

Queen Street Congregational Church

Susan Martin and Jean Bell



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The following research was conducted by Jean Bell and Susan Martin as part of the Queen Street Townscape Heritage Project.

Jean and I began researching the Queen Street Congregational Church in 2017. Not born in Wolverhampton, the research allowed me to discover a great deal about the city which I previously visited only occasionally. Jean, who grew up in Wolverhampton, remembered it as the building where she went to Girl Guides. We soon realised that Queen Street Congregational Church played an important part in the life of Wolverhampton and we wished to bring this out in our account of the church.

We are only too aware that this is a brief overview of the Church's history and much more could be written on the religious life of the church, church activities, church ministers, prominent members, and the branch churches.

The research is organised thematically rather than chronologically. The majority of sources came from Wolverhampton City Archives, more specifically the church manuals 1860-1938 for the early years and recently deposited materials covering the last ten years of the Church. Archived newspapers held by the Express & Star were also particularly helpful for the recent history of the church. The 'Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton: the story of a hundred years 1809-1909' by Henry May and 'Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton 1909-1971' by Alan Riley were also very useful.

Rev Tim Mullings of Tettenhall Wood United Reformed Church kindly introduced us to members of his congregation who had previously attended Queen Street Congregational Church. Particular thanks go to Keith Cattell, architect and the last church secretary, for the patience he has shown in answering our many questions and for his invaluable contribution. We'd also like to thank Queen Street Congregational Church members, Fred and Kay Hobbs and Frank Jenkins, and Adam Phillips from the Express & Star for supplying copies of the paper's cuttings. Ashleigh Hudson, the former Queen Street Community Engagement Officer, kindly volunteered to edit this research and thanks are also due to the staff of Wolverhampton City Archives, especially for bringing us the heavy boxes of manuals on countless occasions.

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Old Queen Street Chapel – photo from May, Henry 1909 f. p6

Chapter One

Congregationalism and the Queen Street Chapel

THE PROTESTANT Reformation in the 16th century instigated a period of political and religious upheaval across Europe. In England, King Henry VIII's break with the Roman Catholic Church in 1534 led to the creation of the Church of England and the rise of Protestantism. Some radical Protestants rejected the new national church, arguing that the reforms did not go far enough. These Protestants were known as 'non-conformists'. In 1662, the Church of England introduced the Book of Common Prayer. A number of congregations rejected this and broke away from the central authority of the church.

Congregationalism was one of several Protestant denominations established in response to religious turmoil in England during the 16th and 17th century. Congregationalists believed that the ultimate authority derived from the congregation. They believed in a covenant of fellowship which bound members to God and to one another through Christ, the head of the Church. Each congregational church runs itself and selected its own ministers. The minister, often referred to as pastor or reverend, was only responsible to his congregation and not a higher church authority. The minister is aided by deacons, also elected by the members, and lay preachers.

The church meeting is an important aspect of Congregationalism because it is where all the covenant members of the church seek together by prayer and discussion to discover the will of Christ. Despite each Congregational Church being autonomous, central organisations were formed. In 1831, the Congregational Union of England and Wales and by 1843, the Staffordshire Congregational Union.

In Wolverhampton, nonconformity dates back to the 17th century. The 1665 Five Mile Act made it difficult for members to meet as it forbade any religious assembly of more than five people outside the Church of England. Despite this, nonconformists in Wolverhampton met in the open air or in houses. A chapel was eventually built in St Johns Lane in 1701. In 1781, there was a division amongst the members, with one group going to an old barn in Pountney's Fold, Dudley Street. By 1782, some of the members built a meeting house in Temple Street which in turn migrated to Snow Hill. A minority of worshippers continued in Pountney's Fold Barn but the tenancy became uncertain and the location was unsuitable.

The earliest nonconformist baptism recorded in Wolverhampton took place in 1726. In 1800, a piece of land was purchased in Princes Street and became

the site of the new chapel. It opened in September 1809 with seven members.¹ In 1836, the non-conformist registers from Wolverhampton were deposited with the Registrar General. One volume was inscribed; 'This book belongs to Princes Street Chapel Wolverhampton'. The first entry on the baptism register is dated 6th December 1785 and lists Benj Cresswell, son of Isaac and Martha Cresswell.

The Queen Street Chapel has its immediate roots in the Princes Street Chapel. It attracted members from the Temple Street Church, including prominent Wulfrunian, John Mander who along with his brother, Benjamin, were occasional worshippers in Princes Street. In the summer of 1812, John Mander purchased a plot of land on the corner of Queen Street and Market Street. Mander also acquired the former Princes Street site at a cost of £400 which was spent on the new chapel. The building later became the public offices for Town Commissioners and Justices of the Peace. The new chapel in Queen Street opened the following year in 1813 and is believed to be the first building erected on the south side of the street.

The new building was unremarkable in style; it had a plain square red brick structure. There was a central door and five windows at the front, with a small grass plot and palisades separating it from the street. The interior was equally plain. Two aisles paved with red quarry tiles divided narrow straight back pews. A tall pulpit stood against the end wall and in front of the pulpit was a small platform with a chair and table for the deacon who acted as clerk at the Sunday services. In the winter a stove stood near the pulpit. Towards the rear of the church there were two narrow rooms,

one above the other, which were used for Sunday school and midweek services. Soon after opening, the pulpit and galleries which formerly stood in Carr's Lane Chapel, Birmingham were purchased and installed.²

The congregation in Queen Street called themselves a church, a church being a spiritual community of Christians. However, its earlier buildings were always referred to as chapels. The name chapel refers to its small size but it is also how nonconformists differentiated themselves from the Anglican Church. The 1813 building design was typical of a nonconformist chapel of this era. In contrast, the building which succeeded it in 1865 looked like a church in the Anglican fashion and was therefore referred to as the 'Queen Street Congregational Church'. Even so, an advertisement for Edwin Adams Jeweller in Barford & Newitt Visitor's Guide to Wolverhampton in 1871 described the jeweller's location as '14 Queen Street, Wolverhampton. Opposite the chapel.'

Shortly after opening, John Mander rented out the basement of the chapel to recuperate some of the costs of financing the project. To the congregation's dismay, the basement was let for the storing of wine and spirits. At the side of the chapel in Market Street there was a large rolling way for the purpose of taking the casks and barrels in and out of the cellar. In response, a member of the congregation expressed their grievance by graffitiing the cellar doors with the following:

*"There are spirits above and spirits below;
There are spirits of joy and spirits of woe.
The spirits above are spirits divine;
The spirits below are spirits of wine."*³

¹ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp. 1-2

² May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp. 6-8.

³ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p.7

Despite this early tension, the congregation soon settled into the new chapel and membership grew at a steady rate.

To become a member of the congregation, individuals made a profession of faith and sought acceptance from other members. Non-members were invited to attend services but were not allowed to attend members' meetings, take part in the selection of ministers or any other aspect of running the church. Queen Street also regularly accepted, by transfer, members of other Congregational churches.

The Congregational Church expected a very high standard of behaviour from its members, both spiritually and in their daily behaviour. When the church was formed, one of the declarations of faith included the following;

*"We agree to watch over one another in love, and to reprove in the spirit of meekness; so that should any of our members be overtaken in a fault we may thus effect his restoration and gain our brother."*⁴

We resolve by his grace to act constantly and uniformly according to his will in the rules which Christ and his apostles have left to govern his churches, and also, as long as we continue in union one with another, to submit to every regulation made by the majority of his church according to God's blessed word."⁵

Members were encouraged to;

*"...submit to such chastening from one's fellow Christians was looked upon as part of the agreement made under the covenant of membership."*⁶

In the early days, religious discipline was rigorously enforced. In 1818, a member was suspended because of his "ungodliness of habit and declension of holy life." Another member was expelled because she was seen entering the local theatre while a family of eight also found themselves expelled for holding a family dance in their own home. Members were also warned against marrying or even courting "unconverted persons".⁷

In 1860, the first church manual was printed as part of the 50th Jubilee celebrations and listed the following rules:

1. Any member absent from the Lord's Supper six months out of the twelve without justifiable and sufficient reason is to be regarded as no longer standing connected with the Church in Christian unity.

2. No question to be raised or proposition made respecting individual cases or general interests, by any member of the Church - no discussion or debate allowed - unless the matter in hand has been previously submitted to the Pastor and Deacons.

3. No member of the Church or congregation - no communicant - to engage in village preaching, without previously being recognised by the church as possessing the qualifications for such engagement - preparation of mind and heart and holy living.⁸

These rules give a flavour of what was expected of individual members of the Church and how the Church behaved as a body. Their introduction may have been influenced by events within the church in 1845.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp. 19-21.

⁸ 1860 Church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/1. See Appendix for more information on the collection of church manuals held by Wolverhampton City Archives.

In 1844, the Reverend Pigg resigned as Pastor of the Queen Street Congregational Chapel. Disagreements surrounding the appointment of his successor ensued, dividing the congregation. John Barker, ironmaster of Chillington Ironworks and one-time County High Sheriff, was a leading member of the Chapel and had a large following. Barker was displeased when in 1845, a young preacher named Newman Hall visited the chapel. Shortly after, members petitioned for the popular young preacher to become the new pastor. Hall was not the only nominee that failed to impress Barker. He deliberately objected to the appointment of the Rev David Loxton of Hull against the wishes of the majority of church members.

In response, members of the congregation led by 89-year-old John Bullock revolted against Barker. In doing so, the members asserted the basic tenant of congregationalism - that is a church run by its members. The Congregation moved to appoint Reverend Loxton, Barker was outvoted and ultimately left the church along with 46 others.⁹ Despite this turn of events, Reverend Loxton declined the appointment because he feared it would jeopardise the unity of the church.

In 1846, Reverend Watson Smith was appointed as the Queen Street Congregational Chapel Pastor and remained in post until 1854. Smith was well-loved but reputedly absent-minded, once conducting a service in his carpet slippers.¹⁰ The appointment of Smith restored peace in the church. Historian Henry May, in his seminal history of the church, refers the incident as 'the Disruption'.

Over time, attitudes softened although as late as 1924, the Young People's Institute (which was usually referred to as 'The Institute') was closed temporarily due to card playing which Congregationalists regarded in the same light as gambling.¹¹ On the other hand, a Queen Street Dramatic Society was formed in 1920. Its first production was two performances of 'Twelfth Night' in February 1922 and another in May for Alexandra Day. It was disbanded shortly thereafter but was revived in October 1928 to stage a production of the 'Mayflower Pageant' at the Grand Theatre. It was also decided that there would be dancing on Tuesdays evenings as well as dance classes on Mondays. Whist drives and socials were also arranged.

In the early days, the chapel hosted prayers on a Sunday at 6am followed by public services at 10:30 am and an evening service at 6 pm. The 1860 manual listed public services on the Lord's Day at 10.30 am and 6.30 pm. The Lord's Supper (Holy Communion) was held on the first Sunday of every month. On Tuesday evenings, prayer meetings were held at 7 pm and on Thursday evenings a lecture at the same time. Fellowship meetings for church members took place on the last Monday evening of each month 7.30 to 8.30 pm. Sunday schools took place at 9.15am and 2.15pm.¹²

⁹ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp. 13-16

¹⁰ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp. 17-18

¹¹ Riley, Alan: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p. 6

¹² 1860 Church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/1.

Chapter Two

A New Building

BY THE EARLY 1860s, the Queen Street congregation had outgrown its chapel. On 1st September 1862, it was decided during a meeting of the congregation that a new chapel should be built. George Bidlake, a prominent Wolverhampton architect, was asked to design a grand building in the 'free Italian' style. The resultant building was constructed by Trow and Sons, Wednesbury at a cost of £12,000. Whilst the church was being built, the congregation attended services at the Corn Exchange.

On 28 June 1864, Mr Thomas Wilkinson Shaw, who along with his brother had contributed a third of the total cost of the new building, laid the foundation stone during a special ceremony. He delivered a moving address touching on the history of the church and their hopes for the future. Offerings to the building fund were made, hymns sung and prayers offered. A time capsule was deposited underneath the foundation stone containing a copy of the Wolverhampton Chronicle, the 1864 church manual and the last two sermons preached in the old chapel, as well as a few 1864 copper coins and a parchment outlining a brief history of church. In the evening, a tea party was held in the Corn

Exchange followed by a public meeting.¹³

The new building was notably described by renowned architectural historian, Nikolaus Pevsner who included the following description in his book covering many of the historic buildings in Staffordshire:

*"Grand, of ashlar, with a corner steeple. Free Italian, but in the long side to Princess Street with its two tiers of triple arched windows remarkably independent."*¹⁴

No contemporary description has survived however a photograph reveals that there was a wide central nave and side aisles filled with pews.¹⁵ There were galleries on both sides and behind the pulpit and altar there was a large stained glass window. The walls were gradually filled with memorials to leading members of the congregation and pastors.

