton cum Hardy in Manchester. The new diaconate in 1961 was composed of Miss E Chadwick, Mrs F Kershaw, Mrs L Pomfret, Mr A Ashworth, Mr T Baron, Mr A Bigland, Mr J Clegg, Mr E Johnson and Mr M Miller. Bob Tunstall continued as church Secretary and Harold Shepherd was still the church Treasurer. John Clegg was the organist, Vernon Greaves the Sunday School Superintendent and Eric Clegg remained the Sunday School Secretary. Fred Kershaw was now in his tenth year as church caretaker.

The Whit Friday procession was held as usual, led in 1962 by the Hinchcliffe Mills Prize Band from Holmfirth. The route was: Pleasant Street, War Office, Wood Top Avenue, Pitfield, Hollin Lane and Bamford Chapel. Still thinking of the Sunday School, 22 children entered the Sunday School Union Scripture Exam and because they gained the highest marks, Bamford Chapel was awarded the Walter Frost Shield. This was out of 17 other Sunday Schools in Rochdale.

Altogether, approx £2,000 had been spent on renewing church premises in 1961 and 1962, as follows:

New chairs for school	£186
Flooring school passage	£ 35
New door mats	£ 25
Re-lighting and re-wiring	£835
New heating	£675
School ventilators	£110
Re-building chimney	£115

£1981

Gradually, a new trend had happened at Bamford Chapel, in so far that people were now being approached and invited to become church members. For well over 150 years, it had been the reverse, in that people had to ask to be members, and then be visited and interviewed.

December 1962 saw the first appearance of a television set in the chapel, when the service of dedication for the new missionary ship, "John Williams VII" was televised nationally. The church was financially in credit at the end of 1962. This was due to weekly offerings averaging £5 for the very first time. Curiously, the "monthly gifts" (pew rents) still averaged £2 per week; the Sunday School Anniversary collection still topped the £100 mark and a Christmas Fayre raised £323.

The chapel continued to attract the leading preachers of the day to its Sunday School and church anniversaries, and in 1963 the Rev John B Nettleship conducted the Sunday School Anniversary. It should be stated here that the minimum stipend for Congregational ministers was now £570, and for a good number of years, during the ministry of Arthur Wilson, the church had never contributed anything like the full amount. In 1962, the church contributed £100 towards the stipend, the other 80% coming from the chapel investments, ie the Walter Abel Ashworth Fund.

The Sunday School Union Scripture exam results were better than ever. The results were:

Lower Junior Division: Heather Seddon, Peter Warburton (Honours)

Elizabeth Smith (1st class)

Allun Evans 2nd class)

Upper Junior Division: Jennifer Unsworth, Susan Reeves, Stephen Hargreaves, Margaret Wilson, Peter Miller (Honours)

Frank Baron, William Ramm, Helen Uren, Andrew Hargreaves,

David Walkden, Susan Hollis, Judith Evans, John Taylor, Janet

Barcroft, David Seddon, Brian Walkden, Shirley Fairclough, John

Miller and Margaret Uren (1st class)

As a result of these efforts, Bamford Chapel was awarded the Walter Frost Shield for the second year, out of 18 local Sunday Schools.

Because of the change of holidays, the Whit Friday walk did not take place in 1963. This was the first time since the early 1800's that the Whit Friday festivities had not happened; instead due to holidays, the procession and field day took place on the day before Whit Sunday.

1963 saw the beginning of an influx of new people in the village, and consequently, new members at the chapel. Mr and Mrs Foy came from Blackburn and Sid and Dorothy Hazlehurst arrived from Wigan. Within weeks the Hazlehursts were both on the Sunday School teaching staff.

The Congregational Union in England and Wales had offered six commissions to the local churches, No 1 being the proposal that Congregational churches should cease to be in a Union but instead covenant together as a Congregational Church. However, Bamford Chapel displayed its long in-built independence when the Deacons declared in April 1962 *"that we cannot, at present, make a recommendation to the Church Meeting that our church should enter into a covenanted relationship with other Congregational churches"* (7 for, 3 against).

At the end of 1963, John Clegg stood down as organist and choirmaster. He had completed 20 years in those roles since the death of Walter Abel Ashworth. The choir presented him with a gold watch. The newly arrived Mr E Foy was invited to play the organ. It was in March 1964 that the minister, Arthur White told the Church Meeting of his intention to accept the invitation to the pastorate of Inglewhite Congregational Church.

In 1963's accounts, the minister's stipend had disappeared completely from the balance sheet - does this mean that the church was entirely dependent upon the bequest of Walter Abel Ashworth for the payment of their minister?

Easter 1964 saw the usual visit by two Bamford young people to the Lancashire Congregational Union's Young People's Conference at Bangor. This had been a custom for many years and Susan Miller and Douglas Clegg were Bamford's representatives at Easter 1964. A new banner was dedicated at a Family Service in April 1964. The banner

was of bright red corded silk, with gold lettering saying "Bamford Congregational Church and Sunday School, established 1801" on one side and a gold cross on the reverse side. The new banner was first carried in the Whit procession in May 1964. Every year, the choir had an outing, and the 1964 trip was to Skegness.

34 children and young people from Bamford Sunday School entered the Sunday School Union Scripture exam in 1964, and once again the church won the Walter Frost Shield for the best results of any church in Rochdale. There had been many comings and goings within the local churches over the previous 12 months. Rev Barry Hawksworth had been ordained at Whitworth and Pastor Lewis Davey had died. He had been pastor at York Street, Heywood, and Mansell Hiles of Milnrow replaced him. Peter Scotland was ordained at Castleton and the Rev Jessie Halfpenny was inducted at Milton Church in Rochdale. Norden Congregational Church had come into a working relationship with ex Bamford member, the Rev Jim Millward and his induction took place in July. For most of the century, the minister at Bamford Chapel had also had oversight of Norden but this new move at Norden meant that Mr Wilson's successor at Bamford Chapel would be responsible for Bamford only.

The church magazine for August 1964 records: "*The Rev Arthur Wilson, for the past 15 years our faithful minister, and his family, left Bamford on 7th July to take up his new ministry at Inglewhite, the church where he first ministered. On Jul 5th, the Rev A Wilson concluded his ministry at our church and preached farewell sermons at the morning and evening services. After the evening service, an informal meeting of members of the church and congregation was held in the Primary at which a presentation was made to Mr Wilson of a Leitz slide projector. The Church Secretary Mr R Tunstall made the presentation and spoke of the progress that has been made during the 15 years of Mr Wilson's ministry.*"

Incidentally, the church magazine took an interesting turn during the vacancy, for the Editor Vernon Greaves invited a number of previous Bamford Chapel members to contribute to the "minister's letter". So, for the next five months, there were letters from the Rev Jim Millward, the Rev William Hodgkins, the Rev Frank Shepherd, the Rev Tom Wigley and Jennie Richley, the widow of the Rev Robert Richley.

Nearly 200 people gathered at Norden for the Induction of Jim Millward. At the service, Frank Heys, the Church Secretary said that less than six months earlier, the question as to whether the church should continue or not, was discussed. Mr Millward said: "*It could be that our two churches, Bamford and Norden, might be drawn closer together, because I am a Bamford boy*".

Now, for a while, it was the turn of the minister at Norden to help out with the vacant pastorate at Bamford Chapel. Inside four months, Mr Millward conducted services, spoke at the Ladies' Service, opened the Garden Party and wrote regularly in the church magazine.

That Autumn, it was announced that the Bamford Chapel Sunday School had been awarded the Lancashire Congregational Union Pemberton Shield, for achieving the highest marks (70%) of any Congregational School in Lancashire, at the recent Scripture Examination. Chairman of the Lancashire Congregational Union, the Rev Hubert

Burnley, presented the Shield to Bamford Chapel at the Sunday School Anniversary in October.

During the vacancy, several names were brought before the Deacons and the Rev Jim Millward took upon himself the task of sick visiting for several months. He also conducted numerous services and chaired Deacons' and church meetings. But nine months after the announcement of Arthur Wilson's departure, the name of the Rev Tom Vause was recommended to the church meeting by the Deacons as the new minister at Bamford Chapel. It was agreed that he should receive £725 per year, plus £135 expenses.

In January 1965, Rev Jim Millward commented "*The opening of a new chapter in the chapel's history by the settlement of Mr and Mrs Vause will coincide with springtime. It is right to look forward and face the future with confidence. The Church is ready to meet the challenge of the new age. Bamford is no longer the old village of a former day. It has become the residential suburb of Rochdale. I believe the membership of the church will increase, the congregations will continue to grow and the school will become even more of a hive of activity*". It was a prophetic word.

Miss Sarah Wood, the oldest member of the chapel, aged 96 died at the end of 1964. Just prior to the arrival of Tom Vause, Mansel Hiles, the pastor at Heywood Congregational Church preached at Bamford Chapel for the first time. He was to become a good friend of the church. Soon after Miss Wood's death, Mrs Emmeline Milnes died. She had been a former leader in the Infants' Department of the Sunday School and she had helped found the church Drama Society in 1919. Incidentally, the Drama Society was still in full flight, performing two productions each year. In 1965 they performed "The Joan Danvers" and "The Feminine Touch". In the latter, produced by Vera Shroder, the leading parts were taken by Fred Kershaw, John Smith, Hilary Waring, Alice Pomfret and Gillian Pickup. The following year, Irene Miller produced both "Strictly Business" and "Shadow in the Sun".

Mr Millward conducted his last Deacons' meeting in April before the arrival of Tom Vause from Christ Church Congregational in Castleford. By this time, the new diaconate read: A Ashworth, T Blincoe, E Johnson, T Baron, V Greaves, J Warburton, Mrs D Goodwin, Mrs F Kershaw, and Mrs G Whitworth. Harold Shepherd (Treasurer) and Bob Tunstall (Secretary) continued in their roles.

The Rev Tom Vause was inducted at Bamford Chapel on Saturday, April 3rd 1965. The Rev Glyn Evans of Bolton gave the charge to the church and the minister and a large congregation was present. At that time, the Congregational Union of England and Wales was debating whether or not to form the Congregational Church. The churches at Bamford and Norden expressed their agreement to enter into such a covenant, although from the records of Deacons' meetings over the last two years, this had not always been the general opinion.

Soon after his induction, Tom Vause was appointed the Free Church Chaplain of Rochdale Infirmary, Springfield and Marland Hospitals. For over 100 years, the chapel had supported the work of the Lancashire Independent College, now the Northern Congregational College, and a special weekend was held in 1966 to strengthen the links

between Church and College. The Rev Eric Hull was the speaker on the Saturday evening, whilst Principal W Gordon Robinson conducted the Sunday services.

The minimum stipend for ministers was increased to £670, and curiously there was still no mention in the Bamford Chapel Balance Sheet of any payment being made from church accounts to the minister. It seems they were still dependent on the Walter Abel Ashworth Fund.

Many houses were being built in Bamford in the mid sixties. Congregations began to increase after the arrival of Tom Vause and weekly collections rose. The weekly offerings were now coming to £8 per week, a big jump from the £5 weekly offerings of just 12 months earlier. Again, well over 30 young people entered the Sunday School Union Scripture Exam, but this time the Walter Frost Shield was won by Littleborough Congregational Church.

Tom Vause began to put his finger on a few long-lasting problems at Bamford Chapel. One concerned church membership and the false figures given in the annual returns. He queried the times of church services, and if the times were OK, regarding bus services, etc, then why were church services not better attended. He also asked what the church was going to do regarding the children and young people. Was it not time to introduce some uniformed organisations?

After 3 years, Mr Foy stood down as church organist, and Herbert Morley temporarily took over his role. Terry Brierley became Deputy Church Treasurer in 1966. Very soon, Mr J Howarth was appointed as organist.

Until 1966 there had been a church meeting twice a year. In 1966 the Rev Tom Vause introduced bi-monthly church meetings. He took the opportunity in the January church magazine to challenge members of the congregation to become members of the church. In the February issue, the clarion call went out to put more effort into youth work: *“It is my opinion (for what it is worth) that just as “man shall not live by bread alone”, young people will not continue to live in the church merely on a diet of Sunday School and an occasional visit to the church. Someone put himself out in days gone by on our behalf. Does the need of our present young people ever tempt you to put yourself out for them? If not, why not? Give this great challenge some thought, will you? Better still, give it some action?”*

Every month, Tom Vause issued a new challenge to the people of Bamford Chapel. In March it concerned mission and giving. He said: *“It is interesting to note that the £61 18/1d which Bamford Chapel contributed last year to world mission represents about two pence per person per week over the year. Not much is it? We couldn’t send a letter to a missionary for that, not even an unsealed one! It makes you wonder how the missionary managed to do his job!”* In April, Tom turned his attention to the local church: *“According to the statistics before I arrived in Bamford, the church membership in 1964 stood at 135. Bearing in mind this number “why does our evening congregation average 30 worshippers?” And one might go on to ask: “why do those thirty folk scatter themselves to the four corners of the church?” WE MUST DO SOMETHING ABOUT OUR CONGREGATIONS!*

Few areas of the church escaped his searching eye. *“Our schoolrooms are a disgrace, with the exception of one room which the menfolk painted a year ago. Since then, the paint has remained undisturbed in the cans under the kitchen table. What about it you chaps?”* His lists of tasks were unending: *“There is the question of re-planning the Communion area in the church. We need to look at the planning of some kind of centre porch in the church, where the minister can meet people without having to stand out in the rain and cold. We should consider the removal of side curbs in the graveyard to facilitate the work of keeping the graveyard respectable. Don’t forget the question of some sort of youth organisation to keep our young people together. We are to put in a false ceiling in the schoolroom. We must set about painting the whole of the outside of the manse, church and school.”* There were also several financial challenges.. *“the last time you had a Gift Day, I see that £51 was raised. I have no worries at all about our ability to raise £500 at our next Gift Weekend.”*

Let us not think that the church was filled week by week. Tom Vause was thrilled to have seventy people in church on Easter Sunday morning. A Ladies’ Fellowship was begun by Lena Vause. The oldest member of Bamford Chapel, Miss Jane Ann Stott died in February 1966, aged 93. She was the last surviving daughter of Mr Charles Stott, whose family had been stalwarts in the previous century. The Whit-Saturday processions took place, but for the first time this century, the field at Bamford Hall was not used, but instead Richard Fairhurst loaned his field at Moss Meadows, Crimble.

Albert Bigland was awarded the Sunday School Union badge for 25 years service to the Sunday School at Bamford, and over 40 children sat the Sunday School Union Scripture Exam. More and more families were moving into the district and numbers at Sunday School were growing steadily. Three television sets were installed in the chapel for the televised service of the formation of the Congregational church in England and Wales from the Whitfield Memorial Church in London on May 22nd 1966. Churches like Bamford Chapel had come a long way in their pilgrimage together since those days of independence in the early 1800’s.

The children who had sat the Sunday School Union Scripture Exam won the Perry Shield for the highest aggregate of marks, although the Walter Frost Shield was won by Littleborough Congregational Church. 15 young people and 4 adults shared in a Youth Weekend at Plas-y-Nant, at the foot of Snowdon. November 1966 saw the beginning of the Covenant Scheme, whereby the church could reclaim income tax paid by members and friends. Changes were made to the morning Sunday School, so that the children could be incorporated into the morning service, along with their parents. Until then, the pattern had been that the Sunday School met at 9.45am and went home at 11am, after sharing a little time in the morning service; now, the children were to start in the morning service at 10.30am and later leave for their own lessons, finishing at 11.30am. And £450 was raised at the Gift Weekend. It may not have reached Tom’s target of £500, but it was far above the previous total of £51.

14 people were welcomed into church membership in March 1967. These included Sid Hazlehurst and Dorothy Hazlehurst, Margaret Gooding and Ella Wheatley. Alongside the various activities, a new St John’s Ambulance section began in the chapel.

At Christmas, Tom Vause wrote a Nativity Play which he produced, called "In Fullness of Time". The cast included Judith Evans, Michelle Marsland, Ian Goodwin, Ian Walton, Janet Barcroft, Frank Baron, Richard Adams, Michael Goodwin and Martin Hazlehurst.

Never one to be satisfied, Tom announced the 1967 Gift Day as having a target of £1,000. However, the Deacons persuaded him to tone it down to £600!

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was observed for the first time in 1967, when the Vicar of St Michael's the Rev L Challinor and the Rev Tom Vause shared in the worship at Bamford Chapel. Eunice Chadwick received a Sunday School Union certificate for her 30 years service as a teacher in the Primary Department. As an encouragement for his work, the Deacons recommended that the minister's stipend be increased by £2 per week (now £17).

Conversations between the Congregational Church and the Presbyterians were now reaching their final stages, and Bamford Chapel obtained a number of copies of "The Basis of Union" to study the proposals. And so came to an end the first two years of the ministry of the Rev Tom Vause. They were two of the most memorable years that the Chapel had seen this century, but more was to come!

A visitation campaign around 200 houses was held over 2 days in May 1967. A Swimming Gala was held by the Rochdale Sunday School Union, and Bamford Chapel's team won the event. The swimmers were Gillian Brearley, Peter Brearley, Alun Evans, Ian Goodwin, Jill Taylor, Katrina Wright and Peter Warburton. Evening services were discontinued in 1967, in favour of afternoon services, and the Gift Weekend raised the total of £610.

After 53 years as Sunday School Superintendent, Vernon Greaves retired. He was replaced by Sid Hazlehurst. Mrs Warburton and Mrs Adams offered their services to found a Brownie Pack at Bamford Chapel. Harold Shepherd was asked to compile a list of elderly people who would be helped by a car ferry to church each Sunday - ten drivers immediately volunteered to help.

Similarly, Harold Shepherd stood down as Church Treasurer after 20 years of faithful service, and Terry Brierley took over the role. The diaconate was now comprised of Mrs O Brierley, Mrs M Goodwin, Mrs G Whitworth, T Blincoe, D Gooding, N Hodgkinson, M Miller, J Stonehouse and J Warburton. As an illustration of the false figures contained in the annual statistics given by local churches, Bamford Chapel had in 1967 135 church members. In 1968 Tom Vause stated that 42 of these had not been seen in the church for two and even three years!

An International Evening was held in February 1968, when 24 male students studying at Manchester and seven student nurses from Rochdale Infirmary attended. Over 12 different nationalities were present. A United evening service with the vicar and members of St Michael's was held in March at Bamford Chapel. By now, the weekly offerings were averaging an all-time high of £10. The old pew rents were still being received as "monthly gifts" and these still topped £2 per week.

Despite the increased offerings (weekly amounts were now twice what they were four years earlier), Tom Vause was concerned about the financial state of the church. In September 1968, he wrote: *“One could go on. It is not a palatable fact, nor is it a pleasant duty for me to have to put it into print, but there is a lot of nonsense talked about the huge sums of money ‘they have at Bamford’. We have funds left to use by our benefactors, but these are for specific purposes and we are not able to use them for anything else, even if we were bankrupt. And, may I ask you, why should we be content to let the legacies of the past discharge our duties for us? What are we to leave for our sons and daughters in the faith? Many people would be very upset if they thought the church was to close down and go out of existence, but the plain fact is, unless we do something about it this is what will happen. I have said it before, and I am now going to say it again, and I make no apology for repeating it, if it were not for the generosity of those who have gone before, Bamford Chapel could not afford to have a minister of its own.”*

That same month, Albert Bigland died aged 69. He had been a faithful member at Bamford Chapel for upwards of 35 years, a Sunday School teacher, Secretary, and Deacon. George Whitworth also died the month afterwards. A quiet and dignified man, George was Tom Vause’s “right hand man” in the upkeep of the grounds (Tom’s words).

At the end of 1968, the church held a stewardship campaign. All did not go well, as we can read in Tom Vause’s letter in January 1969: *“I regret that some of you have misunderstood the meaning and purpose of the campaign. Apparently, because you did not agree with our proposed attempt to consolidate our financial resources in a weekly envelope scheme, you did not think it worthwhile to fill in the form or make any other offer of service to the church of which you are a member. We can continue (as far as our finances are concerned) to depend on ‘WAA’, as you have done for the past twenty-odd years, without being alive to our own responsibility. But what about all the rest of our church commitment? What a pity that some of you have only seen the conception of Stewardship as an attempt to start a weekly envelope scheme. However, for the number who have had this misguided conception, there are others who have responded to our appeal for greater service. We shall be giving a full report at a later stage. I wish now to thank those who have so willingly given of their time to go out on the visitation. No doubt you will have been discouraged by the reception given to you in some cases, but there will have been those who will have made you feel that this was a good piece of evangelism for Christ and the church’s sake.”*

That same month the Brownie Pack held their first church parade. For one of the first occasions for many years (we imagine well over half a century?) there were over a hundred communicants at the January 1969 communion service.

By May 1969 Terry Brierley, the Church Treasurer was able to report that weekly collections had increased by over 100%! In 1962, they had averaged £5 for the first time in the church’s history, now they were averaging £25 per week, thanks to the Free Will Offering scheme. The guest preacher at the Sunday School Anniversary in 1969 was the Rev Jeffrey Yates of Morecambe.

