

**TWO GATES
RAGGED SCHOOL
CRADLEY**

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL

WRITTEN TO COMMEMORATE THE

CENTENARY

1867 — 1967



Dedicated to all who have made the writing possible

C.W.

PRICE — TWO SHILLINGS.

TWO GATES RAGGED SCHOOL

CRADLEY

1867 — 1967

CENTENARY YEAR

OFFICERS OF THE SCHOOL AT 1967

Superintendent: ALDERMAN C. WILLETTS, C.C.

Assistant Superintendent: MRS. H. M. CLIFTON, J.P.

Sunday School Secretary: MRS. P. A. SIDAWAY

Treasurers: MR. H. COX

MR. B. G. WILLETTS

Senior Steward: MR. T. JACKSON

President: Women's Class: MRS. L. BILLINGHAM

President: Women's Bright Hour: MRS. L. TAYLOR

Treasurer: Joint Women's Classes: MRS. M. WILLETTS

Treasurer: Women's Savings Club: MRS. E. MALPASS

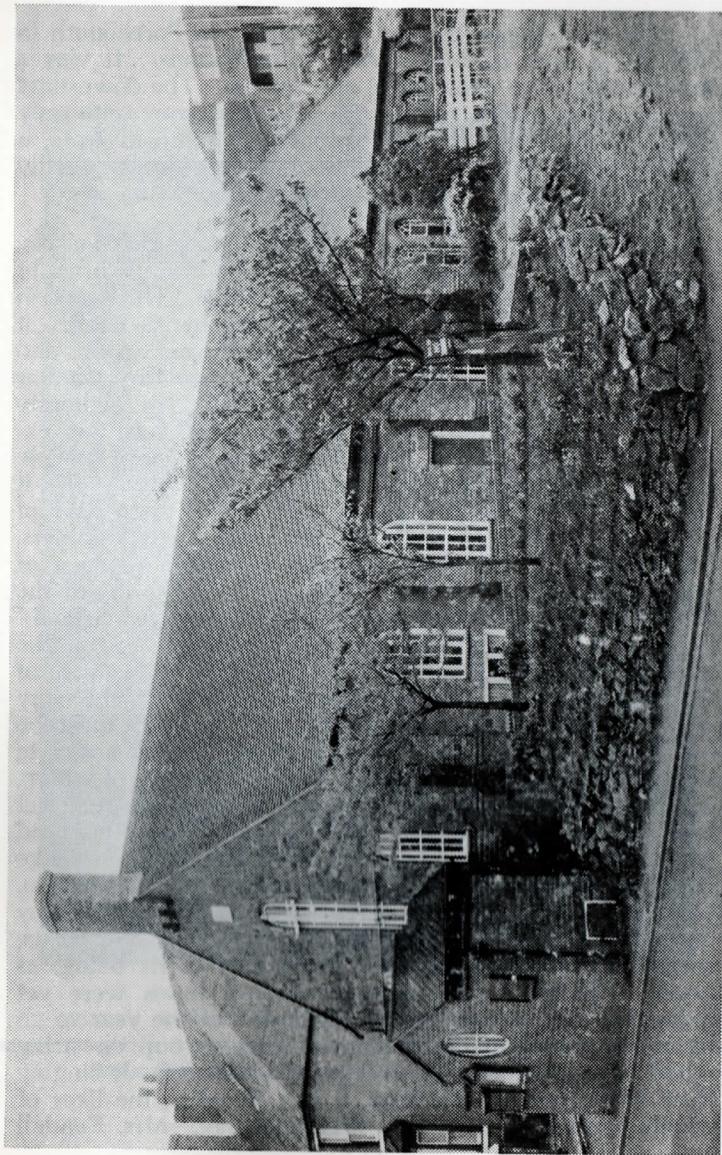
Treasurer: Children's Clothing Club: MR. N. CLIFTON

Organists: Sunday School and Chapel: MR. P. BATE

Wednesday Fellowship: MRS. R. O. WILLETTS

Bankers: LLOYDS

MIDLAND BANK



TWO GATES RAGGED SCHOOL, CRADLEY.
Built 1867.

