

Then and Now: Memories of the Methodist Chapel, Lawrence Road



Half way up Lawrence Road, on the right hand side, stands the old Methodist Chapel. It opened on 31st October [Hallowe'en] in 1837, 6 years before Dickens wrote 'A Christmas Carol', and was every inch a Victorian Chapel.

Whereas St Martins was full of pomp and ceremony, Ebenezer was simple in its decoration, organisation and the nature of its services.

There were, and still are, yellow steps up to the double doors and an entrance porch with a table and a notice board.

Two inner doors led into the chapel itself, which was usually painted cream. The light oak pews were arranged in 3 sections and were plain and identical to one another.

At the front was the huge pipe organ on the left, an elaborate pulpit in the middle with choir stalls on the right. This array actually looked rather impressive. A first floor gallery was reached by a staircase from the entrance porch. Children in the congregation loved the gallery and sneaked up there to witness weddings, unobserved.

There were no carpets or stone slab floors, just linoleum in a dull shade of brown. The absence of stained glass windows allowed the space to be flooded with light. The Schoolroom opened off the Chapel on the south side, with a kitchen beyond that. There was a lavatory, but it was in an impossible state, and anyone desperate ran down to the Lamb Inn.

Despite its austerity, this chapel was loved by its congregation and was used almost every day of the week for services, Sunday school, Bible classes, choir practice, Bright Hour and so forth. Evening service was at 6.30 p.m. and generally poorly attended, but the 11 a.m. service was a busy, social gathering and the congregation was often greater than St Martins. Holy Communion was celebrated monthly at morning service once a month - Methodists did not believe in overdoing things.

When it closed in 1979 it was 142 years old and there was great sadness. Now the building is home to Worle Community Association and is still used by local organisations almost every day of the week.