The Sunday School was much to the fore in the annual Sunday School Union examinations, because once again, the Walter Frost Shield returned to Bamford Chapel

after a lapse of 5 years (presented to the church with the greatest number of marks). Those who passed the exam in 1969 were:

JUNIOR A Michael Pearson, Harry Marsland, Timothy R Oldfield, Neil Goodwin, Tracey Lloyd-Johnson, Susan Lomax, Elizabeth Brierley, Gillian Hazlehurst, Kristelania Boulton
JUNIOR B Elizabeth Adams, Paul Hazlehurst, Roderick Herd
SENIOR A Julie Lloyd-Johnson, Patricia Hayes, Susan Pearson, Ann Baron, Michael Goodwin, Christine Smith
SENIOR B Elizabeth Smith, Susan Stonehouse, June Kay, Christopher Pearson, Peter Warburton, Ian Goodwin, Martin Hazlehurst, Richard Adams
YOUNG PEOPLES DIVISION A Heather Seddon
YOUNG PEOPLES DIVISION B David A Seddon

Martin Hazlehurst gained the top marks (99%) among all Rochdale entrants. We also include a report of the Whit Walk of 1969, now held on the Saturday before Whit. *"The weather on the days preceding May 31st had been very unsettled, but nevertheless we were encouraged by the weather reports and left the Chapel shortly after 1.30 pm, in bright sunshine to join our friends at St Michael's, headed by the Leigh Silver Band. There we had a brief service addressed by the Rev Thos Vause, who spoke on the importance and significance of our witness, after which the procession re-formed as follows: St.Michael's banner, Congregational banner, the Band, Primary scholars of both schools (looking very beautiful in their summer attire), the Brownies (very smart in their uniforms) and the Junior scholars followed by the Adult members, Guides, and Scouts.*

On arrival at Pleasant Street, Hooley Bridge, two hymns were sung, and we turned about for our next halting place at Spencer Lane. Clouds and a threat of thunder were in the air, and we had started to sing, when a deluge came, and we had to seek shelter in garages, cars and houses, until the storm abated, but most of us got a good soaking, so it was decided to beat a hasty retreat to the Chapel. Owing to St.Michael's School not being available, due to alterations, both Churches joined in a lovely and much enjoyed tea at the Congregational School. After tea, the weather having cleared, games were played in the school grounds, where ices, sweets, and minerals were available. All the children were presented with a new shilling piece, and in the circumstances, we had a very happy half-day. The Hymn Singing was conducted by our Choir Master, Mr Derek Gooding, Mr Sid Hazlehurst was the Chief Marshall, the Band Steward, Mr F Butterworth, and the Secretary for the combined schools, Mr V Greaves."

Mrs Richley died in Windermere, aged 92. In April 1969 the minister's stipend topped £1,000 for the first time. Also for the first time the church paid the cost of lighting and heating the Manse. And also, the church purchased a car for the minister's use. Things had certainly improved since the days of Robert Richley some 50 years before.

The youth work at Bamford took a step forward when the 3rd Rochdale Girl Guides Company was formed in September 1969. Mrs Partington (Captain) and Mrs Kennedy (Lieutenant) were the first leaders. In contrast to the new group, a much older group, the Dramatic Society celebrated their 50th Anniversary, when they presented the play "Bonaventure". This took place over 4 evenings in November and we read in the church magazine: *"the following players acquitted themselves well - Myra Loynes, Heather*

Seddon, Dorothy Hazlehurst, Derek Gooding, Vera Schroder, Ken Mills, Eileen Seddon, Frank Entwistle, Gillian Howarth, Bernice Magson and Lena Vause. They were supported by Fred Kershaw (Stage Manager), Joseph Hardman (Make-up), Edna Kershaw (Properties), Alice Pomfret (Continuity), Olive Brierley and Margaret Entwistle (Wardrobe). Alan Hargreaves was the Hall Manager, and the play was admirably produced by Irene Miller."

For the umpteenth time, Tom Vause raised the issue of evening services in the church magazine. No firm decisions were made, but at the same time, December 1969, he raised the subject of the possibility of having a Family Church, rather than the afternoon Sunday School. A Toy Service was held for the first time in 1969.

For the fourth year, the Rochdale Group of Congregational Churches organised a youth weekend. For the first two years the weekend was at Plas-y-Nant. Young people from Bamford Chapel who went in November 1969 were Martin Hazlehurst, Paul Hazlehurst, Richard Adams, Michael Goodwin, Susan Stonehouse, Patricia Hayes, Julie Lloyd-Johnson, Sylvia Walton, Ann Baron, Denise Ramm and Leslie Marsland. They were led by Sid Hazlehurst.

11. THE SEVENTIES

1970 saw more changes. Early in the year there was a meeting of Sunday School teachers where *“It was resolved by a vote of 9 to 4 that some time after March 1970 the Sunday School afternoon services be discontinued. This includes the Primary Department”*. And after 17 years as caretaker Fred Kershaw decided that it was time to step down.

Mr and Mrs Harry Lloyd stood down as members of the choir. Mr Lloyd had served for 72 years and Mrs Lloyd 51 years, they were regular members at both services each Sunday as well as choir practices. May 17th 1970 was the occasion of the Sunday School Anniversary and congregations were so good that the gallery was used for the first time for a great many years. It was also the day that “Family Church” began, the afternoon Sunday School closing for the first time in 169 years. The collection came to £141 - the highest this century.

Once again, the Sunday School did remarkably well in the Sunday School Union Scripture Exam, with ten young people winning special prizes: Ian Riley, Timothy Oldfield, Judith Marks, Ian Goodwin, Martin Hazlehurst, Gillian Hazlehurst, Tracey Lloyd-Johnson, Kristalania Boulton, Susan Stonehouse and Elizabeth Adams. Another 17 won certificates, which meant that Bamford Chapel received the Perry Shield as runner-up for the most successful Sunday School in the District.

The church magazine took on a new look in September 1970. That same month, the Rev Arthur Wilson returned to Bamford Chapel when he conducted the 169th church anniversary. The church magazine for October 1970 included the following item: *On a sunny morning in September a taxi drew up in front of the Manse and out stepped a lady from America. She was Mrs Elizabeth Fenton Carlstead of Camas, Washington, USA, who had made the pilgrimage to see the tombs and memorials of her great-grandfather, John Fenton, MP, who in the early days of our chapel, resided at the then Bamford Hall. After much chat over a coffee in the Manse, Mrs Carlstead left for London and home, the proud possessor of a china mug showing a picture of the chapel and Manse as it used to be before the Manse was re-built. Our visitor took many pictures of the chapel and grounds and evinced a lively interest in all we have done in the church of ‘her father’s and brethren’.*

The Deacons elected for the next two years in 1970 were Mrs Miller, Mrs Brierley, Mrs Smith, Mr Gooding, Mr Hodgkinson, Mr Hazlehurst, Mr Miller, Mr Shepherd and Mr Wild. The new caretakers, taking over from Fred Kershaw were Mr and Mrs Harry Norcross.

21 new members were received into the church in the first two months of 1971. These included Audrey Brierley and Michael and Doreen Lucas. The Sunday School Anniversary of 1971 took on a new form, in that instead of holding the traditional afternoon service, there was a procession of witness instead. This replaced the long-established Whit walks, which had been held for over 150 years. The route of the walk was entirely in Bamford, no longer did the procession wend its way down to Pleasant Street in Hooley Bridge. The field day was held on the previous day.

The Rev Tom Wigley, ex Bamford Sunday School scholar revisited the church in September 1971 for the 170th Anniversary of the founding. By now the national Congregational debate revolved around the proposed union with the Presbyterian Church of England and Wales. Each Congregational church had to make its own decision by December 16th 1971, and 75% had to be in favour to take Bamford Chapel into the new United Reformed Church.

For nearly 20 years there had been a lengthy series of "Take a tip" articles in the church magazine. These eventually came to an end in 1971. But they were always memorable: "a strip of elastic tacked to the front of your dressing-table drawer makes a handy holder for bottles of nail-polish and perfume" or "before mending often washed socks, shrink mending wool by holding it in the steam from the spout of a boiling kettle. Then the darns won't shrink and pucker in the wash" or "coat-shirts with collar attached can be renewed if you turn the sleeves inside out, reverse all the buttons, and press the collar the other way".

Each month, Tom Vause wrote lengthy letters of great passion and challenge in the church magazine. Such as the 3½ page letter in August 1971, when he wrote about the building: *"There is much that needs doing, which we seem to talk endlessly about, but do nothing! We are so apt to be complacent about our buildings until we realise that they are falling about our ears!"*

On October 11th 1971 a special church meeting was held to discuss the proposed Scheme of Union. Tom Vause commented the following month in the Minister's letter November 1971: *"We had an exceptionally good meeting. I would judge this to be the best church members' meeting we have had during my ministry. It was evident that those who came treated this matter with the seriousness it deserved. I am at a loss to understand why some members who could have been there didn't take the trouble to come to express what they felt about the proposals, even if they were against them. Perhaps this presents us all with an opportunity of having a look at what our membership of the church means. There is much more to it than merely attending a service of public worship, now and again. Another problem thrown up by this meeting is that of the number of names on our roll of members who have left this district and who are possibly in membership at another church. It would be helpful if any of my readers who come within this category would write and let us know if they are in membership at any other church. Certainly, we must address ourselves to this question of our members' roll."* Of the persons present 74 members voted and the result was 66 for the resolution "To unite" and 8 against the resolution. Thus the resolution was carried by a majority of 89%.

The same month saw the resignations of three long serving members of the choir - Joe and Doris Hardman and Marion Ashworth. Tom Vause raised the issue: *"Is the choir to be disbanded or not? Certainly we cannot carry on as we are at the present time"*.

The greatest sadness of 1971 was the death of the Rev James Millward. Born in Bamford, he grew up in the chapel and the Sunday School in the days of McIntosh Arthur, he worked in the local branch of the Rochdale Pioneers until he joined the forces in 1914. After the war he was Secretary of the League of Workers and led the Men's Bible Class from 1919 to 1924, when he became lay pastor of St Stephen's, Milnrow. Later he became minister at Ancoats in Manchester, followed by churches at Bootle and

Prescott. He was a chaplain to the forces in the second war. After the war he served the church at Brownhill, Blackburn and then at New Road, Bury for five years. In 1960 he went to the Congregational church at Lock's Heath in Hampshire for three years and then retired to Norden where he took over the care of the Norden church. He ministered altogether for 46 years.

At the end of 1971 Bob Tunstall stood down as church secretary, a role he had occupied for 24 years. Bob Tunstall was presented with a watch by the church. He had begun as church secretary aged 22, fresh from the army at the end of the war and his service had covered the ministry of three ministers, William Hodgkins, Arthur Wilson and Tom Vause. He was succeeded by Alan Loynes.

The result of the Union vote was announced. 82% of our churches nationally (1,668 churches altogether) had voted in favour. The new United Reformed Church would come into being in October.

In January 1972 a second Brownie pack was formed, due to the large demand. And in April a second Guide Company was formed. During Holy Week the Dramatic Society presented "The Vigil" in the chapel. Once again the annual Procession of Witness took place on the afternoon of the Sunday School Anniversary. At the Anniversary Eric Clegg was presented with a certificate for completing 25 years as Sunday School Secretary.

"Bamford Choristers sing their way to a 584 year record" - so ran the headlines in the Rochdale Observer in April 1972. The article referred to the long service of the twelve recently retired choir members at Bamford Chapel. A social was held, and at the evening service all the hymns were chosen by the retiring members. Tom Vause presented each of them with a music copy of "Congregational Praise". The members involved were husband and wife Mr H Lloyd (72 years) and Mrs E Lloyd (50 years), husband and wife Mr J H Hardman (58 years) and Mrs D Hardman (62 years), husband and wife Mr H Morley (48 years) and Mrs E Morley (49 years), husband and wife Mr A I Shepherd (45 years) and Mrs E Shepherd (45 years), Mrs M Ashworth (40 years), Miss E L Shepherd (42 years), Mrs A Astin (25 years) and Mr H W Shepherd (48 years). Between them, the twelve had given 584 years of service.

It was the end of an era in the life of Bamford Chapel. The last Assembly of the Lancashire Congregational Union took place at Bolton in April and the final May Assembly (the May Meetings) of the CCEW met in London in May. Meanwhile two former Primary teachers Heather Seddon and Helen Uren were summoned to Buckingham Palace on 2nd May to receive the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award from the Duke of Edinburgh.

There was much rebuilding and decorating going on - a new toilet block was completed at the rear of the church and front and back of the chapel were being tarmacadamed. Meanwhile the church was closed for 3 weeks in June for alterations and decoration.

Another sadness came, as the Rev Frank Shepherd, another of the Bamford Chapel and Sunday School old boys died. Frank had become a church member in the days of Robert Richley, when he was only 16, a rare thing in those days. He trained at the Lancashire Independent College and after his ordination he served churches at Dursley (32-43),

Shipley (43-46), Cleveleys (46-52), Olton (52-62) and MacFadyen, Chorlton (62-70), before his final ministry at Buxton (70-72). Tom Vause conducted Frank Shepherd's funeral at Bamford Chapel on 18th July 1972. Burials were still taking place in the old graveyard. Robert Richley had conducted over 140 burials in the graveyard, William Hodgkins just 16, and Arthur Wilson 32. Among those who William Hodgkins buried were people like Walter Abel Ashworth, Mary Alice Wood, Joseph Wood and William Wood and Edward "Ted" Tattersall. Whilst Arthur Wilson conducted the funerals of such as Rachel Jay, Mary Tattersall, Herbert Diggle and Martha Wood. And of course, all these ministers prior to Tom Vause conducted many funerals at Bamford Chapel for the Stotts, the Ashworths, the Grindrods, the Holts and the Shepherds.

The time was fast coming, when the old graveyard would be closed because it was full, Tom Vause conducted 9 burials at Bamford Chapel. When Frank Shepherd died, aged 64, he was the youngest person to be buried there in the last 50 years of the graveyard. Almost without exception, the ages were 70's - 90's, and since the days of the Rev George Chamberlain, the next 80 years only witnessed the death of 5 babies and two children.

It was 7 weeks before the chapel was ready again for worship. Much had been changed, carpets, furniture and decoration. The chancel was totally changed from its previous appearance. It was fitting, that soon after the redesigning of the church, came the formation of the new denomination. On 5th October at a great service in Westminster Abbey, the two denominations came together, Congregational and Presbyterian, into the U United Reformed Church. Here at Bamford Chapel, a TV service was conducted by Tom Vause, commemorating the occasion. One of the many changes in the new church was that Deacons were now given the title of Elder.

Tom Vause was still keen to revise the church membership roll and this happened in November 1972. As a result, the membership fell from the "book figure" of 195 to the actual figure of 159.

The 9 Deacons were increased to 11 Elders in 1973. They were W R Brierley, A Loynes, W Brisk, J Ainsworth, S Hazlehurst, M Lucas, D Magson, R Tunstall, Mrs M Gooding, Mrs I Miller, and Mrs E Smith. After countless years, Vernon Greaves stood down as editor of the church magazine. Michael Lucas took his place as editor. The church magazine wrote: *It is impossible to describe adequately the service to Bamford Chapel of Vernon Greaves, whose church membership extends over sixty years. During that period he has, in many cases continuously, sat on almost every church committee and his particular contributions have included the following: Sunday School Superintendent, Secretary and teacher, Whit Friday Secretary, League of Workers Council, Treasurer 'Scholars Special Fund', member of the Finance Committee - all these activities Vernon has involved himself in for fifty years. He was a founder member of our enthusiastic Dramatic Society, organised the sending of parcels to troops during the war, has been a member of the choir and responsible for the production of this magazine since it was launched in 1943.*

At the start of 1973, Tom Vause welcomed 10 new church members, including John and Pat Lapworth. The church membership now stood at 170, and the Sunday School about 110. As a guide to numbers worshipping, 140 were at the January communion, and the

evening services averaged 30. During his time at Bamford Chapel, Tom Vause constantly queried the future of the evening service - the topic came up several times each year in the church magazine. In March 1973 an experiment was tried by shortening the service to ¾ hour, followed by refreshments and discussion. Previously Tom had tried afternoon services and film services among other ventures.

Socially the Dramatic Society still flourished. In April 1973, they presented a drama "Kind Cousin" produced by Ken Mills. The cast included Margaret Gooding, Eileen Seddon, Myra Loynes, Margaret Frain, Irene Miller and John Lapworth. The Ladies' Fellowship had been meeting regularly for many years. They met on Thursdays and the Ladies' Guild met fortnightly. The Men's Fellowship had never been stronger, with regular meetings and weekends.

The church had a Visitation Campaign around the new houses off War Office Road and Tom Vause commented afterwards in June 1973: *"I would like to concentrate on one important matter, ie our recent visitation of the estate off War Office Road. The first thing I want to mention is the great encouragement which our plea for visitors gave me. We spent two nights on the estate and the 'exercise' gave much food for thought. Whilst many thought the idea of paying them a visit a good and friendly gesture, most of the visitors were not a little surprised by the general attitude of disinterestedness of many towards the church. As in other areas we met many non-white and non-British residents, yet we were received graciously by them. As in most visitation campaigns, we found many 'hiding' under the Church of England banner, and quite a number of our new neighbours professed themselves Roman Catholics. These latter were amongst the most impressed by the idea that we should undertake such a door-to-door visitation."*

Jack Howarth, who had been the church organist for 8 years, left the area to live in Blackpool. For four evenings in December the Dramatic Society produced a pantomime "Young Lochinvar" with a cast of about forty children.

1974 began with a bang. Nineteen new church members were received into the fellowship at the first communion of the year. In the years 1971-1974, 80 new members had been received. John Whiteley became Church Secretary in place of Alan Loynes who had moved to Ilkley, whilst Howard Sharp replaced Sid Hazlehurst as Sunday School Superintendent. There was an economic crisis in the country, with the cost of fuel escalating rapidly. Locally, the cost of church heating had doubled in six months, so in an attempt to counteract this, the church rearranged its weekly calendar, so that no heating needed to be used for four days each week.

Mr Wastie was now the organist and choirmaster, Walter Brisk led the Youth Fellowship and Terry Brierley continued as Church Treasurer. Obviously, problems occurred from time to time, like when Mr Wastie left to become the organist at St Luke's Heywood. And then there was a dip in the fortunes of the Dramatic Society, and it was agreed that "outsiders" be invited to join the dwindling numbers of church folk in the society. Cyril Haslam became the new organist, whilst Derek Gooding took over as choirmaster.

A fairly new feature of church life was the growing number of young people who left each year for college and university. Tom Vause's frustrations came to the surface again, when he compared the chapel in 1974 to a car running on 2 star petrol. *"The machine*

seems sluggish, the pace has slackened off, the engine is 'pinking' somewhat and I feel we need an injection of some good 'higher grade' mixture." He complained about only 25 members being at the church meeting and he pleaded for people to join the choir. "We have been in the doldrums for such a long time."

The following month, he continued in the same vein. *"I ask you, in all fairness, and with a sense of some personal disquiet, what can we do to rouse some enthusiasm, and to get us out of this state of general apathy with which so many of you are enmeshed?" He continued "Quite honestly, I feel despondent when we ask for members of this, that or some other committee; when we appeal for people to sing in the choir, when we ask for people to offer themselves for service within the Eldership (to cite only a few needs) and to find so few of you willing to offer yourselves for a period of service. In another society, such dis-interest would not be tolerated. I do not know why I get myself all steamed up about these things. Why should I worry? Why indeed! One satisfaction, at least, remains, what I seek to do, and have done for nearly ten years, is to 'roll the old chariot along', and my, has it needed some pushing."*

The new Elders elected in 1975 were J Whiteley, W R Brierley, Mrs O Brierley, T Baron, W Brisk, Mrs M Gooding, D Gooding, S Hazlehurst, Mrs I Miller, H Sharp and R Tunstall. For the first time, Tom Vause spoke in the church magazine about his retirement, due later in the year. He struck a prophetic note when he wrote in January 1975: *"there may come a time when Bamford (of all places) will not be able to have or afford a minister of their own."* That month Harry Lloyd, very much part of the old Bamford scene, died aged 86.

Tom Vause retired from the ministry on April 6th 1975. Both services that day were before full congregations, with many of Tom's family taking part musically in the evening service. At his last church meeting, Max Miller paid tribute to Tom Vause: *"He met at first with considerable inertia and lethargy, but in the course of time, he has pushed through many changes, all of which, I think all of us will agree, have proved him to be right. Here may I remind you, and I do so for memories are short, that we have modernised the chancel, decorated the church, completely carpeted the church. We have modernised the kitchen, surfaced the drives and the yard, built new toilets, formed a car park, decorated the Sunday School, the Primary and now all the rest of the building. Apart from all his excellent pastoral work to which Mr Brisk refers, Mr Vause had during his life time been carpenter, painter, gardener, grasscutter and haymaker, leaf gatherer and burner, boilerman, stage manager and clerk of works. I think we shall need two men to replace him!"*

Walter Brisk said: *"We have all come to chapel each Sunday knowing that the service would be thoughtful and stimulating, even if at times, we were rightly to be provoked and startled! The other aspect of Mr Vause's ministry, which has impressed me has been his quiet but constant care and concern for the unfortunate, the elderly, the lonely, the bereaved and the sick."*

Before Tom Vause retired, the church had already extended a call to the Rev Jeffrey T Yates. Jeff had previously ministered at Poulton le Fylde and Sefton Road, Morecambe. He and his wife Sheila and their children, Helen and Katherine arrived in Bamford during April and the Induction Service was on 21st May 1975. It is estimated that over 400

people were present that day at Bamford Chapel, and the Moderator, the Rev Douglas Stewart said it was the largest Induction Service he had ever conducted.

Within the first fortnight, Jeff Yates had begun a sports evening for boys and a Sunday Night meeting for young people in the Manse after the evening service. For the second year running, a party of Bamford Chapel young people went for a weekend to the Braithwaite Adventure Centre near Keighley. There was certainly a sense of renewal in the air at Bamford Chapel in 1975. Congregations increased and weekly offerings increased to an average of over £40 for the first time. The Garden Party of 1975 raised a record £225 (the previous year 1974 had raised the record £188). Mr and Mrs Harry Norcross retired as church caretakers and Evelyn Smith took over the role.

A lot of things happened very quickly in the Autumn of 1975. A Junior Section of the Boys' Brigade began under the leadership of Walter Brisk (with the help of Kathleen Friend and Sheila Yates). A Badminton Club began in September and a Bible Study and Prayer Group commenced in October.

New faces began to regularly appear week by week: the Dutsons, the Gates and the Griffiths. The Youth Fellowship flourished with the current committee: Malcolm Gate (Chairman), Elizabeth Adams (Secretary), Tracy Lloyd Johnson (Assistant Secretary), Neil Goodwin (Treasurer), Timothy Oldfield (Assistant Treasurer), Elizabeth Brierley (Catering Secretary), Judith Dann, Louise Atkins and Steven Needley (Committee Members).

