From The Circuit Superintendent, Wantage and Abingdon
Methodist Circuit i.e. Revd. Peter Jarvis

Introduction

(See D.J.Steel, Sources for Nonconformist Genealogy and family History (1973))

1. History of Methodism

Methodism began in the 1730s under the leadership of John Wesley and George Whitfield, who were ordained clergymen of the Church of England. It was intended to be a revivalist movement within the established church, but separate preaching houses were established at an early date and in 1744 the first Conference was held and Circuits were set up. By 1800, followers regarded themselves as dissenters from the Anglican church. A succession of splits and offshoots meant that by 1837 there were about nine Methodist denominations.

Of these, only Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists are known to have existed in the Vale of White Horse. In 1837 there were 321 Wesleyan Circuits in England, and 150 Primitive Methodist Circuits, or Stations.

(Primitive Methodists, known as such from 1812, originally aimed at reaching poor rural workers, but eventually became strongest in the industrial towns. Their organisation was similar to that of the Wesleyans, but circuits were called ‘Stations’ and ministers, ‘Travelling Preachers’.)

In 1932 the Wesleyans, Primitive and United Methodists merged to form The Methodist Church. The organisation centres on the Annual Conference. Individual churches are grouped into Circuits, which hold Quarterly Meetings, and circuits are grouped into Districts which hold Synods twice-yearly. There are now 1,100 circuits and 32 districts.
2. Records of the Wantage and Abingdon Methodist Circuit

The complex history of Methodism, compounded by various circuit reorganisations, makes it difficult to arrange the records of the Wantage and Abingdon Circuit coherently. Minute and account books often include entries from more than one circuit or branch of Methodism. In such cases documents have been listed under their original circuit, and cross-referenced. Wantage, for example has surviving records as follows:

 1837-1905 Wantage Wesleyan Methodist Circuit
 1905-1911 Wantage and Swindon Wesleyan Methodist Circuit   \*
 1911-1934 Wantage section, Oxford Wesleyan Methodist Circuit
 1934-1959 Wantage and Wallingford Methodist Circuit
 1959- Wantage and Abingdon Methodist Circuit

Abingdon, too, was once part of the Oxford Methodist Circuit from 1905-1958, and searchers should ask for the list of MS.D.D.Oxf. Methodist Circuit records in ORO.

The collection includes records of individual chapels, some of which are no longer in the circuit. It is not always possible to state whether a chapel belonged originally to the Wesleyan or Primitive Methodist connection, especially in villages where there were chapels of both denominations.

\* Wantage and Swindon records only in III/1 and see XXXIV/iii/ln

**I- V Mainly Wantage Wesleyan Methodist Circuit**

I/i Minute books of Wantage Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, 1881-1904,
Quarterly Meetings (2 volumes) (***Acc.2593***)

I/ii Minute book of Circuit Trustees, Wantage Wesleyan Circuit 1868-1911,
Wantage District of Oxford Wesleyan Circuit 1911-1934,
Wantage and Wallingford Circuit 1934-1938 (1 volume) (***Acc.2593***)

I/iii Minute book of Local Preachers’ Meetings, Wantage (Wesleyan) Circuit 1898-1904, Wantage Section of Oxford Wesleyan Circuit 1911-1931. (1 volume) (***Acc.2593***)

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II/i Circuit Schedule books, Wantage Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, 1837-1904
(6 volumes) (***Acc.2593***)

II/ii Circuit Schedule book (Education) 1876-1882,
with loose schedules 1848-1851 (1 volume) (***Acc.2593***)

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III/i Circuit Stewards’ account books, Wantage Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, 1857-1904, Wantage Section, Swindon and Wantage Wesleyan Circuit 1904-1910, Wantage Section, Oxford Wesleyan Circuit 1911-1912 (2 volumes)
 (***Acc.2593***)

III/ii Roll of subscribers from Wantage Wesleyan Methodist Circuit area to the Methodist Twentieth Century Fund, 1901. (Copy c1929) (1 item)
 (***Acc.2593***)

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IV/i Trustees’ Correspondence File, Wantage Wesleyan Methodist Circuit,
later Wantage Section, Oxford Wesleyan Circuit, later Wantage and Wallingford Circuit, 1861-1950. (1 file)
 (***Acc.2593***)

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V/i Circuit Plan, Wantage Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, 1882-3. (1 item)
 (***Acc.2593***)

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**VI-VIII Mainly Wantage Section, Oxford Wesleyan Methodist Circuit**(See also I/ii-iii, III/I, IV/i)

VI/i Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, Wantage Section, Oxford Wesleyan Circuit (1911-1934), Wantage and Wallingford Circuit 1934-1949. (1 volume) (***Acc.2593***)

VI/ii Local Preachers’ Meetings minute book, Wantage Section, Oxford Wesleyan Circuit 1932-1934, Wantage and Wallingford Circuit (1934-1958). (1 volume) (***Acc.2593***)

VI/iii Minute book of Trustees’ Special Meetings, Wantage Section of Oxford Wesleyan Circuit 1913-1934, Wantage and Wallingford Circuit 1934-1936. (1 volume)
 (***Acc.2593***)

