

## *At one point Talke had up to 19 places of worship!*

These included

*The Mission*

*King Street Primitive Methodist Chapel, Talke Pits,*

*New Road Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Talke*

*High Street Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Talke Pits*

*Coal Pit Hill Primitive Methodist Chapel*

*John Street, later Thomas Street, United Methodist Church, Talke of the Hill*

*A Lodge of the N-U-L Methodist temperance league, 1870s-1880s*

*St. Martins Church*

*Possibly a Quaker burial ground*



GEORGE FOX

### **Quakers**

Possibly the earliest new religious group to affect Talke were the Quakers. They were originally known as the 'Society of Friends' and were lead by John Fox, but were given this name in a court case when Fox called on the judge and jury to 'quake before the Lord.' This and the other sects were often described as being puritan, as they wished to return to the purity of the original gospel, but the Quakers were actually persecuted by Cromwell's regime despite the Quaker commitment to non-violence.

There is no evidence of a Quaker chapel in Talke as they often met in the open air, particularly to avoid later religious restrictions and persecution, but there is a rumour of a large Quaker burial ground which is thought to be underneath the houses opposite the top of Monument road. This seems quite possible as there was a community in Knutton in 1672 which sent books and preachers out to surrounding villages, and one member Robert Astbury, wished to be buried in a separate Quaker burial ground in Leek and left £6 to the society in his will. Even the founder George Fox visited the area in 1685, in one of the few times he was out of prison for the crimes of not attending the Church of England, although he may just have been passing without time to preach.

### **Primitive Methodism**

However, the most significant group were the Coal Pit Hill Primitive Methodists. Mow Cop's Charles Wesley had begun preaching here in the 1760s and had been well received. They first established a church in 1814 in King Street but Mr. Hugh Bourne had been preaching and conducting ceremonies and marriages in the open air since 1811- very brave folk considering Talke weather! It was built out of Reverend William Clowe's own money. Primitive Methodism

began at Mow Cop by Hugh Bourne and John Wesley (see their link in 'more local history') so it is fitting that they should have had a strong presence in Talke. A Sunday school and new chapel were also rebuilt in 1838 (the plans are available in staff record office.) Many of the benches here were built by Hugh Bourne's own hands, and can now be found in the surviving Methodist chapel in Butt Lane. We currently only have the surviving register of 1922 to 1951, baptism records of 1869-1973, and marriage records of 1951-1974, but are still an excellent resource for tracing your family history.

### **Wesleyan Methodism**

In 1858 a group broke away from this church and founded the New Road Wesleyan Methodist Church in High Street. They initially couldn't afford to build their own church, so they first met at the 3-story house of a Mrs. Holland in Queen's street, until they saved up enough money to buy land on which they erected a corrugated iron building affectionately known as tin pot. Saving up for a proper church went disastrously wrong as the industrial depression hit and the church was soon in debt. At a society review meeting held by the Reverend P Featherstone in 1884, the circuit superintendent tried to pass a resolution to close the chapel and sell the land to pay off the debt. Only one Wesleyan was there that night, a preacher and pitman called Mr. J Lunt, who was the trust Stewart. He was distressed by the thought of losing his beloved church, but knew that a new rich Wesleyan had just moved in across the street. With the vicar thankfully postponing the resolution, Mr. Lunt went across the road to find none other than the future city mayor, George Baker. With such a backer, the resolution was torn up and thrown in the fire.

However, the debt was still not paid off. Mr. Lunt gathered together a few friends to try to fundraise. They sent out handbills concerning special services and started up a Mission Band, which began with only George Baker, Mr. Lunt, four kids, three dogs and one concertina. Many in the village laughed at them but the band grew until it contained almost 20 members, which would go around the village and encourage people to attend the services. They set up a building fund and organised singing competitions and many other events, until two and a half years later the £400 was raised to build a church.



