

## **Cartmel Wesleyan Chapel now known as Cartmel Methodist Church**

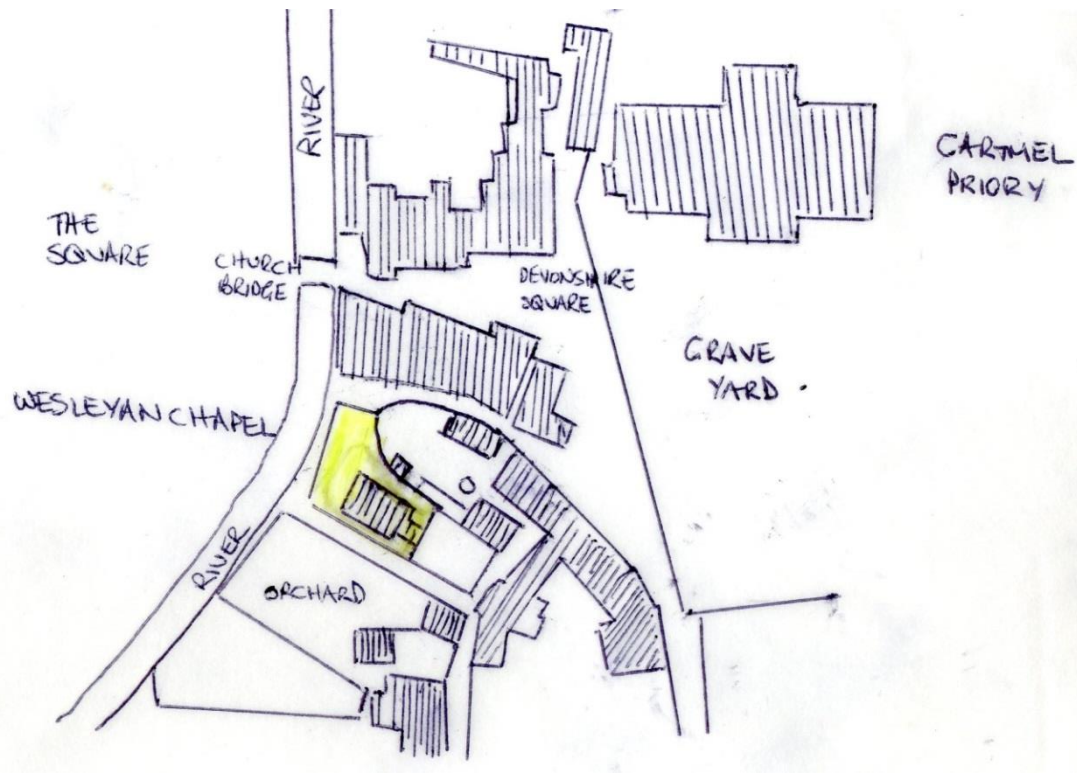
This article has arisen from research on the history of the Methodist Chapel at Cartmel that the Cartmel Peninsula Local History Society was asked to carry out.

### **Location**

The building is hidden away in a quiet spot by the River Eea close to where there used to be a ford. It can be accessed along the riverside from Church Bridge or by taking the narrow road past Unsworth's Yard. It is set in a pleasant garden area.



View of access from Church Bridge showing River Eea



Sketch map based on 1893 OS map

### **History**

There was an active group of Methodists in the Cartmel area for many years during the nineteenth century<sup>[1]</sup>. They met in homes and, occasionally, after it was built in 1859, the Quaker Meeting House, as the closest chapel, built in 1850, was at Backbarrow. They were part of the Ulverston Circuit, which recorded 9 members for this churchless society in 1869. In April 1871 John Gunson of Sparkbridge, a bobbin mill owner, purchased a piece of land for £60, formerly a tan yard, as a site for the new chapel.

The foundation stone was laid by Miss Ripley of Ulverston on 28th November 1871 and the church, built to seat 150 persons, in a simple Gothic style, was opened on October 1st 1872. It cost about £450. Thanks were extended to the Friends Meeting House for allowing services occasionally to be held there. The Meeting House was used again in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century when the church was repaired and renovated.

Despite the optimism about size, membership was never large; in 1972 the then membership of 23 was recorded as the largest in their history. However the church hosted many visitors especially those staying on holiday at Abbot Hall, Kents Bank which was a Methodist Holiday Centre from Easter 1916. The holiday centre had first been established at Moorhurst at Kents Bank in December 1910. A large Methodist Church was built at Grange-over-Sands on land given by Alexander Brogden and the foundation stone was laid by Mrs Alexander Brogden on Sept 11th 1874. This would also have affected the number of people using Cartmel Chapel.

Various modifications were made to the fabric over the years:

1955- Baptismal font donated by Mrs Ryder of Allithwaite.

1967- Electric heaters were installed.



1970- Kitchen and toilet extension built.

1972- Centenary Year. Electric lighting was donated by Ernest Woodburn in memory of his wife Mabel. This plaque was installed.

Partial subsidence in 2007 led to a new floor having to be laid after remedying the cause of the subsidence. Three large holes were found under the floor as the foundations had been laid on marshy land. Therefore a concrete raft was inserted. The roof was also replaced as the timbers had reached the end of their life but some of the original slates were reused and insulation was installed. Then it was totally refurbished; the premises were redecorated, new carpeting installed, and the pews were replaced with chairs. It is now a comfortable, warm church housing a warm friendly Christian Community.





