



DURHAM  
*In Time*

## Harraton Colliery Chapel - a history

by James Lake

A local historian, Mr. Albert Hind, records the building of a Chapel at Harraton Colliery. This was built in 1873 financed by the Earl of Durham and is of brick construction seating 150, the building is still standing. It was used by the Primitive Methodists. This particular branch of Methodism had as its aim the recovery, as they saw it of the principles and practice of the early Methodists which had been lost or at least played down. The chapel was the chosen place of worship for believers of the working classes, where as the Anglican Church was seen as the domain of the "bosses". The Chapel functioned as a place of worship until 1932 when it closed.

According to Dr. Leon le-Dune it remained closed for about 9 months, in the meantime a Mr. Tom Fawcett was appointed as Chief Engineer at the Colliery. He came to live at 10, Office Row next to the Chapel, and being a man of profound Christian faith, the sight of the empty building was a source of deep concern to him.

He became convinced that the Chapel should again become a place of worship and witness.

Single handed and after much prayer and endeavour he obtained permission to open the Chapel. He walked around the area handing out leaflets to the effect that a series of meetings would be held over a period of one week. He did not consider himself to be a preacher, so he invited an evangelist, a Mr. Lavington to come and preach for a week. The Chapel was opened on the 24th of October 1933 and about 70 people attended. The rest of the week was well attended and several people professed their faith in Christ. These formed the nucleus of a new church which became an Assembly of Plymouth Brethren. The local people always referred to it as Fawcett's Chapel as he was held in high regard in the community. A congregation worshipped there until 1975, when it vacated the building and





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moved to its present site which believe it or not is on the very site of the screeners cabin of the now forgotten colliery. The new building is very impressive, rising like a Phoenix out of the ashes, and through Washington New Town was known as Rickelton Chapel. These days it is Wearside Community Church.

The old building is still in use. First it was a community centre, now it is a Doctors surgery.

*Digitised by C. Wild*

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