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VII/i Circuit Schedule book, Wantage Section of Oxford Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, 1928-1934, Wantage and Wallingford Circuit 1934-1936. (1 volume)
 (***Acc.2593***)

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VIII/i Circuit Stewards’ Quarterly Account books, Wantage Section, Oxford Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, 1912-1934, Wantage and Wallingford Circuit 1934-1949.
(2 volumes)
 (***Acc.2593***)

VIII/ii Account book, Women’s Auxiliary Missionary Society, (Wantage Section, Oxford Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, 1920-1934, Wantage and Wallingford Circuit 1934-1947).
(1 volume)
 (***Acc.2593***)

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**IX-XI Wallingford Primitive Methodist Circuit** (only)

IX/i Quarterly Meeting Minute Books, 1862-1931. (3 volumes) (***Acc.2593***)

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X/i Circuit Reports, 1838-1859. (1 folder) (***Acc.2593***)

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XI/i Quarterly account books, 1854-1934. (4 volumes) (***Acc.2593***)

XI/ii Missionary work accounts, 1869-1903, 1916-1934. (2 volumes) (***Acc.2593***)

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**XII -XV Mainly Wantage and Wallingford Methodist Circuit**
(See also I/i, IV/i, VI/i-iii, VII/i, VIII/i-ii)

XII/i Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, 1949-1959. (1 volume) (***Acc.2593***)

XII/ii Minute book of the Advisory Committee of Wantage and Wallingford Methodist Circuit
1936-1959. (1 volume) (***Acc.2593***)

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XIII/i Circuit Schedule books, Wantage and Wallingford Methodist Circuit, 1935-1957, with loose papers relating to Wantage and Abingdon Methodist Circuit, 1960s.
(2 volumes) (***Acc.2593***)

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XIV/i Methodist Missionary Society Circuit Account books, Wantage and Wallingford Methodist Circuit 1934-1959, Wantage and Abingdon Methodist Circuit 1960.
(2 volumes) (***Acc.2593***)

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XV/i Circuit Plans, Wantage and Wallingford Methodist Circuit 1934, 1945-1959.
(69 items)
 (***Acc.2593***)

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**XIX-XXXVII records of Individual Methodist Chapels,
arranged alphabetically by place-names**

XX/i Brightwell Primitive Methodist church account book, 1881-1928.
(1 item) (***Acc.2593***)

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XXI/1-3 Charney Bassett Wesleyan Methodist later Methodist church account books,
1917-1951. (3 volumes) (***Acc.2593***)

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XXIII/i Drayton Methodist Church minute book, 1940-1956. (1 item) (***Acc.2593***)

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XXIV/i File of papers relating to Fawler Methodist chapel, 1952-1965. (1 item) (***Acc.2593***)

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XXVI/i Burial register, Harwell Wesleyan Methodist, later Methodist church,
1862-1944 (not continuous). (1 item) (***Acc.2593***)

XXVI/ii Minute book, Harwell Methodist church, 1961-1970. (1 item) (***Acc.2593***)

XXVI/iii Account books 1872-1972, Harwell Wesleyan Methodist, later Methodist church.
Earlier vol. includes minutes of Trustees’ meetings, 1885-1892.
(2 items) (***Acc.2593***)

XXVI/iv Notebook with description of Harwell Wesleyan Methodist chapel burial ground,
 c1912. (1 item) (***Acc.2593***)

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XXVII/i Minute book, East Hendred Methodist chapel trustees
1953-1962. (1 item) Wesleyan (***Acc.2593***)

XXVII/ii Account and minute books, treasurers and trustees of East Hendred Wesleyan Methodist, later Methodist church 1905-1975. (2 items) (***Acc.2593***)

XXVII/iii Account books, East Hendred Methodist church collections,
1943-1955. (4 volumes) (***Acc.2593***)

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XXVIII/i Minute book, West Hendred Methodist chapel,
1952-1963. (1 volume) (***Acc.2593***)

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XXIX/i Letcombe Regis Primitive Methodist chapel schedules,
1853-1859. (1 volume) (***Acc.2593***)

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XXX/i Account book, Stanford-in-the-Vale Methodist church,
1957-69, with loose minutes, 1960s. (1 volume) (***Acc.2593***)

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XXXII/1-2 Combined account and minute books, Wallingford Primitive Methodist church,
1834-1898. (2 volumes) (***Acc.2593***)

XXXII/3 Account book, 1889-1910, and loose minutes 1916,
Wallingford Primitive Methodist church, 1834-1898. (1 volume) (***Acc.2593***)

XXXII/4 File of correspondence, Wallingford Methodist church hall,
1959-1969. (1 volume) (***Acc.2593***)

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XXXVI/i Correspondence file relating to Long Wittenham chapel,
1960-1; 1983. (1 file) (***Acc.2593***)

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XXXVII/i Copy trust deed, printed, relating to Morland & Co. Ltd., breweries, Abingdon, and 123 properties in Berks. And Oxon., 1897. (1 deed) (***Acc.2593***)

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NB. For records of the Wesleyan Methodist day school in Wantage, deposited as part of Acc. 2593, see schools index (T/S)