I am still not sure when it was built, it seems that it was started in 1889 and finished in 1892. However, before this it was not all doom and gloom. They had managed to set up a Sunday school to teach their children the ways of the faith, possibly around 1870, although this might have been held in the same tin pot. Then again, one source states that the chapel here was rebuilt in 1873, was this when the first tin-pot was constructed or did it have to be replaced thanks to rust? After this, finance seemed to go well as the Sunday school was rebuilt in 1901, by which time it was definitely a separate building. These Sunday schools were particularly important as this was before the time of compulsory education, and even after 1871 the religious instruction essential to a good Victorian life was only provided by



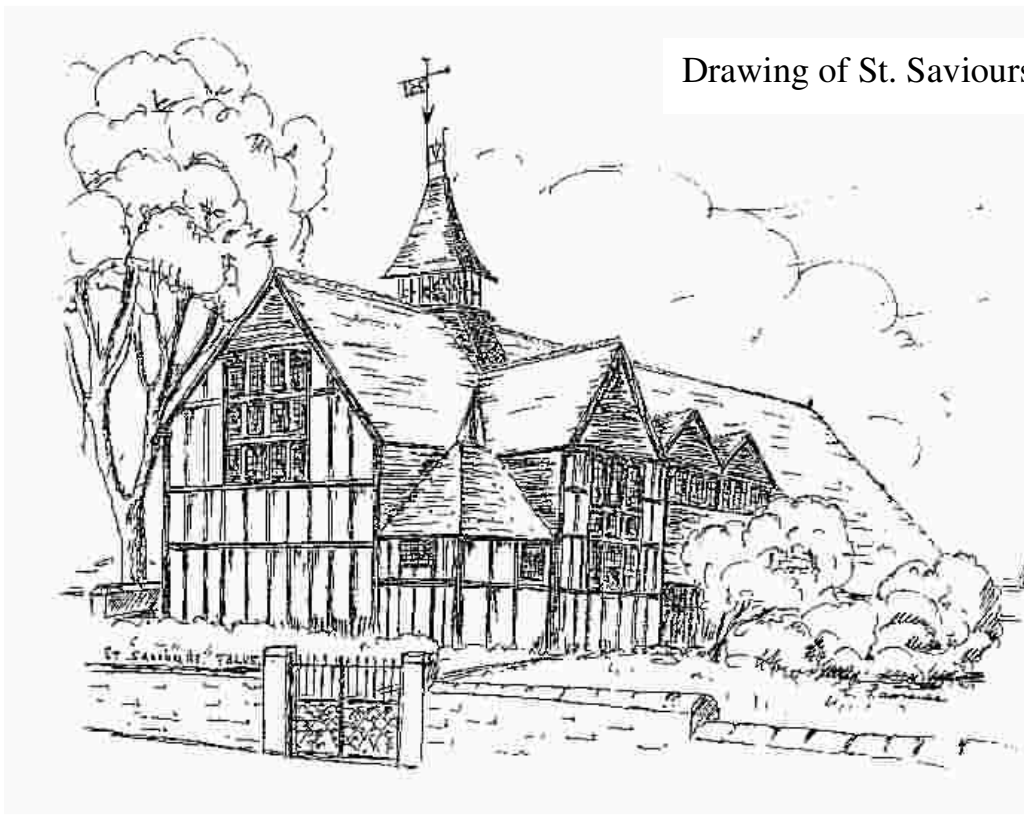
church schools as it was too controversial for a state curriculum. We currently only have the surviving marriage records of 1916-1963. Both of these buildings were later replaced by the now doctors surgery.

### **The Mission**

A Church of England 'mission' to seat 200 people was built in 1877 with Mr John Henry Wibberley as the first 'lay evangelist.' People disagree over whether this was initially a church or if it was always a Sunday school. Either way, by the 1920s the mission was the focus of Talke nightlife. For 6d teenagers could dance the Charlestone to Jack Lovatt's band, which included a double bass and Frank Rigby on the piano. That is if they were too young to be dancing at the Swan Pub or go to the Market dance Hall in Audley! In 1950 it became the St. Martins Junior School, and the site is now taken by a private day nursery.

Most of these later churches, including the mission church, were built out of the subscription money of local worshippers. Mr E Warrilow in his '*History of Talke, 1892*' states that there was only one church that was funded by tithe money, a £78 a year living (in 1892 money) and 88 acres of Glebe (church) land, both of which were in the gift of the Audley Vicar. Perhaps this was the official parish church of St. Martins?

St. Saviours Church was consecrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 1879, having been designed by a London Architect Mr. Best, and made out of timber filled with concrete and plaster. It was fairly large, it could seat 600, but it has since been replaced by St. Saviours School.



Drawing of St. Saviours church

In 1886 a Baptist chapel was built in Butt Lane. There was also a united Methodist church in Thomas Street, near to John Street and Wesley Street whose names also commemorate the founders of this nonconformist religion, of which only Thomas Street remains. Baptism records remain for 1897-1955. There was also a Welsh Wesleyan Chapel in Butt Lane, and one in Red Street.