

John Wesley preaches in Retford



Wesley first visited the town in 1779, then returned in 1786.

His journal for Saturday 24th June 1786 reads:

I preached ... in the evening at Retford, on
"I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God."

Wesley preached in Clayworth in 1752, 1755, 1757 & 1761;
Gringley on the Hill in 1774 & 1776 and Sturton in 1779.

John Mackfarland builds the first meeting house in Rosemary Lane

This was later renamed as Meeting House Lane and then Spa Lane.

In 1781 Mackfarland borrowed £100 to build the first Meeting House which was described as small and plain with a low roof and built partly with Mackfarland's own hands.

There was a rail down the centre to separate the sexes. The seats were backless forms to ensure that no one fell asleep.

Second Meeting House built

On the same site as the first.



Taken c 1970 http://bassetlawmuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/99_5432.jpg

The first Chapel was handed over to a Trust – soon afterwards it was demolished and this chapel built in 1789 by Thomas Whitaker, a local joiner who became a member of the Society 4 years later. B J Biggs gives a full description of how this building looked originally in 'Looking at Old Retford' – and how it was adapted when it was sold in 1823. In 1990 the Pewter Communion Cup and Plate from this chapel were on display.

Foundation Stones laid for Chapel in Newgate, now Grove Street



This site was purchased in 1822 and the building completed in 1823, with a minister's house on either side. John Mackfarland laid one of the foundation stones. When he attended services he was allowed to sit on the pulpit steps as he was hard of hearing.

Inscription on gravestone

Sacred to the memory of
John Mackfarland
who departed this life
May 28th 1824 aged 77 years.
In 1776 he first introduced the
Wesleyan Preachers to this town.
“According to this time
it shall be said of Jacob
and of Israel,
what God wrought”.
Numbers 23:23.

Burial ground at Grove Street Methodist Church closed.

In 1873 the Chapel Trustees sought permission to close the burial ground. The last burial had been in 1866. A copy of the burial records can be seen on the church website and the legible inscriptions are detailed in the Book of Remembrance.

When Chapelgate Hall was erected in 1958 (and later also the Albert Hall) over some of the graves the existing gravestones were moved and laid against the boundary wall.

John Macfarland's gravestone is displayed in the Circuit Office.
The Clater family were buried in the church.

Second (current) chapel built on the Grove Street site.



The foundation stones
were laid in 1879
and the opening services
held in 1880.

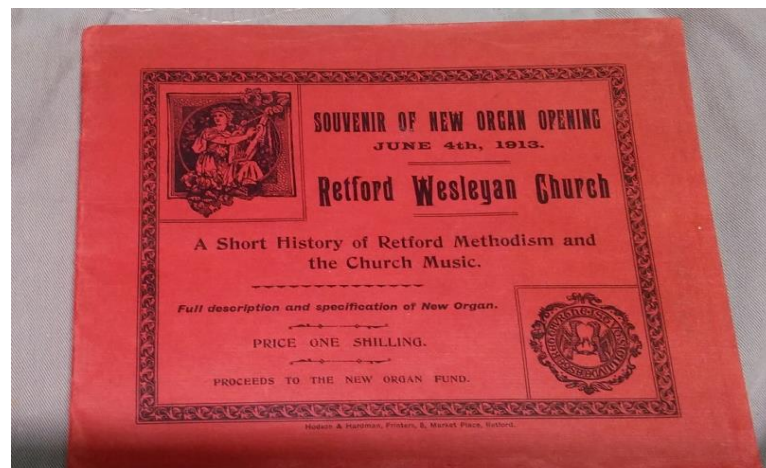


Colour copies of these large posters are held at the Nottinghamshire Archives Office.



Group of people outside The Methodist Chapel, Grove Street, Retford. Taken about 1890
http://bassetlawmuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/99_5682.jpg

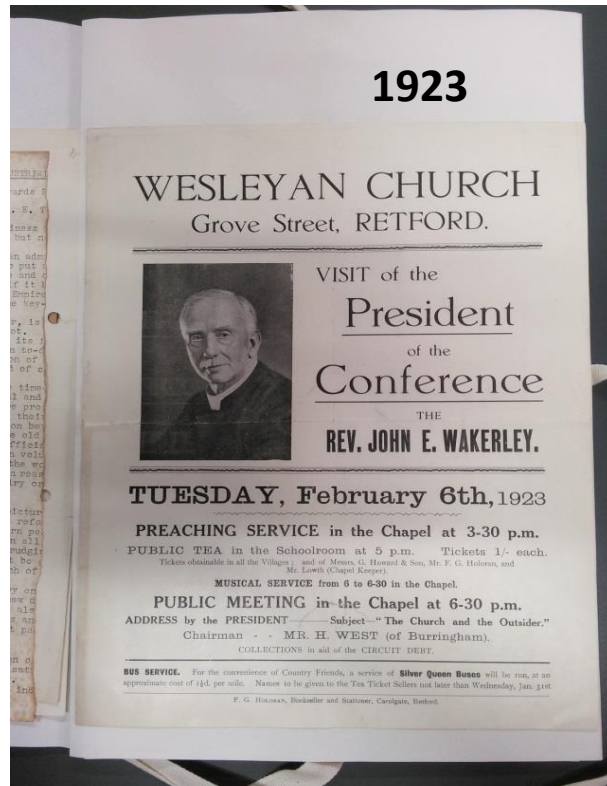
Third organ was installed



This happened in 1913.