FOREWORD

The first Ragged School was started in Portsmouth in 1767 by a poor cobbler named John Pounds. It was a wooden shop, one room down and one up. The downstairs room measured 16ft. x 7ft. x 6ft. In this room, with only tallow candles for lighting and water obtained from a pump in the street, John Pounds taught the raggedly clothed children of Portsmouth to read and write.

Hundreds of children, waifs, hooligans, pickpockets, indeed the worst possible characters, John Pounds brought in and they were taught to read the bible. This wooden hut was called a ragged school, because by its nature, it catered exclusively for children who were poor and neglected. About the middle of the last century, similar schools sprang up all over the country. No elaborate architectural building, no exquisite furnishings, no expensive organs. Just a place where the poorest people could worship God without being well dressed. So, it would seem, Two Gates, being a village in those days of perhaps some hundred or so residents, mostly miners, chainmakers, nail makers, decided to build a place of worship to the Glory of God. The tablet at the top of the School bears the inscription "Two Gates Ragged School" built A.D. 1867. No one knows why it was given the name "Ragged" but it must be assumed it was because of the fact that those worshipping there were of the very poorly clad and fed. The writing of its history must be incomplete. It would need several volumes of books to record the names of men and women who, many of whom, could not themselves read or write, as the Education Act had not yet been passed, yet by sheer personality and character, made their impact upon children. Names like Hingley, Homfray, Perry, Hall, Somers, Boxley, Auden, Dunn, Hodgetts, Adams, Bird, Cox, Beasley and many more, find their place in its history of long ago. The treats, socials, concerts, outings, etc., were part of its being, as radios, television, even motor cars and buses were yet unknown. It was one of the highlights of the year to go by the hundred to the fields in Lutley, a cup on string round the neck, children on waggons and everybody singing their hearts out for the feast, a bag of cakes, the likes of which, children only saw on this great day, Mrs. Fendall



Picture of John Pounds, a cobbler, who founded the first Ragged School in Portsmouth, shown teaching children to read the Bible. Born 17th June 1766. Died 31st December 1839.

and Mrs. Bate, with their "shops" under the hedge, selling bulls eyes, licquorice straps and lucky bags. Mr. Cox with his bag of sweets scattering them for children to dive after. What did it matter if they did drop in the dirt, you could always wipe it off. Many too, in the 40 age group, will never forget Mr. Hodgetts taking his class each year to Kinver. How he made the story of the Kinver giant so realistic, as he recalled the old legend. There are so many memories with the School, that it must be left to your own imagination, as you read this, to go down your own memory lane. Yet all this might have been lost, but for the courage, resolve and determination of these ordinary people, when those in authority wanted to hand the School over to another denomination. The writer recalls being told of the incident which determined the course of the School's future. Mr. Alfred Homfray, a solicitor, decided he would hand the School over and the Vicar of the Parish was coming to receive it and preach the appropriate sermon. These men and women resolved it should not be. They stood in front of the doors and refused him admission. Mr. Homfray could do little against such a formidable power. He sat in his "gig" with horse at the ready. From that vantage point he shouted "I'll sell the School to you" although it didn't belong to him. The crowd yelled back "How much", he replied £5. The money was collected and handed to him. He drove off. Two Gates Ragged School was saved. We pay homage to them.



MR. PERCY BATE
Taken on completion of 50 years as
Organist, 1910—1960.

