*the*LINK

The quarterly magazine of Stockton Heath Methodist Church

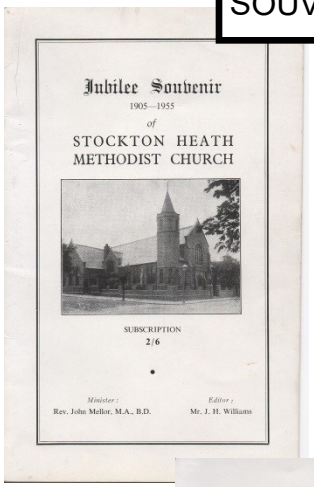
NOVEMBER 2025—JANUARY 2026

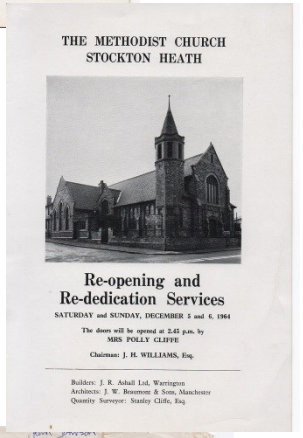


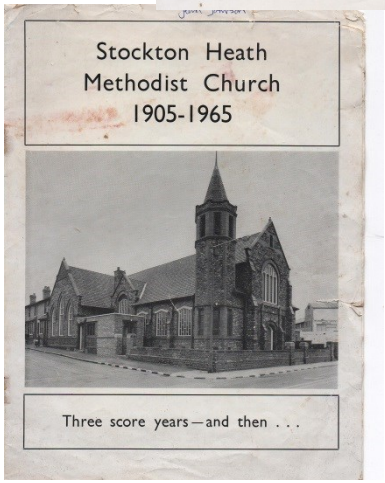
CELEBRATING 120 YEARS OF THE BUILDING FOR STOCKTON HEATH METHODIST CHURCH

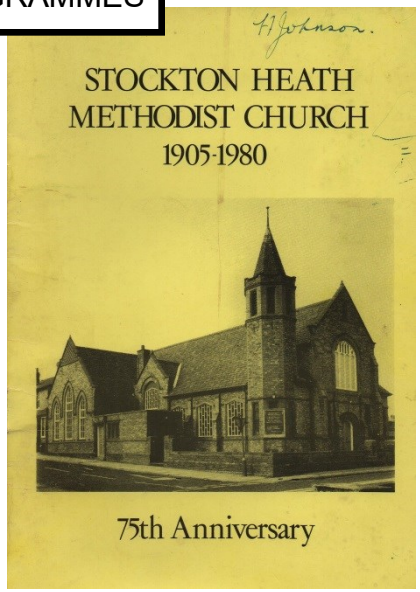
Stockton Heath Methodist Church
Charity Commission Number 1134148
Minister: the Rev Jeremy Tresise
Keep in touch on: www.shmc.org.uk;
www.facebook.com/stocktonheathmethodistchurch

SOUVENIR PROGRAMMES



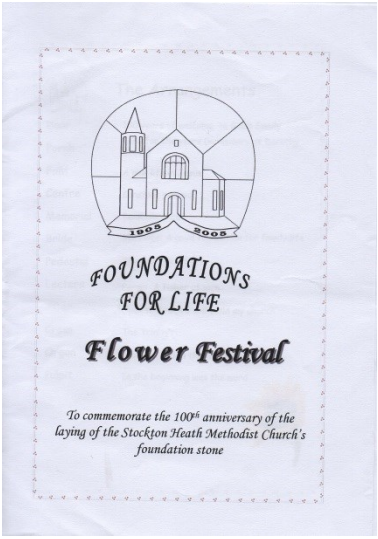






Left from top:
1955, 1964, 1965

Right from top:
1980, 2005



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome everyone to this special anniversary edition of *the*LINK. We are celebrating 120 years since our church building was opened. There is a full list of event dates on page 6. Many thanks to Geoff who has spent so much time organising everything, as well as Kit who has helped with the history of our church.

Part of the celebrations will be the re-opening of our church following redecoration as well as some slight changes, though most of these are technical so will not be seen by most of us! However, several people have spent a lot of time working on the various updates, as well as the painting, so massive thanks to all of them for all the hard work they have put in.