The souvenir booklet in the Nottinghamshire Archives explains that music was originally provided by a band with violins, flutes, violoncello and double bass. In 1845 the building was adapted and the first organ was installed. This was sold to the Baptist Church in 1883 and a replacement organ from Manchester used for 30 years.

Visits by the President of Conference and other key speakers, these have been regular events including



1972

In 1928 Rev'd G H McNeal of Wesley's Chapel preached, he said it was always a pleasure to come to this 'cathedral', he knew of many hundreds of Methodist Chapels up and down the country but Grove Street Wesleyan took some beating. 'You have one of the most useful sets of buildings anywhere in Methodism.'

Closure of the other Methodist Chapels in Retford town centre ...

Two Methodist churches to close at Retford 1957

TWO of the three Methodist churches in the centre of Retford are to close because of lack of support.

But to offset this loss, the Methodists plan to build a new church on the Hallcroft housing estate, and have already acquired a site.

Methodist churches at Retford are suffering from dwindling congregations said Mr. Joseph Clayton, secretary of the Retford Methodist Circuit quarterly meeting.

"We now find that one church is sufficient to serve the centre of Retford, and have decided to close the two smaller churches," he said.

Carolgate and Chapelgate Methodist Churches, both nearly 100 years old, will close, and the bigger Grove Street Church, which seats between 1,200 and 1,300 people, will remain open.

Temporary building

The circuit hopes to start services in a temporary building on the Hallcroft Estate on July 21 — a week after the Carolgate church closes.

Proceeds from the sale of the two

churches will go towards the new church.

Mr. Clayton, a recently retired men's outfitter, of West Carr Road, Retford, has been a local preacher for 47 years. Seventeen years of that time he has spent in Retford. Before then he lived in Hull.

This increasing apathy towards church worship began with the petrol age, says Mr. Clayton.

On Sunday the village church was the hub of village life. There was nowhere else for anyone to go. Now there is nothing to prevent people from travelling elsewhere. Television has also played its part in the decline in churchgoing.

But despite all this, Mr. Clayton does not think people today are less inclined towards religion. They do not support the organised church as they once did.

Mr. Clayton said it was pleasing to note that most people supported their local churches financially, if not with their presence.

"I believe the time will come when there will be a return to the church. Life moves in cycles, and history shows how the attitude towards religion has kept changing."

Below is Mr. Joseph Clayton, a local preacher for 47 years, who believes the time will come when there will be a return to the church. The "petrol age" has caused apathy, he says.

Chapelgate Hall was built



Stone laying on 17th May 1958

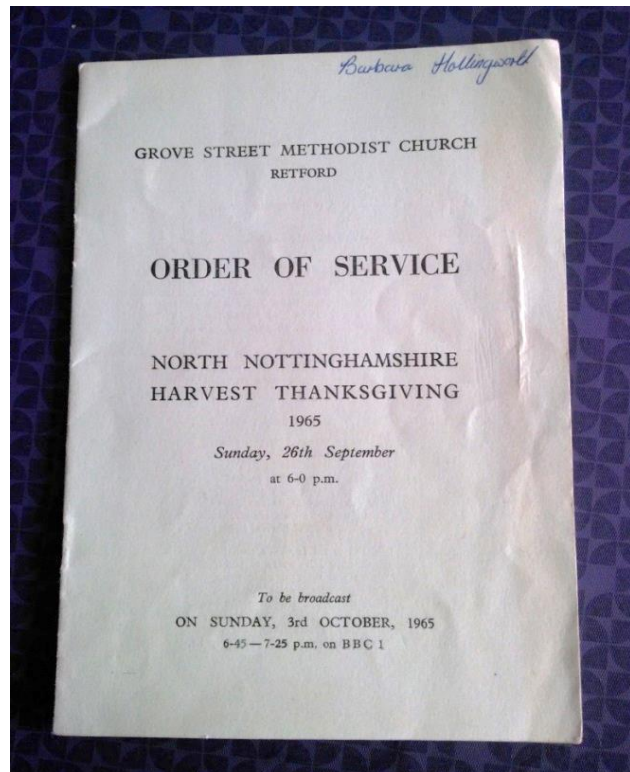
Alterations were made in the church to
create the Prayer Corner
and the Children's Corner.

