

The History of the Joseph Wright Hall, Queen Street, Barton-upon-Humber

This Grade II building is now owned by the Queen Street School Preservation Trust, the body which runs the adjacent Wilderspin National School Museum.

The building is now called the Joseph Wright Hall, as a tribute to the architect who designed it as a Primitive Methodist Chapel – part of an important group of Victorian public buildings in the Queen Street/High Street area of Barton.

Background and History of the Queen Street Site

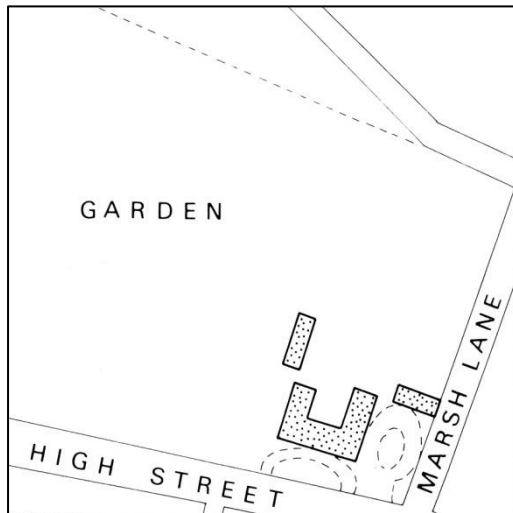
During Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901) there was not only a rapid rise in population but also tremendous social change in the lives of ordinary people in this Country, arguably greater change than in any other comparable period. The ancient port of Barton-upon-Humber shared in this extraordinary period of growth and change.

At the centre of Barton, in the Queen Street/High Street area there are still vivid reminders of the impact on the lives of ordinary people of the principal social concerns of the Victorian era – education, law and order, religion, self-help and temperance. Barton can boast a precious, but sadly undervalued gem, a group of fine public buildings handed down from the first half of Queen Victoria's reign, which, for compactness and homogeneity, is probably unparalleled. Most market towns had buildings of a similar type, but probably none on this scale preserved in such close proximity to one another.



A view looking north down Queen Street in early 20th Century (Dr J B Ball Collection)

The area that concerns us here occupies the site of the former mansion and grounds of the Long family of Barton-upon-Humber. The house was apparently built by the wealthy mercer, William Long in the first half of the 17th century. The plan accompanying the Enclosure Award for Barton in 1796 shows the mansion standing in extensive grounds, bounded by High Street on the south and Marsh Lane on the east, and stretching almost to Finkle Lane on the west.



Long's mansion and its grounds c1820



The Queen Street - High Street area, c 1890.

1. The Temperance Hall: 2. Elm Street House: 3. The National School: 4. The Police Station: 5. The Odd Fellows Hal: 6. The Primitive Methodist Chapel: 7. The School House

The property was sold piecemeal and in 1827 a road, originally known as New Road, later Queen Street, was laid out on the western part of the former grounds. Only limited development had taken place on New Road by May 1843, when the mansion house, outbuildings, yards and gardens, amounting to about two acres were sold. Following the sale, the great house and most of its outbuildings were demolished and the site was divided up. A plot alongside Marsh Lane was purchased by a local brickyard owner, George Ingram, who immediately had the present Elm Tree House built. The rest of the site was apportioned in five lots and during the next twenty-five years they were developed with a fine series of public buildings: the School (1844), the Police Station (1847), the Odd Fellows' Hall (1864) and the Primitive Methodist Chapel (1867). These four buildings, together with the Temperance Hall built on the west side of Queen Street in 1843, still survive, and form a most impressive group of early Victorian public buildings.

Primitive Methodist Chapel (now Joseph Wright Hall)

It is to both the architectural importance and the historical significance of this building that this leaflet is devoted.

During the 18th century, the Church of England was decadent and in need of reform. This state of affairs spurred John and Charles Wesley to found the Methodist movement within the Established Church. Although John Wesley did not want it, the movement did split off after his death and build its own chapels. Subsequent dissent within the Methodists resulted in the foundation of the Primitive Methodist movement in 1810.

There was immense confidence in Methodism during the 19th century, accompanied by a period of intense chapel building throughout England, many chapels being rebuilt and then rebuilt again. Barton was no exception in all this, both in the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist movements.



