

THOMAS JEFFERIES

Thomas Jefferies was born in Stourbridge on the fourth of July 1811.

He was converted at the age of 14 and ordained into the Wesleyan ministry in 1833 and as few records have so far been found for the early part of his ministry, he probably went straight into the mission field in the West Indies..

While at Wellington, Somerset, he married Sarah Louisa Green at Timsbury on 3 Oct 1848

He was appointed as Superintendent minister to the Windsor circuit in succession to Samuel Young and came to live at 4 Osborne Terrace, Clewer with his wife and their three sons Thomas, Peter and Reginald in September 1860

One of the first records of his association with the Maidenhead church was somewhat inauspicious as the Missionary Anniversary reports show:

Wesleyan Missionary Anniversary. - Last Sunday two able sermons were preached in connection with this society in the Wesleyan Chapel by the Rev J Redford, of London, to large congregations; the collections were better than usual.

The annual meeting was held on Tuesday evening, in the Town Hall which was not so full as usual. Mr A H Newman was called upon to preside and in a suitable address compared the present missionary spirit actuating Christians, both with reference to home and foreign efforts, with former manifestations, and showed there was great cause for gratitude and encouragement.

A short report having been read, the Rev T Jefferies, missionary from the West Indies, delivered a lively, telling address, urging the audience to fresh zeal and devotion.

He was followed by the Rev E Barber whose speech was good and practical but he wants a little more fire.

The Rev Joseph Macfarlane, in a speech replete with kindness of spirit, enforced the necessity of combining effort with prayer for success in the missionary enterprise.

Then came the deputation, the Rev H M Howard of London, who in a tame, life-less, wearisome speech of more than an hour, so effectually put a damper on the meeting that the audience commenced retiring long before he had finished, and when that happy climax was reached, the meeting fairly dissolved itself and broke up. The collection was the worst that was ever made.

(Reading Mercury 27 October 1860)

He later moved to to become the superintendent minister at Kingston

During his superintendency at Kingston, he was instrumental in chapel building:

NEW MALDEN

New Wesleyan Chapel

The ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the new Wesleyan Chapel was performed by Francis Lycett Esq, one of the sheriffs of London and Middlesex, on Tuesday last.

The weather was exceedingly showery in the early part of the afternoon; but fortunately the sky partially cleared and the sun broke through about 4 o'clock, when the proceedings commenced, Mr Sherriff Lysett having just arrived from town attended by his chaplain, the Rev Mr Perks.

The site of the proposed chapel is a plot of ground about two minutes walk from the station, and is the gift of Mr Grover, a gentleman of another denomination, residing in the metropolis. The chapel is to be erected from designs furnished by Mr Pocock (of the firm of Pocock, Corfe and Parker); it will be in Gothic style, with open roof and wood-work stained and varnished; it is expected to seat about 260 persons; and the estimated cost is £745. The builders are Messrs Todd and Saunders.

Had the weather been more inviting, there would no doubt have been larger gathering from surrounding places; but in spite of this serious drawback there was a very encouraging muster.

It should be stated that the Wesleyans of this place have hitherto met in a private dwelling, which has served for chapel and Sunday-school, and provided very inadequate accomodation.

The proceedings commenced by the school children singing a hymn, after which the Rev Mr Helier read 1 Chronicles XXXIX and the sherriff's chaplain offered prayer.

The Rev T Jefferies, superintendent of the Kingston circuit, then made a few introductory remarks, in the course of which he stated that this Wesleyan Chapel was indispensably necessary to accommodate the scores and hundreds of persons who had not accommodation provided for them in the houses of prayer already erected. They therefore commenced this work in no spirit of antagonism to their church friends or other dissenting bodies. They had a place of worship inconveniently small; they had a Sunday-school under the same roof, and there was not room enough, nor half room enough, there for those who attended the preaching of the Gospel. He very much regretted the weather had been so unfavourable, as otherwise they would have had a large number present from other parts of the country. He congratulated them on being favoured with the presence of a gentleman, one of the sherriffs of London and Middlesex, who had kindly consented to attend that day, at great personal inconvenience - considering the many public duties he had to discharge - for the purpose of laying this foundation stone; and then, turning to Mr Lycett, he said he was sure every one present was happy to see him there, and feel that he had conferred upon them a very great favour in consenting to visit that little village. Small as it was, however, there were men and women in it who loved and feared God, and companies of young children who were being trained to walk in the way to heaven and were being instructed Sabbath by Sabbath in the truths of the New Testament. They hoped to be able to add to the chapel a Sunday-school. This they considered a very important work. He trusted that the chapel now to be ereceted would prove the birthplace of many immortal souls. Mr Jefferies then presented a silver trowel to Mr Lycett in the name of the Trustees and friends.

Mr Lycett, having received the trowel, proceeded through the usual formalities. The stone bears the following inscription: "This stone was laid by Francis Lycett, Esq, sherriff of London and Middlesex, July 16th 1867". Mr Lycett then declared the stone to be laid in the name of the three Persons of the Trinity, and called on those around him in singing the doxology, etc

(The Surrey Comet Saturday 20 July 1867)

He was also involved in ecumenical issues:

EDEN STREET CHAPEL SUNDAY SCHOOLS

The Anniversary of the Sunday Schools attached to the Congregational Chapel, Eden Street, was celebrated on Sunday last when sermons were preached by the Rev Mr Davies of Godalming, and collections were made towards meeting the expense of carrying on the schools. The amount collected was £9.