Thank you, too, to the Harvest team who decorated the church, only to see it all moved over to the hall at the very last minute which must have been disappointing for them.

I hope you all enjoy these celebrations as well as the Advent and Christmas ones to come.. The calendar for Advent and Christmas is on page 5 but, as always, please check notices etc nearer the time in case any changes have been made.

The eagle-eyed among you will notice that this edition of *the*LINK is in full colour. I thought the anniversary deserved it!

All for now.

Julia

Data Protection: personal records are kept on computer by Rev Jeremy Tresise as minister, and Chris Park as records co-ordinator. If you wish to know what is under your name, please speak to either of them.

CONTENTS

Pages 4-5
Jeremy's message; Advent and Christmas events

Pages 6-11
Geoff's introduction; History of our church

Pages 11-12
Comments from Ministers relating to past celebrations

Page 13
Ministers, past and present;
Sites of manses over the years

Pages 14-15
Photos of the church across the years

NEXT DEADLINE
Sunday,11 January 2026, to cover February, March and April 2026

ACE
Member Editor 2025
Association for Church Editors

MESSAGE FROM THE REV JEREMY TRESISE

"SMILE, OPEN YOUR EYES, LOVE AND GO ON."

There is no one particular reason why this time of year especially should prompt our thoughts into remembering the past, but there is a number of events in our church life and in our wider context at this time of year that invite and enable us to do just that. So we find ourselves reflecting upon times past and the people who shaped us to being the people we are today and the lives we lead.

At the beginning of November we celebrate the feast days of All Saints and All Souls; we are invited to "remember, remember the 5th of November, gunpowder, treason and plot;" we commemorate all those who have fallen in wars on Remembrance Sunday; and on 23 November, we will be holding our annual service of remembrance for those whose lives enriched ours. And to cap it all, on 2 November this year we are also celebrating and giving thanks for 120 years of Stockton Heath Methodist Church standing on its present site!

All these events give us that opportunity to pause and reflect upon the lives of all those who have played a part in enriching *our* lives, in some cases many years after they lived and died. We celebrate the bravery, the love, the foresight and the vision of those who have gone before us to make our lives what they are today.

120 years ago on 2 November, when a ribbon was cut and a building was complete, another chapter was begun in a far greater story. It is good that we can look back on the past (and learn from it) but we should never be stuck there. We remember and honour the past so that we can move on and continue to grow.

In his 1981 poem, (S)He Is Gone, often read at funerals, David Harkins writes: "You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back, or you can do what she/he would want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on".

On Remembrance Sunday, the Kohima Epitaph is recited, ending with the line, "…for your tomorrow we gave our today".

Both of these readings invite and encourage us to live our lives to their fullest, to live in the present and give us hope for life in the future. We do so with God present with us.

In the coming seasons of Advent and then Christmas (2 separate seasons remember, with one following the other!), we prepare for God's coming as we celebrate that He became one of us. Human life became/becomes hallowed by God's presence, as God shows a faith in us that far outweighs our faith in God.

We were made to play our part in God's mission, to see where God is already active and join in. By all means let us celebrate the past, but let us also draw confidence from it to love and go on.

"We'll praise him for all that is past,
And trust him for all that's to come."
StF 67

God bless,

Jeremy



Redecoration in progress. Harvest Festival moved to hall. Thanks to Denise for this photo.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS EVENTS

29 November: Christmas Fair

30 November: First Sunday in Advent; service led by Jeremy

19 December: Village Carol Service, noon in St Thomas's

21 December: Carol Service, am and pm

23 December: Carols around the tree from 7.30 pm

24 December: 5 pm, Christmas Eve service

25 December: 10.30 am, Family service

(At the time of preparing this magazine, consideration was being given to holding a Carol service from 5 pm in Victoria Square. Check with notices nearer the time to find out if this event is taking place.)

4 January: 10.30 am, Covenant service

6 January: Epiphany starts

DATES OF CELEBRATION 120 EVENTS

The celebration is a week of special events as follows.

History Evening – Tuesday, 28 October, 7 pm
Sights, sounds and reflections from 1905 up to today plus short reflections from some senior Church members with a talk by Kit Heald

Friday Night is Music Night – 31 October, 7 pm
Light Entertainment evening with music, some Ceilidh dances and food

Saturday Morning, 1 November 10.30 am until 1p m
History exhibition with memorabilia, old photographs and displays from the groups that meet in the Church or hall. Light refreshments available in the hall café area.