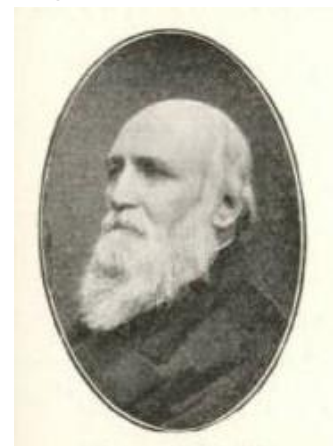
*The Architect's drawing of the Primitive Methodist Chapel, Queen Street, as built in 1867
(Dr J B Ball Collection)*

This huge and ornate chapel in Queen Street is, in fact, the third Primitive Methodist Chapel. It was preceded by a chapel built in Newport in 1838, later converted into houses (now nos. 82 – 6), which was itself the successor of the first Primitive Methodist Chapel which stood on the site of the present Central Surgery in King Street.

The foundation stone of the Queen Street chapel was laid in April 1867 and the building was opened by the end of the same year, an extraordinary achievement. The erection of this building was largely dependent upon voluntary contributions. Only eight months after the foundation stone was laid, the new Primitive Methodist Chapel was opened and special services held. On Christmas Day there were tea and public meetings which were crowded.

The size and extravagance of this building, which cost £1500 and had seating for 600 people, together with a large Sunday School Room, clearly shows the degree of confidence and the aspirations of nonconformity in mid-Victorian Britain. In this Town on Sunday 30th March 1851, the total number who attended the two nonconformist chapels was four times greater than the number who attended the Anglican church.

Barton and Brigg Methodist Circuit is now in the Lincolnshire District, but, until 1932 Barton was in the Hull District, one of the strongest centres of Primitive Methodism in the Country. The Barton Primitive Methodist Chapel was designed by Joseph Wright of Hull (1818 – 85), a pupil of the eminent architect, Cuthbert Brodrick (who designed Leeds Town Hall, The Grand Hotel in Scarborough and other important buildings, including the former Town Hall in Hull). Wright is the architect of at least thirty five Primitive Methodist chapels in the East Riding and northern Lincolnshire. The Barton chapel, one of Wright's most impressive buildings, is among the last surviving examples of his work.



Joseph Wright, architect of the Primitive Methodist Chapel (from *The History of the Primitive Methodist Church* by H B Kendall)

The chapel, of red brick with polychrome brick and stone dressings, is in the High Victorian 'Romanesque' style, with ornate round-arched doors and windows, bold stringcourses and colourful decoration. The main front has twin gabled doorways with carved stone shafts and deep brick arches, now approached by a modern flight of steps. Above, are a series of stringcourses and decorative brickwork panels, paired arched windows and an ornate pedimented gable, flanked by narrow tower-like sections with tall hipped roofs.



The Primitive Methodist Chapel c.1980 – used as the Salvation Army Citadel

Adjoining the chapel to the south is No. 2 Queen Street, a modest two bay, two-storey, brick and pantile house which accommodated a caretaker. This house is now privately occupied. Previously thought to be of contemporary build with the Chapel, it has recently been discovered that this dwelling preceded the Chapel, and its left-hand bay had to be demolished to make room for its impressive neighbour.



The eastern end of the interior of the Primitive Methodist Chapel

The Queen Street chapel ceased to be used by the Methodists on Easter Day 1961. The organ, by Forster & Andrews of Hull, was dismantled and sold to Immingham Anglican church. Subsequently the chapel became the Salvation Army Citadel. The interior of the main hall was substantially redesigned by the insertion of a floor at gallery level, the removal of the ground floor pews and alterations to the frontage, although most of the gallery, together with virtually all the beautiful windows and the plasterwork to the ceiling and organ chamber arch survive. The building was reopened on 22nd May 1965.

In March 1989 a £60,000 fund was launched by the Salvation Army for urgent repairs. The need for the building to conform with present-day requirements, together with the burden of on-going maintenance, have partly resulted in the Salvation Army recently relocating to more compact, purpose-built accommodation elsewhere in the Town.

