

Memories of
Lane Head Methodist Church
Lowton
1842 – 2010



Methodist worship began at Lane Head over 180 years ago, when in 1830 Methodists from Preston Brook set up a society in Lowton, worshipping allegedly in one of the weaver's cottages on Winwick Lane. The first Primitive Methodist Church which stood next to Locking Stoops Farm on Winwick Lane was built in 1842 for the princely sum of £130. By 1880, the congregation had outgrown this small chapel and a new church was built on the corner of Winwick Lane. With 'huge' inflation, this cost £900 to build!

This second church was demolished in 1985 when the worshippers moved across the road, next to Lime House, to the converted former Sunday School, built in 1914 by contributions from the community for nine pence per brick! We have been in the present church for 25 years since April 1985.

We at Lane Head have known for several years now that with an ageing, decreasing congregation and a drift away from traditional church, that unless we had an influx of new people, the church as a place of worship as it stands today would be untenable. The influx did not happen.

We have been jointly worshipping with Heath Street Methodist Church in Golborne for the past two years. This worship has forged a very special bond between the two churches and many of our congregation look forward to developing that relationship as we move on in our Christian faith.

Below are some of the memories that the folk at Lane Head have about their very precious church.

Our memories of Lane Head

We have many fond memories of Lane Head. Sheilah & Lilian

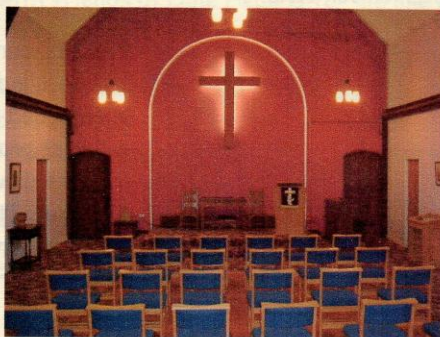
Peter Butcher writes "Frances and I were very happy at Lane Head and were so sorry to leave. All best wishes to you all as you continue your Christian journey elsewhere.

"Lane Head has always given me the joy of loving Christian fellowship shared with friends; holding a simple faith. The church is not the building, it is the people - with whom I will continue to have lasting and meaningful friendship" Iris

"Lane Head means to me a place where worship and missionary activity is taken seriously. A church which has had and has at the very core of its being a radical understanding of what it means to be church. Speaking as its (former) minister a church which takes seriously the support and understanding of its minister." Wes.

"When Edge Green Church closed, we decided to try each church to see where we felt most at home. As soon as we came to Lane Head we knew immediately that it was the right church for us. We all felt such warmth. It was lovely." Joyce and Margaret.

"It's welcoming and has a warm atmosphere filled with a genuine affection for each other and for the wider community and the world. It has a unique spirituality. It's like having a second family" Gill



Doris Smith, senior steward, who has worshipped at the church since 1946 with her late husband and local lay preacher Walter, says "I will miss my role in the church each Sunday, welcoming the congregation into our church. It's a lovely building full of warmth and love."



Mary Brough, another long standing member of more than forty years underlined this, commenting that "there is a lovely feeling as you enter the church. The love and loyalty of the people for their faith is so obvious"

Over the years the church has played a significant part of the area of Lane Head from its early days as a farming community. In addition to worship it has been home to activities for the housebound, aptly named the 'Shut Ins'; Amateur dramatics (LOADS); Yoga; Reiki; Dance classes; Lane Head South Residents Group, Polling Station, training centre for Nugent Care, Numerous Coffee mornings; Golborne and Lowton Township meetings; Christian Aid meetings; Messy Church for the whole family; Children's parties; a very long standing Mums and Toddlers Group and even a rock band.



Frances, our brilliant Treasurer, and Rosalind write -" Lane Head is surrounded by God's love and we will miss praising Him in the unique fellowship we have had together. It has provided us with wonderful memories that will linger in our hearts for ever."

"So grateful when Eileen died. There was somebody to give me a hug - somebody who really cared which helped me enormously to get through the bad times." Mike

"I remember when I first came into the church, it was anniversary weekend. I went across to the Coffee morning where the people were so very very nice. I've always been made to feel so welcome." Pat

Wendy says "Lane Head to me means friends and an extended family. I was made to feel so welcome and I hope I welcomed other people."

"From the first day we were made to feel so welcome - greeted by the lovely smile from Doris, to the caring Rev John Payne, to the friendly members. We felt a sense of belonging." Mike and Joan

Mary Crowshaw, a member of St Catherine's R C Church says

"When I was unexpectedly asked to do a reading, I felt a closeness—that we (all the churches) should be one."

Ada says "It makes my week"

Anne says "worshipping with friends at Lane Head is for me like a second family"

Rita says "I wanted to come to church, but didn't feel I was good enough. When I received an invite to a service through the door I plucked up courage. It was a very happy moment and I couldn't wait to go again.