120th Anniversary Service on Sunday, 2 November at 10.30 am
Service, including a Celebration cake, led by Rev James Tebbutt, Chair of NW District

Family Evening Worship, Sunday, 2 November at 6 pm
Service in the Hall led by Rev Jeremy Tresise and Hazel Bradley - theme of "Light and Dark"

OVERVIEW BY SENIOR STEWARD

For this quarterly magazine of Stockton Heath Methodist Church called *the*LINK, it has been decided to make it a special celebration edition. It acts as a celebration of 120 years since the opening of our Church building.

The content of this document has been compiled from several sources including records and information kept in the Archives and from previous Anniversary Celebration brochures when the Church was 50, 60, 75 and 100 years old. We are particularly indebted to the tireless work done by Kit Heald, who has been Circuit Archivist until recently and has been a loyal member of the Methodist Church in South Warrington for many years.

If you are reading this before the celebration week, we hope you can join us for at least one of the 5 events. If you are reading this after 2 November 2025, then hopefully the information in this document will give you an insight into what we have done.

I want to thank all those involved in the refurbishing work in the Church whether it's in planning, decorating, wiring, cleaning or making the tea! The work ended up being partly done by contractors and partly done through the goodwill and hard work of Church members. We hope the newly decorated building will serve the community for many more years.

We are grateful to Rev Jeremy Tresise and family for their positive support. We are also pleased that Rev James Tebbutt, Chair of the North West District is leading our special Anniversary service on Sunday, 2 November, exactly 120 years to the day when our Church building was officially opened.

Geoff Clarke, Senior Steward

HISTORY

The Early Years

Our long history begins when early Methodist worship in Stockton Heath took place in the old 'Barn Chapel' which was situated between London Road and Walton Road but the building became dilapidated. Funding for a new chapel was sought.

A chapel known as 'The Ebenezer Chapel' was erected on this very site in 1886. This early Chapel, which was built by a local builder called Rogers, was purchased by the Warrington Wesleyan Methodist circuit in1888.

The growth of membership of this Chapel which had only one room, soon led to a decision to take it down and erect a new Church on the same site.

1905 – Planning/Building/ Opening Event

Membership of our Church in 1905 totalled under 60 plus children.

The last service in the old chapel was held in May 1905.

Laying of the Foundation Stones was on a very hot day, 22 June, 1905 (see photo).



Then less than 6 months later the new church opened for worship.

On 2 November 1905 our Church building was opened and this was reported in the Warrington Guardian.

The building was opened at 3.0 pm on 2nd November 1905 by Miss Bessie Dutton of Moore.

Miss Dutton said…. "this new church is eloquent testimony to the love, enthusiasm and energy in the hearts of those connected with the church."

War Years and memorials

The memorial (*see back page)* records the names of many who went to war and didn't return. Many of these would have been in the Sunday School just 10 years earlier when the new Church building was opened.

There is a second war memorial for G Arthur Whitfield who was organist of the Church and he gave his life during the war *(see back page)*.

Interwar Years

The first resident minister arrived in 1922; he was Rev Joseph Kewley who served as a supernumerary in the circuit from 1922 to 1928.

In the interwar years the Church was growing and new activities commenced.

In 1921 Women's Bright Hour started and its first president was Mrs Beatrice Ardern (Lee Ardern's mother and Chris's grandmother).

In 1923 a new organ was purchased and installed by Pendlebury & Co. Although it has been extensively refurbished twice, it is the same one in use 102 years later! Also in 1923 electric lighting was installed in the Church. Until that time it would have been gas lighting or candles.

In 1923, land and 11 cottages were purchased opposite the church in a project led by F E Penketh and Fred Pendlebury.

When Fred Pendlebury died in 1930, he left a legacy, the interest of which has since funded several projects in the life of the Church.

In May 1926 Henry Brereton (Harry's Great Grandad) died after 40 years of service to the Church. In his honour his family gifted 2 wooden chairs to the Church (above).



Many social and sporting groups started including walking, cycling, football and tennis.



Post Second World War, 1950s to 1990s

Membership quickly rose to 400 by the 1960s with a wider Church family of over 700.