Internally, it was surprisingly large, bright and colourful, but it was also memorable for its incidental features. Keith Cattell, the last Church Secretary, told the Express & Star about one such feature:

"Built before modern intercom systems existed, it had a naval-type speaking tube connecting the entrance lobby to

¹³ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp. 29-32.

¹⁴ Pevsner, Nikolaus: Staffordshire: The Buildings of England 1974, p. 316.

¹⁵ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton

*the pulpit to inform the minister of the arrival of bridal or funeral parties or even mayoral processions for nine mayors of Wolverhampton were members of the church at various times.”*¹⁶

Keith added;

“The speaking tube was installed when the church was built and it is the only instance of using one in a church that I have come across. I never managed to trace the route of the pipe but presumed it went under the floor, nor do I ever remember it being used in my time there.”¹⁷

There were numerous rooms including vestries for the pastor and for the deacons as well as several meeting rooms, libraries, and Sunday school rooms. The Sunday school rooms and rooms used by various groups were accessed from Market Street.

By 1902, the church required refurbishment. It was renovated and decorated from the designs, and under the oversight, of Mr G. Faulkner Armitage of Altrincham at a cost of £71 3s 9d.¹⁸ The next redecoration probably happened in 1927 with church accounts detailing a large expenditure on the roof, electrical wiring, and windows. Payments from the Queen Street Fabric Fund are detailed in the 1928 manual.¹⁹

Between 1860 and 1914, the Queen Street Congregational Church experienced a golden age and carried out important work in the community. In the 1873 manual, Pastor T.G Horton wrote in his address;

“Our usual congregation is probably twice as large as we used to see in the old chapel. Our number of church

*members is more than doubled. We have now a most efficient day school in both its branches, male and female. Our Sunday school is also flourishing and doing much good. We have greatly increased our work in the villages; besides erecting new chapels or school rooms.”*²⁰

It also attracted large numbers to its sermons and many of its members exerted considerable influence in church and town affairs.



*The New Church – from May, Henry 1909
title page*

¹⁶

<http://static.eexpressandstar.com/millennium/1900/1900-1924/1903.html>

¹⁷ Interview with Jean Bell and Susan Martin, 2018.

¹⁸ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p.79.

¹⁹ 1928 Church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/

²⁰ 1873 Church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/ 3.

Chapter Three

‘The Worthies’

MUCH OF THE Queen Street Congregational Church membership comprised of tradesmen and their families, with the addition of clerks and artisans. There were also men of significant social standing and wealth including iron masters, manufacturers and merchants.²¹ These men are typically referred to as ‘the worthies’.

Many of these men assumed municipal roles as mayors, aldermen and councillors, legal roles such as justices of the peace and public roles on the boards of schools, hospitals, poor law bodies, as well as charitable and social organisations. They also had important roles within the church with many serving as deacons, lay preachers, Sunday School teachers and superintendents, Church secretaries and treasurers as well as organising most of the Church’s many groups.

Here is a selection of the most prominent and most active in church activities.

The Mander Family

Brothers Benjamin and John Mander were early industrialists and entrepreneurs in Wolverhampton. They established a cluster of loosely integrated businesses in paints,

lacquers and pigments, japanning, chemicals manufacture and varnish making in the late 18th and very early 19th century. John Mander was instrumental in the founding of the Congregational Chapel in Queen Street.

John Mander’s nephews, Charles Benjamin and Samuel Small Mander founded the Mander Brothers firm in 1845. The firm initially manufactured varnish but by 1865 there were paint and colour works too and a printing ink division by 1882. Samuel Small Mander was a particularly important figure within the history of the church, serving amongst other things as superintendent of the Sunday School.

His son Samuel Theodore Mander, known as Theodore, was a leading deacon in the church and elected chairman of the Staffordshire Congregational Union in 1892. Samuel Theodore Mander did a great deal to advance art education in Wolverhampton and at the time of his death in September 1900, he was serving as the Mayor of Wolverhampton.

Henry May’s seminal work on the Queen Street Congregational Church noted that;

*“...to a Queen Street man to name Mr Mander was the equivalent to naming a saint of God.”*²²

²¹ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p.13.

²² May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p. 20.

Today, the Mander family's contribution to Wolverhampton is commemorated through the name of the Mander Centre and Wightwick Manor, which is one of the best examples of an Arts and Crafts home in the country.

The Bantock Family

In 1864, Thomas Bantock, a canal and railway agent, bought a 1730s farmhouse named Merridale. Thomas Bantock served as secretary to Reverend Horton who was a pastor at the Queen Street Congregational Church from 1862 to 1877. Thomas served as an alderman and mayor between 1869 and 1870 and was a leader in local liberal politics. Following his death in 1896, the property passed to his son, Albert Baldwin.

Albert Baldwin Bantock was twice Mayor of Wolverhampton between 1905-1907 and 1914-1915. Albert became a leader in local liberal politics like his father and served as High Sheriff of Staffordshire in 1920. Albert also served the church as a senior deacon. He died in February 1938. Historian Alan Riley remarked;

*"The church was forever indebted to the strength of character and the great gifts of heart and mind which made him an honoured and trusted leader in the public life of Town and Country."*²³

Albert bequeathed Merridale House and its grounds to Wolverhampton Corporation. In 1940, it was renamed 'Bantock House and Park' in his honour.

The Shaw Family

Baptism records reveal that John Shaw joined the Queen Street Congregational Church in 1818 and he quickly became a prominent member.

From 1815 to 1848, Shaw entered into business partnership with a Mr Henry Crane. The business prospered and in the 1830s, Shaw purchased Oxley House, a manor on Stafford Road. When the partnership ended, Shaw traded from George Street as John Shaw & Sons. By 1852, Shaw established his own manufacturing business from 64 Chapel Street. He manufactured various items including pots, pans and coffin plates. The firm advertised itself as general hardware merchants.

Shaw's three sons, Thomas, Edward and Richard assisted with the family business and were also active members of the church.²⁴ Thomas Wilkinson Shaw served as superintendent of the Sunday school, while Edward Dethick Shaw was engaged as a Sunday school teacher.

Richard Edwards Shaw was heavily involved in church affairs. Like Samuel Mander, he was thought of as a second pastor to the church. All three brothers made a substantial contribution to the financing of the new church building.

Thomas's son, John Perks Shaw, was a deacon from 1875 and served as Church secretary for many years.²⁵ His son, Leslie Gardner Shaw, is remembered on the Church's roll of honour.

The Adams Family

George Adams has an interesting rags to riches story. At eight-years-old, he was

²³ Riley, Alan: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p.11.

²⁴ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp. 33-39.

²⁵ Riley, Alan: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp. 10-11.

working in the Coalpool China Works. George became a wealthy iron master, establishing the Mars Works at Ettingshall and the Cleveland Works at Horsley Fields.

In 1879, he entered into partnership with his sons, George North Adams, Tom Byron Adams and John Adams. When George Adams died in 1891, the firm became a private company with nearly all the shares being owned by his sons, George and Tom, John having previously died.

George North Adams served as president of the Wolverhampton Music Society. He had the distinguished responsibility of selecting the music at the Queen Street Congregational Church. He died in November 1921 and his obituary in the church manual read:

*"...no matter in what circle one heard of him, in business dealings; with his employees; amongst colleagues in public work and in private enterprise: in the work of the church or intimacy of private friendship and the home, the impression was always the same. Uprightness, honour, diligence, integrity and consideration for others."*²⁶

His son, George Norman, was also a member of the church and is the first name inscribed on the Queen Street Roll of Honour.

Sydney Cartwright

Historian Henry May described Sydney Cartwright as one of the two leading business men in the Queen Street Congregational Church in 1845.²⁷ Records reveal that by 1855, Sydney was no longer a member of the Church.

Sydney was a toymaker by trade but his lasting contribution to Wolverhampton

was art. He befriended many of the best artists of the time and collected works by Landseer, Hardy and Faed amongst others. On her death in 1888, his widow Maria bequeathed his collection to Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

Samuel Dickinson

Samuel Dickinson, born in Manchester in 1826, worked in his early twenties as an assistant to his father who was a draper in Wolverhampton. Samuel later became an important iron merchant and owned two ironworks.

Samuel became a member of the Queen Street Congregational Church in 1853. John Jones, one time Mayor of Wolverhampton and member of the church, described him as one of its chief supporters as well as a leader in most of the movements for the advancement of education. Along with Samuel Mander, Edward and Thomas Shaw and other non-conformists, Samuel promoted a company which built Tettenhall College for £23000 in 1863. The College provided education for the sons of commercial men in Free Church principles and to prepare them for the universities. Samuel was also appointed chairman of the directors of the College. Many of the young men active within the church attended the school and links were maintained to the closure of the Queen Street Congregational Church.

Samuel also served as mayor of Wolverhampton between 1876-77 and during his term in office, he was responsible for the idea of turning the old racecourse into a park. On 12 March 1879 he, then an Alderman, invited landscape gardeners to compete in designing the layout of the interior of the park with a £50 prize for the winner. The

²⁶ 1922 Church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/48.

²⁷ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p. 13.

winner was R Vertegans of Edgbaston. The park is now called West Park. When it was opened on 6 June 1881, it was known as 'People's Park'.

Thomas William Dickinson

Thomas William Dickinson lived in a large house in Palmers Cross in Tettenhall. He was fruit merchant and farmer and served as Mayor of Wolverhampton from 1911 to 1913. Thomas also held the distinguished position of church treasurer. His son, Thomas Arthur Dickinson, is another of the young men on the Church's roll of honour.

Stephen Craddock

Stephen Craddock was a respected boot manufacturer and served as the Mayor of Wolverhampton in 1896-97. He died 5th September 1924 aged 72. His obituary in the church manual read:

*"...he was a member of our church for over 30 years and served us for some years as a deacon ... His was a public soul. He has written his name in the life of our church and the town. He loved both well and served both ably."*²⁸

Several other members of the church served as Mayor of Wolverhampton including; Thomas Bank 1869-70, John Jones 1878-81, Jon Annan 1884-5, Joseph Jones 1887-88 and James Saunders 1891-92.

The Craddock, Dickinson and Shaw families were leading members of the Church until the Second World War. Many of these families made substantial financial contributions towards the running of the church. The church also

received various individual donations. In 1914, Miss Alice Whitehouse bequeathed the residue of her estate to the satellite churches linked to the Queen Street site. Her estate, after probate, amounted to £360 9s 9d.²⁹ In 1957, Miss Beatrice Elizabeth Biglen bequeathed war stock amounting to £800 having attended the church since she was a young girl.³⁰



S. Theodore Mander – photo courtesy of Wolverhampton City Archives

²⁸ 1925 Church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX/340/51.

²⁹ Church manual 1915, Wolverhampton Archives, DX/340/41.

³⁰ Express & Star, 14/6/1957

Chapter Four

Queen Street Membership

FEW PEOPLE living in Queen Street have been recorded as worshipping at the church although it is likely that residents attended services and social events. A list of members with addresses is only available from 1855 so earlier residents may also have been members.³¹

The Adams family (unrelated to the Adams family in the previous chapter) in the 19th century and the Jennings family in the early 20th century were the only families who lived and regularly worshipped at Queen Street.

The Adams Family

Abraham Adams was baptised in St Martins, Birmingham on 4th April 1800, the son of James and Mary Adams. His father, James Adams, is listed in various trade directories in the 1830s as a jeweller, silversmith and watchmaker. Abraham appears to have inherited the family business as in 1841, he is employed as a jeweller in Queen Street.

Abraham was admitted as a member of the Queen Street Congregational Church in May 1843 and was still a member of the church when he died in

1881. Abraham's nephew, Edwin, also worked as a jeweller and became a member of the church in 1852. Prior to his death in 1892, his brother, Thomas, a master jeweller and watchmaker, moved to Wolverhampton and took over the family business until his retirement in 1906. There is no record of Thomas being associated with the church.

The Jennings Family

John Charles Jennings was born in Kinver in 1849 and followed his father's trade as an iron bolt turner. In the mid-1890s, John changed occupation and become a baker and confectioner.

