

Mount Zion New Connexion Chapel – 1815 a very important year

Extract taken from *Green Edge to Cold Edge. Warley Township: Halifax*

For the congregation of Mount Zion, 1815 was a very important year.

Firstly there was the nationally significant and widely celebrated ending to the Anglo-French war in Europe. In the region of Waterloo in Belgium, in one of the bloodiest battles ever fought, the Duke of Wellington had been victorious; the defeated self-appointed emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte, then being committed to a life-long exile on the island of St. Helena.¹ In Halifax parish, as in everywhere else in the country, there would have been a terrific up-swell of relief, pride and happiness.

Secondly, in the region of Cold Edge and Ogden Moor a locally significant event provided another but very different reason for joyous celebration. This was the rebuilding of the Mount Zion Methodist New Connexion Chapel - replacing a visual legacy of a deep-rooted dispute.

Forty two years earlier in 1773, the first Mount Zion Chapel had been erected to serve the needs of an established Wesleyan Methodist congregation. In the midst of an age when Wesley and his colleagues were accused of encouraging fanatical religious disturbances and creating social unrest the building of the chapel was not only a symbol of local zeal and fervour, it was also a statement of purpose regarding the growing strength, permanence and legitimacy of the Wesleyan cause.

Likewise the second chapel, of 1815, was a symbol of local zeal and fervour. Likewise the second chapel also made a statement of purpose. But this time the statement was not regarding the Wesleyan Methodist cause. Methodist it most certainly was and Wesleyan doctrines and orders still remained intact. Rather, this statement of purpose concerned New Connexion Methodism and its more 'grass-roots' approach to democracy, ownership and administration. Fundamentally divergent views regarding these issues had led to intense rancour and acrimony and had resulted in a Methodist split in 1797. Weslyans left Mount Zion to find a new meeting house. New Connexionists stayed put. Symbolically the 1815 chapel was testimony to the action the New Connexionists had taken and a vindication of their democratic beliefs and desire for reform. During the intervening years since the split, numbers in the congregation had swelled. And so too, numbers attending Sunday school, in response to which, a purpose built school was constructed and proudly opened to scholars in 1816.

¹ 'They (the British) had by 1815 gained the most complete victory in the entire history of the world, having emerged from the twenty years of war with France as the only industrial economy, the only navel power ----- and virtually the only colonial power in the world' (E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution 1789 -1848*, London 1962).

(This extract is taken from *Green Edge to Cold Edge Warley Township Halifax: A family-focused view of aspects of local history*. A full text version is available as a .pdf on this sight - page *Warley Township*. A full colour text book version is available for purchase at Lulu.com.)