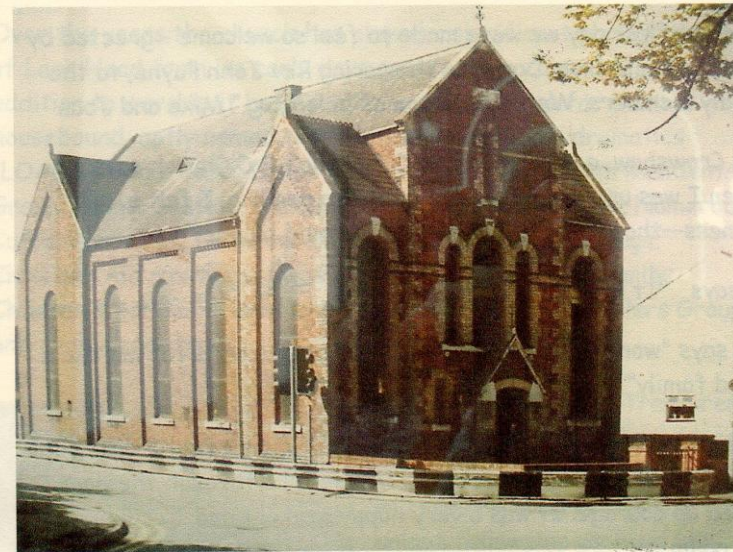
Sitting next to Lilian and Les I felt very welcome"

Lane Head means to me 'Fellowship with very dear friends'.

Marion

Anita writes "Through membership of Lane Head the Lord has provided me with the great privilege of serving Him in many ways over many years. The two most important have been i) Leading worship in several of the churches in the circuit ii) the opportunity to play an active role in building up and extending the Ecumenical Movement in Lowton.

A very personal reflection by Olwyn. "My first memories of Lane Head date back to the early 1960s when Brian and I took our twins in carry cots to services in the beautiful old church on the corner of Winwick Lane. All three boys were baptised there by Rev G Dean Sherriff.



The church was heated by a coke boiler in the cellar which had to be lit on Saturday and stoked up every few hours, including 2.00am and 6.00am on a Sunday and Brian was on a six weekly rota. They often had to pump the flood out of the cellar before they could get to the boiler!

As the boys grew they attended the thriving Sunday School in what became our church in the 1980s, with Jack Laybourne, Alec Thompson and Margaret Jones. Sunday School Anniversaries were the highlight of the year with three services on the Sunday, all packing the church with parents, grandparents and friends of the numerous children. I remember my Mum travelled up from the midlands to attend the occasion in 1968, the last time she

saw her grandchildren before she died just a few weeks later. For several years we had great Harvest celebrations with the Harvest Queen and her retinue, the previous year's queen and her retinue and queens and retinues from the other churches in the area, along with their families, packing the school hall and all sitting down to a turkey salad tea.

We were very active in Women's Work, part of Overseas Mission, meeting with Circuit and District, raising lots of money and hearing first hand from missionaries through letters and personal attendance when they were home on leave. The Overseas Mission Rally at the Philharmonic Hall in Liverpool was always a wonderful occasion.

We formed a drama group with Peter Crooks, Walter Smith, Alec Thompson, Kevin and Betty, giving us lots of fun, and we won the Drama Festival Trophy two years running.



We had a ladies' choir, started by Anne Owen and later, a full choir which for several years sang excerpts from Messiah at Christmas time, with Ken Laybourne at the organ, as he was every Sunday, or taking the bass solos, Walter Fairhurst Tenor and Joan Griffiths Soprano. Over the years we performed several of Roger Jones musicals. In the 1970s we started up the annual Women's World Day of Prayer under the leadership of Joan Maddran, wife of Ron, the then minister, and this was the beginning of the getting together of the Churches in Lowton. Later we became part of Christian Aid and part of the beginnings of the Epiphany Trust, as some of our members went on the first visit to Romania when I remember Walter was particularly disturbed by the plight of the children in the orphanages.

Joan Griffiths for several years led a Junior Club on Tuesday evenings which was very well attended and lots of fun, as well as being a channel for the gospel.

Our 'Shut-ins' Club for physically disabled people from the area were often entertained by the young people from Edge Green led by Joyce. We went on days out and generally got involved in their lives



It was in the old church that I first felt the call to preach - I can still feel it now - and I have had the great privilege of leading worship for over thirty years.

There has always been great warmth of fellowship among the folk at Lane Head and even in the latter years as numbers have declined and average age increased we have maintained that warmth, meeting regularly for worship and fellowship. Now the time is right to leave yet another building but the Christian Spirit and warmth of fellowship and all our memories will go with us wherever we are.

John Payne writes:

"The last ten years I have spent as minister at Lane Head have left me with many memories. I will recall the privilege of sharing in family events of both great joy and of sadness. I will remember warm and close fellowship always offering much support to one another and always ready to laugh, cry and pray with one another. Most of all I will recall the quality of the worship Lane Head, always warm and filled with the Spirit revealing the faith and spirituality of the fellowship. May God go with you all."

Music has always been a large and important part of our worship and fellowship - we all enjoy 'a good sing!'



The above picture was taken by Rev Wesley Fairhurst, one time minister of this church, when he led worship for the last time at Lane Head. This was also his own final service before full retirement and our good wishes and prayers go with him.

We are of course very sad to see the closure of Lane Head. It is an end of an era, but it is certainly not an end to Methodism in Lowton. Heath Street, will be known as Heath Street Methodist Church in Golborne and Lowton. We have been made to feel so welcome and we thank the congregation at Heath Street from the bottom of our hearts.

We, the church, God's people, will continue to worship wherever we find ourselves. It is an opportunity that the 21st century has for all Christians. To seek to worship and serve God in new and challenging ways.



*'Tis Jesus, the first and the last,
whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
we'll praise him for all that is past,
and trust him for all that's to come.'*

A heartfelt 'Thank You' to all the countless number of people who, through the years, have contributed to the Spiritual life and development of Lane Head Methodist Church.

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booklet@lowtonwebsites.co.uk and we will send them by email