Offerings increased in a month from £40 to £50. But the major event took place in October when the URC at Heywood came together with Bamford Chapel in a joint pastorate. 17 new church members were received during December, which took the total membership over the 200 mark (the new members included the Gates, the Atkins and numerous members of the Youth Fellowship).

1976 saw the 175th Anniversary of the founding of Bamford Chapel. It was to be a memorable year. Family hours began to be held after the Evening Service, the Men's Fellowship Weekend was more popular than ever and soon after the Badminton Club opened, the Tennis Club was re-formed and 34 young people from Bamford and Heywood went to Hammarbank for the weekend.

Edith Shepherd died in March. She had been one of the most faithful of church members, having served as a Sunday School teacher, a choir member for 42 years, a member of the Ladies' Guild and a talented member of the Dramatic Society.

12 young people from Farnborough in Hampshire, called "The Conquerors" came for a weekend mission to Bamford over Easter 1976. The Dramatic Society under the guidance of Irene Miller produced "Sunrise over Olivet" at both Bamford and Heywood. The cast included Margaret Frain, Pat Lapworth, Eileen Seddon, Margaret and Derek Gooding, Richard Oldroyd and Richard Adams. Susan Butler of our 3rd Rochdale Guide Company became a Queen's Guide. An art exhibition was held for a fortnight in June to commemorate the 175th Anniversary. The drawings and paintings were on the theme "Bamford Chapel and the surrounding area".

April 1976 saw an interesting piece of history for Bamford Chapel, when two ladies, Margaret Whiteley and Elizabeth Adams, did the duties of Door Stewards . Until then, the task had been a “men only” job.

133 members received the sacrament at the June Communion, and a further ten members were received into the fellowship of the church. These included Peter and Lesley Sutton, Judith and Malcolm Gate, Louise Atkins, Paul Hazlehurst and Philip Brisk. This made a total of 37 newcomers who had been received into membership during the first year of Jeff Yates’s ministry.

In June 1976, a 36 mile sponsored walk was held to commemorate the 175th Church Anniversary. Why 36 miles? It was made up of a yard for every day of the 175 years! Dozens of people began, but only John Ainsworth and Richard Adams completed the full course. 12 year old Bridget Oldfield achieved an amazing 31 miles. In August, two old friends officiated at the annual Garden Party, Noel Richley, the son of the previous minister, Rev Robert Richley, returned to be the Opener, whilst Rupert Milnes, a former Sunday School Superintendent was the Chairman for the afternoon. The event raised a record £275.

Cyril Haslam, church organist for the past two years, died suddenly in July 1976. Two couples, who had been married at Bamford Chapel in 1926 by the Rev Robert Richley, celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversaries in 1976. They were Mr and Mrs Joe Hardman and Mr and Mrs William Ashworth. In September, the Company Section of the 2nd Rochdale Boys Brigade was formed at Bamford Chapel. At the same time, a Mother and Toddler Group began to meet every Wednesday afternoon under Bernice Magson.

The Moderator of the General Association of the URC, the Rev Richard Hall was the guest preacher at the 175th Church Anniversary held on 12th September. The previous evening at an Anniversary Dinner held at Rochdale Town Hall, the Provincial Moderator, the Rev Douglas Stewart had brought the greetings of the denomination to the church, and the Rochdale MP, Cyril Smith had spoken on behalf of the guests.

The month after the two Golden Weddings, another one was celebrated, this time that of Mr and Mrs Vernon Greaves, who had also been married by Robert Richley in 1926.

In the church magazine of November 1976, a prayer of thanksgiving was printed for our church:

“Almighty God, we do love you and this place in which your honour dwells. We want to thank you for your great goodness and love made known to those who have belonged to this church.

Our minds go back in thought to that day of opening in 1801, and we feel grateful to those who were led by your spirit to build here a house of prayer to the honour of your name. We rejoice in the rich heritage they have passed on to us and feel privileged to follow after them.

We thank you Father, for all who have belonged to this fellowship who are now part of the Church Triumphant. They surround us like a great company of witness. We bless you for their loyalty and devotion to spiritual things and pray for grace to follow their example.

We thank you for faithful ministers of the gospel, for dedicated Deacons and Elders, for gifted and conscientious lay preachers, musicians, Sunday School teachers and youth leaders, and for all those members of the church who have remained faithful to their high calling in Christ.

Father, we have so much to be thankful for as we remember the life of your church here. Give us grace to express our gratitude for the blessings we have received through the witness of our forefathers in the faith, and help us to be worthy followers of you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

At the October Communion another seven members were welcomed, including David and Margaret Watson, who transferred from Cannock Chase. That same month, Irene Miller and Derek Gooding with the help of 30 enthusiastic young people produced "Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat" for an evening service. After 25 years as the organist at Heywood, Geoff Ogden became the regular organist at Bamford Chapel. At the election of Elders in November six Elders stood down: Irene Miller, Margaret Gooding, John Whiteley, Tom Baron, Sid Hazlehurst and Bob Tunstall. The six new Elders taking their place were: Auriel Atkins, Marjorie Goodwin, Ronald Ashton, Wilfred Dutson, Bob Gate and Norman Oldfield. These joined five who were re-elected: Terry and Olive Brierley, Walter Brisk, Derek Gooding and Howard Sharp. And Wilf Dutson took over from John Whiteley as Church Secretary. Jeff Yates said in December in his final letter of 1976: *"As this will be my last message for 1976, let me put on record my thanks to all who have helped to make this special anniversary year so memorable. What marvellous fellowship we have known, what splendid co-operation there has been among all sections of the church and what joy we have experienced in God's house. In celebrating the 175th Anniversary of our church, we have found inspiration for the future and I want us all to go forward with expectancy to the year ahead. God is greatly to be praised for all that He has done for us. As a culmination to the special events our Thank-offering Gift Day on 21st November raised the grand total of £1,098. This is an excellent result and a fitting conclusion to our special anniversary year. Thank you, one and all, for your generous support throughout the year."*

A few statistics help fill in the scene at the turn of the year. There was now a weekly attendance of 70 children in the Sunday School, 217 church members, and average attendances at communion in 1976 had been 114 at the morning service and 55 in the evening.

Beth Stott stood down as Secretary of the Ladies' Guild, after 32 years in office. Yvonne and Norman Oldfield began a Saturday evening Youth Club in 1977. The Sunday night gathering in the manse was now averaging 30, and full to capacity. Fifty young people from Bamford Chapel and Heywood went for the now regular weekend to Hammarbank.

Bamford Chapel formed a cricket team and were elected as members of the Rochdale Midweek Cricket League. Club captain was the minister, Jeff Yates and vice-captain was Peter Sutton. Still on the sporting theme, a service of thanksgiving for the Joys of Sport was held in April. Guest speakers were Alan Wharton the Lancashire and England cricketer and Alan Waldron the Bolton Wanderers footballer.

160 people shared in the Easter Sunday communion, probably the largest number ever recorded for Bamford Chapel at one communion service. In May, at the Sunday School Anniversary a May morning breakfast was held for the first time.

The sporting side of Bamford Chapel was now at its height. The second season of the Badminton Club closed, as the second season of the new Tennis Club began. The new church cricket team began their first season by losing to Sudden Cricket Club and beating Arrows Cricket Club. £352 was raised at the Garden Party.

A number of church members were regularly involved in providing transport to and from Birch Hill for stroke patients. This was the start of many years helping with the local Stroke Club. A team of seven led by the Rev Bob Gordon of Durham URC led the Church Anniversary weekend in September 1977.

The Rev Tom Vause returned to conduct the Harvest Festival at Bamford Chapel. Though retired, he was now giving oversight to the church at Norden.

Two dozen young people from Bamford Chapel travelled to London in October for the fifth Anniversary of the founding of the URC. Under the guidance of Pam Sharp, Richard Oldroyd and Jeff and Sheila Yates, they stayed at Shepherd's Bush for the weekend, joining with over 2,000 others in "Celebration 77".

Christmas 1977 saw an augmented choir conducted by Walter Brisk and accompanied by organist Geoff Ogden, perform Part One of "The Messiah". Life-long member and ex-Deacon Arthur Ashworth died at the start of 1978. Fifty-two teenagers journeyed up to Hammarbank in the Lake District for the annual youth weekend, led by Richard Aust, a teacher from Winsford URC, Howard and Pam Sharp, Yvonne Oldfield and Merrill Hall. Another youth weekend was held at Poulton le Fylde in April, when 27 young people visited the URC there. This was the church where Jeffrey Yates had begun his ministry.

Earlier in 1978, the young people of the church had raised over £300 for "£ending for £ife", a world development programme supported by the URC. Despite there being such a sense of life and growth in the chapel in those years, Norman Oldfield commented after the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service, held in January at Bamford Chapel: *"How sad, when on that evening, so few of us turned up to welcome our fellow Christians from St Michael's. It is our collective shame that our normal evening services are so badly attended, but, can we really expect our talk of Unity to be taken seriously, if most of us cannot alter our schedules to share in worship with our brothers and sisters from St Michael's once a year? In my humble opinion, we let ourselves down badly on this occasion."*

April saw a week of visitation on the Bowling Green Farm estate. Eight new members were received into church membership on Easter Day 1978: Brenda Griffiths, Mr and Mrs Richard Oldroyd, Jeffrey Short, Chris Telford, Gillian Oldfield, Susan Büttner and Nicola Ashton. These were followed by four more new members in May: Isobel Brown, Noreen Dick, Jennifer Dann and John Pelling.

The church took part in the Festival North West, organised at Lancaster University by the North West Province of the URC. Once again, the year closed with an augmented church

choir of some 50 voices, under the leadership of Walter Brisk, performing Part One of Handel's Messiah.

A pre-junior Section of Boys' Brigade was formed in 1979 under the leadership of Gillian and Finlay Galloway and Mike and Diane Davies. Tracey Lloyd Johnson from Bamford Chapel was selected as one of the three young people of the North West Province to visit Zambia that August.

Maybe we should pause to recall the church officers in 1979. The Elders were Winifred Schofield, Ron Ashton, Terry Brierley, John Ainsworth, Wilf Dutson, Mike Lucas, Bob Gate, Derek Gooding, Marjorie Goodwin, Norman Oldfield, Ian Dick and Sid Hazlehurst. Wilf Dutson was Church Secretary and Terry Brierley was Church Treasurer. Mrs Butler and Mrs McLean looked after the two Guide Companies at the time, and Mrs Smith and Mrs Teuton led the two Brownie Guide Companies. Mrs Hall was the Junior Church Superintendent, whilst Eric Clegg continued as Junior Church Secretary. Walter Brisk was the Boys' Brigade Captain and the Choirmaster too, Geoff Ogden was the organist and Evelyn Smith was the church caretaker.

In February of 1979, the annual Men's weekend was held. The Saturday evening as usual took the form of a concert "A Knight Out", a series of sketches about the various activities of Chapel life. Jeff Yates conducted the evening, and on the following Sunday, the services were led by the Rev David Wiseman of Poulton le Fylde URC. Once again, as Jeff Yates had conducted the Sunday School Anniversary in 1969, prior to his ministry at Bamford (in 1975), so David Wiseman would return to Bamford to minister some 18 years later.

The young people had paid a weekend visit to Poulton le Fylde the year before and in 1979 they visited Wilmslow URC for the weekend. In return the church played host to a variety of other fellowships in 1979: Port Sunlight, Swinton, Wilmslow and Poulton le Fylde.

Two life-long members of the Chapel died in 1979: Edith Shepherd who had sung in the choir for over 43 years, and Maggie Rowley. Sport was still a major part of the church life and as the chapel cricket team (with Paul Hazlehurst's batting, Paul Duttine's bowling and Mike Lucas's wicket-keeping) returned to action, so did the chapel Tennis Club. And the Bamford Chapel football team was beaten 3-0 by Rochdale URC!

Weekly offerings were now topping £100 and many newer hymns were being sung from "New Church Praise". The Garden Party raised a record £385, despite the steady rain of the morning. The Rev Leslie Challinor, vicar of St Michael's retired after 23 years in the village. He had worked alongside three Bamford Chapel Ministers, Arthur Wilson, Tom Vause and Jeff Yates, and Bamford Chapel made a presentation to him on his retirement.

Sixty members from Bamford and Heywood spent the weekend at Abbots Hall, Grange over Sands for the first Church Fellowship weekend. Howard Sharp, a member of the church put his name forward as a candidate for the URC ministry. In November 1979, 11 new members were added to the Bamford Chapel fellowship. These included Charles and Linda Peacock and Ian and Muriel Sturrock. That made a total of 108 new members in the last four years, and a membership of 239. December saw a change for the choir,

for instead of performing excerpts from the “Messiah”, they produced “Night of Miracles” with solos performed by Suzanne Mather, Derek Gooding, John Telford and Mike Weston.

12. THE EIGHTIES

1980 saw the beginning nationally of the Decade of Evangelism, and Rochdale was preparing for "The Whole Story Festival for the Whole of Rochdale". This was an evangelical, ecumenical campaign led by the Rev David Watson and a team from York. St Michael's had a new vicar, the Rev Richard Wilcock and Bamford Chapel was able to welcome him at the United Service held in January.

The Rev John Henry Peck visited the Yates family at the manse in January. He came from the First Presbyterian Church in Lancaster, Ohio and seeds were sown for an Anglo-American exchange with Bamford Chapel in the summer of 1980. Just in case anyone should think that life at Bamford Chapel in 1980 was all joy, there were tensions, as Jeff Yates wrote in his January church magazine: *"How great it is to keep on welcoming new folks into the church, but how sad it is to see others opting out. I am aware of the fact that as many join our ranks, others who were once key figures are noticeable by their absence. There is always need to keep up a pastoral care for those who absent themselves from God's House, who feel that their faith has been lost, or who sense that their contribution is no longer required. The lot of a policeman is reputed not always to be a happy one and many a parson must at times feel that he is fighting on very many fronts at the same time."*

As part of the Rochdale Festival, Bamford Chapel hosted a Gospel Rock Concert on 22nd February. A group called the Bill Mason Band played to a packed church, and the following month another large congregation shared an evening at Bamford Chapel with members of the Riding Lights Drama Group.

Howard Sharp was accepted as a student for training in the ministry at Northern College and that Easter, Peter and Eileen Francis and Sheila James joined the church. A bookstall began at church and over £85 worth of books were sold in the first 3 weeks. The young people visited Marsden URC/Methodist church for a weekend in March. April 1980 saw another visit to Bamford Chapel by the Rev David Wiseman of Poulton le Fylde in his role as Mission Secretary for the North West Province.

The summer of 1980 saw the Anglo-American church exchange with the First Presbyterian Church in Lancaster, Ohio. The Rev John Peck and his wife Corinne were the visitors to the Bamford manse. Shortly before the Yates family flew out to the USA, 17 new church members were welcomed to the fellowship, including Addie and Barbara Redmond, Gordon James, Suzanne Mather and Andrew Friend. This brought the church membership upto 250.

The summer proved to be a wonderful experience for both churches and both ministers with their families. During the summer, the church again enjoyed the North West Festival Provincial Day at Lancaster, and the following week in July, the new URC in Rochdale St Andrew's opened.

As Jeff and Sheila Yates arrived home from Ohio, so Paul and Linda Snell appeared on the Bamford Chapel scene. Paul was a final year theological student and he was sharing in life at Heywood and Bamford as his Internship training. As Paul arrived, so Howard Sharp left to begin his training at Manchester for the ministry. He was the first candidate

for the ministry to come from Bamford Chapel since Tom Wigley, some 30 years earlier. Plans were being made for building extensions to the chapel property, and it was estimated that £40,000 would be needed to see the project through.

October saw a successful Church Weekend held in Colwyn Bay, whilst the Youth Fellowship visited Port Seaton in Scotland for the second year running. A two day Bazaar was held in November, opened by Irene Miller, and this raised over £1,200 for the Building Fund. One week later the Gift Day raised £2,200 and the church was now past the £25,000 mark. In September 1980, the Girls' Brigade began, and inside a year, 27 were attending.

At the end of the year five Elders stood down. They were Derek Gooding, John Ainsworth, Ron Ashton, Michael Lucas and Ian Dick. They were replaced by Yvonne Oldfield, Finlay Galloway, John Telford, Walter Brisk and Bob Tunstall. As the year closed, so new members continued to be added: Eddie and Iris Cresswell, Ken and Elizabeth Greer and John and Angela Hall.

At the beginning of 1981, David Watson took over as Boys' Brigade Captain from Walter Brisk; Koinonia, a Sunday night young people's fellowship began; and under the leadership of Addie Redmond, the Chapel Drama Group was revived. The Chapel Gospel Group had chosen the name "Kinsfolk" and they were in big demand to sing in various churches. January saw them at Hoole in Chester. New church members included the Lambs and the Edmonds and church membership now stood at 280.

Dr Jack McKelvey, Principal of the Manchester Theological College, led the Missionary Weekend in March. Later, Kinsfolk performed alongside a Christian rock group called "Lazer" (unfortunately misspelt in the church magazine as "Lager"!), and when Jeff Yates baptised young Lauren Kenyon, it was the 100th baby he had baptised since his arrival at Bamford six years earlier.

Easter 1981 was memorable. The choir performed "Olivet to Calvary", whilst the Drama Group produced "The Substitute", a play centred around the character of Barrabas. Work amongst local children seemed to be at its height, the 913 club flourished (this was the Friday Youth Club for 9's to 13's) and the Pee Jays now had 26 boys registered (these were the pre-Junior section of the Boys' Brigade). There were now over 60 boys in the three Boys' Brigade sections. Naturally, the number of children in church each Sunday brought its problems, witness this note of caution from Sunday School Superintendent Mrs M Hall in June 1981: *"Just a note that concerns everyone. We expect a certain level of good behaviour from the children while in church. Where necessary, children who are deliberately naughty and cause a disturbance are disciplined. However, leaders cannot supervise the entire church so we ask for help of the congregation to deal with trouble on the spot. 'Grave looks of disapproval' are ignored by children today, so I suggest a touch on the shoulder and a quick word immediately the disturbance begins."*

Collections were now averaging over £200 each week. Rev Jeff Yates himself expressed that there were times of doubt and disappointment in July 1981: *"Of course, life isn't all roses! How could it be in so vigorous a family of many talented people? There are those times when I observe how people go off in a 'huff', argue with each other and even end up scrapping. I hear murmurings of discontent and downright statements of disapproval*

about what is being done by the church. There are those who were once in positions of leadership who are now conspicuous by their prolonged absence and others who make it plain that they are not at all pleased with the style of leadership they witness. And my heart goes out to them, for I know what the Master tells me about the seriousness of causing any one to stumble. Amidst all the comings and goings, the debates and the conversations, I try to latch on to what is being said through both loud and quite still small voices and at times I wonder what purpose God really had in bringing me to these paths of service. I try to gauge where I fit in to it all and if some more gifted minister, who could actually teach, be a better pastor, be more understanding and have a more pronounced expertise than myself, would not be better looking from the manse window than myself. Perhaps there are yet other windows for me to look out of, to widen my vision and deepen my understanding?"

A Tuesday morning Prayer Circle began in October 1981. That month, the Rev Arthur Wilson who had been minister at Bamford Chapel from 1949 to 1964 died, and the Rev Jeff Yates, Vernon Greaves, Bert Morley and Leonard Howarth attended the funeral service at Inglewhite.

There were 57 children on the Primary Department register of Junior Church and their teachers were Gillian Oldfield, Elizabeth Brierley, Jennifer Shooter, Bernice Magson, Alan Hargreaves and Margaret Gooding.

Much was also going on among the older generation too. For six years, on alternate Sunday evenings, a group from Bamford Chapel had visited Meadow View, an old people's home on Cutgate. There, a short service was conducted after the chapel evening service. On 11th November, a Luncheon Club began for the older members of the community with 15 members. The leaders of this new venture were Nell Davies, Audrey Telford, Dorothy Hazlehurst and Betty Ainsworth. After just two months this had risen to above the 20 mark.

The Church Fellowship Weekend at Colwyn Bay was a great success. The leader was the Rev Geoffrey Hayes of Gatley on the theme "The Local Church and The Gospel". The new extensions to the Primary rooms were opened on 15th November 1981 by Mr D F Banwell, Secretary of the URC Buildings Committee. That same weekend £2,934 was raised for the Building Fund at the Church Gift Day.

A sad event took place in February 1982 when Vernon Greaves died. The following was written in the church magazine in March: *OBITUARY In the death of Vernon Greaves our Chapel loses one of the longest and most faithful of servants. Vernon started coming to the Chapel at the age of three, brought by a dearly loved aunt, and he has remained part of our fellowship these past 82 years. During those long years he has served the Church and Sunday School in many capacities. He was the Sunday School Superintendent for 50 years. He was one of the founder members of the Chapel Drama Group and played parts in many productions staged. As a Deacon and Church member he showed the utmost conscientiousness and through all the years supported all the activities that were part of the Chapel's life. He sang in the church choir, took a great interest in the Men's Fellowship; as Secretary of the Comforts Fund throughout the duration of the 1939-45 War he wrote regularly to the young men and women from the*

Chapel keeping them up to date with news and sending gifts of food and knitwear; and generally loved to be involved in all that our fellowship sought to do.

A great recorder of Chapel events and former Editor of the Newsletter, we owe much to Vernon for keeping papers, cuttings and magazines over the years of his life. Bamford Chapel was indeed very dear to his heart and we shall greatly miss him sitting in the back pew, taking the offering, paying visits to old friends and generally seeking the good of the whole fellowship. We thank God for his long life of Christian service and commend him to the care and keeping of our Heavenly Father. As someone has said, the passing of Vernon is the end of an era.”

The Chapel car park was now complete after work by the corporation. The month after, plans were afoot to demolish the mill and chimney of Porritts across the road. For over a century, mill and chapel, those who had worked there and those who had worshipped there, had been inextricably joined. The church drama group had been revived and on Good Friday, they produced “The Word and the Flesh”.

