

Extract from an account of Methodist history in the Melksham area, written

July 1857

There are a few other places in the neighbourhood of Melksham, where Methodism has obtained a footing; and in which, either suitable Chapels have been erected, or convenient preaching rooms have been obtained.

Whitley, the first we shall mention, was placed on the Bradford plan, as early as 1809. There was preaching at Gastard, between Whitley and Corsham before that time; for a preacher going to his appointment, passed through Whitley on a Sunday morning, and seeing many people collected together on the common who were spending their time in idleness and sin, his heart was stirred with compassion towards them.

He inquired if there were any religious people in the village, and being directed to Thomas Joyce's, he found that Joyce and his wife, who were members of the Independent Church had gone to their own Chapel at Melksham. On his return from Gastard, he called upon them, and they agreed to open their house for preaching on the following Tuesday evening.

In 1819, Whitley appeared on the Melksham plan; but the little cause must have languished after that, until the year 1823.

In 1828 a Chapel was erected in the village, for the use of the Wesleyans. This was private property, and has been rented by the Methodists until lately, as a place of religious worship. It is now, however, Wesleyan property, having been recently purchased by the society with a Connexional loan; it is regularly settled on the trustees according to the provisions of the 'Model Deed'.

The Society at Whitley consists of two classes, containing twenty-six members. A small school of thirty children, under the care of five teachers, is conducted on the Chapel premises.