



Wesleyan Methodist Chapel & Sunday School - Lowtherville

In the mid-to-late 1800s, when the area now known as Upper Ventnor began to grow, as a tribute to the principal landowner Capt. Francis Lowther, it was called Lowtherville. There were very few houses in those early days and certainly no churches.

The first place of worship to be built was the Wesleyan Chapel in Newport Road, on the corner of, what is now Cornwall Road, opposite the entrance to Lowtherville Road. The foundation stone was laid down on November 8th, 1881 and the Chapel was opened for services in 1882. The first Sunday School was held on June 25th of that year with up to 80 children attending.

With Lowtherville rapidly expanding and the population increasing, it was decided to add an extension to the chapel for use as a schoolroom, as can be seen in the photograph. The foundation stone for the new



schoolroom was laid on May 29th 1895 and was opened the following year. In later years, from 1945 to 1960, Sylvia Kingswell was the Superintendent and attendances at the Sunday school varied from 80 to 100 pupils a week! The schoolroom was built by Henry Ingram & Sons after their quote of £261 was accepted. The builders were so glad to be awarded the contract that they knocked a further 10% off the quoted price! (Imagine that happening today!) The Chapel was closed for regular worship in 1965, with services moved to the Methodist Church in High Street, but the Sunday School continued until 1968 when the building was sold for development.

Typical of life seven or more decades ago, long before people had televisions, computers or mobile phones, things were so simple. Here is an example of how the residents and children of Lowtherville entertained themselves (and others) in those days. For instance, on January 7th 1948, a concert was given by the Sunday school pupils in the Victoria Street Methodist schoolroom. A few older readers may remember some of those taking part: They included: *Margaret Howell, Keith Gatrell, John Holmes, Olive Westmore, Fay Wearing* (our own Fay Brown!), *Andrew Milligan, William Hargreaves, Diana Price, Sheila Howell, Pauline Orchard, Phyllis Jones, Patricia Tutton, Patricia Jones, Marion Hargreaves, Janet Price, Joan Dowling, Valerie Kent, Catherine Tatchell, Mavis Glaire, Margaret Russell. Gwen Croad, Jean Gatrell and Josie Milligan.*



After the closure of the Sunday School in 1968, the building was demolished. Work commenced on the construction of a block of Council flats by G.E.Banks & Son, who completed the building in just six months in 1971 at a cost of £24,660. In November of that year, Mr R.E.Banks (Managing Director) formally handed over the keys to Mr. A.C. Parkhurst, Chairman of the Ventnor Urban District Council. The flats (see photo, left) were named 'Wesley Court', carrying on the memory of the church and school that once occupied this site. The Chairman of the VUDC Public Health & Housing

Committee, Miss Mary Saunders, MBE thanked the architects, Gilbert & Hobson, for the design which had been specially tailored for Senior Citizens.

Ventnor & District Local History Society: Colin Beavis. Photographs from the Society archives.