

HENRY MATTHEW RATCLIFFE

Henry Matthew Ratcliffe born in Southwell, Nottinghamshire, in June 1842 the son of Henry Ratcliffe a Master Hat Manufacturer .

As a young man he was apprenticed to a grocer before entering the Wesleyan ministry in 1864. He came to Maidenhead fresh out of College in September 1867 for one year.

In the September following his subsequent departure he married Emily Laverack in Goole and together they were to have 6 children

During his ministry he was well thought of as the two following extracts indicate.

HOLSWORTHY

Laying the memorial stones of a new house for the Wesleyan Ministers (1879)

.....The stone laying ceremony over, the Rev W T Gill announced the amounts laid on the stones after which the the Doxology and the Benediction terminated that portion of the proceedings. An adjournment was then made to the chapel where, however, the assembly was not so large as might have been expected. Perhaps one reason for this, however, may be found in the fact that the times are very trying to many who would otherwise gladly do more on such occasions than they are now enabled to do. General regret was felt by those present that the announcement of the Rev W T Gill that, owing to indisposition, the Rev M.G. Pearce was not able to be with them but the latter rev gentleman recommended as his substitute the rev H. M. Ratcliffe, of Okehampton, a fellow student of his. Suitable addresses were delivered. Rev H.M.Ratcliffe in the course of his speech, humorously remarked that the Okehampton Circuit was by some called the penal settlement of the Wesleyan connexion; he told them that as a sort of secret, and hoped his Holsworthy friends would keep it to themselves and not allow it to get back to Okehampton. His (the speaker's) circuit however had lately accomplished great things. When he came to the circuit a year and a half ago, the furniture in the minister's house was not worth £10, and he refused to go into it; now, however - though the Society at first thought it was going to ruin them - they had furnished the house at the cost of £200, and though they gave their present ministers £40 a year more than their predecessors, the circuit was not £5 in debt, and at the last quarterly meeting £65 was raised. The speaker concluded by urging the importance of having a good house, suitably furnished, for the minister's residence which Holsworthy appeared to be about to set a good example in. The afternoon meeting was closed with prayer by Mr Jas Griffy.

Next came a tea in the school room which was bountifully provided and well served. The provisions tea &c were gratuitously given by Mrs Higgs, Mrs Stranger, Mrs Griffy, Mesdames J and W Beckly, Mrs Treble and Mr Miller.

Services in the chapel followed when an excellent sermon was preached by the Rev. H.M. Ratcliffe from Matthew iii, 7,8,9. Miss Higgs ably presided at the organ and was assisted in the musical portion of the service by a strong choir of good voices, who sang, in addition to the ordinary hymns, two excellent peices after the benediction. The cash results of the day, as read by Mr Johnson, the building secretary, were as follows: - amount laid by the ladies on the memorial stones £25; afternoon tea collection £3 11s 8 1/2d; tea £5 11s; evening collection £3 12s 1d; - total £37 14s 9 1/2d. In addition to this amout about £100 was raised toward the same object by a bazaar, a few months since.

Methodist Minutes 1895

Henry M. Ratcliffe was bom at Southwell on March 23, 1842. His father was a devoted Methodist, and home influence and prayers had much to do with leading his son to Christian discipleship. Henry M. Ratcliffe, converted while yet a boy, began to preach at the age of seventeen, and was accepted as a Candidate in 1862. After two years' successful study at Didsbury he began his work as a Methodist Minister. His character was refined, his temperament sensitive, his mind meditative and devout, his heart gentle and tender. He was indeed a modest, conscientious, courteous, Christian gentleman. His preaching was evangelical, fearlessly faithful, notably edifying and soul-saving. His sermons, prepared with great care, showed deep insight into God's word, clear views of truth, and an elevated range of thought. In pastoral work he was most attentive and sympathetic to the aged, the sick, and the poor, he was a friend indeed. He made a special study of Methodist polity, was unswervingly loyal to the distinctive principles and ordinances of our Church, and wisely administered the affairs of his Circuits. He was in feeble health when, in 1892, he was appointed to Holyhead, the climate of which, it was hoped, would restore him. But the improvement was only temporary. On January 21 1895 he became dangerously ill, and during the following weeks was often unconscious. When he had the power to do so, he expressed great sorrow at leaving his wife and children, deep concern for the interests of the Church, and an ardent "desire to depart, and to be with Christ." On February 6, 1895, his tender spirit, chastened by much physical weakness and pain, passed peacefully away, in the fifty-third year of his age, and the thirty-first of his ministry. He has left behind the influence of a devout life, the honour of a good name, an unstained record of faithful service, and the charm of a refined and gentle character.

Henry was associated with the Cross Street Methodist Church in Holyhead where he died in March 1895 aged 52

His wife Emily died in March 1925 aged 82