In 1908, the Jennings family operated a refreshment room at 34 Queen Street. Shortly after, John began attending the Queen Street Congregational Church. Although he and his family attended the services, they never became members, apart from his daughter-in-law Violet who joined in 1913.

John died in 1925 and his son, Charles, took over the family business. An advert, appearing in a Queen Street

³¹ Account of the members of the Christian church assembling in Queen Street chapel Wolverhampton 1855, Wolverhampton Archives, LS/L 285QS/3.

Congregational Church publication, reported;

*“For meals of quality and distinction, you must try Jennings Restaurant. Always a choice selection of courses readily available, luncheons, teas, suppers.”*³²

The business continued to operate until the early-1960s when it sadly closed.

she was living with her mother at Beverleigh Bulgar Road, Bilston and working as a typist for an iron steel manufacturer.³³

Josephine Bonegal

Josephine Bonegal, resided at 43a Queen Street. She became a member of the Queen Street Congregational Church in 1935 and her membership lapsed in 1944.

It has proved difficult to trace her. She may have been the Elsie J. Bonegal born in 1919 to Joseph Bonegal and Alice Mowers. On the 1939 National Register,



Interior of the new church – photo unknown

³² Queen Street Chapel Year Book 1956, Stafford Archives, D1206/1/37.

³³ 1939 National Register

Chapter Five

The Pastors

THE PASTOR OR Minister is the most important person in a congregational church with the sermon at the core of the congregational worship.

The Queen Street Church had many pastors over the years. Here are some of the most important ones.

Mr Thomas Scales

Mr Scales was the first minister of the Queen Street Congregational Church appointed in 1810.

Between 1816 and 1817, Wolverhampton experienced a series of bad harvests and trade was severely affected. Those who worshipped at the church were mostly from poor backgrounds and struggled to provide the small stipend for the minister. Mr Scales had a large family who were dependent on his income so, in 1819, the Scales family moved to Leeds in search of more profitable employment as minister of Whitechapel, Leeds.³⁴ The Queen Street Church remained without a pastor for four years.

Mr Scales returned to give a special sermon during the 1859 Jubilee.

Reverend John Roaf

Reverend John Roaf was appointed in 1823 and 'served with brilliancy and profit' until August 1837.³⁵ During the first cholera outbreak, Reverend Roaf was appointed honorary secretary to the Board of Health.

He was also one of the founders of the Mechanics Institute, founded in 1827 as the 'Wolverhampton Tradesmen's & Mechanics Institute'. During his tenure as the Institute's secretary, they acquired land and erected premises at 43a Queen Street in 1836.

Under Roaf's leadership, preaching stations were established at Heath Town, Wombourne, Wall Heath and a chapel at Stockwell End, Tettenhall.

Reverend Thomas Galland Horton

Reverend Thomas Galland Horton was appointed in 1862.³⁶ He was already the author of a volume of poems entitled 'Gethsemane and Other Poems' and a

³⁴ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p. 8 and W H Jones: History of the Congregational Churches in Wolverhampton, p. 143.

³⁵ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp. 9-10.

³⁶ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp. 45-47.

volume of expositions on the Epistle to the Romans.

Horton soon became one of the leading platform speakers in Wolverhampton. It was under Horton's leadership that the church decided to rebuild.

The 1874 church manual has a hymn dedicated to his daughter, Annie, who died in 1873 aged 15.³⁷

Reverend Daniel Jones Hamer

Reverend Daniel Jones Hamer was appointed in 1876. He abolished pew rents and established the weekly offertory system whereby offerings were made in envelopes.

The 1880 manual surmised:

"Weekly offering system a success and will continue to be if everyone is loyal to the principal

Each one laying by in store as God has prospered by him

Each one out of such store give cheerfully and with ready mind

Each one on the first day of the week bringing an offering as an act of thankfulness and worship

Each one according to his ability not according to anybody else's standard or the space at church placed at his disposal

Each one as to the Lord and not to men."³⁸

Reverend Hamer left Wolverhampton for Melbourne, Australia after being

appointed pastor of Collins Street Congregational Church. His ministry in Wolverhampton ended on the last Sunday of 1881. A testimonial was held for him in January 1882 and raised £57 7s 6d, some of which was spent on a silver tea and coffee service purchased from Messrs Shaw & Sons.³⁹

Reverend Charleston Albert Berry

Reverend Charleston Albert Berry was appointed in 1883 and became one of Queen Street's most, if not the most, widely known and distinguished pastors. He paid two visits to the United States to preach but unfortunately suffered from bad health. On 31 January 1899, Berry was delivering a funeral address for his old friend and doctor, Dr Totherick, in Bilston Wesleyan Chapel, when he sadly collapsed and died.⁴⁰

Crowds lined the streets to witness his funeral procession to Wolverhampton cemetery;

*"...scarcely a house or shop from Parkdale to Queen Street had shutters up or blinds drawn. The passage of the procession of many carriages...was watched by large numbers with respectful sympathy. An hour before service church filled with ticket holders, hundreds of applications had been refused."*⁴¹

A memorial service was held in the Drill Hall on Sunday 5th February. Historian Alan Riley surmised;

"As a pastor and teacher he was loved and trusted as well as admired; he was the comrade of the young, the cheery

³⁷ Church manual 1874, Wolverhampton Archives, DX/340/

³⁸ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp. 46-47

³⁹ Church financial records 1878-1970, Wolverhampton Archives, M/QS/2.

⁴⁰ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp. 50-72.

⁴¹ Reminiscences of Rev C A Berry, pastor of Queen Street Church, Stafford Archives, D 1206/1/38.

*company of those of his own age and faithful friend of the feeble and old.”*⁴²

A tablet was dedicated to him in the church and also in the Wesleyan Chapel Bilston. A full obituary is given in the 1900 Church manual.⁴³

Reverend Reginald W Thompson

Reverend Thompson, who took up the Queen Street Congregational Church pastorate in 1911, was a much-loved minister during the First World War.

In 1912, his first wife Dorothy sadly died aged 26 so the congregation rejoiced when he found happiness again in 1915. His second marriage was to a member of the congregation, Elsie May Adams. The service took place in Carrs Lane Church Birmingham and was performed by Thompson's predecessor, Reverend Carter. Elsie was the daughter of prominent church member George North Adams. Her brother, George Norman Adams, is the first named on the church's Roll of Honour. The roll of honour plaque was also dedicated by the Reverend Thompson in 1924.

Reginald and Elsie left Wolverhampton in 1917 when he was called to serve at St George's Road Church in Bolton.⁴⁴

Reverend John Wilson

Reverend John Wilson was the longest serving minister, serving from 1929 until 1949. He had the unenviable task of ministering the church during the Second World War and attempting to

restore its fortunes in the ensuing peace.⁴⁵

Reverend E.C Donald James

Reverend E.C Donald James was the 16th Minister at the Queen Street Congregational Church, and served between 1952 and 1960.⁴⁶

In the 1950s, James tried his best to revive the fortunes of the church. He died in 1971 whilst minister at Avenue Congregational Church, Southampton. One of the last actions taken by the church was to give a gift of £1000 to his widow.⁴⁷



Rev. E W Thompson – photo courtesy of Wolverhampton City Archives

⁴² Ibid.

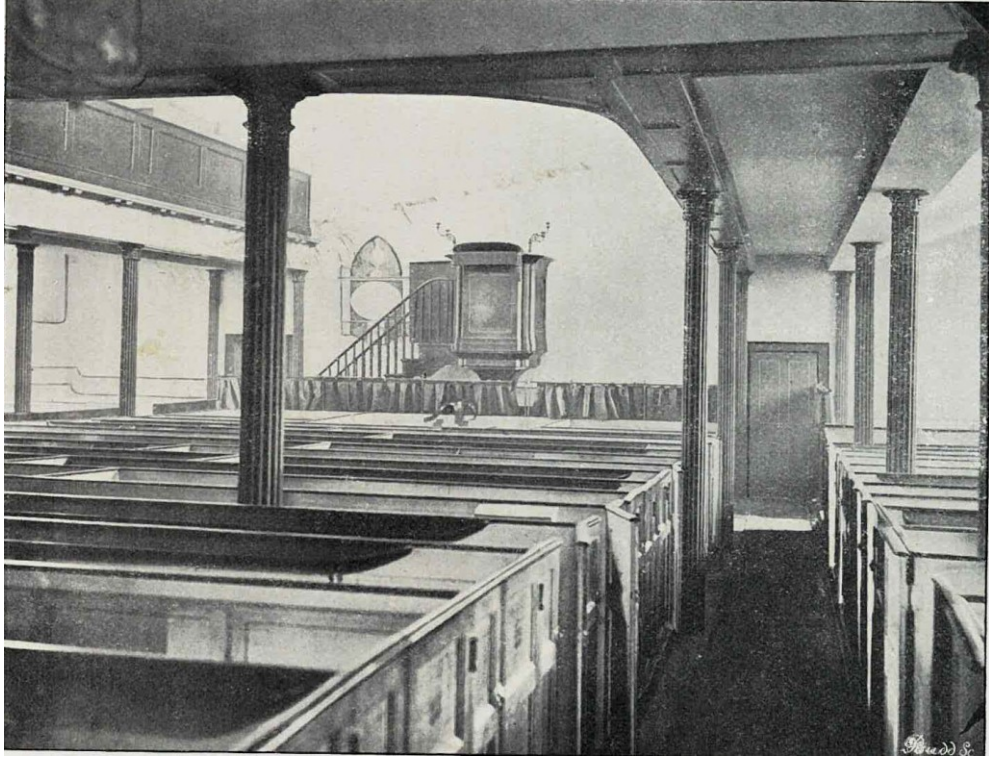
⁴³ Church manual 1900, Wolverhampton Archives, DX/340/

⁴⁴ Riley, Alan: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁵ Riley, Alan: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Riley, Alan: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p.18.

⁴⁷ Church Finance Committee minutes, Wolverhampton Archives, M/QS/1.



Interior of the old chapel – photo from May, Henry 1909 f. p7

Chapter Six

The Satellite Branches

IN THE EARLY days of the Queen Street Congregational Church, before the establishment of branch chapels, lay preachers had to walk to serve Congregationalists in outlying areas. Gradually, over a period of 50 years or so, a number of branch chapels were established which came within the Queen Street Congregational Church family.

The branches ran themselves, with their own deacons, and had their accounts, names of members and annual reports printed in the Queen Street manuals. The Queen Street Church retained financial and spiritual authority although the extent of their involvement varied from chapel to chapel.

Here is a brief historical overview of some of the satellite churches linked to the Queen Street Congregational church.

Heath Town

In 1839, a Mr Rogers bought land in Chapel Street in what was then called Wednesfield Heath where he built a chapel. This passed to the Primitive Methodists and was later used as a Church of England chapel-of-ease. Finally, a group of employees from the chain works of Messrs Wood Bros, Grove

Street decided to reopen it and applied to the Queen Street Congregational Church for help.

The building was old and needed repair. Land was bought in Cross Street in 1857 as part of the Queen Street Congregational Church Jubilee. The rebuilding of Queen Street postponed its building until 1887, although the schools were completed in 1861. In 1909, membership exceeded 100 members.⁴⁸

The church closed on 23rd June 1963 due to a compulsory purchase order from Wolverhampton Corporation. The church authorities were given £24,000 and another site in compensation. It amalgamated with Masefield Road Church the same year to form Oldfallings URC. Keith Cattell, the architect who worked on the Queen Street church in the 1950s, designed the new Oldfallings church.

Lea Road

The Lea Road church was the last of the branch churches to be built.⁴⁹ In 1902, Queen Street decided to spend £2000 on a new chapel and school as it believed this was an area with an expanding population lacking Congregational presence. A piece of land was acquired on the corner of Lea Road and

⁴⁸ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp.98-101.

⁴⁹ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp.115-16.

Claremont Road and the church and school room opened in 1905-1906.

It was replaced by a new building in 1932 and then again in 1966. It is now Lea Road United Reformed Church.

Pattingham

Pattingham opened in 1872 when a former Primitive Methodist chapel was purchased. It had 8 members in 1882 however it met with strong local opposition. It closed in 1887 and the building was later sold and converted into cottages.⁵⁰

Shipley

The church at Shipley had a humble beginning. Prayer meetings had been held in the area for many years, latterly at Mr Robinson's, Long Common, New Inns, about seven miles from Wolverhampton. In August 1857, Mr Robinson applied to Mr Stephens, one of the Queen Street lay preachers, to preach for them.

