

Twentieth Century Fund - Extracts from the Minute Book 1898 - 1909

The first meeting of the Twentieth Century Fund officers was held at Hull on 1st August, 1898. It was agreed that registers should be sent to all Circuits for Circuit use, together with sheets for local, Sunday School, class and family use. Collection books for weekly and monthly contributions and boxes for family use would also be sent.

At a General Committee of the Twentieth Century Fund held at Wesley's Chapel on 25th and 26th October, 1898 attended by 160 ministers and laymen, it was agreed that a Historic Roll should be opened on 1st January, 1899 and closed on 1st January, 1901 and that a list of donors in every Church or circuit should be read out at services held that day. The Historic Roll would be preserved with the historical documents of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. It was also agreed that the Twentieth Century Fund would be used for the following purposes:

£300,000 to assist in the purchase of sites and the erection of Wesleyan Methodist Chapels, Sunday Schools or Mission Halls in the UK and for Soldiers' and Sailors' Homes.

£200,000 for educational work in educational institutions associated with the Wesleyan Methodist Church and for furthering the mental improvement and training of local preachers.

£100,000 for Foreign Missionary work.

£100,000 for Home Missionary work including Temperance work.

£250,000 for the purchase of a suitable site in London and for building a monumental Connexional Building.

£50,000 for developing the work of the Children's Home to save all children of Methodist and Nonconformist parentage from Workhouse Schools and also provide for orphan children of Methodist Soldiers and Sailors.

Grants would also be made to the Irish Wesleyan Methodist Conference and to Foreign Districts and these would be not less than the amounts raised locally in those districts.

The Historic Roll would include the names of all donors and collectors whether members of the Methodist Church, teachers, or scholars in Sunday and Day Schools, communicants, seat holders or other worshippers, adherents and friends of Methodism at home and abroad.

To qualify for a place on the Historic Roll:

[1] All persons who gave or collected one guinea or more.

[2] All persons on whose behalf or in memory of whom one guinea or more had been contributed.

[3] All persons who after bona fide efforts during the period up to 1st January, 1901 cannot in the judgement of the Circuit Committee be reasonably expected to comply with the above conditions.

[4] In no case would the amounts given or collected be recorded in the Historic Roll.

When the Executive Committee met on 10th March, 1899, it was reported that 1,500,000 leaflets had been sent out as had 450,000 other leaflets and letters to young people about collecting cards for small amounts of money. Receipts to the Twentieth Century Fund had already reached £17945/0/10. By the meeting of the Executive Committee on 5th January, 1900, receipts had risen to £164,620/10/11. By the 19th June they had reached £283,104/17/- and the average donation per contributor was £2/7/5.

At an Officers' Meeting on 9th July, 1900 about a site in London, Mr. R.W. Perks, M.P., described the site of the Royal Aquarium in Westminster. It was unanimously agreed that Perks do all that was necessary to secure the site [area 40,000 sq. feet] at a sum of £4 per sq. foot or thereabouts.

By the Meeting of the Executive Committee on 5th December, 1900, the Twentieth Century Fund stood at £423,696/6/7. It was agreed to open immediately a list of 1000 donations of 100 guineas to supplement this amount. The qualifying regulations for inclusion in the Historic Roll were extended to the end of 1901.

At a joint meeting of the Trustees for the New Premises and the Executive Committee held on 23rd April, 1901, it was agreed to acquire the site of the Royal Aquarium for £333,000 or thereabouts and arrange for a deposit of 10% to be paid pending possession of the site being obtained.

By 18th June, 1901 the Twentieth Century Fund stood at £626,363/19/4 and this had risen to £834,567/19/3 by 27th January, 1902. With outstanding promises and interest on the deposited funds, the Treasurers estimated that the final total would reach £965,019.

By the Executive Committee meeting on 7th October, 1902, the Fund stood at £910,629/9/8. 513 Circuits had fulfilled their recorded promises and aims but 317 Circuits had yet to reach their targets.

At the meeting of the Executive Committee on 16th June, 1903, it was agreed to wind up the Twentieth Century Fund at the 1904 Conference in Sheffield. The Executive Committee met on 24th June, 1904 prior to the Conference to finalise its report with the Fund standing at £1,007,229/7/7 including interest.

On 23rd June, 1908, the Executive Committee agreed to bind the Historic Roll, although 13 Circuits still had not returned their portions of the Roll. A special bookcase was to be made and placed in the New hall where the Historic Roll would be stored and exhibited.

At its final meeting held on 9th September, 1909, the Executive Committee agreed that the balance of £1143/2/8 should go the Board of Management for Secondary Schools.