A view of the interior in 2015

**A list of the First Trustees**

William Withers, Cartmel. Gentleman  
Thomas Clark, Cartmel. Gentleman  
Thomas Garnett, Cartmel. Gentleman  
John Richmond, Painter, Cartmel.  
James Gunson, Collector, Ayside.  
George Gunson, Farmer, Ayside.  
Arthur Edward Cox, Stationmaster, Grange.  
Thomas Gibson, Farmer, Arnside.  
William Ripley, Grocer. Ulverston.  
Charles Winston, Grocer. Ulverston.  
Thomas Barrow, Draper. Ulverston.  
John Gunson, Gentleman. Sparkbridge.  
John Long, Paper Manufacturer. Pennybridge

## Some prominent people connected with the Chapel

### John Gunson of Sparkbridge (1821 - 1887)



Photo courtesy of Margaret Gunson McDonagh

Born in 1821 in Seathwaite, the son of John and Elizabeth of Kirkhouse, by the 1851 census he was a bobbin turner at Seathwaite employing 12 journeymen, 5 apprentice and 1 labourer. He married Betsy Casson (born at High Cark, Field Broughton) in Manchester on 6 December 1853. The 1861 census records his workforce as 65 men and 18 boys and the family lived at Spring Gardens, Egton with Newlands. He was operating from Nibthwaite Bobbin Mill, Colton. In 1871 the family were living at Hope Field, Lowick. He employed 70 men and 30 boys and women. The 1881 census record him as a yeoman and slate merchant still living at Hope Field. He had six sons (John 1856, William 1859, Alfred 1860, Joseph 1870, Charles 1872 and Samuel 1874 ) and two daughters Elizabeth (1863) and Mary (1865).

He appears to have supported the building of several chapels as it is noted in a booklet about Lindal-in-Furness Chapel that he was a trustee. It also described him as ‘one time circuit steward’, ‘a benevolent man’ and that ‘he had an interest in many of the chapels built at the time’<sup>[2]</sup>.



Two ornate, inscribed silver trowels commemorate that John laid foundation stones at Wesleyan Chapel Marlin Dec 25 1866 and Wesleyan Chapel Arnside Nov 25 1875.

(We would like to find out where Marlin Chapel is located).

Photo courtesy of Margaret Gunson McDonagh

### **James Gunson** (1806-1888)

James Gunson of Low House Cottage Ayside was born in Colton in 1806, the second son of George and Mary Gunson. His brothers William and George were Methodist preachers and they emigrated to New Zealand. He married Elizabeth Withers at Cartmel in 1834. They had at least nine children; three sons George (1838), James (1847) and William (1851) six daughters Agnes (1836), Eleanor (1840), Mary (1842), Elizabeth (1844), Ann (1845) and Margaret Jane (1849). James was variously described as a grocer, tax collector, woodmonger and preacher. He was an assistant overseer of the poor and in 1873 he went into voluntary liquidation when trading as bobbin manufacturer James Gunson and Co at Nibthwaite Bobbin Mill<sup>[3]</sup>. I have yet to discover the family connection between John Gunson of Sparkbridge and James Gunson of Ayside.

James was an influential local Wesleyan preacher in the Ulverston Circuit during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He preached at Cartmel, Backbarrow, Sparkbridge and Lindal-in-Furness and was also Sunday School Superintendent at Backbarrow. He conducted Cottage Services around the district at places including Stony Dale, Field Broughton and Shaftesbury House, Cartmel because of the small number of Methodists and the long distances between Chapels, the local one being Backbarrow

Chapel which was only built in 1850. James was one of the first Trustees of the Cartmel Chapel as was his son George.

In January 1860 one of James's daughters, Mary, went to the Methodist Normal College, Westminster, London, the first woman to train there, and two years later joined The Wesleyan Mission at Canton in China as a qualified teacher. She contracted tuberculosis and returned home where she died on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1864, aged 22 years. His youngest son William emigrated to Auckland, New Zealand in 1873 and set up a grain merchant business there. He was very involved in Pitt Street Methodist Church in Auckland and taught there for over 20 years. His son James Henry Gunson was born in 1877 and he became an important person in the development of Auckland during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was knighted in 1924<sup>[4]</sup>.

### **Frances Mary Cowherd** (1854-1912)



Frances, born in Cartmel, was the daughter of James, an apothecary and doctor, who had moved from Kendal to Stony Dale, at Field Broughton, in

1852. Stony Dale was one of the places that Cottage Services were held. With her sister Rachel they purchased the Crown Inn in the centre of Cartmel and closed it down. The building was then renamed Shaftesbury House and Frances ran Shaftesbury House Gospel Services there. She also helped run the Cartmel Young Women's Christian Association.



Mary Woodburn (1818-1902) and Margaret Rachel Crosby (1852-1927)



Mary and her niece Margaret Crosby lived together on Devonshire Square where they had a draper's shop. She was very involved with Church matters.

Margaret was for many years Trust treasurer. She also helped run the Cartmel Young Women's Christian Association.

All photographs of the chapel and plaques were taken by Pat Rowland in 2015

See also Cartmel Tan yard article about the history of the site before John Gunson purchased it.

#### References

1. <http://www.slakescircuit.org.uk/Cartmel.html> accessed 01 Feb 2015
2. [http://www.lindal-in-furness.co.uk/History/methodist 100.PDF](http://www.lindal-in-furness.co.uk/History/methodist%20100.PDF) accessed 17 Jan 2017
3. Liverpool Mercury 5 Feb 1873
4. John Stacpoole. 'Gunson, James Henry', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/3g25/gunson-james-henry> (accessed 31 Jan 2017)