

Who's Who in Methodism?

In October 1932, the Uniting Conference of Methodism was held in The Royal Albert Hall and Westminster Central Hall. The Conference brought together three churches – the Wesleyan Methodists, the Primitive Methodists and the United Methodists to form one great Methodist Church.

Following the Uniting Conference, the independent newspaper "The Methodist Times and Leader" published a "Who's Who" of all the Ministers of the new Church and potted biographies of several thousand of the most prominent laymen and women of the new Church.

"Who's Who in Methodism" which was published in 1933 contains the names and short biographies of more than 10,000 people and is an important aid for Church, Family and Local Historians who are interested in the history and people of Methodism in the first half of the Twentieth Century.

One year later, in 1934, Shaw Publishing published "The Methodist Local Preachers' Who's Who." At the time of publication there were 34,694 Methodist Local Preachers in the UK and another 2,243 who were "On Trial," i.e. who were training to become fully accredited Local Preachers. These numbers include 1,474 women Local Preachers. Most local preachers supplied short biographies for this publication which makes it an equally valuable source for researchers interested in Methodist history.

Copies of both books are now difficult to find but occasionally copies can be tracked down in specialist second hand bookshops or as reference copies in Local Studies Libraries, County Record Offices and in the principal Methodist depositories, i.e. the John Rylands University Library in Manchester, the Wesley and Methodist Studies Centre at Oxford Brookes University, the Museum of Primitive Methodism at Englesea Brook near Crewe and at Westminster Methodist Central Hall Archives.

A typical entry in "Who's Who in Methodism [1933] is:

MATTINSON, William Barrow, born 1877 at Kirkby Lonsdale, Westmoreland.

Educated at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School and Woodhouse Grove. Training College - Headingley.

Entered Ministry in 1905 [Wesleyan].

Married Hilda Guthrie of Trinidad – 5 sons and 1 daughter.

Served in following Circuits – Trinidad and Barbados, Sheffield Mission, Saltaire, Bradford, Hull [Brunswick], Bolton [Victoria], Blackburn [Trinity], Plumstead [Central Hall], Clapton.

Special Interests – work among Scouts

Address: 61 Lyndhurst Drive, Leyton E 10. Tel: Leytonstone 1426.

A typical entry in "The Methodist Local Preachers' Who's Who" [1934] is:

SWINNERTON, Harold Brittain, born Hanley, 1904.

Education – Elementary School.

Married Lillian Irene Mary Peake.

Occupation – Grocer.

Year Appointed – 1933.

Circuit – Newcastle under Lyme [Brunswick].

Church Offices – Church Leader

Interests – Reading and Wireless

Address – 8 Westwood Road, Wolstanton, Newcastle under Lyme, Staffs.

GIBBS, Clara Ellen, born Over Norton, 1885.

Education – County School.

Married John Turvery Gibbs [deceased].

Year Appointed – 1928.

Circuit – Chipping Norton.

Church Offices - Second Steward, Class Leader, Organist, Sick Visitor for Women's Meeting & Preaching, Ex-Secretary Women's Bright Hour, Sunday School Teacher.

Public Offices – Ex- President Local Political party.

Recreation – Singing.

Address – 16 Albion Street, Chipping Norton, Oxon.

The Archivist at Westminster Methodist Central Hall is willing to search both books for people seeking information about Methodist ancestors. He can be contacted by e-mail rratcliffe@c-h-w.co.uk or by telephone on 020 7654 3825.