In May 1950 Stockton Heath Dramatic Society was founded and

it successfully continues to this day with typically 3 productions a year. There was a children's drama group through the Sunday School from 1950s and this developed into Theatre Workshop which continues today.

The 1950s and 1960s saw a buoyant Sunday School and youth section.

A new Church Hall and car park were constructed in 1957 at a cost of £22,000.

A decision was made to refurbish and modernise the Church interior and the builder chosen was J R Ashall of Warrington who was a member of our congregation.

On 5 December 1964 the oldest member of the Church, Mrs Polly Cliffe, led a procession of invited guests to view and re-open the refurbished Church building (see photo, inside back cover).

In a book written by G A Carter in 1971 he wrote "All those who associate with this church have every reason to be proud of the church buildings and the religious and social activities connected with these buildings."

More recent changes and upgrades 2000 to 2025

The Church interior was decorated in a 2-tone pink colour by Church members as part of a Millenium project opened in 2000 with a new red carpet fitted.

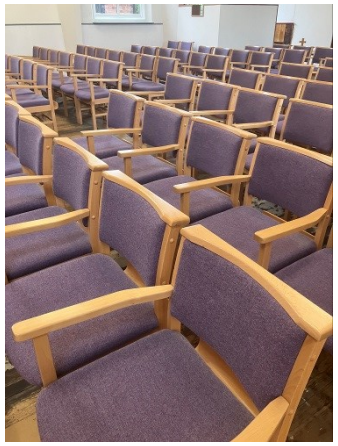
The Church had new toilets and kitchen fitted.

The Covid 19 pandemic spread to the UK in March 2020, and this led to people being told to stay at home. Only a couple of Sundays were missed as a small group of members started broadcasting on Zoom from inside the church to most of us at home.

Even when we returned to Church we had to maintain social distancing of at least 2 metres and were not allowed to sing in worship for several weeks (strange times).

The pandemic accelerated the use of technology in business and social life and the Church has continued to broadcast its 10.30am service on Zoom ever since.

The pews were taken out gradually over 3 stages and replaced by chairs to create a more flexible space.



(All photos by Geoff)

Almost-new chairs were acquired from Bold Street Church when it ceased to meet. Several members from Bold Street transferred to Stockton Heath.

A refurbishment of the interior was agreed which included fitting new windows, a new entrance area, an interior repaint and the installation of modern IT equipment.

The Church building was closed for 3 weeks while decoration was done in October 2025.

Services were held in the hall including Harvest during which Max Whitfield was baptised, a fourth generation of this family associated with the Church.



We have worked closely with the village Methodist Chapel at Antrobus for many years and, in 2023, the Church Councils were merged to form one entity with enhanced collaboration in terms of joint services and helping each other.

In 2026 the Antrobus building is 90 years old, a good excuse for another celebration!



As SHMC looks to the future, and we are part of the Sankey Valley Circuit, we have a Circuit Purpose and Action Plan for 2025 – 2030 to help guide our worship, evangelism, learning, caring and service.

(Photos by Geoff C. Left: SHMC hall; above: Antrobus)

Previous Anniversaries and other Celebrations at 50/60/75/100 years

The Church has held significant celebrations for key anniversary dates. Souvenir booklets or brochures have been produced. You can see photos of the front covers of them *(see inside front cover)*.

50th – 30 October 1955 - Golden Jubilee. Minister was Rev John Mellor

6 December 1964 - Re-opening and Re-dedication Service. Rev Donald F Vickers

60th – 24 October 1965 - Diamond Jubilee. Rev Donald F Vickers

75th – 2 November 1980 –
Rev Norwyn Denny preached.
Rev Denis Marston was here

100th – 19 June 2005 – Flower Festival commemorating the laying of foundation stones. Led by Rev Gerald Tedcastle. Rev Peter Gomm was our Minister

100th – 30 October 2005 – Rev Jim Booth preached on the theme *Church of the Future*.

100th – 30 October 2005 – Evening Service led by Rev Peter Gomm with fireworks.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS FROM THE PAST BUT STILL POIGNANT FOR TODAY AND THE FUTURE

The following are extracts from messages of goodwill to this Church from former Ministers.