In July Bamford Chapel played host to two major events. On 10th July, members from the North East Manchester District joined to celebrate a District Day at Bamford. Whilst the following week, the church played host to ZIP (the Zambian-Indian Project, a youth project organised by the Council for World Mission).

The cricket team was enjoying a good season. The church magazine *commented* “*that the captaincy of Paul Hazlehurst is proving an inspiration, as is his batting ability. Ken Greer had starred as a bowler in two matches, taking 5 for 18 and 7 for 18. Alistair Wilkinson also starred as the wicket-keeper.*” The Garden Party, opened in 1982 by Miss Beth Stott, raised a record £569. Yvonne Oldfield, an Elder was led to offer herself as a candidate for the Auxiliary Ministry.

1983 saw an appeal set up for a new organ which was estimated might cost £8,000. £4,000 was raised in the first month. Two other long-standing features of Bamford Chapel began in January 1983: the Garden of Remembrance was opened for the interment of ashes on 19th January; John Pelling, who had died in October, was one of the first to be buried in the Garden of Remembrance. A series of Lunch-Time concerts began.

Just prior to Christmas 1982, the choir had performed “A Grain of Mustard Seed” and in February 1983 they were invited to perform it again at Bethel Independent Methodist Church at Wigan. Soon afterwards, they began rehearsals for “Saints Alive” another musical by Roger Jones. By now, Kinsfolk were at the height of their fame, performing in a wide variety of church services across the district, as well as recording two cassettes.

Neil Watson became the first boy in Bamford Chapel Boys’ Brigade Company to attain the Queen’s Award. On a more local level, on 16th January 1983 Eric Clegg was presented with a watch by life long friend Bob Tunstall, to mark Eric’s retirement from Sunday School Secretary after a period of 35 years service.

Joint Lenten Bible studies were held with members of St Michael’s Church. In March, the Bishop of Bombay, the Rev Samuel Joshua was the preacher at the Bamford Chapel

Mission Weekend Service. On the social side, Addie Redmond produced "Puss In Boots". The church magazine summed it up: *"5 performances, 675 tickets sold 10 days before the opening night, 80 people involved, 348 bottles of pop drunk, 330 cups of tea served, 310 packets of crisps consumed and £480 profit made."*

Since 1975, Jeff Yates had been minister of both Bamford Chapel and Heywood URC. In October 1982, Jeff became Interim Moderator at Norden URC and in his words: *"he felt that some definite progress had been made in recovering the close link Bamford and Norden always enjoyed upto 1965"*. In 1983 he was also elected as Chairman of the North East Manchester District of the URC, alongside Elder Bob Gate, who was District Treasurer. The Church meeting in March made mention of the 60 years continual service given to the church in secretarial and financial matters by Harold Shepherd, now in his 80th year.

A new church organ was ordered from Makin's of Rochdale, at a cost of just over £8,000. By now, the Elders were: Terry Brierley, Walter Brisk, Wilf Dutson, Peter Francis, Finlay Galloway, Pat Gate, Sid Hazlehurst, Yvonne Oldfield, Linda Peacock, Jack Proffitt, Ian Sturrock and John Telford. Finlay Galloway had taken over as Church Secretary from Wilf Dutson and Terry Brierley remained Church Treasurer.

On Whit Sunday the choir performed "Saints Alive" and prior to the performance there had been a Whit walk around the district by Bamford Chapel and St Michael's members. This had first happened the previous Pentecost in 1982. Financial Secretary Arthur Wilkinson died in 1983.

Each year a good group of members (16 in 1983) attended the CWM holiday conference in Swanwick and in 1983 Jeff Yates and Finlay Galloway were the Sports and Entertainment officers. Ten friends from Lancaster, Ohio came to visit Bamford in July and their programme included visits to York, Chester, the Lake District, Styal Mill, Chatsworth House and the URC Provincial Day at Lancaster. At the Provincial Day, the church choir, Kinsfolk and various soloists entertained the Province, and included a full performance of "Saints Alive".

Emma Lloyd died aged 89. She had been a lifelong member of the church and had sung in the choir for over 50 years. Howard and Pamela Sharp opened the Garden Party, prior to their leaving Bamford Chapel for their new ministry in Pontypridd URC, and £550 was raised. September 1983 saw the opening of the new organ. The previous Benson organ had served the church for over 90 years. Ronald Frost, organist at St Ann's Church in Manchester played an opening recital, and the following day was quite musical too, with the Bamford Chapel choir taking part in the BBC "Ever Singing Festival" at the Free Trade Hall. Meanwhile in October, the North East Manchester District held a service at Bamford Chapel when the Moderator, the Rev Tony Burnham was the preacher. In November, Peter Meek was the latest Bamford Chapel member to offer himself as a candidate for the URC ministry.

Christmas 1983 was as full as ever. Addie Redmond produced the Christmas play "The Business of Good News". Carol singers went out to Heywood Civic Centre, Marland Hospital and the Nursing Homes at Roch Bank, Meadowview and Beaumonds. There was a new style church magazine in 1984, and we should take this opportunity of

remembering those who carried some of the responsibilities in the chapel in 1984. Ken Greer was the Junior Church Superintendent, Lesley Sutton the Junior Church Secretary, Nell Davies organised the Luncheon Club, Tracey Lloyd Johnson and Elizabeth Adams organised the Hay Hodos group on Sunday evenings and Paul Duttine led the Koinonia group on the same evening.

1984 saw a national Christian event called "Mission England" and here in Bamford the Chapel was preparing for an extensive house to house visitation later in the year. Jeff Yates was celebrating his fiftieth birthday and his 25th year in the ministry and for the first time in his life he took a sabbatical, away from church and home. Jeff stayed for a couple of months in Stainton near Penrith and there he wrote a chapter about Bamford Chapel in a new book called "Ten Growing Churches". He also began to condense his lifetime's habit of diary-writing into a short autobiography. Later, he went on a course run by the Church of Scotland at Carberry Tower just outside Edinburgh.

The church choir performed Stainer's "Crucifixion" at Easter, and the following month a united choir of ninety voices from the various churches of Norden and Bamford came together to lead a large congregation in "Songs of Praise".

Whit week saw the Bamford visitation, when 34 visitors from Bamford Chapel and St Michael's visited over 1,700 homes in pairs. As part of "Mission England", the Hay Hodos Group visited Wallasey for the weekend, including a visit to hear Dr Billy Graham preach at Anfield Stadium in Liverpool. Yvonne Oldfield concentrated much of her ministerial training at Norden URC.

Way back in January 1943, a decision was taken at Bamford Chapel to commence a monthly magazine. There had been many church magazines prior to this, but we have very few copies. In October 1984, Bamford Chapel saw the 500th edition of the current series of church magazines. In that issue, Jeff Yates took time to pay tribute to the Rev William Hodgkins for founding it in 1943 and to the editors, like Vernon Greaves who had put together most of the material in those 500 issues, upto 1984 when the editor was Fred Holt and the distributor, Betty Ainsworth.

Another link with the past was severed when Harold Shepherd died. The Obituary in October 1984 said: *"The sudden death of our dear fellow member Harold Shepherd has taken from us one who has given a whole lifetime of service to the Chapel. How we shall miss that smiling, cheerful face of Harold in our acts of worship and Chapel events. He was so regular in worship, so committed to the on-going life of the church, so ready to serve in the various ways open to him. A most loyal Deacon, choir member, supporter of most events, for over many years he served as Church Secretary, Church Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer. For a period of over sixty years he held a major office in the church and always gave his service most cheerfully and conscientiously."*

The Indoor Bowling Club recommenced in September 1984 with a membership each week of almost forty. 1984 came to a close with the election of Elders for the coming year. The main changes in the Eldership were the retirement of Wilf Dutson, Sid Hazlehurst and Yvonne Oldfield as Serving Elders, with the return of Marjorie Goodwin as a Serving Elder and Eleanor Muir and David Watson being elected as Elders for the first time. There were now 291 members on the church membership roll.

Over previous months, there had been hints and suggestions in various ways from Jeff Yates that maybe it was time for him to be moving on to another pastorate. In hindsight as we read the church magazine for January 1985, the same could be said. He reflected on recent visits to his previous pastorates at Poulton, Sefton Road, Morecambe and commented *“I expect the day will come when Bamford and Heywood will be thought of in the same way, when we have finally moved”*.

Doris Hardman died aged 84. For some 62 years she had sung in the chapel choir and played an important part in every aspect of the church’s life.

It was in January 1985 that the Rev Jeff Yates accepted a call from Hale URC to be their new minister. During the previous year the church had adopted a scheme whereby all church related activities at Bamford Chapel were grouped under three headings and Elders each had a responsibility towards one of the ‘groups’. It is of value to see the various groups in action at the time, and they were grouped as follows as stated in the church magazine in February 1985:

<u>Worship & Fellowship</u>	<u>Social & Recreational</u>	<u>Education & Youth Work</u>
Prayer Fellowship	Ladies Guild	Youth Leaders Council
Bible Study Group	Ladies Fellowship	Primary
House Groups	Mens Fellowship	Junior Church
Choir	Luncheon Club	Brownies
Drama	Tennis Club	Girl Guides
Door Stewards	Cricket Club	Girls Brigade
Car Ferry	Badminton Club	Boys Brigade
Church Magazine	Table Tennis Club	913 Club
Flowers	Mums & Babies Group	Youth Club
	Keep Fit Group	Koinonia
	Indoor Bowls	Hay Hodos

Elders Assigned

Mrs M Goodwin	Mrs P Gate	Mrs L Peacock
Mrs E Muir	J Proffitt	W Brisk
J Telford	I Sturrock	P Francis
		D Watson

Jeff Yates said in the April 1985 church magazine: *“It is evident that due to much hard work and generous giving, the church is in sound financial health. You can make what you will of figures, but it is worth noting that in 1975, the turnover of the chapel was around £5,000 and last year, over £35,000. Last year we were able to give away to the wider work of mission, more money than was actually raised for the entire running of the church in 1975.”*

In May it was announced that the Rev David Haward of Bury would be the Interim Moderator at Bamford during the forthcoming vacancy. As Jeff and Sheila Yates prepared to leave Bamford (and we must remember, Heywood too), there were other

changes taking place too. Ken Greer stood down as Junior Church Superintendent to make way for Margaret Gooding, whilst Bernice Magson took over as leader of the Primary Department. Alan Hargreaves completed 40 years in the work of Sunday School and Junior Church, and a presentation was made to him. And it was decided to advertise for a full-time caretaker (Evelyn Smith had occupied the role in a part-time capacity). 50 applications were received, and in October 1985 Rod and Carole Spencer were appointed.

On 20th October, the Rev Ivor Rees of Swansea visited Bamford Chapel on the occasion of the Girls' Brigade Rededication service. Three days later, the church meeting issued a call for him to become the next minister at Bamford Chapel. This was accepted by him, qualified by his comment: *"I am sensitive to the honour you have done me, and the responsibility you have laid upon me by issuing this call"*. The Induction Service was arranged for the following April.

Plans were going ahead in the New Year of 1986 to begin printing and publishing the church magazine entirely from within the church fellowship. Until now it had always been professionally produced. Sid Hazlehurst was elected as Chairman of the North East Manchester District, and January saw the death of Fred Butterworth. Church Secretary Finlay Galloway said of Fred Butterworth: *"Bamford Chapel has not only lost its oldest member, but also one of its characters, a real 'Bamfordite'. Fred came to Bamford Chapel in 1922 when his original church, the Primitive Methodist Chapel in War Office Road was closed and demolished. Being the live-wire he so obviously was he quickly became embroiled in the activities of the Chapel. His involvement over the next sixty years ranged from the very serious side of church life, when he was Secretary of the Chapel Education Committee, to membership of the Finance Committee, to membership of the Whit Friday Committee in the days when Whit Friday outings were very grand affairs to membership of the Catering Committee (and the only man!) when they produced meals at two and three day bazaars, to producing Pantomimes and Men's Weekend Shows, ending on the lighter side of Chapel life as organiser of Christmas parties. A very full life indeed."*

David Lamb, Martyn Lapworth and Richard Wynne became the latest members of the Bamford Chapel Boys' Brigade to be awarded their Queen's Badge. Norman and Yvonne Oldfield moved to Shepton Mallett, where Yvonne would be continuing her ministerial training. Following on their performance of "Night of Miracles" at Christmas, the choir performed Haydn's "Creation" at Easter 1986.

Ivor and Delyth Rees and their children Lythan and Dafyd arrived in Bamford on 2nd April 1986. Over 50 people came from Manselton URC in Swansea to share in the Induction Service for Ivor. The preacher was the Rev Philip Morgan, General Secretary of the British Council of Churches and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the URC in 1985.

Lent had seen Bamford Chapel and St Michael's Church members sharing in the house discussion groups called "What on earth is the Church for?" That Easter, Fred Holt, another faithful member, who had been Editor of the church magazine for the past ten years, died suddenly.

It was proving a very busy spring-time for the folks at Bamford Chapel, because besides the Induction, the Junior Church choir presented “Kid’s Praise”, whilst “Food for Thought” took a leading part in the General Assembly of the URC at Blackpool. The URC had formed a national youth evangelism team from FURY, called “The Ginger Group”, and Lythan Rees had been accepted to be part of the 1987 team.

The Garden Party was opened by the new minister and his wife and the result was a record £673. Yet another key member at Bamford Chapel died in October 1986. He was Joe Hardman, now aged 86. Joe had served in the church choir for 58 years (and his wife Doris had also been in the choir for 62 years). Joe had been an active member of the Dramatic Society for many years and had taken the lead in a number of productions. But above all this, Joe was a loyal and faithful and caring church member, known in later years to the evening congregation where his smile from the back pew was an inspiration to everyone.

During October, Ivor Rees celebrated his 30th anniversary of his ordination, and he was presented with a Bible from the church. The usual Church Weekend was held in November in Grange and was led by Alun and Margaret Jones of Swansea.

The new Elders meeting for 1987 consisted of Bob Gate, Marjorie Goodwin, Ken Greer, Peter Kenyon, Mrs Muir, Linda Peacock, Mrs Pinney, Jack Proffitt, Ian Sturrock and David Watson. Pew Bibles (Good News Edition) were purchased and dedicated in January 1987. They were given in memory of Joe Hardman. 17 new members were received into the church fellowship in January. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was celebrated by two services in Bamford. The first, a united Communion service at St Michael’s Church, when the Rev Ivor Rees was the celebrant, and the second when the six churches of Norden and Bamford came together for a joint service at Bamford Chapel.

The major event being planned for January 1987 was a televised service when the BBC invited the Moderator, the Rev Tony Burnham to preach and he suggested that the service should be held at Bamford Chapel. Bamford Chapel and St Michael’s shared in Lenten study groups based on the course “Not strangers, but pilgrims”. The church began to sponsor a child through the Bible Lands Society. She was Grazelia Saade in Beirut. Still on an international theme, the church was host to a group from the Chinese Church in Manchester for a weekend in March, whilst the following month the chapel received 66 young people from the Wartburg College Choir in Iowa, USA. They stayed two nights and left an indelible impression upon everyone at Bamford Chapel.

As if to display that the Chapel also had great musical talents, May saw two outstanding performances: “Sing Good News”, a Bible Society musical, sung by the choir, and “Kid’s Praise”, sung by the children of Junior Church. Easter 1987 was memorable as Ivor Rees conducted a series of evening services, taking the congregation through the events of Holy Week. The week climaxed with a performance of “The Vigil” on Good Friday.

The Rev William Hodgkins, minister at Bamford Chapel from 1942-48 died in April 1987. His ashes were scattered around the base of the tree outside the manse.

In those days, Ron Atkinson, the Manager of Manchester United lived on Jowkin Lane, and in April there was a six-a-side match between the Chapel members and an Atkinson Celebrity team of Manchester United players! In May, the church meeting approved the principle of holding a Third World Project. This was the first of what was to become an annual event in the church calendar, and in 1987, the focus was upon Sri Lanka. The project would last for 16 weeks and it was hoped to raise some £1,600 towards the living conditions of Sri Lankan tea workers. Peter and Tracey Meek were planning to visit the site that summer. At about the same time, Bamford Chapel began to support the Salford Urban Mission.

The Garden Party took place in July and was opened by Wilf and Nan Dutson. The day raised a record £707. In September, 30 members from Bamford Chapel travelled to Frome in Somerset for the Ordination Service of ex-member Yvonne Oldfield. A report on the state of the church roof indicated that “wet-rot” had attacked a number of rafters on both sides of the church. Work was commenced on treating the suspect roof at a cost of £6,500, a considerable sum.

The January TV service had been cancelled due to an electricians’ strike (indeed Bamford Chapel had been the site of an electricians’ union picket in January to stop workmen preparing for the service!). However, the whole event was re-scheduled for 1st November and it proved a high-water mark in the chapel history. Tony Burnham preached on “Forgiveness”, and the December church magazine had various letters of joy in response to the service, from Wilmslow, Beckenham, Witney, Nelson, Welwyn Garden City, Sheringham and Cardiff.

The church weekend, held again at Grange, had the theme “Go for Growth”. Shortly afterwards, the Koinonia and Hayhodos groups shared in a weekend at Swansea. That Autumn Kathryn Magson and Michelle Kerford became the latest to receive their Baden Powell Trefoil awards.

For some years now, Food for Thought had been functioning healthily as the church drama group. Their role however, was far more diversified than the traditional dramatic society. Elizabeth Adams summed up their latest activities in early 1988: *“In recent months, we have appeared on BBC1 miming the “Unforgiving Servant”; led a morning service at Wythenshawe URC for Peter Meek; done a concert at Connect ’87, the national FURY event, followed by a workshop for FURY members; done a concert at the Health & Healing Conference at Swanwick; taken part in a Sunday morning service at Bamford, about the events at CWM Swanwick 1987; and met with a minister on sabbatical, investigating the use of drama in the church. In February, we are to take part in a service at a District Conference.”*

The lunch-time concerts had become a popular feature of Bamford village life. The members of Junior Church performed “Smike” in February and the church choir performed “The Witness” in March. The Ginger Group, a team of six teenagers, organised nationally by the URC, visited Bamford Chapel for a week in April, and left a great impression. The church took on the responsibility of sponsoring another child, this time a 9 year old boy called Sarkis Mekhjian from the Lebanon.

The last week of May and the first fortnight in June saw two happy wedding celebrations at Bamford Chapel. Philip Nevard, son of Rev and Mrs David Nevard of Burnley URC married Lythan Rees, the daughter of Rev and Mrs Ivor Rees of Bamford. Both fathers shared in the conduct of the service. Soon afterwards, Tom and Lena Vause, now retired in Bamford, celebrated their Golden Wedding.

“Food for Thought” were performing once again, this time at the URC Provincial Day in Blackpool. Ivor and Delyth Rees led a party from Bamford Chapel to the Holy Land in June, and July saw the Ordination of Rev Peter Meek, another Bamford Chapel “old boy”. Peter was inducted to the churches at Poulton-le-Fylde (where Jeff Yates had begun his ministry) and Fleetwood. Moderator, Tony Burnham visited Bamford Chapel to talk about his recent visit to Madagascar and to help launch the second “Third World Appeal”, which was to be called “Self-Help in Madagascar”.

Norah Howarth, aged 86, died in August. She and her husband Leonard had been life-long members of Bamford Chapel. After leading Hayhodos for many years, Elizabeth Adams left the district on the occasion of her marriage. The 1988 Garden Party was opened by Norman and Yvonne Oldfield and raised a record £713. Michael Galloway completed his work for his President’s Badge in Boys’ Brigade and in July he became the first boy of the Bamford Chapel Boys’ Brigade to gain the award.

Kathy Lawes came from Chicago, USA to start a year’s practical experience in the ministry at Heywood URC and she gained further experience by helping Ivor Rees at Bamford Chapel. The 1988 Church Fellowship weekend was held at Grange and led by Chris Lee, who presented the members with the story of the Passion. A party of 20 boys and adults visited the Boys’ Brigade adventure camp at Cammas on the Isle of Mull, including a visit to Iona.

At the end of 1988, ten new Elders were elected, four of them for the first time, the new Elders were Ray Atkins, Kay Berry, David McGrann and Gillian Galloway. After six years as Church Secretary, Finlay Galloway stood down as Church Secretary and he was replaced by Linda Peacock, whilst John Ainsworth became Church Treasurer in place of Terry Brierley, who had served in that role for 22 years. It was announced that £3,000 had been raised for the Madagascar project. Susan Howard had begun a tape library, Debbi Burrige was in charge of the book trolley, and as further signs of Adult Education at Bamford Chapel, more and more church members were attending weekends at the newly established Windermere Centre.

Ivor Rees was preparing for a sabbatical, some of which was to be spent in Tantor in Israel, whilst here at home, was an increasing relationship between Bamford Chapel and the Salford Urban Mission. In the midst of all this activity, the church fellowship suffered a great sadness with the sudden death of Derek Gooding. Derek had been an integral part of Bamford Chapel for many years, as Deacon and Elder, choir master and church treasurer, among many other roles.

The biggest thing that had happened to Bamford Chapel Boys’ Brigade Company in its 14 year history occurred in March 1989, when the Bamford Company won the Battalion Colours (the Colours were awarded to the Company with the best aggregate marks for Scripture Knowledge and Squad Drill competitions).

8th July saw the URC District Day being held at Bamford Chapel, and later that month, Kathy Lawes returned to Chicago, leaving many friends here at Bamford Chapel. The 1989 Project was focussed upon the El Khadar Clinic on the outskirts of Bethlehem in Israel. In the Autumn, the church choir performed "From Pharaoh to Freedom" and during Advent the church drama group "Food for Thought" presented "Angel at Large".

13. THE NINETIES

£3,420 was raised for the Children's Clinic and Centre at El Khadar. Michael Galloway was awarded the Queen's Badge in Boys' Brigade and Nina Inamdar achieved the Baden Powell Award in Guiding. So began 1990.