AN ABRIDGED HISTORY OF TWO GATES RAGGED SCHOOL, CRADLEY

The title deeds record, that on 21st June, 1867, a piece of land on which the School had been built was conveyed by Mr. Samuel Bennett, an inn keeper, to Messrs. Noah Hingley and Mr. Jeston Homfray. In May 1896 an agreement was made, between Sir Benjamin Hingley (Bart) and Mr. A. Homfray and the managers of the School. The recitals in the trust deed of May 1911 state that Mr. James Willetts, labourer, Mr. James Adams, warehouseman, Mr. Joseph Hodgetts, warehouseman and Mr. Enoch Growcott, mines manager, all of Cradley, had for many years owned the property, which had been purchased (by them or their predecessors in title) for the purpose of it being held in trust, for erecting a place of worship on the land, as a place for the undenominational religious worship of God and for preaching the Gospel by a congregation of protestants called Two Gates Ragged School. The deed then recites, that this congregation of protestants, had many years previously, erected a place of worship on the land and had used and occupied the property in conformity with this purpose, up to the date of the deed, which then proceeded to convey the property to the 21 trustees named in the deed. There is no authentic record of how or by whom the School was built. Tradition says all materials were given by local industrialists and the School erected by voluntary labour. Money was raised by selling bricks at a penny each, before they were laid.

A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS OF INTEREST

There are few records between 1867 and 1880. It is known that for the first three years, hymn singing was accompanied by a flute, played by Mr. Jeston Homfray. About 1870 he lost interest and for a time, singing was unaccompanied. A Mrs. Guise, a local resident offered the School an "old" harmonium she had in her home. This was accepted and after nearly 100 years, is still being played in the Sunday School.

1880

John Beasley, Jun., a teacher, emigrated to America. Evening attendances very poor and a canvass of residents took place, inviting them to evening worship. Mr. Downing appointed superintendent.

The teachers and scholars attended the centenary of the Sunday Schools at Cradley Heath, to commemorate the founding of Sunday Schools by Robert Raikes (of Gloucester). The medalion and ribbon specially struck for the occasion, is in the possession of the School.

1881

People were seen taking water from the pump belonging to the School. The caretaker was instructed to report the culprits. A proposal to build a new class room was agreed to. Members joined with other Schools from Old Hill, Cradley Heath and Cradley, for the Annual treat at Cradley Heath.

1882

Classes called first, second and third testament were formed for the purpose of learning the alphabet and to read and write. Meetings were constantly interrupted by roughs.

1883

The class room is mentioned again and members decided to pay 6d. per week towards clearing the debt. Special service also held, Mr. Newton to be the preacher and the collection used to pay the debt.

1884

Decided to hold a concert in High Town Ragged School to raise money for the new class room. Decided to give scholars prizes, the value to be, 104 marks 1/6, 100 marks 1/-, 94 marks 6d. Mr. Forrest appointed superintendent and Mr. H. R. Perry deputy superintendent. An entertainment held in Wesleyan School room to raise funds for the new class room.

1885

Statement of accounts showed a balance of £2. It had been an expensive year. Repairs had been carried out to the harmonium. New books purchased for the choir. Mr. H. Hall appointed deputy superintendent following the resignation of Mr. Perry. Children who went hop-picking would receive their marks. Any child misbehaving, would not receive a prize, even though they made full marks. Class room completed.

1886

Balance in hand £5 18s. 2d. The pump had to be repaired, owing to vandalism. A band formed and a conductor employed at 2/6 per night. Later found too expensive and disbanded. Decided to charge people coming to the prize distribution, one penny, to prevent overcrowding.

1887

Owing to the bad behaviour of some boys, they were moved to other classes. A devotional meeting held at 7.30 a.m. was changed to 9.30 a.m.

1888

Balance in funds £1 16s. 11d. Teachers who were not in their places by 10.10 a.m. and 2.10 p.m. would be fined one penny and severely censured.

1889

Balance in hand 6/9. Sacrament was observed the first Sunday in each month. Agreed to have a student from Handsworth College to preach one Sunday night.

1890

Balance in hand £4 10s. 7d. Teachers requested to be in their places early, to keep children quiet. Christian endeavour formed. Teachers decided they could attend evening services but would not be allowed in the Sunday School.

1891

Balance in hand £3 5s. 0½d. School had been renovated and re-decorated. Caretaker given 5/- for extra work involved.

1892

A year of dissension, rows and quarrels. Minutes record a big upheaval and a great deal of re-organisation took place.