These were dedicated during the Harvest Service
in 1990 – and a baptism was held in the Children's
Corner on that occasion.

It was noted that next time the tie cords would be fitted
so that the congregation could get a better view!

An audio system was fitted in the church just before
this time.

Songs of Praise filmed at Grove Street



Methodist Service will be seen on Television



After the service in 1965 a viewer, who was impressed, donated £25 to the church and challenged the leaders to treble the amount and give the proceeds to the poor of the town.

The premises were extended further to create the Albert Hall, the Rockley Room, extra storage space, improved toilet facilities and the caretaker's flat.



The original plans were rejected and the scheme redesigned.
Permission was then granted despite objections.
There is a copy of the 1992 Service on the website.

The Institute was taken down.

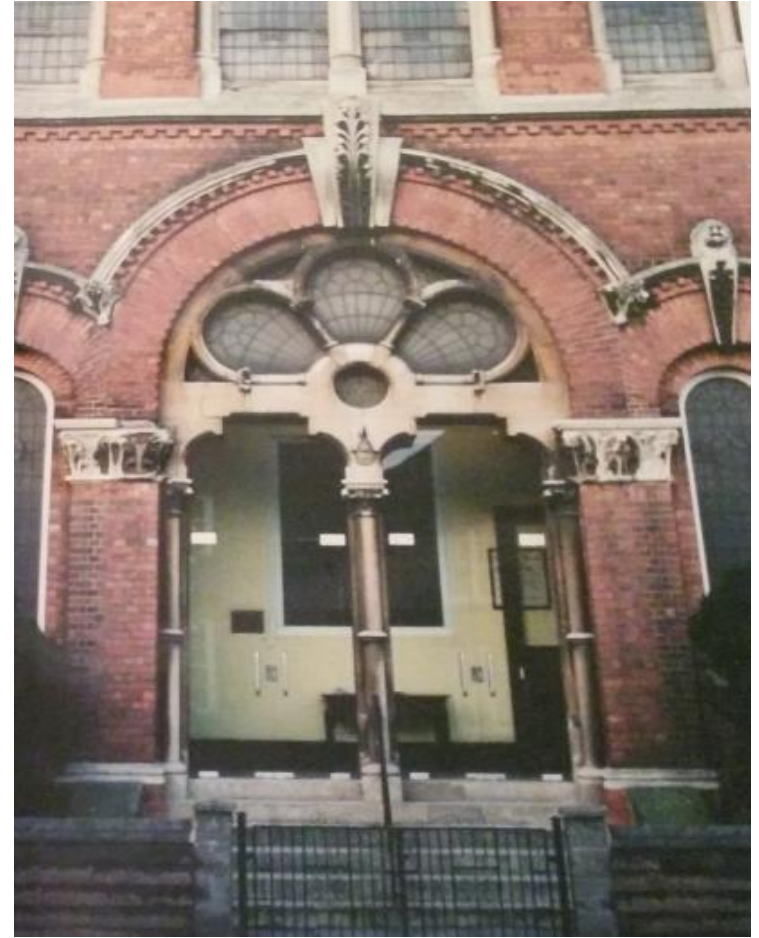
Photos taken around 1970, this was originally the Wesleyan School built in 1823



http://bassetlawmuseum.org.uk/?q=methodist&modes_query=%7Bsearch%7D%3D*%7Bmethodist%7D&page_id=70
http://bassetlawmuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/99_5424.jpg

Around the same time the Caretaker's House, 44 Grove Street was sold and the money used towards the costs of the extension.

Glass doors were added to the front of the church and two rows of pews removed to create a vestibule as an open, welcoming space.



The glass doors enabled colourful, themed displays to be seen by passers-by and made the threshold easier to cross.

Refurbishment programmes have been
a key feature of church life e.g. 1997



● Retford Mayor Jim Napier joined the congregation of Grove Street Methodist Church on Sunday for a march through the town. The procession finished at the church where a re-dedication service was conducted following a major refurbishment programme.

Grove Street Methodist Church was designated as a grade II listed building on 19th December 2008

Grove Street Methodist Church is listed at Grade II for the following reasons:

- * The church retains a high quality of architectural and artistic embellishment in both the external and internal detail.
- * A notable church built by architects Bellamy and Hardy who are respected in the design of various types of public buildings many of which are listed.
- * The oval galleries are an architectural expression of distinctive worshipping practice.
- * Although the church has undergone some changes there has been minimal alteration to the original fabric or fittings.

It was added to the heritage at risk register in June 2016

In 2014 a boss fell from the ceiling in the sanctuary, the centre of which was 'out of bounds' until 2021.



A lot of work was carried out over the next ten years to ensure that the building was fit for purpose for the future, including repairs to the drains, redeveloped toilets and corridor, repairs to the ceiling and stonework, redecoration of the sanctuary, new heating, new AV system and new doors – ready for a new start ...