Copies of "Mission Praise" were donated to the church in memory of Derek Gooding. Soon afterwards Paul Hynes received the Queen's Badge and Clair Gooding gained her Baden Powell Award. For the fourth occasion, the Junior Church presented "Kids' Praise" on the day of the Junior Church Anniversary. This year it was called "Singsational Servants". Bamford Chapel Boys' Brigade were Battalion Champions for the second year running.

A large group from Bamford attended the North West Provincial Day at Lancaster University in July. The week afterwards, Jeff and Sheila Yates opened the Garden Party. Jack Proffit, who had been a quiet Christian gentleman, involved very much with the Luncheon Club and the Indoor Bowls, died that summer, and was greatly missed by his friends at the Chapel.

Bamford Chapel suffered another great sadness when Terry Brierley died, aged 65. He was one of the very few at the Chapel who could claim to have been here practically all of his life. Terry had been among numerous other things, Deacon, Elder and Church Treasurer for over twenty years.

The Church Project for 1990 was centred upon Jamaica.

Life continued at Bamford Chapel at a regular pace, lunchtime concerts, Mary King organising our Christian Aid action, Koinonia and Hayhodos every Sunday, Ladies' Fellowship, Luncheon Club, Girls' Brigade, Boys' Brigade, Ladybirds, Brownies, Guides, Bible Study Groups and Sunday Worship were all regular features. In March, Bamford Chapel played host to the Synod of the North West Province and in April we welcomed the Wartburg Choir once again.

Jeff Yates was due to return to conduct the Junior Church Anniversary, but unfortunately he was not well enough. The Junior Church presented "Captain Noah and His Floating Zoo" at the morning service. The Whit Walk took place as usual, but this time without the leadership of the Boys' Brigade Band, which had temporarily disbanded. The same day, eight people were received into Church membership. The new URC hymn book "Rejoice and Sing" was published, but the church at Bamford decided to stick with "Congregational Praise". Meanwhile the Chapel gave a promise to make a gift of £500 every year for the next five years to the Salford Urban Mission.

The 1991 Mission Project was to pay for teachers for the Garo people in Bangladesh and in the end £3,028 was raised. Canon John Gunstone led the Church Fellowship Weekend and also preached at the Church Anniversary. August 1991 saw the church shocked by the sudden death of John Telford. He had served as Elder, member of the Finance Committee, choir member and he had acted as deputy choir master for some time. He was also involved with the Monday gang, chauffeuring and helping with the Stroke Club Outing.

After 22 years involvement with the Sunday School and Junior Church, Margaret Gooding stood down from her role as Junior Church Superintendent and Angela Smith took over the position.

Churches Together In Bamford (CTIB) was formed, sharing the work and witness of St Michael's, St Vincent's and Bamford Chapel. Towards the end of the year, the Luncheon Club celebrated its 10th Anniversary with the Yates and Rees family being guests.

The year began with another sadness, the death of Bob Tunstall. Bob, a life-long member at Bamford Chapel had served as Deacon and Elder and Church Secretary for 24 years. He was described as "one of Bamford's most loyal sons". The Church Weekend took place at Plas-y-coed, and was led by the Rev John Marsh. The Rev Richard Willcock, Vicar of Bamford, who had worked well with Bamford Chapel left in June for a church in Suffolk and the Chapel closed for the Sunday evening service in order to share in his last Evensong at St Michael's.

Friends at Bamford (FAB) was formed, to meet the demand for Chapel based activities, to increase church fellowship and to help Christians get to know one another better. For the first time in Bamford Chapel history, the Moderator of the URC General Assembly, the Rev Malcolm Hanson preached at the Chapel on Palm Sunday.

The 1992 Mission Project was to be based in El Salvador. It would provide cows and chickens in the region of San Fernando, and so help supply milk and eggs for malnourished and impoverished people in the area. Barbara Redmond and Debbi Burrige took 17 young people from Bamford Chapel to Yardley Hastings in June to share in the opening of the new National Youth Resource Centre. One of the first people to stay there was Michelle Kerford, who helped prepare the Centre for the 3,000 visitors that day. Eileen Francis retired from the Girls' Brigade after 11 years with the Company and seven as Captain, she had been one of the first volunteers when the Company was first formed in 1980.

In late June a great sadness came over Bamford Chapel at the news of the death of the Rev Jeff Yates. Jeff had been minister at Bamford Chapel from 1975-1985. His ministry had spanned an eventful period in the church's history, which saw among other things, the formation of the Luncheon Club, the Boys' and Girls' Brigade Companies, the Indoor Bowls, Badminton and Cricket Clubs, and a Young Mothers' Group. Kinsfolk was formed and many people were introduced to the church as the Chapel and village both grew in size. Many people came together at the funeral at Hale to pay tribute to his character and ministry, his humour and friendship.

A series of evening studies had begun during the ministry of Ivor Rees called "The Bamford Lectures". The speaker at the five lectures in 1992 was Dr Martin Scott of the Northern Baptist College, who spoke about "The Women of John's Gospel". 1992 saw the Church Fellowship Weekend being held "at home". And as well as the annual Mission Projects and the regular support for the Salford Urban Mission, the chapel had become regular workers with the Rochdale Family Service Unit, especially at Harvest with gifts and at Christmas with toys.

Koinonia, led by Ian Sturrock, Dave McGrann and May Bishop took a group to Hartlepool in April. Bert Morley a lifelong member at Bamford Chapel died that month.

The 1993 World Mission Project was centred upon the Hospital Laboratory in Kagando, Uganda. The daughter of Ray and Auriel Atkins, Louise and her husband Andrew and their family were based at Kagando, where Andrew was the Administrator of the Christian Hospital. There was a gap in the production of the church magazine, due to the lack of an Editor for four months. The Church Weekend was entitled "Models for Mission" and was led by the Provincial Moderator, the Rev Keith Forecast. For many years, Bamford Chapel had taken a leading part in Christian Aid Week, led by Mary King. In 1982 £831 was raised and in 1993 £1,226 was raised in the house to house collection around Bamford.

The Rev John Sutcliffe, Director of the Manchester Christian Institute led the fourth series of Bamford Lectures with his theme "Doing Theology". Ex members John and Jean Lamb travelled up from Cheltenham to open the annual Garden Party, the second wet one in succession. £820 was raised on the day. Stephen Peacock moved from Bamford in September to join the Community Team at Yardley Hastings, where the National Youth Resource Centre was based. It is perhaps time to reflect on some of the leaders and helpers at Bamford Chapel in 1993. They included Boys' Brigade Captain David Watson and his wife Margaret who looked after Anchor Boys, Pat McLean (Brownies), Walter Brisk (Choir Master), Anthea Wood (Girls' Brigade Captain), Debbi Burridge (Guides), Barbara and Addie Redmond (Hay Hodos), May Bishop, Dave McGrann and Ian Sturrock (Koinonia), Nell Davies (Luncheon Club Convenor), Geoff Ogden (Organist), Paul Hazlehurst (Youth Club) and Rod and Carole Spencer (Caretakers).

The chapel began to be a centre locally where residents could bring waste paper, sold for church funds, and vast quantities of old newspapers were stored temporarily in the Bier House. The sponsorship of two children through the Bible Lands Society was now in its fifth year. Along with the rest of the denomination, Bamford Chapel celebrated the 21st Anniversary of the founding of the United Reformed Church in October. Elder Kay Berry summed up life at Bamford Chapel in 1993: *"There is at Bamford a family feeling of love and fellowship. It means so much to new friends, to become part of the family. I thank God that since being at Bamford my faith has grown and I have been closer to Jesus than ever before. I am sure that that could only happen in a loving, caring atmosphere; and at the same time it helps us to spread His love around wherever we go. Which of course, is what He asks of us."*

The year began with the sad news of John Ainsworth's death. Deacon, Elder, Finance Committee, Church Treasurer, Monday Gang, duplicator - here was another man at the very heart of the Bamford Chapel fellowship. Sid Hazlehurst described him in three words: *"loyalty, commitment and determination"*.

£4,500 was raised for the 1993 Ugandan Project. In June a party of 19, including twelve from Bamford Chapel, was led on a Holy Land pilgrimage by Ivor Rees. The Rev Yvonne Oldfield led the Church Weekend at Thornleigh, Grange over Sands, which was entitled "No Feeling, No Sense".

Miss Edith Shepherd died. She had spent her entire life within a mile of Bamford Chapel. She was the oldest surviving member of the Shepherd-Ashworth family that dated back to John Ashworth in the early 1800's. Her sister-in-law Mrs Edith Mary Shepherd, the widow of the Rev Frank Shepherd, had died in 1993 and her burial was to be the last in the Bamford Chapel graveyard.

A Roman Catholic layman, Kevin Flanagan gave the Bamford Lectures in 1994. Following Yvonne Oldfield, Howard Sharp and Peter Meek, the latest member of Bamford Chapel to enter the Christian ministry, Mrs Joyce Ashworth was ordained in September 1994. That same weekend, the 1994 Mission Project was launched. This was to support children living in Smokey Mountain in the Philippines.

It was the weekend also that the Kenyons, a family very much at the centre of the chapel fellowship left for their new home in Somerset. Yet another key figure at Bamford Chapel died in October 1994. Wilf Dutson had been an Elder, Church Secretary, Authorised Person, Covenant Secretary and Sunday School Superintendent. Wilf, married to Nan, died on their 55th Wedding Anniversary. And once again, Bamford Chapel gave thanks for another great and good man.

Bamford Chapel played host once more to the North West Provincial Synod in October. At the November Church Meeting, thanks were expressed to retiring Elders Ray Atkins, Addie Redmond, Winifred Schofield, David Watson, Peter Kenyon and Joyce Ashworth.

Four more faithful church members died during the turn of the year, Amy Hodgkinson (whose husband Norman had been a Deacon), Jack Seddon (dramatic society, garden parties, the boys' football team), Louise Haworth (who had served as chapel cleaner for several years) and Kay Berry (Elder, Luncheon Club and Ladies Guild). The Rev Tom Vause, now living in retirement in Bamford, celebrated his 85th Birthday. The Rev David Peel, Principal of Northern College, led the Church Weekend at Bamford in May. Ben Redmond and Darren and Philip Scarr gained their Queen's Badge in Boys' Brigade.

For the third time, the Wartburg Choir visited Bamford from Iowa, and hospitality was provided for over a hundred visitors. The Choir sang at a Saturday evening concert and again during Sunday morning worship. About this time, the chapel conducted a financial challenge called TRIO (The Responsibility is Ours).

Ivor and Delyth Rees went to London in July to share in the 200th Anniversary Celebrations of the LMS and now Council for World Mission. They returned to Bamford with Dr Elia Ta'Ase of the Congregational Church in Western Samoa. Dr Ta'Ase shared in the Sunday service at Bamford Chapel the following weekend.

Ethel Greaves died in July 1995; her association with Bamford Chapel had lasted 91 years. She was the wife of Vernon Greaves, Deacon and Church Secretary. And then in September three people died, whose lives had touched many people both in the chapel and in the village. Nell Davies came to Bamford in 1965. She was a great pastoral worker and will long be remembered for founding the Luncheon Club. Beryl Reid had only been at Bamford five years. She died from motor-neurone disease and though by the time of her death she had lost her speech, her faith deepened and her friends increased.

And the Rev Thomas Vause died in September 1995. Maybe more than anyone else this century, Tom Vause changed the image of Bamford Chapel from being a village chapel to becoming a lively, thriving fellowship. In his ministry, Tom saw Bamford change from being a small village built around its woollen mill to become a suburb of Rochdale with new houses springing up everywhere. His ten years at Bamford Chapel saw many changes, thanks to Tom's vision. It was a vision not shared by everyone, and his work at Bamford Chapel was not without much personal cost. Without the ministry of Tom Vause (1964-1975), Bamford Chapel could well have gone the way of many country churches and quietly declined and closed. The ministry of Tom Vause continues to be much recalled at Bamford Chapel to this day, well over a quarter of a century later.

For several years now, members at Bamford Chapel had been serving the wider church in a variety of ways, Addie Redmond with a team from Bamford Chapel taped material from the URC Prayer Fellowship Handbook, for the use of the partially sighted people across the country. Others shared in the leadership at CWM Swanwick, leading drama, dance, music and games. And there was a growing relationship with the National Youth Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings.

The 1995 Mission Project was focused on the Lephoi Hostel for Blind Children at Franistown, Botswana. The main concern was to dig a borehole, so as to provide the hostel with its own water supply. £5,258 was raised for the Project.

The New Year of 1996 saw several changes. Walter Brisk stood down after twenty years as Choir Master and his role was filled by Margaret Ogden. Pam Long retired as magazine editor and she was succeeded by Lesley Sutton and Angela Smith. Keith and Shirley Boyden had moved to Spain, and after a lengthy illness Ivor Rees and his wife Delyth were able to convalesce there for a week. The new Church Secretary was John Lapworth and the new Church Treasurer was David Edmonds. The church magazine approved a Mission Statement which set out the church's priorities.

For several years now, the church had had a selection of stalls for the use of church members every week: Traidcraft goods were sold by Barbara Redmond and Joan Inamdar; Susan Howard was the contact person for the Rochdale Christian Cassette Library; Lesley Sutton continued with her second hand book stall (in aid of Bamford Chapel's two sponsored children) and the church book stall was organised by Gillian Galloway).

During January and February 1996 the church was busy preparing for the production of "Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat". This was performed in March to rave reviews. Two ladies, much loved in the fellowship, Mary Hope and Eleanor Muir died in April.

"Lifeline", a young people's music group, brought together by Steven and Clair Gooding had been performing regularly for Sunday services. However Steven and Clair extended their musical influence when they produced "Joseph". Over 600 people came to see the production. In 1996, Lifeline had 9 members: Sarah Dugdale (flute), Lorna Bishop (flute), Amy Dawson (flute), Sarah Hartley (recorder), Kate Harrington (trumpet), Sarah Dean (clarinet), Martin McGrann (guitar), Steven (piano) and Clair (clarinet).

For several years now, the Monday gang had met each week. These were a group of retired men who did odd jobs around the church and grounds. With over seven acres and the buildings to care for, the work was never-ending. Koinonia paid another visit to Hartlepool in May, and later in the year thirty members and friends found their way to Thornleigh at Grange over Sands for the Church Fellowship Weekend. This year it was led by the Rev Rowland Goodwin, speaking on "The Church as it was, as it is, and as it could be".

One of the members of Junior Church for many years was Edward Dawson. In 1996 Edward was 16, severely physically handicapped and requiring constant medical care. From the proceeds of "Joseph" £400 was given to Edward's school, Birtenshaw Hall School at Bromley Cross, and a further £300 was donated to the Derian House Children's Hospice at Chorley. Once again, more than £1,000 was collected for Christian Aid in Bamford during Christian Aid Week.

The summer months were dominated by the retirement of Ivor and Delyth Rees, after ministering for ten years at Bamford Chapel. On 20th July, there was a social evening and the following day Ivor conducted Sunday services for the final time as minister at Bamford Chapel. Many members took the opportunity to express their appreciation of Ivor's ministry, speaking of his pastoral gifts, his biblical teaching and his caring approach to all. Mike Davies, Secretary of CTIB (Churches together in Bamford) gave everyone a wider picture of Ivor: "*a man rich in generosity, wide in experience and deep in knowledge*". Beyond Bamford Chapel, Ivor had helped bring the three local churches together in Lenten groups, he had started the Bamford Lectures and he had served as Ecumenical Officer for the North West Province. The ten years that Ivor and Delyth served both chapel and community at Bamford had touched many lives.

Ladybirds (the junior organisation for small girls) celebrated its 10th Anniversary at Bamford. Joan Inamdar and Linda Kerford stood down and the group was renamed "Rainbows" under the guidance of Julie Platt and Jackie Anderson. Tom Baron died, aged 80. A Bamford man through and through, and a Deacon of the Congregational Church, Tom served the chapel over many years. His funeral was the last one that Ivor Rees conducted as minister at Bamford.

It was decided that the 1996 Project would be for Orissa on the Bay of Bengal in India. Fishing boats were needed by the community there, in order to provide their livelihood. In the end, £200 bought eight fishing boats. 16 year old Edward Dawson died tragically and this time the church was left mourning for one of its youngest members.

Once again (for the fifth year) a group of young people from Bamford Chapel spent a week at Min-y-Don, a Christian adventure centre near Barmouth in Wales. The party was led by Stuart and Caryn Dean. The Rev Hugh Neems of Todmorden was appointed Interim Moderator for Bamford Chapel, and for the next few months, the church relied on local preachers and visiting ministers to conduct the Sunday services, whilst the Elders were responsible for pastoral care.

Moderator Keith Forecast conducted the 195th Church Anniversary and later in October another group of young people from Bamford spent a weekend at Yardley Hastings. Ex

member Kath Wilkinson and current Elder Paul Hazlehurst began to make plans to hold a reunion of the youth club that grew up together in the 1970's under the leadership of Jeff Yates and Richard Oldroyd. Plans were also going ahead to conduct an Alpha Course in the New Year. Mary Stone a lecturer in Religious Studies at Lancaster University gave the Bamford Lectures in October and November. Socially "Sweet Rythm", a big band including several chapel members was becoming a regular part of the Bamford Chapel scene.

During November a significant change in the story of Bamford Chapel took place. This was when the Elders of the three local URC churches decided that the future lay in a joint pastorate involving Bamford, Heywood and Norden churches. Over the years, Bamford more often than not had the services of a minister of their own. However, during several ministries, like that of the Rev Richley and Hodgkins, Bamford had given oversight of Norden and during other ministries, like that of Jeff Yates, Bamford and Heywood had come together. This was to be the first time in their history, that Bamford, Heywood and Norden shared in a joint pastorate.

The new Elders Meeting in 1997 comprised: Auriel Atkins, Raymond Atkins, Debbi Burridge, Gillian Galloway, Bob Gate, Paul Hazlehurst, Sid Hazlehurst, Martyn James, Margaret Ogden, Addie Redmond, Winifred Schofield and Ian Sturrock.

Eileen Francis died. For over twenty years, she and her family had been an integral part of Bamford Chapel life. Girls' Brigade (including the combined band of Boys' Brigade and Girls' Brigade), Food for Thought, Easter and Christmas dramas, F.A.B. and being an Elder. All these areas and others had benefited from the talents of Eileen, described by so many as "*a caring person*".

In January, twenty two men came together at Bamford Chapel to consider the possibility of starting a regular meeting for men at the Chapel. Thus, the Bamford Chapel Men's Group was formed, and from then on, began to meet monthly. Elder Bob Gate was instrumental in forming the group. Similarly, Michael and Doreen Lucas began a Bridge Club at the Chapel, to serve the wider community of Bamford. The proposed Alpha Course took place, and was received with great enthusiasm.

In February, the Rev David Wiseman, then serving two churches in Bournemouth, visited the three churches of the new Rochdale West pastorate, and the Joint Elders Meeting recommended to the three churches that he be called to the pastorate. As well as the two children whom Bamford Chapel were sponsoring, the church fellowship also took on the responsibility of sponsoring a student nurse at the Nazareth Hospital.

The latest production by the children and young people of Junior Church took place, when the musical "Daybreak" was performed successfully for two nights in March. About this time, the Rev Joyce Ashworth was moved by the District to serve another newly formed pastorate called Rochdale Central, made up of St Andrew's, Rochdale, Whitworth and Castleton churches.

Long service badges were presented to three officers in the Bamford Chapel Boys' Brigade. These were Mike Davies (over 15 years) and David and Margaret Watson (over 20 years). Meanwhile, Ian Edmonds gained his Queen's Badge, whilst three other

members, Christopher Bishop, Russell Gill, and Martin McGrann, received their President's Badge. The Gift Day had taken on a new form, being composed of gifts from church organisations, rather than individual members. The 1997 amount was £2,678.

May 10th saw the Induction of the Rev David Wiseman to the newly formed joint pastorate of Rochdale West. The service was conducted by the Moderator, the Rev Keith Forecast, whilst the Rev Tony Wilkinson, the minister of Macclesfield URC and an ex-College colleague of David Wiseman, preached the "Charge to the Minister and the Church". Following the Induction, the intention both by the Province and the Pastorate, was that another minister, perhaps non-stipendiary, would be called to share in the task of ministry.

A Worship Group was formed in order to plan the pulpit supplies of the three churches. The new minister and his wife Margaret opened the 1997 Garden Party. This was an event that hit the local newspapers, because David Wiseman arrived on the tennis courts, by helicopter! Beth Stott, by far the oldest member at the Chapel celebrated her 100th birthday on August 4th 1997. She had been baptised in the previous century by the Rev W M Arthur.

Two much loved church members died that summer. First, Alan Hargreaves died in July. Alan had been a life-long member of Bamford Chapel, and had served as pianist in the Primary Department of the Sunday School and Junior Church for over 50 years! And then Catherine Sharples died, aged just 41. A local head-teacher, despite being severely disabled for her last few years, Catherine had affected a great number of people in the church and community.

A second Alpha course began in September. Twenty church members attended CWM Swanwick in August, which had become a regular feature each year for many Bamford families. The 1997 Mission Project was centred upon the Olodum organisation in Salvador, Brazil. This helped children and young people develop skills and give them training for life, all this from a background of poverty and over-crowded dwellings. Because of this, the Bamford Harvest focussed on chocolate and its importance for the people of Brazil.

On the last day of August, Diana, Princess of Wales, died, and in order to help people locally to mourn and express their feelings, the church was open that week for two evenings and Sunday afternoon. Over 160 people signed a book of condolence, and these signatures were later sent to Kensington Palace. The church and denomination celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the founding of the URC in October 1972. Dr Jack McKelvey was the guest preacher at the Church Anniversary that day, and a birthday cake was enjoyed by the congregation. Meanwhile the proposed Reunion of the 1970's Youth Club had taken place in July. It proved to be a great success, with the best part of fifty ex-teenagers coming back to Bamford for the weekend to reminisce and remember past times. Among the guests was Sheila Yates, now living in Hale.

In October, Bamford Chapel replaced their copies of the 46 year old hymn book "Congregational Praise" with supplies of the URC hymn book "Rejoice and Sing". Most members bought copies for the church in remembrance of loved ones. Besides new hymn

books, there were also new members. Nineteen new church members were added to the membership roll in October.