1893

The caretaker had not been paid for a long time. He was owed £3 15s. 0d. and it was decided to pay him when they had the money. A Mr. Watts was not allowed to teach, because his education was not good enough. A collection was taken to help the miners who were on strike. Decided to ask the trustees to change the hymn book. Permission was refused.

1894

Balance in hand £5 0s. 6d. Football club allowed to use the school at a charge of 10/-. First primary department formed. The Annual treat was held in Whites field, Lutley, on Bank Holiday Monday.

1895

The Vicar of Cradley, Mr. Edmondson, asked if he could preach. It was refused, as there had been a disturbance last time he came. Decided to change to Wesleyan hymn book.

1896

Mr. Cleves, a candidate for the District Council election be allowed to use the school for a meeting. Instead of the usual books, it was decided scholars have hymn books for prizes.

1897

No record.

1898

The first baptism was solemnized on Mr. Horace Bird son of Edwin and Ellen Bird.

1899-1900

No record.

1901

The Christian endeavour was reformed. A ramble to Garratts Park was held the last Saturday in August. A coffee evening was held on November 18th, price 3d. Twenty people were present.

1902

The Christian Endeavour decided to use the Sankeys hymn book. They joined the Christian Endeavour union. A concert was held on 27th January. Members attended a Christian Endeavour convention in the Wesleyan Chapel, Lye. Annual concert held on 17th March.

1903

On 26th January a magic Lantern lecture was held. An excursion by tram took place. No destination is mentioned.

1904

A ramble to Clent took place on 13th June starting from school at 3 p.m. In August there was a trip to Rubery by brakes.

1905

Gas lighting was installed. A special fund was started to buy a piano.

1906

A second hand piano was purchased by Mr. Hodgetts. He paid part of the money out of his own pocket and waited six months for it to be paid back. Open air meeting held with other Chapels in the Cradley district.

1907

Mr. Growcott appointed pianist for the Christian endeavour. An outing to Kinver on 31st August. Christian endeavour anniversary held on 17th November Collection 18/7. Expenses 4/-. The debt for the piano still not cleared. A tea urn was purchased costing 11/6.

1908

A ramble to Clent in August. Christian endeavour anniversary on 8th November. Preacher Mr. Nock. Collection £1 9s. 6d.

1909

School registered for solemnization of marriages. The first marriage took place on 2nd August 1909 between Harry Auden and Eliza Beatrice Adams. Donation of 5/- to the relief fund, for the poor of Cradley.

1910

Mr. Percy Bate appointed organist on 1st May.

1911

Men's Own formed with Mr. Edwin Bird as president and Mr. A. Bate as secretary.

1912

Additional class rooms at the top of school completed.

1913

Women's class started with Miss Olive Goodwin as president. Choir outing to Bournemouth, adults 5/- each, children under 16, 2/6.

1914

News received whilst on Whites Field, Lutley for the annual treat, that war had been declared. Outing cancelled and the party went to the Botanical Gardens by train.

1914 to 1918

Activities limited but all services carried on. The debt on the school was cleared by members contributing £1 each.

Cradle Roll was formed by Mr. H. Cox, Sen. Half yearly meeting on Monument hill, preceded by tea. Afterwards, a walk over Clent Hills.

1919

Annual treat on bank holiday Monday at Beasley's field, Lutley. Mr. W. Thomas provided a waggon to take young children to the field. Mr. B. Newey appointed secretary of the children's clothing club.

1920

Mr. C. Willetts and Mr. V. Harris appointed teachers.

1921

Mr. David Adams, a teacher, died on 24th June.

1922-23

No records.

1924

A baptismal font, stand and cover was purchased. Deacons asked for £25 from teachers for expenses. It was refused by teachers Mr. John Taylor and Mr. Alfred Hough were appointed joint secretaries to the Deacons.

1925

Mr. Will Bellingham was awarded a prize for ringing the bell.

1926

Mr. and Mrs. Evans resigned as caretakers. Mr. W. Taylor appointed.

