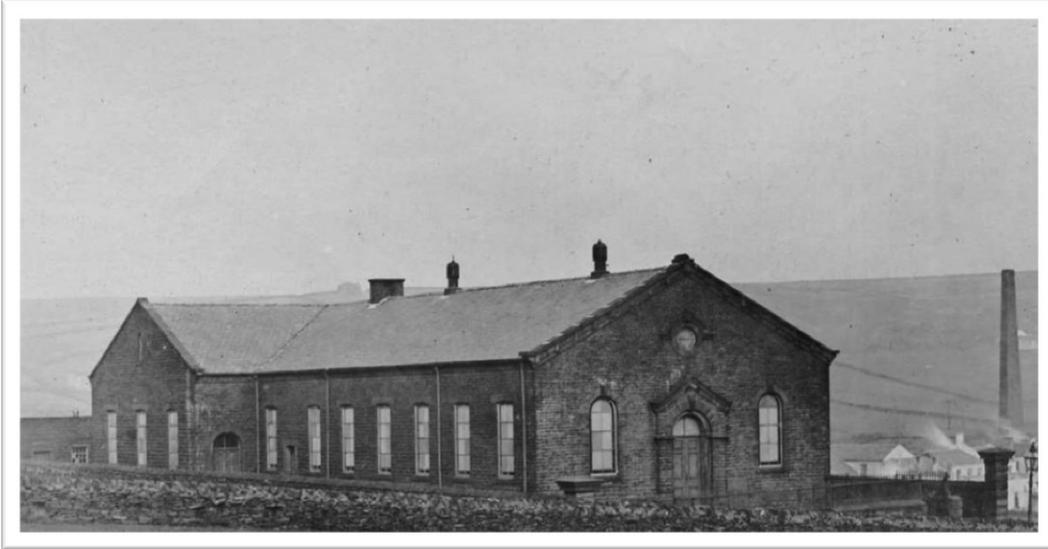


Heald Chapel



Heald was a straggling moorland village situated on high ground on the road to Burnley two miles North of Bacup. The inhabitants of this place, during the 17th century lived hard and rough. The main industry was spinning and weaving the cloth had to be carried to Rochdale or Burnley on the man's back which in itself was a days work. The money earned had to be supplemented by what could be grown or farmed. It was no place for a weakling which is probably why the nonconformists took hold here. The people had been brought up to stand on their own feet. The nearest church was at Newchurch and to get there meant a good long walk over the hills. The road to Newchurch from Deerplay was and is still known as "Kirkgate". Over the period 1800 to 1830 the following mills were built in the area. Old Clough - Irwell Spring. Irwell Springs - Corner Dye Works, Dog Pits Old Engine, Broadclough, Irwell Mill, Meadows Mill.

The building of these mills meant a great demand for labour, and the cheaper the better. The building of these mills mean a big increase in the population in that area. Houses were built around the Old Clough area in a place called Heald Town. In about 1829 a number of young men then working at Old Clough Mill began to ask themselves and one another if they could by joining together be helpful in learning from each other. After talking it over for some time the young men among whom was Lawrence & Thomas Horrocks, James Roberts (alias Jim Parker) agreed to set up some kind of mutual improvement establishment. After working for 13 - 14 hours a day there was little time for meetings and so they met on a Sunday. Having no teacher the best of them taught the rest. They first met at William Clegg's house in Old Clough and provided any teaching equipment they needed. James Ashworth of Newkin End the first Baptist who had any real connection with the school urged the men to begin a regular Sunday school the result was within a few weeks classes were being held morning and afternoon. The chamber in which they met soon became too small and the house was of course occupied.

A deputation of the young men went and sought council from James Maden Esq of Greens House, to see if he would allow them the use of a room at the Corner which he owned as well as some of the surrounding land and so the school moved.

The room at Corner was a big improvement on the one of Old Clough, but bible classes were taught in a room opposite. After a time it was decided that the children of the men should join them and be taught the elementary principles of grammar along with the ABC of religion. Mr Maden paid periodical visits reading and expounding the scriptures to them he also encouraged them to remember the scriptures and if they proved on his next visit they had done so he rewarded them. Adult men and women began to hold prayer meetings and eventually had ordinary services. Once again the room was proving too small and again Mr Maden came to the rescue not only with the land but offering to build a new schoolhouse. It was decided that they would attach themselves to the Wesleyan Methodists and supplied for themselves regular supply teachers In 1840 a night school was commenced. The children had to provide paper, pens and ink. The room, fire and instructions were provided free.

The school was held in the chamber over the house of Mr Robert Priestley of Heald his two sons Enoch and John being instructors In 1867 Charles Henry Sieber managing partner of Irwell Springs dyeing company in the 1850s and his wife Alice daughter of Joshua Hoyle gave the land on which was built, Heald Wesleyan Chapel. Good Friday of 1867 saw the cornerstone of the chapel laid by Alice's brother Issac Hoyle. The ceremony being opened by Mr J. S. Sutcliffe who was said to remark " We cannot vacate the old preaching rooms without giving thanks to Almighty God in inspiring the late James Maden of Greens, I would also allude to your late father (Joshua Hoyle) we are not without occasion to rejoice that he was led to purchase a plot of land at Heald. The land at Heald had passed to Alice by the will of her father.

In 1932 the chapel was gutted by fire which destroyed most of the church sanctuary, organ and pulpit. The church was rebuilt and back open for services by 1933, Heald Wesleyan Church closed in 1985.