On the 22nd May 1860, land was purchased and prominent architect George Bidlake prepared plans for a chapel, which was opened for worship in April 1861. The Chapel cost £420 11s 6d. Mr Henry J Jordan of Tettenhall Wood was appointed the first Superintendent at Shipley and it was mainly through his exertions that the Chapel was erected.

On the 22nd January 1895, Mr. Thomas Bantock gave the cottage known as Yew Tree Cottage with the garden land adjoining, to the church and the rent from this helped support the chapel.

The buildings located at Hillend, off the A454 Wolverhampton to Bridgnorth road, consisted of the chapel, schoolroom and caretakers house. There were 24 members in 1882, rising to 27 by 1909.⁵¹

Stafford Street

A mission was established at 128 Stafford Street in November 1877. This probably came about as a result of the Rev Horton's division of the town into nine districts with a team of lay preachers to visit each of them.

Like Lea Road, it was believed to be an area of expanding population lacking Congregational presence. The property was purchased in 1883 with money from the Queen Street Church Jubilee fund and opened in 1886-1887. There were 69 members in 1882, rising to 731 members by 1909.⁵²

It has proved difficult to determine when the church closed due to gaps in the historical record. Today, this part of Stafford Street has been completely redeveloped.

Swindon

Swindon chapel was built in 1820 and was initially served by ministers from Stourbridge and other towns. By 1834, had become part of the Queen Street family. It was later sold and reopened in 1895. By 1909, it had 7 members.⁵³ It did not ask for separation from the Queen Street Church until 1971.⁵⁴ It is now called the Swindon United Reform Church.

⁵⁰ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p.114.

⁵¹ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp.112-13.

⁵² May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p.105.

⁵³ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p.106.

⁵⁴ Report of Special General Meeting July 1971, Wolverhampton Archives, M/QS/5.

Tettenhall Wood

Reverend Roaf built a congregational chapel at Stockwell End, Tettenhall but it was ultimately abandoned due to opposition from the Tettenhall Anglican church. Following this, a Mr Shann held services in a room used for rifle drill.

After Tettenhall College was built in 1863, Sunday evening services were held there. In 1867, the Wesleyan Chapel was taken over and enlarged in 1873.

Between 1874-80, it tried to be completely independent from the Queen Street Church. In 1874 it had 45 members and felt itself able to stand alone with a pastor commanding a salary of £145 a year. These attempts were ultimately unsuccessful and it returned to the fold in 1880. By 1909, there were 54 members.⁵⁵

Today, it is called the Tettenhall Wood United Reformed Church.

Wall Heath

Congregational preaching in Wall Heath began in 1839 and the chapel had its own ministers between 1855-1862.

In 1863, it decided to join the Queen Street family and in 1895, a new chapel dedicated by Rev Berry was opened. In 1909 it had 61 members.⁵⁶

Today, it is known as the St Andrews United Reformed Church.

Wombourne

The Wombourne Church opened in 1850. Prior to this, worship occurred in a

member's house or in later years in a rented barn.

The new church was planned and the building supervised by architect George Bidlake who worked on the Queen Street Congregational Church in 1864. In 1849, Bidlake was a young member of the church and offered his services for free.⁵⁷

Today, it is known as the Wombourne United Reformed Church.

York Street Mission

The York Street Missions opened in 1867 and lasted for five years. It was non-denominational but the Church of England eventually withdrew its support and it was left in the hands of the Dissenters.

The Queen Street Congregational Church resolved that a Mr Clark, who had been employed by the Mission after many years as a lay preacher, should continue his work and in 1859 the Queen Street Town Mission was established.⁵⁸

The area the Mission covered was chiefly between Horsley and Bilston Street but the Mission's services extended much more widely. Open-air services were held during summer months and were generally well-attended. The Queen Street Congregational Church held a concert in January 1883 to help a number of deserving families connected with the mission cause.

However, by 1885 the church manual recorded that:

*"In the mission proper there has not been the growth either in strength or numbers which we had hoped to see."*⁵⁹

⁵⁵ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp.102-3.

⁵⁶ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p.110-11.

⁵⁷ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp.107-9.

⁵⁸ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p.104.

⁵⁹ Church manual 1885, Wolverhampton Archives, DX /340/11.

Apart from these chapels, the Queen Street Congregational Church also played a big part in founding Low Hill Congregational Church and the Bantock Memorial Congregational Church, Low Hill which opened in September 1940.

The Queen Street Congregational Church and the wider Congregational Movement

Although the Queen Street Congregational Church was autonomous, it was also part of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. The Union held its autumn assembly three times in Wolverhampton; 18th-22nd October 1869; 14th-19th October 1906 and October 1932. The latter in particular had a lot of coverage in the local press.⁶⁰ The chairman of the Union was Reverend Berry's son. Estimated general expenses were around £400. There were some concerns in the Union headquarters as to the choice of Wolverhampton, with some wishing it to be held in Birmingham.

Staffordshire Congregational Union Meetings were also regularly hosted by Queen Street. From 23rd- 25th March 1914, it hosted the centenary meeting of the Union. In 1918, over 120 members of the council of the Union attended meeting hosted by Queen Street, Lea Road and Snow Hill churches. A reception was hosted by Mr and Mrs A. Baldwin Bantock and at a public meeting in Queen Street, Mr J.G Hurst delivered a very eloquent address on the League of Nations.⁶¹

Ministers and lay people from the church also held positions within the National Congregational Union of

England and Wales and within the Staffordshire Union. In the mid-19th century, Reverend Hamer of the Queen Street Congregational Church, was the financial secretary of the Staffordshire Union and did such a good job that during his office, several new churches were founded in South Staffordshire. In 1896, Reverend Berry was elected chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. Later, both Reverend Carter and Reverend Thompson also held the position.

In the summer of 1891, there was an International Congregational Church Council in London and Queen Street had American preachers for six consecutive Sundays. Delegates to the national and Staffordshire Unions and Wolverhampton and District Congregational Board very often came from 'the worthies'.

⁶⁰ Express & Star, 01/10/1932.

⁶¹ Church manual 1919, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/45.

Chapter Seven

Assisting the Poor

WEALTHY philanthropists in the 19th century believed they had a Christian duty to help the deserving poor and working-classes materially and spiritually. Many members of the Queen Street congregation hailed from poor or working-class backgrounds. The Queen Street Congregational Church recognised their role in providing education and moral guidance. The church was particularly concerned with the welfare of children from poor families. Educating the children of the poor was considered vital, prior to the introduction of compulsory education. In December 1863, the Queen Street Congregational Church established Sunday and Day Ragged schools for boys and infants at the British Schools, on the corner of Walsall Street and St James's Street.⁶²

In 1888, a report in the Queen Street Congregational Church manual recognised that services for children who otherwise would spend their time principally on the streets would be difficult and not produce quick results. However, it was believed that Christian teaching and influence would in the end, be highly beneficial. It also added that a small cost entailed by the service was defrayed by the Sunday School.⁶³

The following year, Mrs Mary Ann Bantock bequeathed £500 for poor

children connected with the church. Contributions were also made to the Wolverhampton's Poor Children's Boot Fund, totalling £3 15s 6d in 1934. Regular contributions were made to Dr Barnardo's homes for destitute children. Annual gatherings of blind and poor children were held at Christmas and included a Christmas tree, toys and the distribution of garments financed by a Christmas Poor Fund. This practice continued until the Church closed.

The church also supported young women and girls. In 1879, a sewing club for working women started which ran for many years. It aimed to teach girls to cut and make their own clothing. Several girls and women paid into a penny bank and a library was also established. During 1880, five girls married, and several went into service. By 1884, there were 66 ladies recorded rising to 87 several years later. By 1889, it was renamed The Girls Sewing Class. In 1921, there were 22 depositors in the savings bank. Group outings were arranged and in 1913, the women and girls visited Dudley Castle. The club ceased to operate by 1936.

In the late 19th century, a female servants' bible class was established meeting every Sunday from 3 pm to 4 pm. There were also a variety of funds set up to support women. The W.H Jones charity spent the interest on a £2000

⁶² Church manual 1864, Wolverhampton Archives, DX/340/2.

⁶³ 1888 Church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/14.

investment each year on blankets and flannels for poor widows. This fund still exists and is administered by the Mayor of Wolverhampton's office.

Another fund to help the poor was the Coal and Relief Fund. To help it, on 16th December 1878 Mr Hamer, the then minister, gave a reading of Dicken's Christmas Carol at the Assembly Room of the Agricultural Hall. There would have been many more fund-raising events like this.

The Queen Street Domestic Mission met every Wednesday from 2.30 pm to 4 pm and its purpose was to provide small weekly payments for the cutting, making and procuring of garments. Much of the work with poor families was done through the York Street Mission, one of the church branches described in Chapter Six.

In 1922, the Sacramental Fund, which came from the offertory at the Lord's table, allocated a small monthly grant to deserving members of the congregation. By 1929, daily meetings were held in the Institute in the basement which was open for reading, rest and refreshment for the unemployed. There was also a soup kitchen built in the basement of the steeple with direct access to Queen Street.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Riley, Alan: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p.10.

Chapter Eight

Social Activities

THE CHURCH DID a great deal for young people. In 1872, 428 children attended the afternoon Sunday school. Over time, the numbers declined and by 1937, attendance averaged 75 weekly. Children were still divided into beginners, primary and junior (which were the largest groups), intermediate and senior girls. There were no senior boys. There were numerous societies for children and young people, including a Girl's Society and Sunday Evening Children Society, the Junior Christian Endeavour Society, Children's Missionary Band, Dr Barnardo's Homes for Destitute Children's Young Helpers League and a Boys Brigade.

One of the first organisations for young adults was the Young Men's Christian Association. Its reading room opened every evening between 6:00 and 21:45, except on Fridays when it was occupied by the young women. It provided newspapers, magazines, periodicals, chess, draughts, a reference and lending library. Monday evening meetings took the form of debates and lectures. Subscription of 6d a quarter was required to cover the expense of the library and Monday lectures. In 1886, there were over 50 members.⁶⁵ From 1890, its function was carried on under the name of 'The Young People's Guild' and it was revamped in 1902. Another

name change took place in 1908 and it became 'The Young Men's Institute,' with its inaugural meeting held in January 1908.

With the generous financial assistance of the Church, the Institute aimed to promote the spiritual intellect, moral and physical development of its members. It offered year-round indoor activities including a football club, a cycling club and summer camps. Following the end of the First World War, the Institute opened from 2 pm to 4 pm and 7 pm to 9.30 pm.⁶⁶ As well as dancing, there was also a football club, games, whist drives, socials, and billiard table. In 1921, it was agreed that membership would be 5s for men and 2s 6d for women. There was also a separate Sunday Institute. Following temporary closure in 1924 due to illicit card playing, it reopened in September 1926.

After the First World War, the church embraced the scouting movement and housed the 18th Wolverhampton Group Boy Scouts, the 2nd Wolverhampton Girl Guides, 2nd Wolverhampton Brownie Pack and the 2nd Wolverhampton Rangers. In 1920, the Scouts numbered more than 40 and by 1921, the Guides numbered 18 and the Brownies 14 while the Boys Brigade had 30 members.

⁶⁵ 1887 church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/13.

⁶⁶ Church manual 1910 (Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/36.

The Queen Street Church Fellowship formed in January 1930 and had around 80 members. It provided space for young people to meet and enjoy entertainment leading one person to remark:

*“...the evenings have been much enjoyed by both participants and audience, several proving particularly attractive on account of their novelty.”*⁶⁷

The following year, there were concerns about falling numbers in the Fellowship.

Following the Second World War, some of the Church's young members went youth hostelling and on cycling weekends. A cycling holiday in Germany was organised in the late-1940s. The 1956 Church magazine lists the following clubs as still active: Girl Guides, Choir, Women's Fellowship, 21 Club, Services Canteen and Games Club. Young Wives, Women's Working Party, Sunday School.⁶⁸ There was also a Boy's Brigade and Girls Brigade.