1927

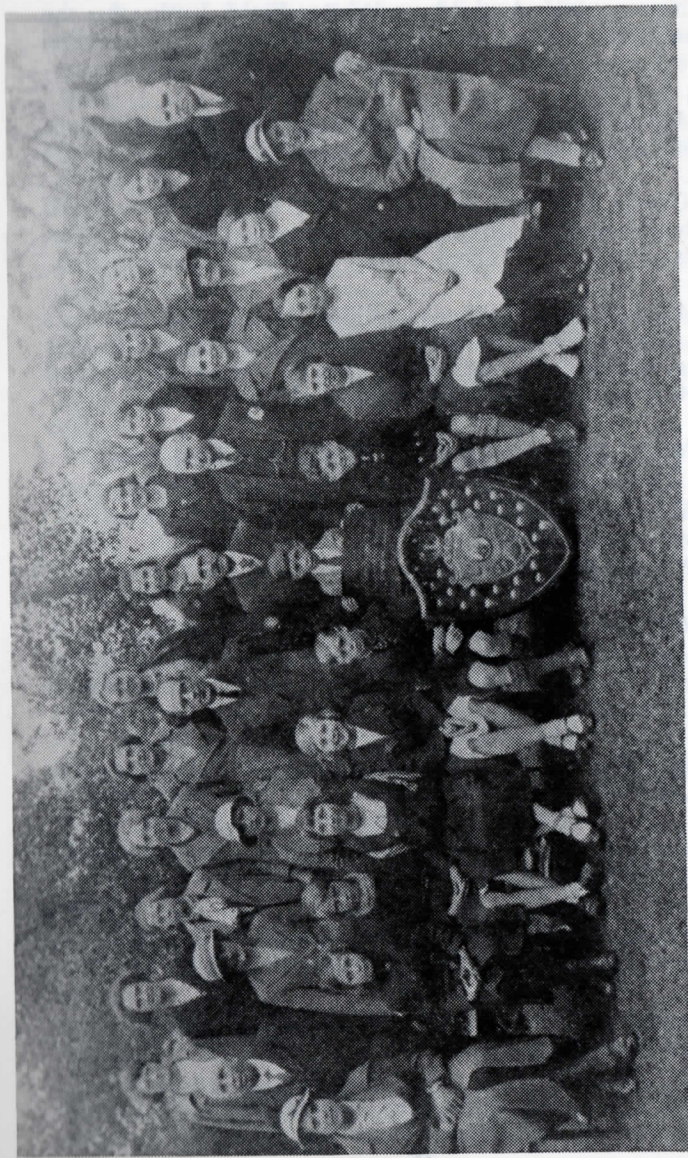
A new pulpit bible was purchased. Mr. P. Bates fee as organist, raised to £3, later increased to £4.

1928

Banking account opened at Lloyds called Two Gates Ragged School renovation fund.

1929

Use of school granted to Mr. H. Cox and Mr. F. Bellingham for ambulance classes.



Winners Woodhouse Challenge Shield 1935 with officials and teachers.

Back Row—M. Taylor, J. Hipkiss, E. Cramp ton, G. Garratt, A. Pearson, D. Homer, M. Cooper, G. Griffin,
M. Brittain, G. Cooper, I. Payne, M. Griffin, K. Malpass.
Second Row—J. Adams, E. Boxley, A. Evans, C. Willetts, J. Hodgetts, E. Bird, D. Wood, R. Bache, E. Growcott.
Front Row—L. Stokes, M. Wellings, E. Griffin, P. Boxley, P. Williams, W. Hipkiss, E. Hill, C. Pegg, A. Taylor,
I. Billingham, R. Boxley.

1930

All meetings this year discussed the repairs and renovation of the school. Socials, concerts and jumble sales were held.

1931

All preachers' names to be submitted to a sub-committee, comprising C. Willetts, H. Cox, C. Edge, J. Bennett and B. Newey. Fifty cups and saucers were purchased.

1932

Mr. C. Willetts appointed superintendent in succession to Mr. H. Cox, Sen.

1933

Questions were asked about the deeds of the school. It was decided to raise the matter at a later date.