All this time, Bamford Chapel was ticking over socially in regular style, the Luncheon Club, Mid-Day Concerts, Fun Days and Bridge, Bowls and Badminton, four Bible Study groups meeting weekly, plus the usual programme of men's, ladies', youth and children's organisations. Bible Lands children and nurses were still being sponsored (now in the tenth year), Christian Aid was to the fore, and the Salford Urban Mission was still being supported. Over 200 copies of the church magazine were being produced and distributed each month. These went, not only to members and community, but many were sent each month to ex-Bamford friends like Dorothy Nuttall (daughter of previous church Treasurer, Tom Milnes, and now living in Windermere) and Lucy Hodgkins (widow of previous minister, Bill Hodgkins, and now in Cardiff).

Prior to Christmas 1997, the church members signed and posted 150 letters of greetings to missionaries and church workers, serving at home and overseas, mainly with the CWM (Council for World Mission). The final project total, given to the Olodum Project was £4,712. Still thinking of mission, the church was expressing a growing concern and involvement regarding Jubilee 2000. This was a national campaign challenging our government and other governments too, to write off the unpayable debts of Third World nations.

Once again, a Youth Weekend was held at Bamford Chapel in January, catering for the youth of Bamford, Heywood, and Norden churches. More and more, Bamford Chapel was having to view activities and events with the eyes of being part of a pastorate. Two church members, Linda Peacock and Wendy Dawson, were busy preparing for a sponsored walk on the Great Wall of China, in aid of "Scope" (for people with cerebral palsy). And members of Bamford Chapel came to their help, supporting the ladies in a wide number of fund-raising activities, which also helped to keep Bamford Chapel socially active during the Spring of 1998.

Due to a number of ladies growing older, it was decided to close the Ladies' Guild which had served the church well for many years. Particularly at the fore had been Winifred Schofield and Marjorie Goodwin; in past years, others like Lena Vause and Beth Stott had taken major roles.

The young people, led by Steven and Clair Gooding, were busy in rehearsals for "Godspell", the latest musical production to be performed by the children and youth of Bamford Chapel. It followed the previous productions of "Joseph" and "Daybreak". Marjorie Goodwin, a life-long member, moved to Norfolk. And just about that time, two older members of Bamford Chapel died, Joe Moore, who had conducted dances and guided walks for over thirty years at the Chapel, and Albert Morley, whose family had had links with the Chapel since the First War, six brothers and a sister. Albert was the last one.

"Godspell" was performed on two evenings in March and over 600 people attended the memorable productions. People came from far and wide to be in the audience, which enjoyed the talents of well over fifty children and young people. During Lent, the Chapel raised well over £1,000 in a project for Christian Aid called "Count Your Blessings".

The Rev David Wiseman completed his first year at the Rochdale West pastorate and commented: *"I have conducted more Sunday services, more weddings, more baptisms, and more funerals than in any other twelve months of my life. I have attended more Elders' Meetings and more Church Meetings than in any other year. And over 400 people have signed the Visitors' Book in the Manse inside 12 months!"*

The summer of 1998 was hectic and lively, a visit from the West Hartlepool URC young people, a football World Cup organised for the children of the village, the Stroke Club Outing (which had been organised by Bamford Chapel for many years now), and the Garden Party (opened by Sir Cyril Smith, MP). There were walks, barbecues, tennis and picnics, coach outings, coffee mornings, and another Alpha Course.

The Church Fellowship Weekend was held "at home" and over seventy people attended the event, led by the Rev Stephen Brown of Purley URC, with his theme "Let me tell you a story". The church magazine began to be produced each month on tape for the partially sighted. A speaker at the Men's Group spoke about the Littleborough Chernobyl Children's Supporters' Group, and this moved the church in future years to invite groups of children from Chernobyl to visit Bamford Chapel for evenings of fun and games each summer. Closely connected with Chernobyl is nearby Moldova, and it was decided that the 1998 Project would be centred upon supporting a Moldova Children's Camp, both by paying for children to attend, and by helping to pay for renovations at the camp. The local connection was via the Dovetales International Trust, and as well as supporting the project with prayer and education and finance, a collection was made for the children of toys, toiletries, stationery, and ladies' and men's accessories.

September saw another new venture for Rochdale West, in the arrival of a theological student from Northern College, in the person of Mrs Jane Barron. Jane was in her final year of training for the ministry, and would spend the Autumn, Winter and Spring, completing her practical training within the Rochdale West pastorate.

One of the great sadnesses of the Autumn 1998 occurred with the death of Mary King. The daughter of the Rev John Clayton, Mary had filled her lifetime with Christian service, working among the blind, organising Christian Aid, and being a leading figure in Council for World Mission work at Bamford. She had been an Elder for six years, and the Moldovan Project was but the latest of many that she had encouraged in the church. Here was another fine Christian, who would be greatly missed by the local Church.

A special Evening Service was held in October to remember the 250th Anniversary of the death of Isaac Watts, the great Congregational hymn writer. At the Church Anniversary that month, twenty members were presented with certificates recording their long-service. They had all been church members for over thirty years, with Dorothy Park having served the longest, with a record of 68 years.

The United Christian Singers visited Bamford in December, to perform "Night of Miracles". This was followed soon afterwards by a performance by "Food for Thought" of "Angel at Large". Jane Barron was continuing her role as student-minister, preaching regularly in all three churches, conducting weddings and funerals, and sharing in the numerous social activities of the church.

Every quarter or so, Bamford Chapel printed and distributed over 2,500 leaflets around the village. The leaflet described what was taking place at the Chapel, and gave everyone an invitation to join in whatever they wished. For thirteen years, Rod and Carole Spencer had been the church caretakers, and at the end of 1998, they retired. January saw the induction of new Elders, Susan Harrington, Judith Negus and Andy Platt. The membership of the Elders' Meeting now read: Gillian Galloway, Bob Gate, Ken Greer, Paul Hazlehurst, Sid Hazlehurst, Martyn James, Dave McGrann, Addie Redmond, Dave Watson, Susan Harrington, Judith Negus, Andy Platt (Church Secretary) and David Edmonds (Church Treasurer).

Over £6,500 had been raised for the Moldovan Project. Alongside this amount, hundreds of gifts were sent, ranging from toothpaste to toys! Poverty Lunches were being organised at church every Sunday during Lent, in aid of Christian Aid. In February, 22 members and friends spent eleven days on a Holy Land pilgrimage, under the guidance of David and Margaret Wiseman. During their visit, they were able to revisit the Arab Rehabilitation Centre at Bethlehem, which had been the focus of a Bamford Project some years before.

Geoff Kirk became the new caretaker, and life was as busy as ever at the Chapel. The Wartburg College Choir paid their fourth visit to Bamford in April. Jane Barron was preparing to leave Rochdale West, prior to her Ordination and Induction at Marple, Marple Bridge and New Mills URC's. Perhaps the biggest social event ever held indoors at Bamford Chapel took place on June 1st, when the celebrated key-board musician Rick Wakeman included the Chapel in his 25 venue nationwide tour. 425 people attended (capacity seating in the Chapel), and the evening concert was one which was talked about for long afterwards. People came from all over the North of England, including one man who actually came all the way from Pittsburg, USA just for the concert!

The following weekend, over thirty church members made their way to the Windermere Centre for the Church Fellowship Weekend. Once again, this proved to be a memorable experience. A coachload of members accompanied the members of the chapel choir, when they took part in the Provincial presentation of "Feast of Life", a Christian Aid musical, performed at Blackburn Cathedral.

The Autumn saw the start of the Bamford Chapel Juniors Football Club. This was established for the youngsters in the area, all aged under 8 years of age, and it soon became a regular feature of Saturday morning life on the chapel field outside. Beth Stott celebrated her 102nd birthday, and the Chapel was beginning preparations to celebrate the Millennium. One event was the Millennium Candle. Two of these were lit at a service in July, and afterwards given to the people who had travelled the furthest to be at that service. One went to Grimsby and the other went to Solihull. The last we heard of them, some months later, was that one was in Blackburn, and the other in the West Indies!

The Chapel published the Bamford Millennium Calendar, which included scenes of the village, and several hundred of these were sold. A group from Koinonia (the Chapel youth group) spent the week in Bournemouth, camping out at the Richmond Hill URC, under the guidance of David Wiseman. Another major children's activity took place at

the end of August, when a children's Holiday Club called "Newshounds" was organised. Over fifty children took part in the event.

"Old Boy" Rev Howard Sharp, now ministering in Winchester, returned to Bamford to conduct the 198th Church Anniversary in October, and the following week, dozens of Bamford Chapel members shared in the 175th Anniversary celebrations at Heywood URC. By now, a regular team of worship-leaders had been formed, to work alongside the minister in conducting services at the three churches each week. These included Sid Hazlehurst, Ruth Watson, Auriel Atkins, Joyce Yates, Margaret Ogden, Dave McGrann and Ken Greer. All these were backed up with support from "Lifeline" and "Food for Thought".

The 1999 Church Project was centred upon Malawi, with the aim of helping to build a library at a school there. This was all under the auspices of the Hunter Trust, founded by Gillian Hunter, a teacher in Malawi, who visited Bamford, and shared the needs of that country with the members here. By now, this had turned into a Pastorate Project, as the three churches came closer together. "Food for Thought" presented "A Lad in a Manger", a nativity pantomime at Christmas, and this was a great success. Fred Kershaw died in Norway, whilst away on a cruise. He had been a life-long member of the church, and in earlier years had been much involved with chapel drama and cricket. He had served for 17 years as church caretaker.

14. THE YEAR 2000

The entry into the new Millennium was celebrated in great style at Bamford Chapel with a 12 hour party. Beginning at 8pm on New Year's Eve, dancing and games preceded a splendid supper. The festivities continued until a large number gathered for the Millennium Eve Service. After this, and now into the year 2000, the congregation spilled out to watch fireworks on the tennis court and elsewhere, before celebrating the event with a glass of "bubbly". Then followed a walk around the village, as we distributed millennium candles to the neighbours, before returning for hot soup. Quizzes, bingo, karaoke, board games and competitions continued for the next six hours, climaxing in a breakfast of bacon butties at 8am. We have no record of how they began the 20th Century at Bamford Chapel, but the entry into the 21st Century will long be recalled. The new Millennium had begun at Bamford Chapel!

Soon into the New Year, Beth Stott died, aged 102. She had lived in three centuries, and had seen nine ministers at Bamford Chapel. Beth still readily recalled the Bamford of Wheelbarrow Lane and "Tatt's" Mill. When Beth Stott died, a door closed of memories going back almost a century. As usual, the three churches of St Michael's, St Vincent's and Bamford Chapel came together for a United Service during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Later, during Lent, they also shared in discussion groups "All Together Now", in which members at the Chapel took a leading part.

The Malawi Project proved to be the most successful yet, with well over £7,250 being raised for the proposed school library. Another project called "Count Your Blessings", which took place at Bamford two years earlier, had been adopted by Christian Aid throughout the North of England, and it was introduced again during Lent. Once more, the three URC's were able to top the £1,000 by Easter.

The United Reformed Church nationally united with the Congregational Union in Scotland. Locally, Easter was celebrated here at Bamford with the performance of ten traditional Mystery plays by "Food for Thought". One church member said afterwards: *"I have been to so many Good Friday presentations, but never have I been so moved, and there were many there who felt the same"*. Also, as part of the Lenten remembrance, the church had cut down its Christmas tree, and reshaped it in the form of a cross, suitably "redecorated" with symbols of the crucifixion. Another established service took place each year at Bamford Chapel in the upstairs room, when the Last Supper was re-enacted on Maundy Thursday.

Looking back over his first three years at Bamford, Heywood and Norden, David Wiseman reflected that over fifty new members had been received into the pastorate during that period. The Chapel mourned the death of several members and friends that summer. These included Margaret Roberts, a much loved member, Ronald Hart (who years before had been the Chapel caretaker), and Peggy Richley (the daughter of ex-Bamford minister, the Rev Robert Richley).

Christian Aid Week in Bamford had resulted in an all-time high total of £1,740 from the House to House collection, conducted by members of Bamford Chapel and St Michael's Church. The summer passed with the Garden Party, an outing to Llandudno, the Koinonia annual holiday to Bournemouth, and another highly successful Holiday Club

for local children, entitled “Going for Gold!” David and Margaret Watson stood down from Boys’ Brigade, which they had led at Bamford for over 25 years. Tributes were paid to their influence on generations of young boys, and suitable presentations were made.

We were now well into the Autumn, and the Provincial Moderator of Yorkshire, the Rev Arnold Harrison, an ex-College colleague of David Wiseman, conducted our 199th Church Anniversary. By now, all eyes were being focussed on our Bicentenary Year, and plans were going ahead, preparing for the many celebrations: a pantomime “Dick Whittington” presented by church members and children and produced by Addie Redmond; concerts, art exhibitions, a Flower Festival, guest preachers, and the actual 200th Church Anniversary on October 14th 2001, when the guest preacher would be our new Provincial Moderator, the Rev Peter Brain (the previous Moderator, the Rev Keith Forecast had retired in the summer).

The Mission Project for the year 2000 was “Wings of Hope”, which was a Christian charity running three homes for street children in Port au Prince in Haiti. So that we might learn more of the needs of the children in Haiti, one of the Church members, Wendy Dawson, flew out for two weeks to see the work and help with the children in Haiti. It was to be our most successful Project yet. Nearer home, the Chapel was asked if we could man the URC exhibit at the Christian Resources Exhibition at the G Mex Exhibition Centre in Manchester. Jenny Burridge reported back on her visit with a group of URC young people to the Waldensian Church in Italy.

By now, the Church was almost going into overdrive concerning the celebrations of the Bicentenary. A group of ladies had put in over 500 hours (still continuing!) in creating a tapestry showing the history of Bamford Chapel. A pictorial Church Directory of Chapel members and friends was in production, and the pantomime had sold out! Christmas was celebrated with services and carol singing groups, nativities and parties, and the distribution of well over 3,000 Christmas cards around the entire area of Bamford and Norden. Over twenty friends attended a meeting to enquire about church membership, and most of these would be received in the New Year.

And as the 199th year of Bamford Chapel came to its close, the entire Church took on a new appearance. Following extensive roof repairs (on the original 1801 timbers!), the entire church sanctuary was redecorated, re-carpeted, and fitted with an entirely new lighting system. Never in all of its years, had the Chapel appeared more colourful, felt more comfortable, or looked brighter. Among further work planned for the New Year was an extensive redesigning of the grounds in front of the Chapel, with new walkways, flower beds, and the general pruning of the trees surrounding the Church.

So, as Bamford Chapel entered her two hundredth year, the sanctuary was in a beautiful condition, and the church members were in good heart. As we reflected on the way that we had come, we had so much to be thankful for, and we look to the future with high hopes. To quote the Covenant signed in 1803 by our forefathers, “*we this day dedicate ourselves to the Lord*”.

THE FENTONS

The Fentons of Crimble go back to 1565, when Roger Fenton, D.D. was born there. With one short break, the property remained in Fenton hands for 300 years. Roger Fenton was one of the translators of the Authorised Version of the Bible in 1611. His children, grandchildren and great grandchildren were all buried at St Luke's Church in Heywood.

The first Fenton who affected life at Bamford Chapel was Joseph, who was born at Crimble in 1765. Along with his contemporary Fentons, he was a sizeable landowner, owning much of the local countryside and its farms, and employing the cottagers in the weaving of mainly woollen goods. The spinning was done by the women in their homes and collected by Joseph Fenton's employees.

In 1789 Joseph married Ann Kay of the renowned Kay family of Bury, who dominated the local cotton trade. The Kays were all strong non-conformists of the Congregational tradition, whilst the Fentons till then had been members of St Luke's for many generations.

Around the turn of the century, Mrs Fenton's brother Robert Kay of Bury was seeking to establish the Congregational cause in the districts of Ashworth and Heywood. Bamford it seems was chosen, almost as a halfway house between the two, and Joseph and Ann Fenton gave the land called Butterworth Fold from their Crimble and Bamford Estate for the church to be built upon.

Joseph seems to have been an outstanding man in his generation. As the Industrial Revolution developed, the mill owners like Joseph Fenton became increasingly wealthy. It is highly likely that he already owned the mills at Meadowcroft and Crimble, when in 1826 he built the cotton mill at Hooley Bridge in Heywood, building 300 cottages for the workers, and with new machinery, he began to produce superior types of sheeting, flannel and blanket goods.

In 1819 Joseph established the Fenton Bank which was considered in Lancashire "as safe as the Bank of England". In 1820 he moved to Bamford Hall.

Joseph continued to buy land and over the years he bought properties in Ribchester, Dutton and Bailey, and was styled Lord of the Manor of these places. He had tenants in each place and he would visit his properties for fishing and shooting of game.

Joseph and Ann had two sons John and James. They both went to Mr Littlewood's boarding school in Rochdale, and as teenagers they taught reading and writing at the Sabbath School at Bamford Chapel. We have many examples of John Fenton's beautiful copperplate handwriting, which suggests he was certainly qualified to teach those in the village far less fortunate than himself. We also have several hints of the Fenton's life-style. From the Fenton family comes this story: "*When James and John had finished imparting their instruction in rudimentary calligraphy, they would return home to Bamford Hall in the most direct way by jumping over gates, hedges and ditches, with all the lithesome buoyancy of athletes.*" Meanwhile as Joseph and Ann grew older, they often went to Southport by stagecoach or private chaise, to enjoy the luxury of warm seawater baths for their health.

Ann Fenton died in 1831 and strangely, very soon afterwards Joseph, perhaps as an act of devotion to his wife, became a church member himself at Bamford Chapel. By this time Joseph Fenton owned land which included Grizlehurst, Birtle, Ashworth and Wolstenholme. By the 1850's John Fenton lived at Bamford Hall, his son John lived at Plumpton Hall. Meanwhile brother James lived at Clegg Hall, William Fenton lived at Meadowcroft and stepbrother James Fenton lived at Hazelhurst. Such was the local standing of the Fenton family.

Nearly all of the Fentons by this time attended Bamford Chapel and they and their servants occupied the entire right hand side of the chapel. John Fenton, elder son of Joseph and Ann had two wives. His first wife Elizabeth bore him three sons and three daughters; his second wife bore him five sons and five daughters.

By the time Joseph died in 1841 he was a man whose wealth and fame were known throughout the nation. Branches of his bank could be found at the bottom of Yorkshire Street in Rochdale and next to St Luke's in Heywood. There was also a branch in Bury. The Mill at Hooley Bridge was six storeys high with over 500 looms. The workers at Fenton's Mill were noted as *"the best housed, best clad, best fed and educated in the area"*. When Joseph died, aged 77, his income was, according to a newspaper of the time, £30,000 a year. Another newspaper report said: *"he left £500,000 sterling and he had previously divided a similar sum between his sons"*.

In 1832 John Fenton of Crimble Hall and Bamford Chapel became the first MP for Rochdale. He was like most non-conformists of the time, a Liberal. He lost the next election, but in 1837, in the General Election on the accession of Queen Victoria, he was elected again. A life size marble bust of John Fenton is to be seen on the grand staircase of Rochdale Town Hall. His friends and colleagues at the time included John Bright and Richard Cobden. A smaller bust can be seen on his memorial at Bamford Chapel.

John Fenton, MP died in July 1863 and, like his parents and some of his children, he is buried at Bamford Chapel. His second wife Hannah Fenton died in 1878 and again was buried at Bamford Chapel.

The 1860's saw the end of the Fenton Empire in Bamford. No-one is quite clear how it all happened. There was a run on the Fenton Bank and the firm went bankrupt. Everything had to be sold: Crimble Hall, Meadowcroft, Hazelhurst, Plumpton, the furniture, silver, pictures, horses and carriages, indeed their entire belongings.

Maybe because of the financial stress in the family, certain of the Fentons fell out among themselves regarding whether or not to replace water power with steam engines at Hooley Bridge. The mill was run down and ultimately closed down in 1863. The mill was valued then at £189,000, making £30,000 a year profit. 24 years later, it was finally sold to W.R. Lee for £6,150 (40,939 yards of the Hooley Bridge estate went for three half pence per yard!).

All the Fenton family left the area and settled in different parts of England, as well as emigrating to the USA.

Of all the 17 children born to John Fenton, MP, Roger Fenton was the only one to go on to achieve international fame. He studied photography, then in its infancy, in Paris in the 1840's. He soon became well known in London for his pictures and portraits. He worked for the Czar of Russia, and in 1854 he was asked to Buckingham Palace to take photographs of the Royal Family, and to instruct Prince Albert in this new art. These were possibly the first ever Royal photographs. In 1855, Roger was sent to the Crimean War as the first photographer ever to take pictures of battlefields, soldiers and the Generals who were conducting the war. In 1855 Roger Fenton organised and became the first secretary of the Royal Photographic Society. He died, aged 50, in 1869.

THE KAYS

The Kays were a remarkable family, who left their mark on millions of people and across generations. Basically, they stemmed from Bury. John Kay, born in 1704 at “The Park, Walmersley, near Bury” became famous as the inventor of the flying shuttle. But as well as being greatly influential in the Lancashire cotton industry, the family were almost all stalwart Congregationalists.

Many were members of Holcombe Chapel, built in 1712. The descendants of those Kays helped found Park Congregational Church, Ramsbottom in 1798. The first six Trustees of Park were six brothers, all sons of James Kay of Bass Lane, and the seventh was his grandson. All these brothers are buried at Park, except for Robert who is buried here at Bamford Chapel.

By the turn of the century, the Kay family had scattered from Bury, and Robert Kay was to be found living in Ardwick. He had married Hannah Phillips of Birmingham and was in business as a fustian manufacturer. The Kays were keen evangelists and it was Robert Kay who was instrumental in starting the Congregational cause locally. It is worth noting that several early preachers at Heywood, Ashworth and Bamford, like Benjamin Holmes and John Winder, were all friends of Robert Kay from his Bury days.

