

Charles Turner: Druggist and Methodist

Given that our Society meets in the Methodist Schoolroom, this item may be of interest by providing some background details for one of the leading Methodists at the time when the Schoolroom was built in 1845.

Born in 1793 in Rossington, son of John Turner also a druggist, Charles followed in his father's footsteps training as an apprentice in his father's druggist shop in Tickhill until he was 19. After working as an assistant druggist in Newark, Charles moved back to Tickhill to work in his father's business in Market Place. John died in 1825 aged 80 (his wife Ann died in 1819) leaving Charles in sole charge of the business. Charles became very active in the Methodist community. Even as a young man he was known as 'Father Turner' as a mark of respect for his character and beliefs. He founded the Sunday School and visited the sick, among other activities. At this time the Methodists 'worshipped in a lowly place in Mangham Lane'. Charles was at the forefront in efforts to acquire land on Northgate and build a new Chapel and subsequently the Schoolroom. He was Trustee (the only one of the Trustees of the original Chapel who retained the role when the new Chapel was built), Treasurer of the Trustees, School Manager, Teacher and Superintendent.

Charles married Esther Lawson Atkinson from Wadworth on 10 July 1821. Before her marriage Esther was an active member of the Methodist Society in Wadworth and began a flourishing Sunday School and Missionary Association there. After her marriage she led a class here and visited the sick as well as raising her growing family: Sarah born in 1822 (who died in 1825 and was buried in her grandparents' grave), John in 1824, Charles in 1825, and Ann Elizabeth in 1827. Esther died shortly after giving birth to her fifth child, Henry, in 1829. Charles had another child, Frederick, with his second wife, Elizabeth Mary Atkinson, whom he married on 9 August 1831. Charles's second wife and their son died in 1832. Both Charles' wives were buried in the same grave, near his parents' grave in St Mary's churchyard, along with his baby sons Henry and Frederick. Charles often went to the grave and wept according to his obituary. His sister Mary helped to look after the three surviving children until she married, then the teenage Ann Elizabeth took over the running of the family household with the help of a live-in servant, caring for her father and brothers, John and Charles.

In Ann Elizabeth's obituary written by her husband he noted 'her training had been thorough in the priceless ability to manage; and this, with her accomplishments, fitted her to keep open for her father some years longer one of the most hospitable and happy Methodist homes in England... the Methodism of her native place for many years has had among its adherents not only the godly poor, but also educated and well-to-do people. Early in her Christian life Annie Turner followed her sainted mother's example in loving kindness towards those in need; and in the little town she had her select circle of young friends that loved her and looked up to her. One of them remarked: 'Our town never seemed like itself after dear Annie left us'...She never lost a friend. In Tickhill, she took an active part in various Christian work.....the Class-meeting, however at times it might have been a cross to her, she never neglected, but gratefully enjoyed.' Ann left Tickhill in 1854 when she married The Rev. Joshua Mason and moved to Peterhead.

Census returns for 1841 and 1851 show that Charles Turner had live-in apprentices helping with his druggist business: Richard Turner (aged 16) in 1841 and William Butterell (also aged 16) in 1851. The 1851 Census shows that Tickhill had three druggists in business in the Market Place. As well as Charles there was Thomas Crowther and George Jarvis who was a druggist as well as a grocer. Is there a clue here as to why Charles' business finished? He lost his property, both his business and home, and moved away from Tickhill by 1860 (a trial which would have crushed some men according to his obituary). He left behind 'a good name' and so there is no suggestion of a scandal but what happened to Charles' business remains a mystery. He went to live first with his daughter and her husband in Sale and then later with his son John, also a druggist, and his wife, five daughters and a son, in Liverpool. He died there at 75 Norwood Grove on 30 November 1873 aged 80 and was buried in Toxteth Park Cemetery.

Charles' obituary notice was full of praise: 'A more kind, unselfish, exemplary father children never had; and a better master never had servants under him. If there was any fault in his rule, it was certainly not the want of kindness; never was there a more considerate and trustworthy friend; a kindness done to him was always remembered, and he delighted in doing a kindness....He was referred to as a model of good neighbourliness. His home was always open, but not more open than his heart, to receive his friends and their friends with them.'

Notice about the death of Esther Lawson Turner in *The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, Vol. 8, 1829
Memorial Sketch of the late Mr Charles Turner, of Tickhill, in the Doncaster Circuit by his son-in-law The Rev. Joshua Mason,
The City-Road Magazine, October 1874
Memorial Sketch of Ann Elizabeth Mason by her husband The Rev. Joshua Mason, *The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine,*
August 1882