1934

Joint meeting of teachers and Deacons to discuss installation of electric lighting. Later decided to accept the quotation of Mr. S. Robinson of £18 12s. 0d.

1935

Mr. Bates fee increased to £5. General repairs to school carried out. Scholars won the Woodhouse challenge shield in the scripture examinations.

1936

Repairs again took up most of the discussions at meetings.

1937

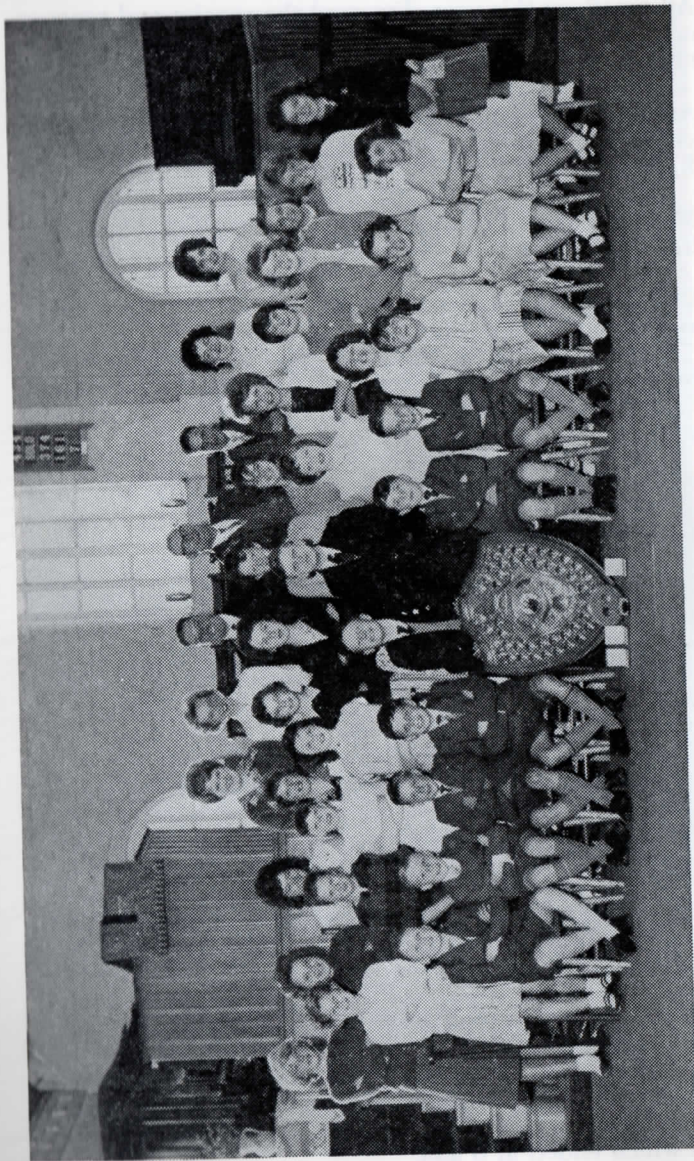
Scholars again won the Woodhouse challenge shield.

1938-45

Second World War. Services carried on. Evening services cancelled and held in the afternoon. Later reverted to evening with all windows blacked out owing to danger from air raids.

1945 continued

At midnight on 4th September, a radio announcement said the war with Germany was ended, spontaneously, crowds of people left their homes and gathered together in the street. Someone suggested they go to the school and hold a thanksgiving service. The doors were opened and people flocked in. Mr. Dennis Edge, who rang the bell for Sunday School, was roused from his bed. The ringing of the bell brought people from all over Cradley to the service. Mr. Willetts conducted the service offering special prayers for the absent ones. Parents, wives and families of men still on active service were present at this memorable service which ended at 3 a.m.



Scholars who won the Woodhouse Challenge Shield 1937 with officials and teachers.

