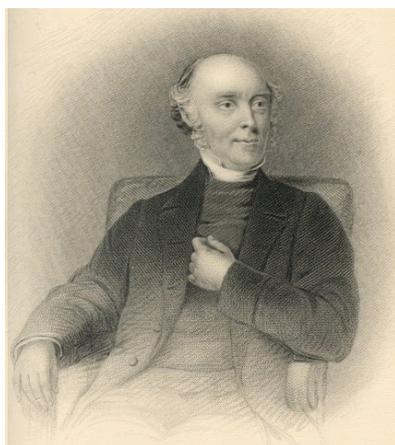


WHAT THE PAPER SAID

“OPENING OF THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHAPEL

This sanctuary, formerly occupied by the Countess of Huntingdon’s connexion, has been recently purchased by the Wesleyans, who have enlarged and beautified the interior, and who are now erecting a large school room, infant room and vestry beside it. On Sunday last the chapel was opened by the Rev W.L.Thornton, of London, who preached morning and evening to large congregations. On the following day two sermons were preached by the Rev W.M.Punshon, of London, whose powerful eloquence and earnest zeal riveted the attention of his audience. The chapel was tolerably full in the afternoon, and very crowded at night. Between the services upwards of 300 sat down to tea, the arrangements for which were most admirable. The organ in the chapel is a very splendid instrument. After the services the hallelujah Chorus and a few other pieces were performed. The collections at all services, including the result of the tea meeting (the provisions having been given by friends) amounted to about £50. The weather was exceedingly auspicious and many were able to attend from other towns.” (Reading Mercury Friday December 24th 1858)

But who were the two preachers?



William Lockwood Thornton. The son of Joseph Thornton a Methodist Minister was born in Huddersfield in 1811. He entered the Methodist Ministry in 1830 (aged 19!) became a tutor in Biblical Literature and Classics in the Wesleyan Theological Institution (Hoxton, London) and then for eight years was a tutor (1841 to 1849) at Didsbury College. He later became the Wesleyan Methodist Connexional Editor (1851 to 1865). He represented British Methodism at the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (USA) in 1864, towards the close of the American Civil War, and became President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference that same year. He died suddenly at Hackney on 5 March 1865 (aged 54), during his year of office.

William Morley Punshon. Born into a Methodist family in Doncaster in 1824, orphaned in his youth and entered the Methodist Ministry in 1845 (aged 21). He became renowned as a powerful preacher and lectured widely on John Bunyan and William Wilberforce. In 1862 The Wesleyan Methodist Conference accepted an offer by him to raise £10,000 towards the building or improvement of chapels in seaside and inland resorts (*The Watering Places Fund*). To reach this formidable target, he threw himself into a fresh round of preaching and lecturing and by 1867 the total had been reached (at some cost to his health). In 1868 he went to Chicago as British representative to its Conference and served as its President from 1868-73; he was a founder and director of the Methodist Recorder and its first editor; became President of the Conference in 1874 and died in 1881.