In 1789 Robert’s sister Ann married Joseph Fenton and this no doubt led to the interest of Robert Kay in the Bamford district. We can only assume that Robert and Hannah had another house somewhere in the area, for when their first son James Phillips was born in 1804 he was baptised at Bamford Chapel in 1805 and the family are described “of Rochdale”.

It was Robert Kay who paid for the first preachers of the Gospel to come to Bamford, and it was he who hired a house for them to preach in. The year 1821 saw the Kay family move from Manchester to Meadowcroft in Bamford. *“His eldest son, well versed in the system of Sabbath instruction practised in Manchester, took the superintendence of the boys’ school and in a little time such improvement took place that it was agreed to enlarge the school, which was done in 1822.”*

The Kays lived at Meadowcroft until 1830, when they moved to Brookshaw House in Bury. He was without doubt the main beneficiary to Bamford Chapel and it was his vision and generosity, which caused the galleries to be built in 1828. The first history written of Bamford Chapel records: *“He liberally contributed himself and used his influence with the friends of religious Independency in Manchester and the adjoining towns, by which a very handsome sum was obtained towards defraying the expenses. Whilst in the vicinity of Bamford Chapel he employed his leisure in Tract distribution”*.

Robert Kay died in April 1834 *“and at the request of his family, a place of sepulchre was granted him in that pew where he used to sit and listen to the Gospel”*. A plaque on the chapel wall marks the place where he is buried (the only person ever to be buried within the church).

His son, James Phillips Kay, was to rise to the very peak of English society and culture. In his teenage years he worked in Fenton’s Bank for his Uncle Joseph. He went, aged 20,

to Edinburgh University where he received a MD. In 1827 he was Senior Physician to the Ardwick and Ancoats Dispensary. In 1832 when cholera raged across the land, James Phillips Kay became the national authority on the disease and its causes. He it was who stressed the connection between ill health and the poor environment of most Lancashire people. He wrote a famous essay at the time, entitled "The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes employed in the Cotton Industry in Manchester". This was in the words of a later *historian* "a work of genius, which was to influence the thinking of an entire nation". Certainly J P Kay's writing greatly influenced Friedrich Engels, who was himself to influence Karl Marx, founder of the Communist Movement. Such was the authority at the time of the young man from Bamford Chapel called James Phillips Kay.

In later years, Mr Kay turned from medicine to education. He became the first Secretary of the National Board for Education, and in 1849, because of his services to education, he was knighted by Queen Victoria. He founded the very first Teacher Training College at Battersea. Another historian, writing more than a century later said: "*to him, more than any other man, we owe our present system of elementary education*". It was James Phillips Kay who formed the system of education still practised in Britain today, of primary, junior and secondary education.

In 1842 he married Janet Shuttleworth of Gawthorpe Hall in Burnley, and from then, the family became known as the Kay-Shuttleworths. In 1863, James Phillips Kay-Shuttleworth became High Sheriff of Lancashire. This great man, who had begun life here in the Sunday School at Bamford Chapel, eventually died in May 1877.

THE ASHWORTHS

John Ashworth and his wife Alice were both born in 1774. They lived at Cutgate and it is suggested that old John was the last handloom weaver in Heywood. That was when he moved his wife and family to Simpson Clough. They had ten children, several of whom were to have a lasting effect on future generations.

There were seven daughters and three sons: Abraham, Abel and John. Abraham married into the Bell family (farmers of Jowkin, and related to the Bells who had the Minorca Laundry, Bagslate). Their sons later included Ernest Ashworth, decorator of Heywood and Deacon and choirmaster at Bamford Chapel.

Abel Ashworth of Hooley Bridge was the father of two daughters Alice and Ann. Alice married her cousin George Ashworth and they were the parents of Walter Abel Ashworth. In later years Walter became manager at Porritt's Mill. He was the instigator in 1923 of Bamford Chapel acquiring the present playing fields at the back of the chapel. His sister was Mrs Barker, whose mill-owning family, the Barker Bros, owned the fields. At his death, Walter Abel Ashworth bequeathed much of his legacy to Bamford Chapel, and this money is still helping church work fifty years on.

But of the ten children, the son who was to have the widest effect on local and national people was John Ashworth. He was brought up in the Sunday School and the chapel at Bamford, and the graves of his parents can still be seen in the churchyard. He was born in 1813 and was so poor that he received his first Sunday School prize in bare feet and wearing a pinafore made by his mother from an old wool sack. In later years he founded the Ragged School in Whitehall Street, as well as the Chapel for the Destitute on Baillie Street. As a preacher, he travelled all over the British Isles, Europe and the USA.

But John Ashworth was best known nationally for his writings. His first book "Strange Tales from Humble Life" went into five editions. Two later books "Walks in Canaan" and "Back from Canaan" sold over 30,000 copies each. He wrote many penny Tracts. Over 60 of them sold over 60,000 copies, seven of them sold over 100,000 and one of them sold over a quarter of a million!

His beginnings were influenced by family poverty and his father's fondness for drink. The pastimes of the day and area included cock-fighting, bull-bating, dog-fighting, drinking and gambling. From this humble background and his Christian beginnings at Bamford Chapel, John Ashworth rose to be known by Queen Victoria and her ministers as well as leaders across the world.

When he died in 1875, the streets of Rochdale were lined by thousands who wished to honour this man of God. Typical of the man was that one of his last wishes was that all the children in his Sunday School should have a new pair of clogs and a pair of new stockings. One hundred and twenty nine children received these gifts.

Margaret Ashworth (one of the seven daughters) married James Shepherd. One of their children was called Robert Shepherd, and two of Robert's children became ministers.

THE SHEPHERDS

Robert Shepherd (Junior) was the first person from Bamford Chapel to enter the ordained ministry.

Ambrose Shepherd was the younger brother of the Rev Robert Shepherd and like his brother and his family shared an upbringing at Bamford Chapel. He was born in 1852 and by the age of ten was working at Oram's Mill at Simpson Clough. When he was 22 he entered Rotherham College to study for the ministry.

His ministry was carried out at Newton Park, Leeds, St Mary's, Morley and Trinity Church, Reading. From Reading the Rev Ambrose Shepherd became minister at Elgin Place Church in Glasgow. He had great gifts as a preacher and he became known throughout the United Kingdom. He remained at Elgin Place for fifteen years before retiring to Southport.

The Rev James Francis Shepherd was the son of Rev Robert Shepherd. He was born in 1871 and after training at Mansfield College, Oxford he ministered at Haverhill, Withington, Aberdeen, Halifax, Shipley and twice at Beverley, where his father had also ministered. He was a great organist and served on the Editorial Committee for "Congregational Praise". He also wrote several hymns, the best known being "Once there came to earth".

The Rev Frank Shepherd was born at "Spring Gardens", Bamford in 1907. While still a school boy he became known in Lancashire as "The Boy Preacher". He became a church member in the time of the Rev Robert Richley and trained for the ministry at Lancashire Independent College in Manchester. His churches included Dursley, Shipley, Cleveleys, Olton, Chorlton and Buxton.

Frank Shepherd was a very popular minister and had an influence in many circles, especially education. He died in 1972 and his funeral in the Bamford Chapel churchyard was conducted by the Rev Tom Vause.

THE PORRITTS

The Porritt family had much in common with the Kay family, who came before them. They were great industrialists, though the Kays were in cotton and the Porritts were in wool. Both families had strong Christian roots, and both families came from the Ramsbottom area.

The Kays had founded the Park Congregational Church in Ramsbottom in 1798. However, it fell into disrepair some thirty years later and was closed. When the chapel re-opened in 1840, with just six members, four of those six were of the Porritt family: Joseph, James, Samuel and Ann.

The three Porritt brothers began their woollen manufacturing career at Dearden Clough Mill in 1838, and then extended their work to Springwood Mill in Ramsbottom in 1845. In 1851 the Porritt brothers built the Stubbins Vale Mill. In 1857 Joseph Porritt branched out on his own and founded the Sunnybank Mill at Helmshore, under the management of Joseph Porritt and Sons.

At Stubbins, the Porritts began a Sunday School at the mill and within a few weeks they had founded the Congregational Church there. Of the original eight members, four came from the Porritt family. In 1866 Samuel Porritt extended the Porritt Empire when he built the mill at Bamford.

The Porritts' arrival in Bamford followed very quickly after the demise of the Fenton Empire in Bamford and Hooley Bridge, and the disappearance of the Fentons was the reason for the arrival of the Porritts. In 1866 there was an abundance of unemployed labour in the village, and so the new mill brought prosperity to the village community.

The Porritts contributed a great deal, both spiritually and financially to Bamford Chapel. Three of them became Deacons: Samuel, Joseph and Bertram, whilst for many years Charles Porritt was both organist and choirmaster.

A MEMORY OF BAMFORD CHAPEL SUNDAY SCHOOL

(as narrated by John Ashworth, recalling the late 1820's)

It was the custom in our Sunday School to give the boy who was first in the class, when the bell rang for closing in the afternoon, a round ticket of merit, bearing a figure one. These tickets were collected once each year, and the boy having the largest number had the most valuable prize presented to him. Teachers, scholars, parents, friends, and members of the congregation, assembled in the large school-room on Whit-Friday to have tea, and to witness the distribution of prizes. One year, I had just one more ticket than any other boy in the school; and in consequence, I was entitled to receive the highest honours. The evening before that memorable day on which I was to receive my prize, I was very unhappy on account of still being without shoes or clogs, and I said to my mother, as gently as I could: "Mother, do you think you could get me a second-hand pair of clogs for tomorrow? I am going to have the highest prize, and I shall have to go up the steps to the platform, and I shall be ashamed to go with my bare feet".

The following day, I washed my feet for a long time. I was determined that if I could not get anything to cover my ten toes, I would make them look clean. I was at the school before the time, and sat in one corner alone. Soon the people began to gather.

On the platform, there stood a large table, covered with a white cloth. On the cloth, the prizes were arranged with as much display as possible. Books, penknives, inkstands, a small writing desk, and other valuables, arrested the attention of all who entered the room. The ceremony was opened by singing a hymn. Then one of the superintendents (the present Sir James Kay Shuttleworth) mounted the platform, and made a speech, eulogizing the scholars for their good conduct during the year, and holding up to view the various rewards whilst speaking.

When he came to the first prize, he called out my name, and invited me on to the platform amidst a loud clapping of hands. O, how my heart did beat! I felt at that moment as though I would have given twenty pounds, if I had possessed it, for something with which to cover my feet. I arose from my corner, and threading my way through the people as softly as if I were a cat, I walked blushing on to the platform, and received my reward of merit, amidst the repeated clapping of the audience. But when I got back to my place I sat down and cried as though my heart would break, because I was such a poor, poor boy, and because I thought some of the other boys sneered at my poverty.

TWELVE YEARS LATER

(Another memory from John Ashworth, of an evening at Bamford Chapel, about 1842)

A circumstance that took place about twelve years after. I was then grown into a young man, and the Church had determined that I should take a very important place among them. Though the incidents in my mother's life already related produced a lasting impression on me, yet I never saw her weep as she did on the following occasion.

My memory will ever retain the scenes and feelings of that eventful hour. It was one Sabbath evening, my mother, as usual, was seated in her pew in the house of God. The congregation was very large, and all were silently waiting for the appearance of the preacher.

He, poor man, was on his knees in the vestry, praying for Divine help, and trembling with fear. One of the deacons opened the vestry door, and the young preacher rose from his knees and ascended to the pulpit. There was an elderly female among the congregation whose face was covered with her hands, and whose head was bowed in deep reverence. Large tears streamed down her pale cheeks, and her whole soul was greatly affected.

That woman was my own dear mother! And the young, trembling, timid preacher was myself! Her once little barefooted, ragged boy, her own dear child. When I gave out the first line of the hymn, and the congregation rose to join in celebrating God's praises, my mother's head was still bowed down. Poor, dear mother; how she loved me; and yet she feared on my account.

Once, I had on my pinafore made from the old pack-sheet, and the form under which I put my bare feet. But now we had met again in the sanctuary; she to weep for joy; and I her son, a sinner saved by grace, and a preacher of the gospel of peace.

RECOLLECTIONS OF BAMFORD CHAPEL AND ITS PEOPLE

(By Sir James Phillips Kay-Shuttleworth, in a letter sent to be read at a meeting of old Sunday School scholars, held at Bamford in 1867)

My dear friends,

I regret that I cannot hope to avail myself of your minister's invitation to be present at the meeting of old scholars of the Bamford Sunday School. Probably few among you know that for two or three years before I went to college, and while I was living with my uncle Fenton at Bamford Hall, I took a very lively interest in your school. I was a youth between 15 and 18 years old, and I devoted my leisure to the organisation and management of the boys' school. Robert Porter, a deacon of the Independent Church had charge of the girls' school. As these early events of my youth have never faded from my memory, nor lost their hold upon my feelings, some of my remembrances may be interesting to you.

Among the most prominent of these is my association with Thomas Jackson. He was the son of the minister, and my most active assistant. He was then a youth, learning his trade as a shoe-maker. He was crippled in the foot and in the leg, and of by no means a robust constitution; but he had a wiry vigour of frame, singular activity and energy, and considerable mental power, but only a very elementary education. He had then much quaint humour, was prone to be arch and sarcastic, and was full of practical jokes. Beneath this surface, there was a depth and earnestness of purpose, and a sincere and fervent piety, which directed his whole after-life. He taught in the Sunday School very regularly, and with great energy. He was the leader of the choir in the chapel, where he played the violin. He was most enthusiastic in organising choral meetings, for which he obtained the scores of oratorios and anthems, and with an unwearied energy, superintended the rehearsals, both instrumental and vocal, before the final display. At last, after great exertions at meetings for practice, held during most nights of every week for two or three months, the whole neighbourhood was assembled, all the performers were placed on a platform in the chapel, Thomas Jackson led with his violin, and there was a burst of instrumental and vocal music which astonished the audience.

I was then at work on chemistry and electricity and magnetism, and the worthy minister allowed me to establish my laboratory in a part of his house. His son, Thomas Jackson, generally assisted me in the construction of apparatus and in experiments, and I conceive it was he that proposed that I should give to the Sunday School scholars and their parents a public demonstration of the most remarkable changes in volume, form and colour which attend such operations. This, in my young and inexperienced hands, resulted in my suddenly driving my whole audience from the school in tumult and confusion, by filling the room with an irritating and noxious gas!

Occasionally, I took the most active teachers and advanced scholars on a long excursion on foot. I remember that once we climbed the Knowl Hill and descended Balderstone and Brooksbottom. I cannot remember whether we then ascended Holcombe; I think not, but even without this, our excursion was long and fatiguing. I recall that on our return, as a last feat, we climbed the steep scar in Bamford Wood. I mention this just to show you with what strange energy of will, Thomas Jackson could compel his crippled and wiry frame to do him service, for he was my foremost companion in this excursion. I had climbed the scar expecting to throw off almost all my party, but when I reached an old

withered oak which overhung the top, I found Thomas close to me. I revive the recollection also to recommend such excursions to you.

I hope there are still as many florists among you as there were in the old congregation of hand-loom weavers who gathered from the cottages between Bagslate, Ashworth, and Birtle. The minister was himself, perhaps the most skilful florist, and Thomas learned the art from his father, and through life took daily pleasure in the garden attached to his cottage. Whenever I have visited him, I have found it full of choice flowers, reared with the greatest skill. I do not remember that there were any flower shows nearer than Rochdale.

I was fond of accompanying the deacons in their visits on Sundays to remote "folds" and hamlets in the hills of Blackstone Edge and Todmorden, or along the range from Knowl Hill to Rowley Moor. I remember long walks with the deacon, John Crabtree, his pious conversation on the way, our arrival at a weaver's cottage in some far distant "fold" on the edge of a wild moor, the simple breakfast of oatcake or oatmeal porridge and milk, the gathering of the neighbours, and the primitive scriptural greetings sometimes uttered, the simple services and the quaint, rather dogmatic discourse of my friend John. The mid-day meal of eggs, bacon and oatcake; then the walk home, and the arrival at Bamford in the twilight or night. In these walks, John lent his whole influence with me to induce me to become a missionary, but I had a thirst for knowledge, and longed to go to the university to study science, history, and metaphysics.

You know that the mantle of John Crabtree fell on my friend Thomas Jackson, who in years, while he supported his family by working at his trade as a shoemaker, became a devoted missionary among the solitary hamlets and remote villages of our Lancashire and Yorkshire highlands. I have often heard him preach. His discourses were carefully prepared. They were characterised by much of the quaintness of the old divines, and deeply tinged by a severe form of Calvinistic theology. But his imagination prevented his style from being harsh, and the geniality of his disposition gave a winning sweetness to his manner, so that the sternest doctrines were not repulsive from his lips. I visited him from time to time to imbibe somewhat of the spirit of his earnest life, and give him some slight proof of my sympathy in his labours. Thus I came to know that Thomas visited many outlying congregations of weavers, miners, and labourers, on the borders of Derbyshire and Cheshire, and along the Blackstone Edge range of hills. He walked great distances to places remote from any public conveyance. He commonly lodged on the Saturday and Sunday nights in the cottage of the deacon or other prominent member of the little congregation; and conducted the worship on the Sunday either in some small chapel or in a cottage. There must be in many secluded place a lively remembrance of the earnest, unwearied man, who spent his life in such humble but faithful imitation of Christ. I have a heartfelt pleasure in holding up to you the example of this noble-hearted good man, in pointing to his simple, cheerful, pure life; to his struggle with natural infirmity of body, and his triumph over it, and to his self-sacrificing labours under the influence of fervent religious zeal.

At last, he had to suffer under grievous chronic disease, which slowly wasted his strength, until his life flickered out. But his hope rose as his vital force failed, and he died strong in faith and full of charity. I wish I could remember as much of John Ashworth, who was one of my scholars in your Sunday School. You know that John Ashworth is the

missionary of Rochdale. He has published tracts of which some hundred thousand copies have been sold. He has done more than any other man to keep alive and spread the faith of Christ among the manual labour class in the valley of the Roche, and his missionary labours extend to many distant places. Early in the cotton famine I visited Rochdale with a friend to make myself acquainted with the organisation of relief there. We were in the stores from which bread, meal, soup, and other foods were given, and were examining the forms of their accounts and the modes of distribution. Two members of the relief committee were explaining to us their methods, when one of them said to me, "I am one of your former Sunday School scholars". "At Bamford Chapel?" I enquired. "Yes", he said, "I am John Ashworth". I did not before that know that John Ashworth had been one of our Bamford Sunday School scholars. Since that time, I have read all of John Ashworth's tracts, and watched his career. My conviction is, that he is a noble-hearted man, with a natural genius for his work as an evangelist. You ought to rejoice, as I do, that your Sunday School has produced such a man.

I would not have you, however, think that the Sunday School can do all that is needed in the instruction and training of youth. The Sunday School was the root from which sprang our system of day schools. The force which makes religious training the chief aim of the elementary day school was derived from this root. The Congregational organisation of our school system had the same origin. Long before even enlightened statesmen and leaders of public opinion cared for the education of the people, the congregation had begun the work in the Sunday School. When the government first attempted to organise national education, it not only found this machinery ready to its hand, but it also, after various experiments in other directions, found that the churches and congregations contained within themselves a zeal and a purpose, as to public education, which existed in no civic body, not even in the Parliament itself.

Even now, when great political changes have made the education of the people a necessity of the State, I cannot conceive that any purely civic body like a committee of ratepayers, or a town council, can in the present state of information, opinion and feeling, without mischief, supersede the congregation in the management of the school. On the other hand, the congregational school will have to become a public school, in which the civil rights of the minority, however small and humble, will have to be respected. On this basis the schools which have sprung from the root of the Sunday School, and retain both the original aim of religious training and the congregational organisation, may well be included in a national system, supported both by the general taxation and by local rates.

Your Sunday School has, as I am informed by your minister, borne its natural fruit, a congregational day school attended by 80 scholars. From what I know of the district, I think this number ought to be greatly increased. That increase would be ensured if your children came to school at an earlier age and remained to a later age, and if they were kept more regularly at school. Few grow up without some schooling, but the period of their instruction is too short and too much interrupted. You ought not to confine your exertions to the payment of the school pence, but to make whatever sacrifice of wages or of home service is required to assure them of thorough elementary education. The Sunday School will be regarded more and more as a part of the religious organisation of the church. The day school will I hope always retain the object of bringing up our youth religiously, but it will also be adapted to the political wants of the State, and to the civil rights of the minority. We do not make revolutions in England, but our organisations

grow and spread like our oaks. So this school system, which has had a congregational origin will grow, change, and spread, until it is national.

Now I bid you God speed. I have written all these words from my heart. I often think of Bamford, and I should not wonder, if among my last thoughts, is the Sunday School, in the organisation and management of which, I, forty-five years ago, received the first impulse to observe, enquire, and ponder on the methods and discipline of schools for the people.

I am, my dear friends, your sincere well-wisher,

James P.Kay-Shuttleworth

FROM THE DIARY OF RACHEL JACKSON

Born in Bamford 1836, she was the daughter of Thomas Jackson, and grand-daughter of the Rev Thomas Jackson. She lived across the road from the Chapel at the "Cottage". For many reasons, Rachel seems to have been the central figure at Bamford Chapel at the time, because she was from the previous minister's family; because she lived across from the Chapel; because she was such a devout lady; and maybe most of all, because she was an invalid and confined to her home. Everyone knew her and visited her. John Ashworth, a native of Bamford Chapel wrote a book about her called "Trials". And we still have her diary, just one year of her thoughts and experiences, 1868. The following are just a few snippets from this fascinating insight into Victorian village life. Rachel died the following year, Sept 21st 1869, aged just 33!

New Year's Day 1868 "At the commencement of this year, I would praise and bless the goodness of the Lord, whose gracious hand has brought me hitherto. More than six years, I have been laid upon this bed, and for the first two years it seemed as if a few more hours would close my earthly existence. But God's thoughts are not our thoughts, so he did not take me home when I expected.

