



The Apostolic Church In Hereford

Haydn Greenow - FEBRUARY 2016



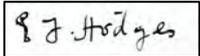
The City of Hereford is famous for a number of things – Bulmer’s Cider, Hereford Cattle, Nell Gwynne, its Cathedral which is also the home of the Mappa Mundi and a world famous chain library and sorry all you Newcastle supporters, who can forget the moment when Hereford United still a non-league side beat the Magpies in the FA Cup in January 1972, but there is another important fact about this city and it is this – it is probably the home of the very first Apostolic Church in the modern history of Christianity in the United Kingdom! This we will see later.

The Apostolic Church is celebrating its centenary this year and the formation of the Movement following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit during the early 1900’s and in particular the Welsh Revival. God was doing something special in certain areas of the UK and miraculously He drew these different places together to eventually become the Movement we are today. The four main places were Penygroes in Carmarthenshire, Wales, Glasgow in Scotland, Bradford in Yorkshire, England and Hereford also in England. The linking of these four centres took place



Pastor Frank Hodges

in this order. Penygroes and Glasgow in 1919 then with Hereford 1920 then with Bradford in 1922.



The first building in Monkmoor Street (photo 1980)

During the outpouring of the Welsh Revival in 1904-05 a well-known and respected Gentlemen’s

Outfitter in Hereford was saved and filled

with the Holy Spirit, his name was Frank Hodges. He was converted as a result of a Torrey-Alexander Mission and because of his Spirit baptism he had to break away from the mission he was attending and he commenced a new place of worship in the City. A lady called Mrs Hambridge, who owned a row of cottages, gave a plot of land for this new work. These cottages were demolished and a Church building was erected. This took place in 1908 and after the building was completed this new group of believers asked of the Lord for a name to be given for them, Frank Hodges was inspired to put a sign above the door which read ‘THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH’. The building was in Monkmoor Street and was still used for services up until the early 1990’s the building is still standing and is now used by a funeral director.



Pastor William Rowe



A few years after this Frank Hodges heard about a convention being held in Wales and that those holding the convention were also called 'The Apostolic Church', he went to the convention and gave an invitation for the brothers Pastors D.P. and W.J. Williams to come to Hereford. On their arrival they were amazed to see the name 'The Apostolic Church' over the door and after many confirmations and ministries of the Ascension Gifts the Hereford assembly decided to join fellowship with the work in Wales, this taking place in 1920.

The work in Hereford began to expand quickly and in mighty ways. Another man who had come from Wales to work in the City was converted, filled with the Holy Spirit and received the gift of prophecy. His name was William Rowe who was called into the ministry to serve alongside Frank Hodges. He is remembered as W.A.C. Rowe who wrote the well-known Apostolic book 'One Lord, One Faith'.



The building in Canal Road (photo 1980)

The first overseer of the work in Hereford was Mr J.F.D. Thompson who himself was later called into the full time ministry. In 1926 because of the growth of the work a new building was opened in Canal Road just a couple of hundred yards down the road from the original building in Monkmoor Street. This building was made from a timber structure and fitted around the sides with corrugated sheeting and the roof of the same material. I remember asking my grandmother back in the early 70's why they didn't build a more solid brick structure like the other building was and the reply

was simply this; 'They didn't expect to be using the building for very long because of the very strong belief in the 'Imminent Return of the Lord'. Well, this new building was used by the Church right up until the late 1990's and is still in use today as a garage, only now it is cars that go in for a service rather than people! In the early 1970's when the pastor was Pastor John Evans the building was updated (if this could be a right description to use!) when the interior was covered with hardboard panelling, hiding the dirty white tongue and groove timber and painted in a turquoise colour. We who were the youth in the assembly at the time were invited to spend the evenings with panel pins and hammers following the carpenter Mr Percy Andrews around he put the initial bits together while we completed it after him. This same building although not very much to look at, was a place where for many years the blessing of God was to be found, many being converted in the early years, on Sundays the place would be full in both the morning and evening service. Today the local congregation meet in the Eastholme Community Centre in the Belmont area of Hereford.



The Church buildings as they are today (photo 2015)

At one period of time there were 35 Churches connected to the Hereford Church as it became the centre for the work in the Midlands with 6 apostles many pastors, elders, evangelists, deacons and deaconesses.



Another Church was opened in the City in an area known as Hunderton a poorer part of the city and I can remember really well going there on a Sunday afternoon to the Sunday school which drew many children from the community, the Sunday School was run by my grandfather Jim Powell assisted by a lady called Hilda Regan (the daughter of Pastor Ben Matthews). My grandfather didn't have a car and yet he would be active on the Sunday morning as an elder in the Hereford assembly, after lunch often having to walk

(if no lift was available) to run the Sunday school in Hunderton then return home ready to attend the Church again in the evening and he did this tirelessly till he was well into his late 60's.

For many years Hereford held one of the main conventions of the Apostolic Church at Whitsun time, later changed to the Spring bank holiday. The convention was held from the Saturday through till the Tuesday evening and was a highlight of the year. Many used to attend from around the Hereford district and wider afield from the Shrewsbury and Birmingham districts. One of the memorable aspects of the convention for me would be the Monday evening, which was the missionary meeting. Usually besides the convention speakers that would number three or four, any missionaries' home on furlough would also attend. Personally those Monday evening meetings had a big impact upon my life in regards to mission. I remember Pastor W Pearson being home from New Zealand and calling some of the youngsters out to help him with a roll of paper. When it was unrolled almost covering the width of the front it had this long name of a place in New Zealand don't ask me what it was but I remember the occasion and the challenge it left in my young life. He also shared that the Lord had spoken to him at sometime in the past saying that he would go to the ends of the world with the gospel and he showed a photograph that had been taken of himself and his wife standing by a sign that said 'The uttermost part of the world!' Oh that we could be challenged in the same way again and respond with commitment to the call of God on our lives not only in going but also in giving to support overseas mission.