Written in 1955 on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee

The making of a Church is a wonderful and mysterious process. It begins in a small way; it grows to become a great community. We have reason to be proud of our past history which has shown growth and progress. Many have passed through our Church from infancy to adulthood; many have taken ideals and convictions and now live them out in different parts of the world. We celebrate our Jubilee with double gladness, we are 50 not out and still batting as strongly as ever and our building scheme will provide very necessary premises for the future. All good things to our Church and to you, Good Reader.

Rev John Mellor, Minister 1952-1957

Written in 1965 on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee

Faith and faithfulness, witness and service are cornerstones of a Christian community. As we commemorate the opening of a building we do not forget the faithful service which has made this possible. As we are conscious of those who have gone before, we shall be conscious of those yet to come, following in our footsteps as we have followed for 60 years. In grateful remembrance of the faith of the past and in sincere acknowledgement of the labours of the present, we prepare to enter another phase in the history of Stockton Heath Methodist Church.

Rev Donald F Vickers, Minister 1962-1975

Written in 1980 for the 75 years Anniversary Brochure

Warrington is a rapidly developing area and we need to meet that development with the elements and proclamation on which wholesome life depends. The new style of life should challenge our contemporary society with the issues that really matter and with the understanding of wholeness and salvation. May God bless you in the years ahead

as you have been blessed in the years that are past.

Rev Norwyn Denny, Chair of Liverpool District. Led Anniversary Service on 2 November,1980

An anniversary in the life of the Church is a time to say thank you to God. When we come to others with openness, friendship, forgiveness and joy, the meaning of life is heightened. This will be as true for the next 75 years as it has been for the past 1950 years *(since Jesus)*.

Rev David Blatherwick, Minister 1975-1980

We share with you in your thanksgiving for what God has done in the past and in eager anticipation of what He is going to do in the future. May God bless you all.

Rev Denis and Muriel Marston, Minister 1980-1987

After years of "Divine worship" with the living Christ frequently present, Stockton Heath Methodist Church is alive, and quality there is obvious. Congratulations on all your achievements. I wish you every success in making yet more saints and bringing folk into the Kingdom.

Rev J Norris Foster, Minister 1957-1962

Congratulations on the Anniversary of this much loved Church. Accept too our grateful thanks for the Ministry together, enriching for all subsequent years. Goodwill, encouragement and challenge were part of our journey together. Some friends of those days have departed, but as precious memories still remain, we believe with John Wesley "The best of all is – God is with us".

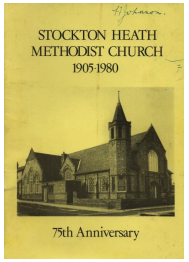
Rev George Sherratt, Minister 1947-1952

The 3 brief years with you left a deep impression on my memory. There was never a dull moment but always a dedicated enthusiasm for all that concerned the family of Methodists at Stockton Heath. A host of happy occasions including Bright Hour New Year's Party, "Iolanthe", Flower Sunday with excellent breakfast. May every blessing be yours during the coming years.

Rev W Ralph Rutter, Minister 1935-1938

In 1967, we began to hold Family Worship services. I was sure we were on the right lines, for the church is the family of God. We are called to be a caring community. God be with you in the coming years, so that it may be said of you as the years go by, as it was said of Moses at 120 – his strength had not abated, for God was with him.

Rev Donald F Vickers, Minister 1962-1975



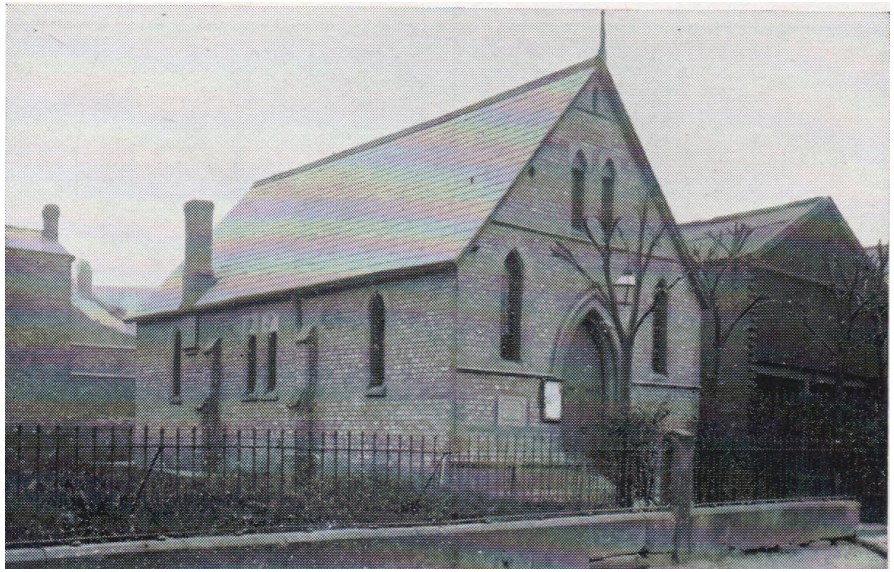
SUMMARY OF MINISTERS WITH CARE OF SHMC OR SUPERNUMERARIES LIVING IN STOCKTON HEATH

