

A Reflection by Graham Hargreaves

My parents were active members of Coundon Methodist Church which sadly closed its doors five years ago. A few years ago, one of our regular members, Malcolm Whittle, a local preacher who moved to Hinckley died and, in his memory, we paid for a hardwood bench to be made which we placed in the gardens of the Willersley Castle Guild Home overlooking the river Derwent. Plaques to other members who have since passed on have been added.

Sadly, Willersley Castle has now been sold and one of the members managed to rescue the bench from a pile of property destined for the skip. Please see below an article from Mike Skinner the gentleman who rescued the bench which explains its rescue and its new local resting place.

Many of the old Coundon members still worship at other Churches around the Circuit and I am sure would be very interested to read this story.

Pictured is the bench, with Mike Skinner standing right alongside fellowship members Brian and Maureen Roebuck.

YPF Memorial Bench

Another public bench has been installed in the walled garden after an enquiry from former members of a Coundon church demolished several year ago. One of the group Mike Skinner, who restored the bench and transported it to the garden in November, recalled its interesting background. He said:

"Our group of friends started off as members of the Guild and Young People's Fellowship at Coundon Methodist Church in the mid-50s. Many became Sunday School teachers and Society Stewards at the church and some eventually lay preachers, missionaries and one, a Superintendent Minister.

At the time there was a network of holiday homes around the country specifically for Methodist Guild members and many of our group spent summer and Easter holidays at these places. In time, many of them became Christian Guild holiday and conference centers for all denominations. A particular favorite of our group was Willersley Castle at Cromford in Derbyshire and most of our members have happy memories of times spent here.

It was in 2010 after one of our members died of cancer that I had the idea of putting a memorial bench at Willersley Castle with his name plate on it together with name plates of those that had previously died. Twenty members contributed to the cost of the bench and I purchased it and assembled it on site. We then met up at Willersley the following July for a dedication ceremony. Since then, others have passed away and further name plates added. "Some months ago, it came to our notice that Willersley Castle was to be sold and a fortuitous visit revealed that the various memorial benches in the grounds were destined for the skip. Our bench was rescued and brought back to Coventry and a new location was sought. "Allesley Park Walled Garden was suggested, and this was thought to be an ideal site as it was not very far from our old church at Coundon. We would like to thank the APWG Group for allowing us to re-site the bench in very fitting new surroundings."