My beloved parents and a dear brother were all removed by death in the short space of one year and ten months (dear Mother and brother quite unexpectedly), and very dark my faith seemed then. I would remember with deepest gratitude the goodness of God in sparing my sister Mary's life and granting a little increase of strength. She was in a very weak state last Spring, the Doctor said both her lungs were diseased. Her cough was very troublesome and her breathing difficult. For nearly three months she was quite an invalid, we had to get a woman to wait upon us and mind the house.

About midsummer, she was considerably better, she went with Alice and Edwin to Leeds, but instead of getting better with change of company and scenery, she became much worse, and it was with difficulty she was got home. For several days after her return, she was confined to her bed, and it seemed very doubtful whether she would get over it or not. But God in his mercy has seen fit to bless the means used to check the disease, for although she is far from being strong, she is better in some respects than she was a year ago.

My brother George and his family are all pretty well. He has left his situation in the bank, hoping that by a more active life, his health might improve. [It was about this time that Fenton's bank closed down, and this may have been the bank that brother George worked at, and the reason why he left]. Anne is pretty well. Edwin and Alice are very comfortable. The School is in good condition, with about 110 scholars in attendance. [This is most probably the Bamford Chapel Sunday School].

And so, at the beginning of the year, we are, as a family, in the enjoyment of a measure of health and comfort, for which we ought to feel very thankful. Received letters from Miss Foden and Miss Davidson. The latter has been confined to her bed ten months. Given sacred garlands to E Ashworth and Leah Wild for the trouble they have had in bringing orders for tating. Sent to Miss Green of Westhoughton, collars for her nieces.

Jan 21st Mr McCappin [Minister of Providence Chapel, Rochdale] called to see me today for the first time and also Mrs Bamford (one of his members). Mr McCappin spoke very nicely on the 103rd Psalm and on the duty of praise to God. He was very nice and homely in conversation and offered a suitable prayer before he left. I enjoyed his visit very much. Aunt gone to Ireland today, to nurse Mrs John Fenton who is very ill. [This John Fenton was the son of MP John Fenton who had married an Irish girl].

Jan 22nd This morning, a telegraph message has come to Crimble informing them of Mrs John's death. A heavy stroke for her husband and her family. One can hardly realize the sad fact that her beautiful home and garden at Plumpton is so unexpectedly deprived of her presence, and that on earth, we shall see her face no more. Received from Mrs Shepherd a packet of small books. Sent to Mrs Hoyle a small parcel in acknowledgement of Dr Hoyle's kindness to me. I have not been well in the night, and am feeling weak and poorly today.

Jan 23rd Suffering from irritation in my back, and unable to do any work. Mr Calman and Mr Barraclough called today. Also Mr W Fenton's Governess who brought a piece of bacon. [Mr Calman was the assistant to John Ashworth at the Church of the Destitute in Rochdale].

Jan 24th Still feeling weak and poorly.

Jan 25th Mrs John Fenton interred this morning near her father's home in Ireland. Only a month ago, her only brother was carried to the grave. The family now consists of Mr Murland and two daughters. They will seem very desolate. Uncle John is very ill, not likely to recover, the Lord be near him now. Received some tracts this morning, and a letter which made me uneasy. I am rather better today.

Jan 26th Mary has been to see Uncle John, he is suffering much pain, caused by disease of the bladder and kidneys.

Jan 27th Received letters from Mrs Hoyle and Mr Howarth. Written to Miss Hodge and Mrs Kershaw. My back keeps sore and weak, but I am rather better on the whole.

Jan 28th Mrs Heape of Rochdale called to see me today. She brought some grapes and oranges and a present from her sister in law (Mrs Schofield) and her son, which they wished me to accept as a token of their respect for my father. She ordered a quantity of tatted edgings.

Jan 29th Sent Uncle John some broth. He continues very ill. The doctor says he will not recover. Mrs Browne has been to see him today. [Mrs Browne was the wife of the minister of Bamford Chapel].

Jan 31st Mr Ashworth called to see me, prior to starting on his journey to Jerusalem. [John Ashworth was the minister of the Church of the Destitute in Rochdale]. The party leave on the 4th of Feb and expect to be from home about three months. He agreed for Miss Maggie Ramsbottom to commence visiting the poor and ignorant in this locality, and report progress to me.

Feb 1st My brother George has brought us a piece of calico. He is looking better. Edwin is here too, Alice is but poorly.

Feb 4th Mrs Browne been and had prayer.

Feb 7th Sent a piece of tatting to Miss Pennington. Sent letters to Miss Tattersall (Oldham) and two small books ("God's purposes in afflicting his people"), one for herself and the other for Miss Heywood who is also an invalid.

Feb 8th This day 11 years ago, our dear little Johnnie died. He would have been 16 years old had he lived until now. [John Handel Jackson was Rachel's young brother who died when he was five. He is buried below the manse window].

Feb 8th A very quiet Sunday. Mary is not so well.

Feb 13th Mr Browne [The Minister] been here and gave me a letter which has been sent from the Church and Congregation belonging to the Independent Chapel at Barnsley, inviting him to become their Pastor. He has been at Bamford ten years, and says that to leave here would be like wrenching part of his life from him. He has promised to consider the matter and acquaint them with his decision by the end of this month. I cannot help fretting when I look back on the past and remember how long he has been a regular visitor in my chamber, how he was with us in our bereavements too.

Feb 15th Mrs Tunnicliffe been to pay for some tatting, and order more. Alice is here. All being well, she will stay until tomorrow evening. Uncle James keeps very poorly. [James Jackson, brother of her father Thomas, and the other son of Rev Thomas Jackson].

Feb 20th Mr Calman called to see me and gave me some eggs which he had bought for himself. Then our kind Doctor Hoyle came and left me some medicine. I cannot help shedding tears of thankfulness while I think of God's great goodness to me.

Feb 23rd Mr Hodgkinson, Mr Morgan and Edwin been to see us. They sang several hymns after which they engaged in prayer. I am rather better today.

Feb 24th Mr Calman and Mr Barraclough who have been visiting the sick in the neighbourhood called and had tea with us. Mr C. read a portion of scripture and Mr B. offered prayer.

Feb 27th My dear Father's birthday [Thomas Jackson, spoken of and described by James Kay Shuttleworth in the previous letter]. How these days remind me of the past, and make me feel the loneliness all the more.

Mar 3rd Mr Browne been here. He is still undecided about leaving Bamford for Barnsley.

Mar 9th Mr Calman been here, stayed an hour or two and had a nice conversation and prayers. He said the last letter they had received from Mr Ashworth was dated from the Med. Sea. By this time, he will most likely be in Jerusalem. Miss Lord called. She is very poorly. As she is very poor and fatherless, I gave her 2/- from the fund for the poor.

Mar 14th Edwin's birthday. Crocuses and snowdrops in full bloom, but much spoiled by the high winds and showery weather. Gooseberry bushes are looking green and the hedges beginning to bud.

Mar 24th My birthday. Mr C. and Mr B. called and brought a letter sent by Mr A. from Jerusalem, which is very interesting.

April 8th Mr Calman married today. He and Mrs C. have gone to Malvern for their wedding tour.

April 10th Good Friday Laying the memorial stone of the new Congregational Church in Heywood today.

April 12th Mr Ashworth and his wife and Miss Ramsbottom have been to hear Mr Browne today, previous to his leaving Bamford for Barnsley.

April 15th Mary Ramsbottom has been married today to Mr W Grime. They called to see me on the way to the station. They go to Worcester tonight and on to Malvern tomorrow. Mary has gone to have tea with the wedding party.

April 19th Mr Calman and Mr Barraclough been to see me. Mr C. brought me a picture of St Ann's Well, Malvern, which I once stayed at for a few days, he has just returned from his wedding tour.

April 24th Mr and Mrs Browne had their farewell tea up in my room today, and spent a nice quiet evening.

April 25th There has been a Tea Meeting this evening in our school and a presentation to Mr Browne on the occasion of his resigning the Pastorate at Bamford. Revs Parkinson, McCappin, Jones and Yonge were present and several friends from Heywood as well. Mr Porritt occupied the chair and after singing and prayer, he called upon Mr Albert Fenton to make the presentation which consisted of a handsome silver inkstand and a purse worked by Mrs Fenton containing one hundred guineas. The money had been subscribed by the members of the Church and Congregation. Mr Browne was much moved, the affair having been brought about without his knowledge. The meeting was very affecting, most of the people in tears. Mr Parkinson spoke of Mr Browne in the highest terms and every other speaker testified their sincere estimation of his character and worth.

April 26th Mr Browne's last Sabbath at Bamford. The weather is beautifully fine and warm. There has been a great many people at the Chapel. The Lord's Supper was administered in the evening. Mr Browne's last text was Romans 1.16 "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ". This day has been painfully affecting both to Pastor and people. No more must I have a quiet hour with him as I have often had on a Sunday evening when his usual services were over.

April 29th Mr Browne's furniture is being removed today. Lionel and the servant are sleeping here tonight. Mr and Mrs Browne at Crimble and two of the children as well.

The other children are at Daisy Bank. [The Fentons were still at Crimble, and it seems they offered the departing minister and his family their hospitality].

May 2nd Mr Browne called to see me, but was so overcome that he could not converse at all. Neither could I tell how to speak or what to say. I handed the lines to him which my father composed on "A Pastor's Farewell". He said he hoped to see me again. I feel almost as if it were a brother who was leaving home. I can hardly realize the fact that he lives no longer amongst us.

May 31st Our School Sermons A lovely day. Mr Butcher of Bury gave an address to the scholars this morning. Dr Frazer of Airedale College preached this afternoon and evening. There has been a large attendance at both services and Dr Frazer has given great satisfaction. After the evening service, the choir kindly came and sang two of the tunes for me, standing in the garden, and so I had a small share of the memorable day. It is kind of them to come, and especially as only last Sunday evening they sang every hymn and tune appointed for the day in my chamber.

June 5th Another Whit Friday has come. The scholars and teachers met in the school at 9 this morning, and shortly after formed a procession, led up by a grand new banner and several small flags. They sang two hymns for me and then set out their usual round. They were treated with milk at Mr Fenton's, oranges at Mr Porritt's and Mr John Fenton's, and with buns and milk in a field which Mr Albert Fenton allowed them to play in. The day has been gloriously fine, and no doubt many will have spent a very happy day.

June 26th Mr Ashworth called and brought me two stones from the Holy Land, one from the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and the other he took out of the River Jordan. They are very precious stones.

July 3rd Miss Fenton sent me some nice things from her croquet party, and a kind note which rather cheered me. Sister Mary continues to decline in health.

July 17th A cow has been in the garden and eaten the tops off the raspberry bushes and trodden many of the beds.

Aug 9th Mary and I are both ill. We are indeed in poor condition. I unable to move and Mary unfit to rise. Robert Shepherd called this afternoon, but I could not see him and Mary was too ill to listen to conversation. He had preached at the Chapel today.

Oct 28th James Ashton and Maria Horrocks married this morning. Mr Browne came from Barnsley to perform the ceremony. Mrs Browne confined this afternoon of her seventh son. Mr B. called to see me and brought some books which his wife sent for me.

Nov 5th Heard the sorrowful tidings of Mrs Browne's unexpected death, leaving eight children and her devoted husband to lament their great loss.

Nov 23rd Still feeling weak and poorly. Miss Fenton has just sent some nice potted shrimps, I feel almost ashamed to care about anything to eat, but these really are a treat.

Dec 13th And now the days of pain and weakness are ended. Uncle James has exchanged an earthly for a heavenly Sabbath. He was ill nearly ten months. We have missed him very much, for since we lost our parents, he became especially kind and tender towards us. The 23rd of last December, he stayed for tea with us. In the evening, we sang the Christmas hymns and many others, Uncle James setting the tunes. He would have us to sing "There is a land of pure delight" to a tune they formerly sang at our Chapel, and he was very lively all the evening. Before going home, he read and prayed, and that was the last time we joined in prayer. He was only here two or three times after that. He had been Superintendent of the Sunday School and a Deacon for many years.

Dec 19th Mr Browne called to see us, but his trouble is so fresh upon his mind that he had few words to speak. He called again to say he cannot perform the funeral service as he promised to do. His feelings are so overcome with a sight of the house where he and his much loved and departed wife spent so many happy years that he is unable to control his feelings, and cannot help the tears from rolling down his cheeks. Mr Roseman of Bury kindly performed the last service for the departed.

Dec 24th Edwin has gone to spend Christmas at Leeds. He brought his dog Carlo for us to take care of and unfortunately, the poor creature found a bait which was placed long since to kill mice, which we supposed the dog ate, and the poor thing died very soon. We are much put about with it happening here.

Dec 25th Tea Meeting at the Chapel. The weather is wet and uncomfortable.

(Here, Rachel Jackson's diary ends, after just one year's entries. There is much more, the above are just excerpts).

MEMORIES OF WILLIAM WOOD

I commenced teaching a class of young boys in March 1880, morning and afternoon, for some time in top school. And then I had the second class of Young Men in a downstairs classroom.

I was recommended for a Church Member in March 1882. And after being interviewed by two Deacons, I was publicly admitted a church member at the April Communion Service. I was married the following Friday (Good Friday) April 7th 1882.

On the commencement of the Primary Movement in 1909, I had an afternoon class of boys aged 9 to 12, retiring in June 1920 after 40 years without a break. I was presented with a most beautiful diploma by the officers and teachers of the school in appreciation of 40 years service as a teacher. I had previously got a diploma from the National Sunday School Union in 1912 for 32 years service in Sunday School work.

My first office of Secretary was in connection with Bamford Sunday School Brass Band in the autumn of 1880, which carried on until the Band went out of existence at Whitsuntide 1888. I was afterwards on the Whit Friday Band Committee for several years as secretary.

Then, on Whit Friday mornings (before the days of tramcars) I left home at 6am to go to Rochdale station to meet the band and bring them to the school wagonette to be ready for the procession at 9 o'clock. The Band was always provided with refreshments before starting on "The Whit Walk".

My first committee of any importance was the renewing of the Chapel in 1887. Afterwards, I was on all committees of importance. For several seasons in the 1890's, we had a Mutual Improvement Society, which was open to the village. It had about 150 members, with weekly meetings, lectures, concerts, entertainment, etc. The membership included such men as Mr Benjamin Schofield (Mrs Rostron's father), Dr Hunt, Mr Arthur E Porritt, Mr Henry Ashworth, Mr Robert Hardman and Mr James Stansfield. The subscriptions for the Winter Session were 6d each, which admitted members to all functions.

We had Saturday afternoon outings. On one occasion, April 25th 1901, we went to Daisy Lever, to visit a coal mine. We went down the shaft, and were shown over the workings, which to say the least, was most interesting. The Rev W M Arthur, MA was president of the Society, with the writer of this epistle, the Secretary during the whole of its existence.

Some time previous to coming to Bamford, Mr Charles Porritt had a singing class, preparing young people for the choir. I was one of the pupils, coming to weeknight practices, and getting home about 10pm, after about a 7½ or 8-mile tramp, out and home. Later Mr Porritt engaged a Mr Abraham Crossley of Rochdale to take over this class. Amongst the pupils was Miss Sarah Berry.

Eventually, we were drafted into the chapel choir, and we were styled "The rising talent", but I am afraid that some of us did not rise very high. About Christmas in 1879, something went wrong. Some of the older choir members objected to some of the

younger members as not being efficient. Consequently, this led to the whole choir voluntarily resigning! A Committee was elected to select a new choir from the former members, but I was one of the rejects, and was out of the Chapel Choir for 18 years. I rejoined on February 18th 1898, and am still a member.

In the meantime, a Sunday School choir was formed in 1895, of which I was a member. I was made secretary to this School Choir, and later secretary to the combined choir. The Chapel and School choirs amalgamated in February 1904. I remained secretary to the end of 1925, having been Choir Secretary over 30 years. I was also librarian to the choir from 1895 to 1930.

On Mr Charles Milnes leaving Bamford for Bradford in September 1901, I was appointed secretary pro tem to the Finance Committee and also to the Bazaar Committee (the Centenary Bazaar being held at the end of September), a rather tall order, and in January 1902 I was elected a member of the Finance Committee, still serving here in 1943. I was made permanent secretary of the Finance Committee at that same meeting, retiring in 1925 after 24 years.

I was also secretary for the Sunday afternoon service for "Men Only", which commenced about 1903, which was carried on several years. As I write, I have before me a small handbill which reads: Bamford Chapel Sunday afternoon service for "Men Only". Sunday April 17th 1904. 3 till 4 o'clock Speaker Rev Silas Rixon of Heywood, Chairman Rev WM Arthur MA. Hymn books provided, no collection, seats free. All men urgently and affectionately invited to come to Bamford Chapel for this one hour."

On Mr Arthur retiring in September 1907, I was elected Church Secretary, retiring at the end of 1930 (owing to homesickness). From 1907 till 1925, I held the double office of Church and Finance secretary, often attending two meetings in one night. During one year in 1914, I held the office of Church Secretary, Finance Secretary, Sunday School Secretary and Choir Secretary. It goes without saying that it kept one busy.

I was elected a Deacon in March 1910. I served 8 terms of 3 years each, retiring in February 1934. The Diaconate in 1910 was Messrs Bertram Porritt (Church Treasurer), William Wood (Secretary), George Ashworth, Richard Tattersall, Edward Tattersall and James Williamson. In 1934, when I stood down, the Diaconate was Thomas Milnes (Church Treasurer), William Wood (Secretary), Ernest Ashworth (Sunday School Superintendent and Choirmaster), Walter A Ashworth (organist), Herbert Diggle and Tom Watson.

In football seasons 1910-11 and 1911-12, our then young men were very keen on football, and along with some imported members, ran a very successful team in the Rochdale Sunday School Football League. The writer of these notes was also as keen, and along with others, we helped the lads.

I was made a Church Trustee in 1915 and was the General Secretary during the first season of the League of Workers.

BETH STOTT

I was born in 1897, the daughter of Benjamin and Sarah Stott. They lived on Falinge Road in Rochdale, but for most of my early years, I lived at 2 Sandhole Lane. Indeed, I understand that I was baptised there by the Rev Arthur.

In my childhood, Bamford only had about 100 houses, and the area around War Office about another 70. There were three chapels: Bamford Chapel, the Primitive Methodists and the Wesleyans. There was also a Catholic Church, which used to be a day school called Bagslate British School. This was at the bottom of Spring Bank Lane. It had 4 classrooms if I remember right, a schoolyard at the back, and later a playground which came up to the main road.

In the village we had two shops which made their own bread and cakes. They also sold sweets at 4oz for a penny. Besides these two shops there were three chip shops, a newsagents, a cloggers, whilst my mother had a draper's shop. A lot of the place names have changed: Norden Road used to be called Wheelbarrow Lane, Mansfield Road was Mayfield Terrace, and Spring Bank Lane was the Jolly Brow. Where the shopping precinct is now, there were five cottages known as Pitfield. Across the road was a cotton mill, which we called "Tatts" (Tattersall's) and lower down in the village was a woollen mill called Porritt's.

We had to depend upon carts coming round the village for a lot of our food. There were four greengrocers who came three times a week, and a milkman who came twice a day. We didn't have bottles, but the milkman poured it into jugs from a large milk-kit. We had no buses, so we had to walk to the Woodyard or to Fieldhead. The fare was one penny to Rochdale. There were no buses to Heywood so you had to walk. There were no streetlights in the early days. I remember the gas lamps when a man came at night to light them and then came back in the morning to turn them off.

Most of my young life, I worshipped at Holland Street Methodist Church in Rochdale. This of course, meant walking there beforehand, and walking back afterwards. The first minister I really remember at Bamford Chapel was Robert Richley. He was a good preacher. We've been very lucky for ministers at Bamford Chapel. Ninety years ago, the services lasted much longer. But it really was the only place to go in the village. If you missed chapel, then you missed everything that was going on in the village!

I remember all the operettas and concerts. Clara Jay was a nice singer and Sarah Berry was known all over the country. Polly Ashworth was my Sunday School teacher. I came back to the chapel as a member in 1942.

From being 14 to the age of 60, I worked at Porritt's in the felt room. Bertram and Arthur Porritt lived at Beechfield. Mr John Porritt lived up on Clay Lane; his wife Edith used to teach us for the anniversaries. Walter Abel Ashworth was our boss at work. I've known nine ministers during my time and I always enjoyed my days at Bamford Chapel.

Later in life, I was the Secretary of the Ladies Guild. I also represented the church at the District and County Assemblies.

(Beth died in January 2000, aged 102).

PRAYERS OF RE-DEDICATION AT BAMFORD CHAPEL,
DECEMBER 17TH 2000

This house of God has been built, decorated, and furnished
for the honour and service of almighty God,
to fill our minds with reverence for His glory,
and to inspire our hearts with love, devotion, and joy.
Let us now pray for God's blessing upon this work, and
re-dedicate this building and ourselves also, to the honour of His name.

It is in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we do this now.
To the Glory of God the Father, who has called us;
To the Glory of Christ his Son, who loves us;
And to the Glory of the Holy Spirit, who inspires us,
We re-dedicate this house of God.

For the Worship of God in Praise and Prayer;
for the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,
and for the celebration of the Sacraments of his Grace,
we re-dedicate this House of God.

For the giving of comfort to all who mourn;
of strength to all who are tempted;
and of light to those who seek the way,
we re-dedicate this House of God.

For the hallowing of family life;
for the teaching and guiding of the young;
for the equipping of God's people for work in His service;
and for the building up of the Body of Christ,
we re-dedicate this House of God.

And finally Father, we want to give thanks, for those in this community, who have
worshipped and witnessed to the name of Jesus Christ in this Sanctuary;
for those who have planned and built and worked and served in this Sanctuary;
for those who have finished their course in this life, having spent their lives in
giving and loving, to God and His House.
And for those with us today, who have used their God-given talents to decorate, and
light, and furnish this House of God.

For all these, Father we thank you.

Here and now, in Your Presence, we dedicate ourselves anew, along with this
Sanctuary, to the Worship of God, and the service of His Kingdom, in the name of
the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.