In the 1950s, a youth club for teenage boys and girls flourished and there was a '21 club' for the young people who had outgrown the youth group. The Wolverhampton Chronicle described it as “the most up-to-date of its kind in the district.” Reverend James recognised that playing, studying and listening to jazz, in both its original and progressive forms, appealed to young people and used jazz to attract them to the church. An article in the Chronicle describes how Ken Rattenbury, referred to as ‘Wolverhampton's King of Jazz’, gave a talk on its origins and development.⁶⁹

The church also made an effort to reach out to the wider community. A services and canteen club was established to provide entertainment for young men in the surrounding air force camps. Over 100 young servicemen came the first

night and it was regularly frequented by 400-500 young people every Saturday night. On offer were magazines, table tennis, darts, trampoline, sandwiches and light snacks. The canteen closed in 1958 when the air force camps provided their own entertainment.⁷⁰

There were also a variety of groups aimed at the older members of the congregation. The Women's Meeting, later known as the Women's Hour, had a savings bank. The Queen Street Congregational Church claimed to be the originator of the idea of the ‘Mother's Union’ which the Church of England founded in 1876. In 1837, a maternal association, was founded by Mrs Matheson, wife of former pastor Dr Matheson, and was believed to be the first of its kind.⁷¹ In 1864, it had 40 members and they met one afternoon a month.

Following the Armistice in 1919, the League of Nations was created to promote permanent peace. The Queen Street Congregational Church quickly set up its own branch with J. Sheldon as branch chairman. On 24th February 1921, a Queen Street League of Nations Recruiting Committee was established to enrol members in the local League of Nations branch. Around 128 members were recruited that year and by 1922, there were 190 members.

Various groups supported the missionary work including the Ladies Mission Sewing Aid Meeting, Colonial Missionary Society and The London Missionary Society Queen St Auxiliary, the latter also had a woman's branch. In 1879, The London Missionary Society had 142 English and 353 native missionaries in India, China, South and Central Africa, Madagascar, Mauritius,

⁶⁷ Church manual 1931, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/57.

⁶⁸ Queen Street Chapel Yearbook 1956, Stafford Archives, D1206/1/37.

⁶⁹ Wolverhampton Chronicle, 25/3/1955.

⁷⁰ Wolverhampton Chronicle, 25/ 3/1955.

⁷¹ Church manual 1864, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/2.

South Seas, New Guinea, West Indies. In 1885, a large box of 89 garments were sent to Madagascar.

Miss Smith's School in Peking received £4 7s from the church through the YWCA in 1897. In February 1915, there was a valedictory service for Mabel Shaw who was due to travel to Mbershi, Northern Rhodesia. Mabel became a well-known and well-respected missionary in Africa. In the same year, the Rev H.W Newell, who had been an assistant minister for 17 months, left for India with the YMCA. He sailed in a troopship from Avonmouth on 4th March but was shipwrecked. He eventually arrived safely and later in the year, went onto East Africa.⁷²



*Queen Street Youth Club, cycling in Cambridge in the early 1950s
photo courtesy of Keith Cattell*

⁷² Riley, Alan: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p. 2.



*Queen Street Youth Club at Wilderhope youth hostel (early 1950s)
photo courtesy of Keith Cattell*

Chapter Nine

Events

THE QUEEN STREET Congregational Church was a popular venue for celebrating significant events and hosted many baptisms, weddings and funerals. It also celebrated its own birthdays with jubilee celebrations in 1859, 1909 and 1959.

From 1898, the Queen Street Congregational Church was approved to hold marriages conducted by a minister. Samuel Robert Taylor and Susan Alice Jones were the first couple to be married in the church in 1899. There is only one recorded Queen Street resident who was married in the church. On 4th July 1957, Patricia Taylor of 38 Queen Street, a clerk married Michael John Bell, railway guard.⁷³ Patricia's father had a milliner's shop at number 38.

In 1958, Kay and Fred Hobbs who were active Church members, married at the church. A photograph of Kay and Frank on their wedding day standing on the steps of the church features in the Queen Street exhibition at Wolverhampton Art Gallery. In an interview for the Queen Street Townscape Heritage Project, Kay explained that she and Fred had to meet in secret in Queen Street. When the wedding day came, she was late for the ceremony as the taxi had been unable to

find her. She had one bridesmaid and the service was very traditional.

The last marriage conducted in the church took place on 12th October 1968 between Edward Johnson Smith aged 29, a grinder, and Deloris Eunice Esson, a pupil nurse.

In the early days of the church, when somebody important died, the pulpit was draped in black and the minister made funeral sermons with black gloves on while Handel's 'Dead March' played.⁷⁴ The Queen Street Congregational Church never had its own burial ground and prior to the opening of Merridale Cemetery in 1850, burials would take place in a burial ground attached to another nonconformist church or in an Anglican burial ground.

The Queen Street Congregational Church also enjoyed celebrating various jubilees. At the 50th anniversary jubilee on 1st November 1859, its first minister, Thomas Scales, returned to deliver a sermon. Over 1000 people attended including 300 members and a large number of Sunday school children. As a thanksgiving, it was decided to build a chapel at Heath Town and have the first church manual printed.⁷⁵

⁷³ QSCC marriage register, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 605.

⁷⁴ Jones, W H: History of the Congregational Churches of Wolverhampton from the Year 1662 to 1892.

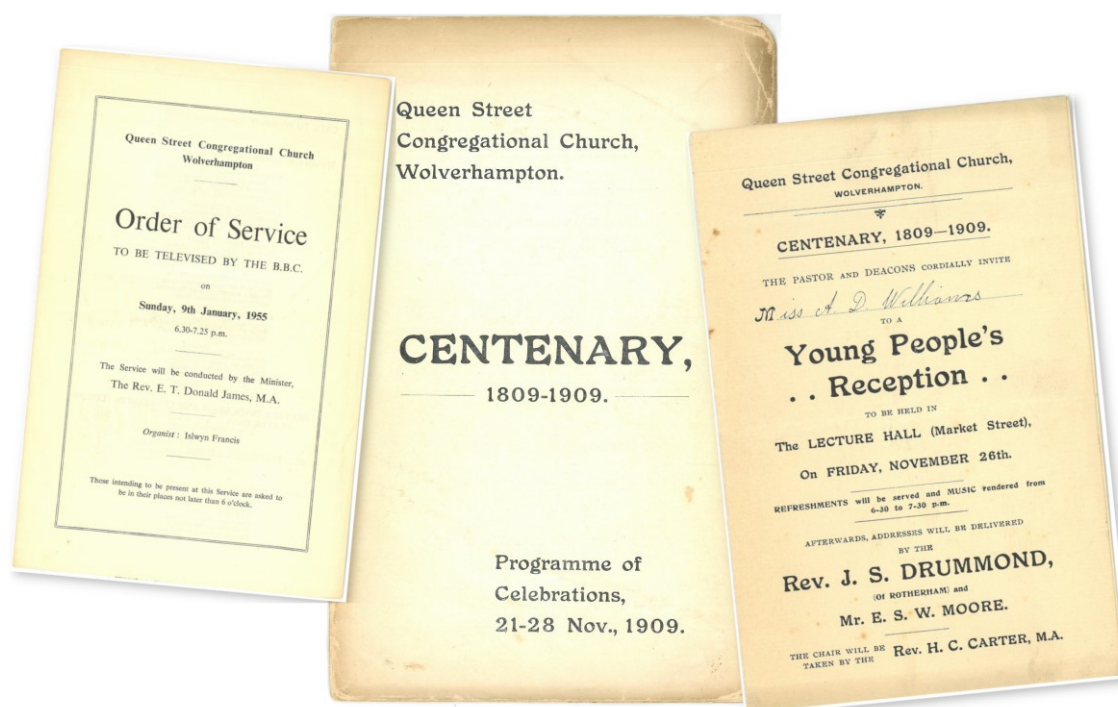
⁷⁵ May, Henry: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp.24-25.

The 1909 centenary celebrations took place between 21st and 28th November 1909 and consisted of Sunday services; a Monday evening meeting with past and present members; a public meeting in the Agricultural Hall on Wednesday as well as a reception of young people on the Friday.⁷⁶

Plans for the 150th Anniversary was reported in the *Express and Star* in April 1959.⁷⁷ The schedule included a reunion of representatives from past and present branches of the church, a Sunday morning service attended by the mayor, Mr Homer, his wife and representatives of various organisations. The preacher throughout the day was to be the Rev Dr Sydney Berry, son of the church's late pastor, Rev Dr Charles Berry. Finally, the day would close with a social in the evening. Plans for later celebrations included a visit by the missionary Mabel Shaw.

The Queen Street Congregational Church also held innumerable less auspicious social events. During the late-19th century, there was an annual tea meeting held at the start of every January. Members were encouraged to sell tickets although records reveal that not all members were successful. In 1880, Mrs Bantock claimed 24 tickets but only sold 19.⁷⁸

Many of the events were also open to and enjoyed by people outside of the church. For example, in the late-19th century, there were organ recitals by the Church's organist. Between 11th and 13th March 1913, the Church also hosted a 'Home Arts & Industries' exhibition. The programme reveals that the Mayor opened the exhibition each day and it consisted of a science exhibition and as well as home arts, such as woodwork, cookery, gardening, nature study. There were also tableaux and music.⁷⁹



⁷⁶ 1910 Church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/36.

⁷⁷ *Express & Star*, 18/4/1959.

⁷⁸ Church Financial Records 1878-1970, Wolverhampton Archives, M/QS/2.

⁷⁹ Programme of the Home & Arts Industries Exhibition 1913, Wolverhampton Archives, LS/L2852Q.

Chapter Ten

The First World War

IN 1915, QUEEN STREET Congregational Church Pastor, Reverend Thompson, declared in his New Year sermon;

*“Our prayers are that in these times of national anxiety and strife we shall find ample security in the eternal God, knowing of a truth that underneath us are the everlasting arms.”*⁸⁰

Reverend Thompson experienced first-hand the realities of life at the front. In 1916, he went to France for three months and recounted his experience to the Express and Star newspaper in the summer of 1916.⁸¹ His first six weeks were spent at a YMCA hut in the base camp at Calais. The hut had been closed due to a measles outbreak and was derelict. Reverend Thompson worked 19-hour days and eventually the hut was reopened. It contained two billiard tables and a restroom for reading and writing.

Rev Thompson also worked with the training school for officers where he arranged concerts, lectures and entertainment. At night, he and the officers went out to watch the shells fall. Reverend Thompson came under fire himself when he moved around the Ypres salient. This was only possible because he was given a permit by a general whose sister was one of the four

women helpers in the hut in Calais. During his time at the Front, Reverend Thompson met many Canadians and ‘Anzacs’ and visited huts at Poperinghe and Armenteres.

The First World War severely impacted the day-to-day operation of the church and deprived it of many of its young men. The men’s organisations at the church immediately began to suffer when hostilities started with many of their ‘most attentive’ young men going off to war. Many belonged to the Young People’s Institute which maintained contact with those at home through regular letters and weekly prayer. In 1916, a special roll of honour booklet was published containing the names of those serving in the armed forces. Unfortunately, no copy seems to have survived however the 1916 manual contains a roll of honour of those serving between 1914-1915. Queen Street has 92 men and five nurses listed.⁸²

Back home, the Church recognised the important role of women in contributing to the war effort. A report on the Church’s Sewing Class and Clothing Club for Working Women and Girls spoke of being glad to have enrolled more young factory girls ‘who really need the teaching and help we can give them.’ The Church also hoped to ‘...band

⁸⁰ 1915 Church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/41.

⁸¹ Express & Star, 31/7/1916.

⁸² 1916 Church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/42.

together women and girls of the empire to uphold the standard of women's duty and honour by prayer, purity and temperance.' ⁸³ Underlying this was the concern, which was widespread, about the effect of the war on the morals of working class females. By 1917, there were concerns that the darkened streets caused by lighting restrictions affected attendance at the meetings. In response, coffee suppers were arranged to help lift spirits.⁸⁴

The war also affected the congregation's children. The country holiday in August 1914 was cancelled due to the declaration of war and transport difficulties meant there were no more holidays for the duration of the war. Furthermore, since no appeals had been made, funds were very low.⁸⁵

In 1915, Reverend Thompson outlined how the children could also help support the war effort;

*"...girls can knit and sew. Boys can obtain name of one soldier or sailor and send him an up to date paper or bright magazine. And carry on at school, country will spend on you in future, and pray."*⁸⁶

By 1917, the Sunday school children's service had no summer treat owing to food shortage and books were gifted instead. The following year, it was reported that the Sunday evening children's service was well-attended despite an outbreak of influenza and sadly there were to be no summer or Christmas treats that year.

