

20-10-1896 to 4-1-1981

"IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR SUPERINTENDENT"

"Cliff", as he was affectionately known, was appointed to the position in 1924 and remained as head of the Chapel until his death at the age of 84, a total of 57 years' dedicated service, during which he officiated at hundreds of Weddings, Funerals and Baptisms. In addition to this, "Cliff" served the Methodist movement and other denominations as a Lay Preacher for 55 years, throughout the Black Country.

He will be remembered for his great love of children, and through nearly six decades of Sunday School work helping to shape and mould the lives of thousands of children to a Christian way of life, a love of God and Jesus Christ. The greatest testimony he could have is in the minds and lives of children who are now mature men and women. The memorial which he would like most is to see that his life's work carries on in the Sunday School and Chapel. In 1977, the children presented him with a plaque inscribed with these words...

*"As to adults we shall grow,
your influence in our lives will show."*

This shows the esteem the children held for "Cliff".

His public work also shows a dedication to his fellow men and women that few people have ever achieved. Leaving school at 13 years of age he worked for 45 years making anchor chains, and during his leisure time he educated himself so that by 1935 he was elected to Halesowen Urban District Council. He was elected in 1936 when the Charter of Incorporation was granted, and he continued as a member until 1974 when Halesowen was incorporated with Dudley and Stourbridge. He was elected to the new Metropolitan Borough Council of Dudley and continued to hold office until his death in 1981 - a continuous record of 46 years.

He was...

Mayor of Halesowen 1950 - 1951
Deputy Mayor .. 1951 - 1952
Alderman for .. 10 years

He was also Chairman of the Public Health Committee for 19 years, and served as a member of the Worcestershire County Council from 1955 to 1974.

In 1964 he was made an Honorary Freeman of the Halesowen Borough. An extract from the citation states "In testimony of his notable work for religious and charitable causes and in connection with his services to public health, education and the welfare of the youth of the Borough, and all he has done in the well being of the Borough, center on him the Honorary Freedom of the Borough.

In addition to his religious and public life, "Cliff" has been in great demand for his talks on "Black Country life", also for talks he gave to the Darby and Joan Clubs, Schools, Rotary Clubs, etc. He also wrote three books, "When I was a Boy", all proceeds have been donated to the two Darby and Joan Clubs, Sons of Rest and to the building of the first Community Centre in Cradley, which was opened in 1979.

Continued...

" CLIFFORD WILLETTS " (continued)

The climax of his career came in 1980 when he was awarded the O.B.E., the highest civil award. Unfortunately, at the time of the investiture his health had deteriorated to the extent that he was unable to attend Buckingham Palace to receive his Award which was to be presented by The Queen.

Part of the citation reads as follows :-

"Elizabeth the second, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other realms and territories, Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith and Sovereign of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, to Our trusty and well beloved Clifford Willetts Esquire. Given at Our Court at Saint James's under Our Sign Manual and the Seal of Our said Order this fourteenth day of June 1980 in the Twenty-ninth year of Our Reign. By the Sovereign Command.

Signed Elizabeth R.
Philip. "

After a life like "Cliff's" there is only one thing left to be said...

" WELL DONE, THY GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT. "