On Monday evening the annual and public meeting was held at both of which there was a numerous attendabnce. The Rev L H Byrnes, the pastor of the chapel, presided at the public meeting, and opened the proceedings by delivereing a well adapted speech, in which he urged the advantages which the future men and women of our land would derive from Sunday schools, and challenged the accuracy of certain statements made by the Bishop of Oxford as to the value of such schools. The chairman also read letters from the Rev A Mackennad and the Rev Mr Davies, expressing their regret at being unable to attend the meeting.

The honorary secretary then read the report, which was very satisfactory, showing that the schools are well attended, and testifying to the benefits which the children receive from the instruction given to them.

The Rev T Jefferies next addressed the meeting in an earnest manner, expressing his approval of the report on account of the satisfactory tone which pervaded it. He was especially pleased with one donation, which had been sent by a former scholar of the school, who in his younger days had been much benefitted by the instruction there given to him. What would England be but for the Sabbath school instruction which taught children from their youth to know Christ as their Redeemer. There was, said the speaker, much reason to mourn over our country, for with all the profession wich existed, Satan yet held great sway and exercised authority amongst all classes. The rev gentleman, having cautioned his hearers against the prevailing evils of the day, went on to say that as the children of the present were the seed of the future generation, much depended on the instruction now imparted to them. The cause of God called for all their zeal, talent, and courage, for the young were betrayed every hour, and what could save hem but religion?. In conclusion, Mr Jefferies exhorted the teachers to go on with their work, which was God's and invoked the Divine blessing on their efforts.

(Surrey Comet 19th October 1867)

British and Foreign Bible Society

The annual meeting of the Sevenoaks branch of the above society was held at Pawley's Royal Crown Hotel, on Wednesday evening last. The chair was taken by Hugh Jackson Esq who was supported by a number of the clergymen of the town. The meeting was a very large one. A hymn was sung after which the Rev T Jefferies offered up a fervent prayer for the welfare of the society and the chairman read some appropriate passages from scripture.

The chairman pointed out the good the society was doing throughout the world, and said the Bible could now be read by all nations. He spoke of the conflict now raging in France, which was a Catholic country. He thought that was a great pity, and believed if they had a proper knowledge of the scriptures they would come to terms of peace. The Rev G. B. James, rector of Hatford, the deputation from the parent society, read a most satisfactory report, which showed that Sevenoaks had contributed £35 5s to the funds of the society during the past year.

The Rev. T. Jefferies. in proposing the adoption of the report, said be was pleased to see so many ladies present, as he believed it was a ladies' society. When he heard the sum the ladies had collected he did not know what they should do without them. The Bible Society, as they had been told was doing wonders throughout the world. What would they do without the Bible that was the foundation of religion. It was through the want of the Bible that the present war was raging in France, and he was gratified to learn that a large number of the precious book. had been circulated in that unhappy country. He was delighted to hear so gratifying a report as had been read, and was pleased to find the society in so flourishing a state. He could not conclude without referring to a departed friend of the society. He meant Mr Felking, who, although death had separated him from them in this world, had left a sovereign to be presented to the meeting that evening.

The meeting was addressed by several other gentlemen, and at the close a good sum was collected in aid of the funds of this society.

(Maidstone Telegraph 12 Nov 1870)

OPENING OF A NEW SCHOOL (Sevenoaks)

A new school-room in connection with Mr Mendall-Drake's establishment was opened, under very auspicious circumstances, on Thursday evening, September 29th.

The new schoolroom is situated near the Vine, and was built by Mr Willis, Mr Burton being the architect. The proceedings were opened at 7 o'clock, by prayer, after which the Rev T Jefferies (Wesleyan minister), was called upon to take the chair.

On the platform were the Revs J Jackson and J Bonjam, and Messrs T B Mendall-Drake, W Bird, R Burton, S Corke, and Constable.

The Chairman said they had commenced at the time appointed, but he could not say when they should leave off. This was an occasion which might not occur again and it would be excusable to stop a little later than usual. He was perfectly surprised when he came into the room; and he thought the building had done Mr Burke and Mr Willis credit.

He was pleased to see the young gentlemen on his left (Mr Drake's scholars), but they would not always be young. Who could tell what would be instilled into their minds in that room. They would have to fight the battle of life, and at some future period might be heard in the House of Commons. He had no doubt the building would turn out a benefit for Sevenoaks. Mr Drake was a good teacher and he felt certain he would turn out some good scholars.

What the country would be in years to come depended in a great measure upon what was instilled into the mind of the youth at the present time; and he had no doubt but that Mr Drake's careful teaching would not only make the school a benefit to Sevenoaks but to the country at large. To the credit of the Scotch, their children were well educated. You could not meet many Scotchmen but what could read; and he was very sorry to say that was not the case with Englishmen.

The rev chairman then referred to religious subjects and the infallibility of the Pope, and concluded a lengthy address by exhorting the young gentlemen on his left to always uphold protestant principles.

(Maidstone Telegraph 8 October 1870)

Failing health forced Thomas to retire in 1875

Thomas's son, Thomas Bealey Jefferies, entered the Wesleyan ministry in 1871

Thomas predeceased his wife and died at Christchurch in September 1883 aged 72

Sarah Louisa died in Brighton in Jun 1899 aged 81

The Methodist obituary records:

"As a Superintendant he was a wise administrator, ever securing respect and love by his eminently kind disposition. His attention to all the details of business was constant. His love of Methodism was deep and unchanging. His sermons were plain, instructive, and evangelical; the doctrines of the Atonement and justification by faith were his favourite themes, which he enforced with much earnestness of appeal. His last illness was severe and prolonged, but was borne with great patience and resignation. When the end came he was undismayed. The faith he had long preached sustained him when flesh was failing. Beloved by all who knew him, he fell asleep, September 7th 1883"