Austerity also affected other charitable work. In 1917, the Ladies Mission Aid

Society sent fewer parcels to ministers' wives due to increasing cost of materials. Nevertheless, the parcels were very welcome as these women had little money left for clothing due to price coal and food. Appeals to help servicemen were prioritised. In 1918, the Queen Street Church and its branches raised £5 9s 2d for soldier's gifts and £23 10s 3d for wounded soldiers.⁸⁷

On 17th January 1924, a war memorial was dedicated by the former pastor, Rev Thompson. The then current minister, J. Edgar Williams, reported that Rev Thompson was suited to the task because "...he knew personally all the young men who went out from us to war, and he loved them and was beloved by them."⁸⁸

The memorial, which stood inside the entrance to the church, was fashioned from a panel of Carrara marble with an alabaster surround. It was created by the well-known sculptor, R.J Emerson who taught at the Wolverhampton School of Art. Listed on the brass tablet at its foot were the names of those fallen in the war: Adams, G Norman; Bailey, William; Bostock, Geoffrey H; Caddick, Joseph; Craddock, Reginald; Craddock, Victor; Davies, W Gerald; Dicks, Lillie; Dickinson, T Arthur; Fieldhouse, Albert; Hidens, George; Lee, Albert; Northall, Charles S; Reynolds, George; Shaw, Leslie G; Shelton; Gilbert H; Thorne, John P; Veitch A Gordon; White, Ernest C; Whoods, George T; Wright, William.⁸⁹

Biographical details of those listed on the Roll can be found in the Appendix.⁹⁰

⁸³ 1915 Church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/41.

⁸⁴ 1918 Church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/44.

⁸⁵ Church Finance Committee minutes 1962-1971, Wolverhampton Archives, M/QS/1.

⁸⁶ Church manual 1915, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/40.

⁸⁷ Church manual 1918, Wolverhampton Archives, DX/340/

⁸⁸ 1925 Church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/51.

⁸⁹ 1925 Church Manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/51.

⁹⁰ See Appendix.

Chapter Eleven

The Second World War

THE SECOND World War saw many of the same challenges as were experienced in First World War, including blackouts, rationing and difficulties with transport. In 1939, the church's large basement was heavily reinforced with steelwork and thick blast walls to provide an emergency air raid shelter for around 500 people. Fortunately, it was never required.

It proved impossible to black out the large windows, so service times were changed. This proved very difficult and severely impacted on attendance. Many of the church buildings were requisitioned including the guild room and hall leaving only rooms for the ministers, deacons and the vestry. The Ministry of Labour and National Service also occupied some of the rooms. Unfortunately, this disrupted some of the church activities and clubs including the Institute which sadly had to close during the war years.

In August 1945, Rev Wilson wrote of the urgent need to derequisition the church building. Reverend Wilson wrote of the Church's problems in the Congregationalist, and his words were later reproduced in the Express & Star. Wilson called for

"...the release of our premises which have been requisitioned for so long. A central church like Queen Street Wolverhampton has...a great part to

*play in the social and cultural life of the town but so long as they [we] are deprived of the full use of their rooms they are prevented from doing their full work."*⁹¹

Perhaps more important than the issue of the requisitioned rooms, Mr Wilson emphasises the active interest of men and women in the work of the church.

*"Now that the strain of long hours and arduous toil is over he adds, we look to those who love Queen Street to rally round and build up the former greatness of the church."*⁹²

The basement was 'derequisitioned as air raid shelter' in November 1946, but the other rooms were held by the Ministry of Labour until September 1948 and it was not until 1950 that final compensation was paid by the Government. Unfortunately, the government departments concerned did not restore the premises to their former condition, and the compensation awarded was quite insufficient for the purpose.

The schoolrooms were ultimately restored as far as possible by the labour of the Church's own people, notably Mr. J.W. Clifford and the Youth Club. Unfortunately, restoration of the Institute proved impossible. The Civil Defence Authorities had destroyed the heavy timber floor to accommodate brick blast walls and subsequent regulations

⁹¹ Express & Star, 10/8/1945.

⁹² Express & Star, 10/8/1945.

by another government department prohibited the use of similar heavy timber for replacement. A permit for additional joists to carry a lighter floor was refused and the Institute was never used again.⁹³



*First World War Roll of Honour now in Tettenhall Wood Church—
photo Ashleigh Hudson*

⁹³ Riley, Alan: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p.15.

Chapter Twelve

Modernising the Church

IN 1953, THE EXPRESS & Star declared that up until around 40 years ago, the Queen Street Congregational Church had been a focal point in Wolverhampton's religious life.⁹⁴ The decline in the church's fortunes started during and after the First World War and by the 1950s, there was a concerted effort to revive and modernise the church.

On 27th October 1953, a bazaar was held to recapture the church's 'past glory' when many prominent of the townspeople and local industrialists were 'ardent supporters'.⁹⁵ Several such bazaars had been held in the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1956, the church hosted an exhibition which featured a range of 'strange objects' including;

"A working coal mine model, bottles of chemicals, a two-stroke motorcycle engine - and some unattached artificial eyes. The most striking exhibit was a wrought-iron crown used as a Westminster Abbey canopy at the Queen's coronation."

The exhibition aimed to promote the relationship between industry and Christianity. Reverend James and Mr Wilfred Leighton, a Birmingham industrial educationalist, delivered

sermons at the two services. After the evening service, there was also a Christianity and industry quiz with a panel of clergymen and industrialists. Topics covered included automation, profit sharing and closed shops. Afterwards the Rev James said he hoped the event would be repeated.⁹⁶

A first for the church was when it was televised on 9th January 1954, making it the first Wolverhampton church to be filmed. Minister Rev E.T Donald James gave the sermon and the choir and congregation sang several hymns. It was later reported that the TV programme went without a hitch or flashing.⁹⁷ In January 1956, a Queen Street early morning Sunday service was also broadcast on BBC radio.⁹⁸

Rev James was at the forefront of the attempts to revive the church. In 1956, he lamented the changing status of the church in the town writing;

*"I suppose that Queen Street would now be classed as a 'down-town church' but I would prefer to call it a central church...it is in fact much more accessible than many a church which is supposed to be 'where the people are'...It is wrong that such a church as ours should give the appearance of being very shut and very dead from Monday to Saturday."*⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Express & Star, 27/10/1953.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Express & Star, 26/11/1956

⁹⁷ Express & Star, 10/12/1954.

⁹⁸ Express & Star, 14/4/1956.

⁹⁹ Queen Street Chapel Church Year Book 1956, Stafford Archives, D1206/1/37.

Rev James worked hard to make services both popular and more meaningful. He frequently used film during services and often invited the congregation to stay behind to discuss the subject of the service. In 1952, Bible study meetings alternated with regular Church meetings and there was a monthly social evening. Communion services with other branches were held at Queen Street. In 1956, a Church Council was established with representatives from all branches of church life. A series of Sunday afternoon conferences were held and Family Church adopted whereby Sunday school was replaced with Junior Church Worship. This ran concurrent with the Sunday morning service.¹⁰⁰

The church building was also refurbished as part of the church's efforts to modernise. In 1956, youth club members carried out the first major interior redecoration of the church for 30 years. The scheme, designed by one of the youth club members, earned great admiration. In March 1956, the Express & Star reported on the grand opening;

*"After ten weeks exile in the guild room, the congregation of Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton return to more familiar surroundings on Sunday, when the church is being reopened after the first major interior decoration for 30 years. Modern treatment has brought out the beauties of this typically Victorian building as they have never been seen before. The Rev. E.T. Donald James tells me that the whole scheme of the décor was worked out by a young member of the congregation Keith Cattell who is hoping soon to qualify as an architect."*¹⁰¹

Keith Cattell added that the refurbishment proved that;

*"...no matter how drab the outside of a building looks it can be made bright and cheerful inside. It is all done by adding a yellow here and a red, blue or green there."*¹⁰²

Were the efforts to modernise the church successful? It was reported at the church's annual general meeting in May 1958 that there had been an increase of membership and it was felt that the adoption of the 'family church' model, which supported children from baptism to coming of age, had been successful.

However, it was also noted that the offices incorporated in the building were out of keeping with the times. In early-1958, the ground floor of the three-storey Sunday School building in Market Street was let as a shop.¹⁰³ The Church required more costly renovation and even everyday maintenance was a financial strain. Complaints were made by users of the upstairs rooms that they were cold and damp.¹⁰⁴ In 1961, it was estimated that £5000 - £10,000 was needed over the next ten years to maintain the building. The church had even lost its looks, 'blackened by more than a century's fall-out of industrial grime'.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Riley, Alan: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, pp.18-19.

¹⁰¹ Express & Star, 16/3/1956.

¹⁰² Express & Star, 1956.

¹⁰³ Wolverhampton Chronicle, 31/1/1958.

¹⁰⁴ Church Finance Committee minutes 1962-1971, Wolverhampton Archives, M QS/1.

¹⁰⁵ Express & Star.

Chapter Thirteen

The End

ON 3RD MARCH 1961, the proposal to demolish the Queen Street Congregational Church was accepted in principle by the congregation and a rebuilding committee was set up. Miss M.K Moore, the church secretary, optimistically remarked that it would not be the destruction of the church but a 'rebirth'.¹⁰⁶ At this time, there was no minister and deacons held communion services while they and the other church officials would see to the other church services and the running of the church.

Despite plans to demolish the building, attempts were still made to make the building as habitable as possible. In January 1963, it was decided that apart from the Boys Brigade room, the upstairs would no longer be used and future classes would use the vestry rooms. However, The Guild Room and Deacon's Vestry needed redecorating due to dampness and the roof of the minister's vestry required repairs due to a leak.¹⁰⁷

Financial concerns dominated the 1960s. In July 1962, Financial Committee member Mr Oates mentioned that depreciation and budgets would come strangely to Queen Street as there had not been any need for them in the past. Rev Mr Sabin also

mentioned that the new church must be commercially minded. By 1954, the Church treasurer reported that 'the few' were carrying the financial burden of the church. Reportedly, one third of church income came from just one tenth of members. Requests were made to members to give more, especially through the yearly Harvest Appeal, and the responses were good although not nearly enough.¹⁰⁸

Despite the financial misgivings, Church life continued. In the summer of 1968, 25-year-old architecture student Richard Jenks set up a religious bookshop on the porch of the Queen Street Congregational Church.¹⁰⁹ The organ was put back into working order and despite its own precarious financial position, the church continued to be generous to others. The Welfare Fund Christmas Appeal continued, as did other donations to good causes. Life had its lighter side too. In 1968, the Express & Star reported that three women were locked in the toilets after the church was locked up.¹¹⁰

The last members to join Queen Street Church were the Johnson family who transferred from Neeth in December 1965; Henry, Dorothy and their 13 year old son Philip. The last baptism was Richard Charles Herbert on 30th August

¹⁰⁶ Express & Star, 8/3/1961.

¹⁰⁷ Church Finance Committee minutes 1962-1971, Wolverhampton Archives, M QS/1.

¹⁰⁸ Church Finance Committee minutes 1962-1971, Wolverhampton Archives, M QS/1

¹⁰⁹ Express & Star, 17/2/1968.

¹¹⁰ Express & Star

1970, the son of Anthony and Barbara. Barbara was a church member.

In 1972, the Express & Star printed a sketch of a proposed three-story block fronting Queen Street with impressive elevation to Market Street and backing onto Castle Street containing ground floor shops and offices above. Three of five units had already been let. The proposed building would have cost £250,000 but the plans were never realised.¹¹¹

Keith Cattell, architect and the last Secretary of the church, recalls;

*“As I remember, the Queen Street Church did not have a large pot of money to help with rebuilding and required a developer willing to fund a new building, consisting of shops with church over. This had worked for one or two other churches in the country but our developer finally decided it was not going to work for us; presumably because of the restricted site and insufficient return from the shop rents. The ultimate result was that we sold the site to the developer, for around £100,000.”*¹¹²

In March 1971, it was announced that the church was up for sale, with a final service to be held on the 2nd May. At a special Church meeting on 27th April 1971, it was reported that none of the tenders were acceptable and attempts would be made to sell by private treaty. At the final service, Reverend Roy Porter gave the sermon with around 300 people in attendance. The lower school of Tettenhall College marched to the service, taking 45 minutes to do so.¹¹³

During another special Church meeting on 6th July 1971, it was agreed that the church would be dissolved from 31st July 1971 and the Staffordshire County Congregational Union would undertake

the disposal of the site. That same month, the site was bought by Company Developments Ltd., Solihull for a sum in the region of six figures.¹¹⁴ The application for the erection of hoardings was dated 28th February 1972 and the demolition had to be carried out brick by brick for health and safety reasons.¹¹⁵ The Express & Star reported that a glass jar was found underneath the foundation stone and erroneously said it contained the deed to the church.¹¹⁶ This may have been the time capsule buried during the opening ceremony in 1864.