1905-1908	Rev Sidney Pitt
1908-1911	E Blanshard Keeling
1911-1914	William Arthur Beckett
1914-1915	W T Derry
1915-1918	Percy Ineson
1917-1919	Mr E F Pawson (assistant)
1919-1921	Thomas Dargue
1921-1922	William Cooke
1922-1928	Joseph Kewley
1928-1930	Noel J Chew
1930-1935	Cyril J Thomas
1933-1950	J Wesley Waddell, Supernumerary
1935-1938	W Ralph Rutter
1938-1941	Maurice H Giddings
1941-1942	J Gregory Rolley
1942-1947	James H Cox
1945-1962	John H Sanders, Supernumerary
1947-1952	George Sherratt
1952-1957	John Mellor
1957-1962	J Norris Foster
1962-1975	Donald Vickers
1975-1980	David Blatherwick
1980-1987	Denis Marston
1987-1995	David Woosley
1995-2000	R Gerald Tedcastle
2000-2005	Peter Gomm
2005-2006	Lorraine Mellor
2006-2016	Mark Coles
2013-	Roger Bradley, Supernumerary
2016-2021	David Easton
2022-2023	Linda Bishop
2023-	Jeremy Tresise

The 1965 anniversary brochure also mentions Rev R C Hutchinson, 1911-12. A comprehensive list, from which the above has been extracted, has been compiled by Kit.

MANSES: These included properties as follows

Bewsey Manse; 2 Palmyra Square; Stafford Road; 5 Carlton Street; Chester Road; Greenbank Road; 80 Whitefield Road; Millhouse Lane; 78 Grappenhall Road; 24 Westbourne Road; 35 Hillcliffe Road; 23 Teddington Close; 16 Brook Road (Lymm); 18 Calderfield Close



Ebenezer Chapel, the original small chapel on our current site. Demolished in 1905 to make way for the present building. Below is the interior of the ‘new’ church with the Sunday School behind the screen.





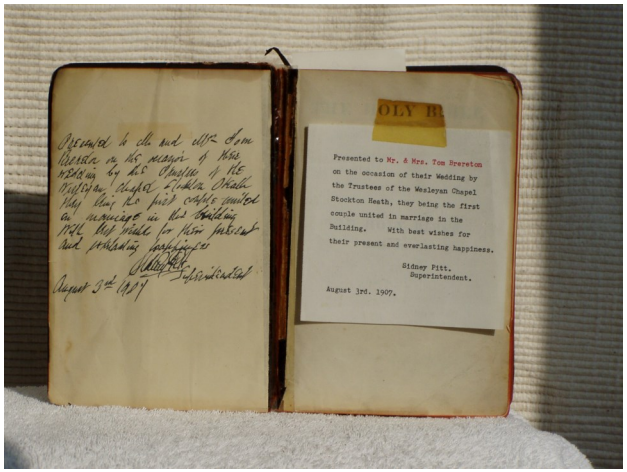
Rev Stanley Brown (circuit supt), Polly Cliffe, J H Williams, Jack Ashall, Rev Don Vickers: reopening the church in 1964.
Below: the revamped interior which most of us remember.



Presented to Mr and Mrs Tom Brereton on the occasion of their Wedding by the Trustees of the Wesleyan Chapel, Stockton Heath, they being the first couple united in marriage in the building.

Sidney Pitt
Superintendent

August 3, 1907



Above is a Bible presented to Mr and Mrs Tom Brereton. The text has been reproduced to the left of the photo.

Below are the 2 war memorials from World War 1 (*see pages 7-8*).