Conclusion

After a long period of neglect, the importance of 19th century ecclesiastical buildings, both churches and chapels, is only now beginning to be appreciated, both for their architectural qualities and for the message they proclaim.

‘Anti-conservationists within the dioceses should perhaps reflect that in an increasingly secular society they will never again be able to afford to build churches which in their number and in their splendour silently preach more than a thousand sermons’
(S.Cantacuzino, *Saving Old Buildings*).

Nonconformist chapels are seemingly the most vulnerable buildings in towns and villages and this chapel in Queen Street is not only an excellent, largely unaltered, example of the work of Joseph Wright, but also typical of the type of building which is steadily disappearing.



A modern view looking down Queen Street

The enthusiasm and determination of our predecessors, who strove for social improvement in the face of great adversity, produced results of which we can be justly proud. Could we today, with all our sophistication and bureaucracy, achieve so much so quickly? The group of buildings in Queen Street, of which the Joseph Wright Hall plays a central part, has won the admiration of people from all over the Country, and are all deserving of being restored to their former glory and to again play an important part in the life of the Town.

The Trust's intentions for the Joseph Wright Hall

Queen Street School Preservation Trust took over the Grade II building with the intention of preserving it along with the historic setting of the adjacent Grade II* School building (now Wilderspin School Museum). Visiting school groups already use the building and Barton upon Humber Civic Society uses it for its monthly lecture programme. Twice weekly painting sessions are run for the Wilderspin Art Group by an independent art tutor.

After consulting with the community, it was resolved to develop the building as a venue for creative arts, largely because of the superb hall upstairs, with platform and raked seating. The acoustics in the Hall are widely acknowledged to be excellent and the Hall will be ideal for use as a theatre. Already, the building is used by local drama groups including Friends at Barton and the South Bank Players.

Some grants have already been secured to refurbish and upgrade the building, but more are still needed. Planned improvements include a new sound and lighting system for the theatre, redevelopment of the ground floor to provide enhanced public facilities and more space for room hire (including the large ground floor community hall). When completed it will be fully insulated, energy efficient, and restored to its former glory with ground floor level access through the main doors, enhanced by an internal lift to enable full access to the first floor for people with mobility problems.

The Joseph Wright Hall - a creative arts venue for the people of Barton and surrounding areas.

Acknowledgements

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John French

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Joseph Wright 1818 – 1885, Architect of Hull

Described by H.B. Kendall, in his “The History of the Primitive Methodist Church” as
“Architect of the principal Chapels in Hull and District”.

Some of the Chapels designed by Joseph Wright:

Location	Built	Comments
Hull : Bourne P.M. Chapel, Anlaby Road	Begun in 1869	Demolished by 1964
Jubilee P.M. Chapel, Spring Bank	1863	Demolished 1958, except Schoolroom
Bright St P.M. Chapel, Holderness Road	1862 opened 1864	Demolished 1959 – 60
Zion P.M. Chapel, Fountain Road	1877	Demolished c.1960
Emmanuel P.M. Chapel, Stoneferry Road	1871	Demolished since 1964
P.M. Chapel, College Street, Sutton-on-Hull Above information from “Lost Churches & Chapels of Hull, 1991	1876	Closed 1933. Now used as a Masonic Hall (2014)
Beverley : P.M. Chapel, Wednesday Market	1867 - 68 (internet 2014)	Closed 1955 (internet 2014) Demolished
Driffield : P.M. Chapel, George Street	1874	Demolished
Tadcaster : P.M. Chapel Above information from Dr David Neave April 1986	1864	
Beesford : P.M. Chapel	1873	Closed 1964. Disused in 1996
Cottingham: P.M. Chapel, King Street	1861	In use till 1937, now in commercial use (2014)

Location	Built	Comments
Hornsea : (?) P.M. Chapel, Market Place	1864	Closed 1983. Various uses and in 1997 it was a Pentecostal Church
Scarborough : P.M. Chapel, St Sepulchre Street Above information obtained by Peter Smurthwaite from internet 24.07.14	186...	Demolished 1965
Barton upon Humber : P.M. Chapel, Queen Street	1867	Closed 1961 and became Salvation Army Citadel
Winterton : P.M.Chapel, Queen Street	1879	Demolished c 1989