In 1971, Keith Cattell expressed concern that the closure would lead to members of the congregation feeling a sense of ‘homelessness’;

*“The ‘homeless’ members were those few elderly people who lived within half a mile or so of the church and did not have a nearby Congregational branch church to go to. They were the hardest hit, and we felt sorry for them because they had been generally attending the church for many years. Some members did keep in touch following the closure of Queen Street but generally they were content to concentrate on their adopted local church, Such as Tettenhall Wood; Penn; Lea Road; Wombourne and eventually Old Fallings.”*¹¹⁷

The former site of the Queen Street Congregational Church is now occupied by the local Jobcentre. Just after it was built, a rumour circulated that it was haunted; perhaps by an indignant spirit of one of the thousands of deceased church members.¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ Express & Star.

¹¹² Interview with Jean Bell and Susan Martin 2018.

¹¹³ Express & Star.

¹¹⁴ Express & Star, 09/7/1971.

¹¹⁵ Express & Star, 12/10/1971 and 26/10/1971.

¹¹⁶ Express & Star, 18/2/1972.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Jean Bell and Susan Martin, 2018.

¹¹⁸

<http://static.eexpressandstar.com/millennium/1900/1900-1924/1903.html>

Chapter Fourteen

The Queen Street Congregational Church Legacy

THE QUEEN STREET Congregational Church has an enduring legacy in Wolverhampton and much of its building and contents have been preserved.

A house in Penn boasts as part of its garden wall some of the original wall of the church. Businessman, B L Bayliss of Woodlands Grange, Penn installed the wall in 1972. The installation was carried out by stonemason and artist, Noel Morse of Castlecroft, Wolverhampton. It was 118 feet long standing at Gallery height facing Market Street and consisted of 13 arches and stained glass.¹¹⁹ The wall still stands today.

The stained-glass windows were much more difficult to preserve. The window lead and the glass were too brittle to move unless at great expense. Finally, the windows were sold to demolition contractor Vincent Brunberg who told the *Express & Star* that he would be keeping one and selling the other two.¹²⁰

As soon as the decision had been taken to replace the building, disposal of some of the church's property began. As early as 1963, it was suggested The Guild and Bantock libraries should be offered to

second hand book shops and those books not taken be sold for pulp. However, this does not seem to have been acted upon as at the end of the church, at least some of the Bantock library remained.

When demolition was imminent, valiant attempts were made to find homes for items large and small. Items were offered to other churches and indeed anyone who might be interested. This was not always without problems. A memo from Horace Gilbert, the Treasurer, remarked that the removal men failed to get out the cupboards from Deacons' Vestry and Institute for Gt Barr and Oldfallings, and the heavier 'counter' from the Guild Room for Oldfallings.¹²¹

A complete silver communion set was given to Keele University. The silver trowel used to at the foundation laying in 1864 is held by Wolverhampton Art Gallery and was on display during the Queen Street exhibition.

From the early-19th century, the Queen Street Congregational Church had an organ. In 1884, Frank Watkiss was appointed organist and he was the favourite accompanist of the famous soprano, Mme Adelina Patti.¹²² As part

¹¹⁹ *Express & Star*, 19/2/1972.

¹²⁰ *Express & Star*.

¹²¹ Memo in 'Other material', Wolverhampton Archives, M QS/5.

¹²² 1885 Church manual, Wolverhampton Archives, DX 340/11.

of the refurbishment in the first decade of the 20th century, it was decided to acquire a new organ as a monument to the Rev Charles Berry. The new organ by Willis, was installed 6th November 1903 when C W Perkins city organist Birmingham played. Before the church was demolished, valiant efforts were made to find a new home for the organ. Rev Ray Porter explained;

*"The organ is one of the largest in the area, but nobody could afford to rebuild it, even when we offered to give it to them."*¹²³

Dudley Corporation considered taking it but sadly couldn't find a suitable place for it nor the £15,000 required to install it. The parts were ultimately sent to the factory of Willis & Sons in Liverpool where it was originally built and most likely used for spare parts.¹²⁴

Monuments

At the time of demolition, the church had numerous monuments. One of the most significant is still on display outside the United Reformed Church in Tettenhall Wood. Inside the church is the Queen Street Congregational Church roll of honour, containing the names of the congregation's men who died in the First World War. Most Queen Street people were well aware that in the War Memorial bas-relief by R.J Emerson they possessed 'a piece of sculpture of distinction'.¹²⁵ It was dismantled by Peter Lockett, a Tettenhall-based monument mason who had been one of Emerson's pupils.¹²⁶

Riley then mentions another monument which he believed to be of artistic importance;

*"They had not realised, however, that the Wilkes memorial [Wilkes the early 19th century ironmasters] commemorating two of the earliest members of the Church, was a hitherto unrecorded work of a distinguished Midland sculptor, Peter Hollins. This identification was due to Mr. Michael Rix [sic], who arranged for Birmingham Art Gallery to take over the sculpture 'on permanent loan'."*¹²⁷

This is corroborated by an article in the Express & Star;

*"...a reclining woman holding an anchor and looking skywards will go the Birmingham Art Gallery - it was the work of the city sculptor Hollins."*¹²⁸

Unfortunately, Birmingham Art Gallery has been unable to locate the Hollis sculpture.

John Mander's monument is currently in St Peter's Church, Wolverhampton. Memorials to ministers were given to Tettenhall College.

As to its legacy to the town, Keith Cattell reasoned;

"I don't think the closure of Queen Street had much impact on its town centre neighbours when it closed, although there were still a few businesses in the centre that had Queen Street Church contacts such as the Wolverhampton Building Society manager in Lichfield Street, Snapes and Taylors in Princes Square. Of course, if you go back a hundred years, I think a large proportion of businesses in the town centre had associations with the church and there were always a few members on the council, Alderman Foster being the last one that I can remember."

By 1971, the church had indeed ceased to have much impact on

¹²³ Express & Star.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Riley, Alan: Queen Street Congregational Church, Wolverhampton, p. 29.

¹²⁶ Express & Star, 04/8/1971.

¹²⁷ Riley, Alan: Queen Street Congregational Church Wolverhampton, p. 30.

¹²⁸ Express & Star, 03/04/1971.

Wolverhampton. However, the Church's lasting legacy must be the great impact it had on the town prior to the First World War. It helped to mould many of the men and women who ran Wolverhampton's businesses and public services. It also helped many of the poor, particularly children, to achieve better lives and it was responsible for branch churches some of which continue to thrive. One could say that without Queen Street Congregational Church, Wolverhampton would not have become the city we know today.

Perhaps the last words should be those of Pevsner the Architectural Historian who wrote of the church so favourably but had as a footnote for his description

“The church has now been pulled down – Wolverhampton's loss”.¹²⁹



Foundation stone – photo author's own

¹²⁹ Pevsner, Nikolaus: Staffordshire: The Buildings of England 1974, p. 316.



*Emerson Memorial – image from Queen Street Church manual
1925*

Appendix

Bibliography

Church Publications

The first manual was produced in 1860. Copies of many but not all the manuals are at the Wolverhampton Archives. The last one was for 1938 when it was suspended and seems to have been superseded by a yearbook. Material contained in the manuals varied over the years but most gave an address by the Pastor, accounts of the church and its satellites including the accounts of its various groups and committees (and sometimes further information on these), obituaries of prominent church members and the addresses of members. Samuel Theodore Mander was for a long time responsible for the manual and it was then taken over by Henry Arthur May, who also wrote the centenary history of QSCC in 1909. There were other church publications including a church magazine. This started in 1899 and there was a quarterly magazine in the 1950s. There was also a church record. Before WW1 this was a publication of a religious nature and ceased publication because it was too costly. There may have been other publications of varying duration

Primary Sources

Queen Street Congregational Church manuals, Wolverhampton City Archives, DX 340/1 - DX 340/64. The Archives have a number of other items related to the Church, of particular interest were the Financial Committee Minutes 1962-1971, M QS/1 and material in M QS/5 for the last ten years of the church. Financial records 1878-1970, M QA/2 were also very informative and provided context for information provided in the church manuals.

The Stafford County Records series of documents on the Queen Street Congregational Church and its branches, D1206 were consulted.

The Express & Star and Wolverhampton Chronicle cuttings covering post-Second World War were kindly provided by Express & Star newspaper archive.

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QUEEN STREET CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

ROLL OF HONOUR

Adams, Norman George

1888-20/1/1918 2nd Lieutenant 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment. Son of George North Adams, a Wolverhampton ironmaster. Buried Wolverhampton cemetery

Bailey, John William

1892 - 14/12/1914 Private 1st Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment. His family came from Heath Town. Before enlisting as a regular soldier before the war he had worked as a vermin trap maker

Bostock, Geoffrey Henshall

1897- 20/1/1917 Private 20th Battalion Royal Fusiliers. Son of William Henry Boistock, a Wolverhampton ironmaster. Surprisingly Geoffrey was not an officer

Caddick, Joseph

1888 - 23/4/1917. Private 8th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment. His parents, then his widowed mother Mary had a shop in Parkfield Road, Ettingshall for many years

Craddock, Reginald

1888 - 21/3/1918 2nd Lieutenant 5th Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment. Son of George Craddock boot manufacturer, Wolverhampton. Brother of Victor Craddock

Craddock, Victor

1894 - 11/10/1918 2nd Lieutenant 1/5th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment. Son of George Craddock boot manufacturer Wolverhampton. Brother of Reginald Craddock

Davies, William Gerald

1895 - 8/8/1918 Private 25th battalion (Nova Scotia Regiment) Canadian Infantry. Emigrated 1913 and enlisted in Calgary

Dicks, Lillie

1873 - 26/9/1916. Worked as a Red Cross VAD in 1915. Married Thomas Howard 25/1/1916 and died in Toxteth Infirmary

Dickinson, Thomas Arthur

1893 - 1/7/1916 2nd Lieutenant 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment. Son of Thomas William Dickinson fruit merchant and farmer Palmers Cross Tettenhall

Fieldhouse, Albert

1888 - 25/4/1915 Private 4th Battalion Royal Worcestershire Regiment. Known as Bert, one of 10 children of a brass polisher. He had enlisted before 1911 and is the only man on the roll to be buried in Gallipoli

Hidens, George

1892 - 24/4/1917 Staff Sergeant 1/3rd North Midland Field Ambulance, RAMC. He had previously served in the RAMC for four years and re-enlisted.

Lee, Albert Lewis

1892 - 3/9/1915 Private 1/6th Battalion. South Staffordshire Regiment. Had worked like his father for Manders, paint manufacturer

Northall, Charles Stewart

1895-5/10/1915 Corporal 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment. First Wolverhampton Corporation official to be killed in action in WW1

Reynolds, George

1889 - 5/6/1916 Stoker, Royal Navy. Enlisted 1913, was lost, like Lord Kitchener, when HMS Hampshire was sunk

Rutter, Edgar

1895 - 2/1/1917 Corporal 2nd Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment. Son of an iron moulder he had enlisted shortly before the outbreak of war

Shaw, Leslie Gardner

1890 - 13/10/1915. 2nd Lieutenant 1/5th Battalion. South Staffordshire Regiment. The family firm was Messrs J Shaw & Sons Ltd, hardware merchants

Shelton, Gilbert Henry

1896 - 13/1/1916 Leading Seaman Hawke Battalion RN Division. Son of an ironmaster's manager. The Hawke Battalion was fighting as infantry on the Western Front at this time

Thorne, John Parry

1888 - 1/7/1916 2nd Lieutenant 1/5th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment. Solicitor, son of John Rennie Thorne MP for Wolverhampton East and a former mayor of Wolverhampton

Veitch, Alexander Gordon

1888-24/3/1917. Lieutenant 2/1st Battery of the Leicestershire R.H.A. Teacher at Wolverhampton Grammar School. Only man on the Roll of Honour to leave a child

White, Ernest Charles

1887 - 23/3/1918 Dispenser, RAMC. Born in Uppingham, Rutland and served at 1st Southern General Hospital Birmingham. Only man on Royal of Honour to have not served abroad.