Children in the Hunderton Sunday School in 1953 (Hereford Times)

Over the course of the history of the work in Hereford, some have gone from the City to serve in other nations, of the three men already mentioned, Pastors W.A.C. Rowe went to Australia and J.F.D. Thompson left the UK to work in the Apostolic Church in New Zealand and then to Australia. Pastor W.A.C Rowe became the Chairman of the Australian Executive and lived in Melbourne, Pastor J.F.D. Thompson became the Acting President in Australia and lived in Brisbane. Pastor Hodges also went out to Australia following his retirement to help Pastor W.A.C. Rowe. In later years Pastor Mark and Julie Andrews left Hereford to serve the Lord in Mozambique.

In the history of the work in Hereford – which has been for 108 years! The following that

have been in some way actively involved in the Hereford Apostolic Church have entered into the ministry of the Apostolic Church:

Frank Hodges, W.A.C.Rowe, J.F.D Thompson, Ben Matthews, Fred H. Williams, Robert Hughes (retired Gorslas) Brian Powell (retired Walsall), David Williams, Mark Andrews (currently serving in Skewen, Ystradgynlais and Pontardawe), Robin Pryse (currently serving in Aberaman) and Haydn Greenow (currently serving in Rhyl, Wrexham and Shrewsbury).

Over its 108 years at least the following have been pastors of the Hereford work (the earlier years not necessarily complete or in order):

Frank Hodges, William Rowe, J.F.D.Thompson, A Chanter, J. J. Williams, B. George Evans, C.H. Rosser, J. Eynon, Cecil Ireson, J. Lindsay, Tom Saunders, W. (Bill) Bidder, A. Strathdee, John Evans, Ken Rees, Ernest Chase, Philip Cawthorne, Jim Hodge, David Williams, Howard Chiplin and Derrick Hopkins.

Besides this list there were men who were located in Hereford when the second work was in place in Hunderton: C Forest, C.C. Morris, Jim McCullough and Harry Knight.

The Apostolic Church secretary for many years, Mr H C Jones was also from Hereford.

In the history that has been recorded of the Apostolic Church in books such as 'What God hath Wrought' and Ploughman's Progress' the following narratives have been recorded either to do with personnel or situations linked to Hereford.

"One day, whilst engaged in a campaign in the town of Hereford, Pastor Andrew Turnbull went for a walk through the streets accompanied by a man who did not believe in the existence of demons. It was in the summer and the sun was very strong. Turnbull and his companion were striding along the pavement when they overtook a lad wheeling a barrow filled with vegetables. As they passed him the shadow of Turnbull fell on the youth. Whereupon, dropping his barrow in confusion and scattering the vegetables in the act, the urchin took to his heels and fled. Soon he fell down in what is generally called an epileptic fit. The Pastor at once realised that something was wrong. The lad was a demoniac. Turnbull ran after him, bent over him and commanded the demon to come out of him in the Name of Jesus. This it did to the astonishment of the crowd which had gathered in the street to witness the occurrence. Needless to say, Turnbull's companion needed no further demonstration of the reality of demon power" (Ploughman's Progress I Macpherson - page 223).

"Pastor Frank Hodges received a mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit in the early days of the latter day outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It happened while, on a mountain-top in Wales, he was with other brethren seeking God. The signs following which he experienced was that, without any knowledge of Welsh, he spoke in that language a message of God clearly and with perfect enunciation several hours giving glory to God, those around him knowing the language" (What God hath Wrought T.N.Turnbull - page 150).



Pastor David Williams a 'Hereford(shire) Lad' who faithfully served God in Hereford, Lydden, Neath, Penygroes and Inverness

"On still another occasion when Pastor Andrew Turnbull was in Hereford, England, while sitting at the table eating food, the Spirit of God came on him and he spoke with tongues. A lady from France who was also sitting at the table said that he was speaking in the French language and saying what a great and mighty God he had. He was magnifying God in other tongues" (What God hath wrought T.N.Turnbull - page 152).

In April 1980 during a Region Three Youth Weekend in Clovelly Hall, Whitchurch, Shropshire, the Lord spoke through Pastor John Langford the following: *'I would give a word to the lads of the Hereford district, if you will seek the Lord in your closet my hand will be upon you. You shall know the power of God and realize that I have brought you, and as I have brought you so will I take you. As you have tilled in natural soil, so I have been sowing my word in your lives, allow me to till the soil, let me saturate it, and you will stand in awesome wonder, its not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord. I have moved through you from small to big, from the least to the greatest, oldest to the youngest.'* In looking back over the 35 years since that occasion God has been faithful and from that group of Hereford lads seven have served as elders in the Hereford assembly and four of them in the full time ministry of the Church.

As we look back we must thank God for every blessing that has flowed from the throne of God through the assemblies and ministries of the movement in Hereford, ministries that have reached to the uttermost parts of the world. We pray that God will yet again move in sovereign power through the city of Hereford. 'Do again Lord the mighty works that you did of old'.

'O God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us, what deeds you performed in their days, in the days of old . . . Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever! Why do you hide your face? . . . For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly clings to the ground. Rise up; come to our help! Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!' (Psalm 44 ESV)

Sources:

Own personal knowledge from interviews given and research in completing my Thesis 'History of the Apostolic Church' 1980/81 AC Bible College, Penygroes. What God hath Wrought - T.N. Turnbull, Ploughman's Progress - I. Macpherson, Brothers in Arms - T.N. Turnbull
Thanks to Ps Brian Powell for helping me clarify some of the information