Back Row—C. Whille, H. M. Clifton, H. Cox, C. Willetts, P. Bate, J. Patrick, P. A. Cr. ce.
 Second Row—V. Beale, C. Worrall, C. Harris, P. Billingham, A. Jones, A. Morgan, C. White, M. Lee, A. Kathke,
 C. Brettell, A. Capewell, B. Cook.
 Third Row—C. Roberts, J. Coley, P. Pritchard, G. Yates, R. Skelding, J. Smith, C. Lawson, H. Brookes,
 J. Stevenswood, M. Davies.
 Front Row—C. Totney, R. Woodhouse, P. Katnke, D. Taylor, M. Skelding, G. Hughes, W. Weston, P. Wright, J. Pritchard.

1949

On 25th October, Mr Willetts received a letter from a solicitor in Perth, Australia, asking for information about the school. An extract from the letter states, 'An 80 year old man in this city has happy recollections of the school back in 1880 when he was a scholar there and from which he received great benefit'. He sent the school £100. He gave his name as Barrington. No records of any such name is in the school records and no one knows of any such name in Two Gates. It is probable he changed his name in Australia. It is significant that he left this district, obviously with his parents, at 8 years of age and 72 years later and 12,000 miles distant, the school made such an impact that what he learned there and the influence of teachers, neither time or distance could eradicate.

1950-1956

A meeting of members was called to consider improvements to the School. Messrs. A. T. Butler, architects, were asked to draw the plans. The tender of J. M. Tate for £1,950 was accepted. The work was completed in 1953. Voluntary subscriptions from old members, was the main source of income, which enabled the whole of the money to be paid by 1956. The heating apparatus was found obsolete and a new one installed at a cost of £200. On 2nd July, 1950, a Civic service was held in honour of Mr. Willetts, who was elected Mayor of Halesowen, the service was presided over by Rev. R. W. Yaxley (Mayors Chaplain) and the address given by Canon J. T. Davies (Rector of Halesowen). A new roof at a cost of £600 was completed in 1959.

1960

Mr. Percy Bate completed 50 years as organist. By general consent, a testimonial was opened and on a special occasion, at which his family and many old friends were present, he was presented with a cheque for £50 and a gold watch.

1962

Scholars won the Woodhouse challenge shield.

1963

An illuminated cross, presented by Mr. Frank Kirton, a former scholar of the school, in memory of his family, was dedicated by Rev. Edward Page M.T.K. (Dudley).

"God buries His workers but He carries on His work"

John Wesley



Scholars who won the Woodhouse Challenge Shield 1963, with teachers, parents and friends.
 Back Row—B. Willetts, H. M. Clifton, C. Willetts, N. Clifton, L. Taylor, R. O. Willetts, H. Wright, M. Willetts, C. Billingham, L. C. Evans, P. Billingham D. Skeiding, C. Worrall, P. Bate, C. Harris E. Cox, H. Cox, L. Billingham, W. Billingham.
 Second Row—P. Pritchard, M. Davies, B. Oran, C. Lawson, C. Hadley, R. Skelding, M. Hughes.
 Front Row—J. Coley, W. Oran, W. Weston, S. Gilliam, G. Yates, R. Woodhouse, J. Pritchard, P. Wright, G. Hughes, M. Skelding, D. Skelding, C. Totney, P. Kathke, D. Taylor, J. Little.

A FEW INTERESTING STATISTICS DENOTING THE CHANGING PATTERN OF PRICES

Annual Treat 1924:

20 lbs sugar	...	...	7	6
1½ lbs. tea	...	...	4	0
10½ lbs. butter	...	...	1	1 0
52 pkts. sweets	...	...	4	4
70 lbs. slab cake	...	...	2	18 4
300 plain rolls	...	...	19	9
200 currant rolls	...	...	10	5
100 currant rolls	...	...	4	2
680 wine cakes	...	...	1	15 5
4 2lb. loaves	...	...	1	5
6 gallons milk	...	...	12	0
			<hr/>	
			£8	18 4

Tithe, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries	17	11
Overall of clock	4	6

1925 Anniversary:

75 Practice sheets	}	£3	0	0
800 hymn sheets				
100 Crown bills				
1000 circulars				

Anniversary collection 1924	£44	6	1
" 1943	£100	0	0
" 1961	£225	0	0