Whoods, George

1889 - 25/4/1917 Private 25th Battalion (Tyneside Irish) Northumberland Fusiliers. He grew up in Bilston. Buried in Boulogne Eastern Cemetery he also has a headstone in St Philip's churchyard Wolverhampton

Wright, William Edward

1895 - 9/6/1917 Private 75th Machine Gun Corps. Grew up in a court off Faulkland Street, Wolverhampton. With others from Faulkland Street had attended classes run by the Queen Street Congregational Church

QUEEN STREET CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

ROLL OF HONOUR - BIOGRAPHIES

George Norman Adams

George Norman Adams, son of George and Fanny Adams, was born in 1888 in Wolverhampton. In 1888, his father became a member of the Congregational Church in Queen Street and eventually became one of its leaders.

In 1911, George Norman was employed as a stock keeper and iron mill manager and was still living with his parents. He joined the 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment and went to France in May 1915. Between September and October of that year, he was hospitalised for an unidentified reason. He received a period of leave until 24th November 1915, when he was assessed and it was decided that he had fully recovered.

On 1st July 1916, the battalion was involved in the Battle of Gommecourt and George suffered a gunshot wound to the right knee. He returned to England on the hospital ship Galena on 20th July 1916.

His knee swelled up after an eight-mile march and he couldn't fully extend it. An abscess formed and on 14th November 1916, he was deemed unfit both for general and home service.

By early-March 1917, Norman was deemed fit for home service. He was allocated to the 5th Staffordshire Regiment based in Lincoln. By October, Norman was admitted to the 4th Northern General Hospital in Lincoln with scabies. Norman contracted pneumonia shortly after and died in October 1918.

John 'William' Bailey

John William Bailey was born in Wolverhampton in 1892, the son of John Henry and Mary Ann Bailey (nee Roberts). He had a younger brother, Sidney Harold and sisters, Annie Ada, Alice Octavia, Jessie Mary, Victoria Jane and Olive Mary.

In 1911, William was working as a vermin trap maker. In April of that year, William joined the 1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment. The battalion was station in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa before returning to Southampton on 19th September 1914.

William embarked to Zeebrugge in October to assist with the defence of Antwerp. The battalion assumed defensive positions at important bridges to aid the retreat of the Belgian army. They were amongst the first British troops entrenched in front of the Ypres and they suffered heavy losses in the First Battle of Ypres.

In 1914, the Birmingham Daily Gazette reported that William had died of wound sustained in action.

"Information had reached Wolverhampton yesterday of the death from wounds received in action of Pvt Wm Bailey of 1st S. Staffs. The deceased was 22 years of age and his parents lived at New Cross, Heath Town. His mother states that as far as she knows, he was wounded near Ypres 7 weeks ago, being shot through the lungs and in

the leg. He lay in hospital at Boulogne during that period and though an attempt was made, it was not possible to bring him back to England.”

William is buried in Boulogne Eastern Cemetery and is commemorated on the Heath Town Park memorial.

Joseph Caddick

Joseph Caddick was born in Burton-upon-Trent in 1888. He enlisted in the 8th Battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment and was killed in action in April 1917.

Reginald Craddock

Reginald was born in Wolverhampton in 1888 to boot manufacturer George Craddock. In 1911, he lived with his parents and three siblings, Albert, Matilda and Victor at 45 Park Road East, Wolverhampton.

Reginald attended the Grove House School in Stratford-on-Avon before becoming articled to Mr Beck, an architect, based in Wolverhampton. Reginald later went on to work for Staffordshire County Council and later Dunlops where he was an architect.

In 1916, Reginald enlisted as a private in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. Records reveal that he was 5ft 7ins with 'good physical development.' He was detailed with the Royal Engineers. In August 1916, Reginald underwent training in Newark which included demolition work.

From Newark, Reginald went on to serve in the 13th Reserve Brigade Rhyl. In December 1916, he departed for Boulogne via Folkestone and from there headed to Etaples before joining his battalion on 1st January 1917.

In August 1917, he was accepted into no 15 Officer Cadet Battalion Romford and was given a commission in the 5th Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment. Reginald was killed in action in France on 21st March 1918. His death was announced in the Express & Star on 1st April 1918.

Victor Craddock

Victor was born in 1894 in Wolverhampton to George and Lucy Craddock. His older brother Reginald, born in 1888, was also killed in 1918.

Victor was a 2nd Lieutenant in the 5th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment. He died on 11th October 1918 and is buried at Belicourt British cemetery.

William 'Gerald' Davies

Gerald was born in 1895 although his attestation paper gives the year of 1894. He was the third child and only son of George Edward and Frances Elizabeth Davies (nee Harley). His parents married in St Peter's Church, Wolverhampton in September 1892. He had two older sisters, Lilian and Gladys.

When Gerald was five-years-old, his father died. The 1901 census reveals that Gerald's mother, Frances, was working as a boot dealer. His family were members of the Queen Street Congregational Church.

Between 1911 and 1915, Gerald emigrated to Canada. He joined the Canadian arm in November 1915 and was described as 5ft 6 in tall. He gave the occupation of 'accountant' and religious affiliation as 'congregational'. Gerald served in the A company 25th Battalion Canadian Infantry (Nova Scotia Regiment).

Gerald died on 8th August 1918. On this day, the battalion was taking part in the Battle of Amiens. Gerald is buried at Crucifix Corner Cemetery Villers-Bretonneux.

Thomas 'Arthur' Dickinson

Arthur was born on 21st July 1893 in Wolverhampton to Thomas William and Sarah Elizabeth Dickinson. Arthur's father worked as a fruit merchant and farmer. His mother died in 1895 and his father remarried in 1898. Arthur was educated at Tettenhall College and by 1911, Arthur was an articled law court. It is believed that at some point, he worked for Messrs. May and Court, solicitors of Wolverhampton.

Arthur signed up in 1915. He was 5ft 10ins and described himself as working in quality assurance. He joined the 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment.

Notice of his death was announced in the Express & Star newspaper on 22nd September 1916. Sadly, his body was never recovered.

Lily Dicks

Ellen Gertrude Lily Dicks was born in Wolverhampton in 1873 to Alfred and Hannah Dicks. Alfred was a master draper. In 1901, Lily worked as a nurse in the household of Samuel Higgott, a landowner. By 1911, she had moved back home to Wolverhampton and was living with her parents. The same year, she was received into the Queen Street Congregational Church. The family were originally members of Lea Road Church, a satellite church, but started worshipping in Queen Street around 1914.

Lily began working as a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) nurse in January 1915. Her service concluded by September that same year, possibly because she intended to marry. In January 1916, she married Thomas Howard at the Wolverhampton Register Office. On the marriage certificate, he is described as a 62-year-old widow.

Unfortunately, Lily's marriage was short-lived. She died on 26th September 1916 in Toxteth Park Workhouse Infirmary which was acting as a general hospital. A brief announcement of her death appeared in the Express & Star newspaper and attributed her death to illness.

Albert 'Bert' Fieldhouse

Albert was born in 1888 in Wolverhampton to William and Annie Fieldhouse. He was the eldest of ten children. By the 1911 census, Bert had joined the 4th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment. In 1915, the Battalion became involved with the Battle of Krithia. They were part of a forward push on 6th May which saw 100 men killed or wounded. Unfortunately, Bert was one of them. He is buried in the Redoubt Cemetery.

George Hidens

George was born in Wolverhampton in 1892 to Joseph and Elizabeth Hidens. In 1901, they were living at 15 Gibbs Street along with George's two brothers and sister. By 1911, George was working as a canal boat builder, like his father.

George first enlisted with the Territorial Force in Wolverhampton in 1908, aged 17. He served four years with the 1/3rd North Midland Ambulance Regiment. In 1912, he re-enlisted for a further four years and by October 1914, signed to serve overseas. He attained the rank of 'Staff Sergeant'. He was 5ft 6ins and recorded as 'in fair physical development and vision'.

George died in April 1917 while stationed at Aix-Noulette. Records reveal that shells of 'large calibre' fell in a courtyard killing George and two others.

Albert Lewis Lee

Albert was born in 1892 in Wolverhampton to Enoch and Amy Lee. By 1911, Albert was working as an assistant engineer to a paint manufacturer. His father, Enoch, had been a member of the Queen Street Congregational Church since 1889.

Albert enlisted in the 1/6th Battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment and was initially posted to France. Albert was seriously wounded in 1915 and evacuated for medical treatment. He died of his wounds at a casualty clearing station in September 1915, aged 23.

Charles Stewart Northall

Charles was born in Dudley 1895 to Francis and Emma Northall. By 1911, Charles had moved to Wolverhampton where he lived with his grandmother, aunt, mother and siblings. He was employed as a clerk in an insurance office.

Charles enlisted in the 1st/6th Battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment and became a corporal. He served in France from 5th March from 1915. He was killed in action on 13th October 1915.

George Reynolds

George was born in Wolverhampton in December 1889 to John and Elizabeth Reynolds. George was employed as a police constable and by 1911, he was living in police accommodation in Tipton.

In July 1913, he enlisted in the Royal Navy where he remained for twelve years. He was 6ft tall, had brown hair and greyish-brown eyes. In January 1914, he was drafted to HMS Hampshire and by May 1916, he was promoted to Stoker 1st Class.

The Hampshire was destroyed by a German submarine in June 1916, killing the majority of crew members including George and Lord Kitchener, who was onboard at the time.

George's death was announced in the Express & Star, along with two others who lost their lives on the Hampshire.

Edgar Rutter

Edgar was born in Wolverhampton in 1895 to Joseph and Emily Rutter. His mother, Emily, had been a member of the Queen Street Congregational Church since 1903.

Edgar enlisted with the South Staffordshire Regiment, 2nd Battalion. He was killed in December 1917, aged 21.

Leslie Gardner Shaw

Leslie was born in Wolverhampton in 1890, the son of John Perks and Eliza Shaw (nee Gardner). He was educated at the Wolverhampton Grammar School before studying for two years at the University of Birmingham. He later joined the family firm, Messrs. J Shaw and Sons Ltd, hardware merchants, as a clerk. The Shaw family were prominent and active members of the Queen Street Congregational Church. His father, John Perks, was a long-serving deacon and secretary to the church.

In 1914, he enlisted in the A Company of the 1/5th South Staffordshire Regiment and became a Second Lieutenant. He died October 1915, aged 25. His death was announced in the Express & Star in September 1916.

Gilbert Henry Shelton

Gilbert was born in 1896 in Wolverhampton. He was the younger son of Jarvis and Helen Shelton. Gilbert was a pupil at Tettenhall College and attended the Sunday School at the Queen Street Congregational Church.

Gilbert enlisted in January 1915. He was described as 5ft 9ins with brown hair and grey eyes. Gilbert died in November 1916.

John 'Jack' Thorne

Jack was born in Wolverhampton 1888 to John and Susan Thorne. His father, John, was mayor of Wolverhampton 1902-1903, JP and chairman of the South Staffordshire Joint Smallpox Hospital. In 1908, he was elected in the Wolverhampton East by-election, a seat he maintained until October 1929.

Jack was educated at Tettenhall College before training as a solicitor. He joined the 1/5th (Territorial) Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment and disembarked for France in June 1915. Jack was killed in action and his body was never recovered.

Alexander 'Gordon' Veitch

Gordon was born in 1888 to Robert and Helen Veitch. He was received into the Queen Street Congregational Church in 1914. In May 1917, it was reported that he had been killed in action in France.

Ernest Charles White

Ernest was born in 1887 to Charles and Mary White. By the outbreak of the First World War, both his parents had passed away. By 1911, he was employed as an assistant pharmacist in the Isle of Wight.

Between 1911 and 1914, he moved to the West Midlands. In 1914, he was received into the Queen Street Congregational Church. He enlisted in Birmingham in November 1914 and is described as 5ft 9ins tall with dark grey eyes and dark brown hair. He was allocated the rank of 'Sergeant' due to his profession. He died in March 1918 due to poor health.

George Woods/Whoods

George was born in Coseley in 1889. His surname was registered at birth as 'Woods' although it appears elsewhere as 'Whoods'.

In 1916, George went to France with the British Expeditionary Forces where he served with the 25th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. He died in April 1917.

William Edward Wright

William was born in 1895 in Wolverhampton to William and Emily Wright. William attended classes run by the Queen Street Congregational Church. He enlisted in Wolverhampton and served in the South Staffordshire Regiment and later, with the 75th Company machine Gun Corps. He was killed in action in June 1917.

The Queen Street Gateway Townscape Heritage Scheme is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the City of Wolverhampton Council.

The scheme provides grant assistance towards the cost of external repairs and enhancements to buildings of historic interest in Queen Street, and a programme of community engagement.

These booklets draw from research conducted by Friends of Wolverhampton Archives and Queen Street volunteers at Wolverhampton Art Gallery.