

JOHN WEDGWOOD'S LAST RESTING PLACE

A striking feature of the graveyard at Brown Knowl Methodist Chapel is the monument which marks the burial place of John Wedgwood (1788-1869), who was related to the family of the Staffordshire pottery king Josiah Wedgwood.

John was a leading figure in the early history of Primitive Methodism, which had its origins in open-air 'camp meetings' held on Mow Cop, the prominent hill with a folly on top standing on the borders of Cheshire and Staffordshire near Alsager.

He married one of the daughters of William Clowes (1780-1851) who, with Hugh Bourne (1772-1852), is regarded as one of the founders of Primitive Methodism.

Primitive Methodism was one of a number of new Christian denominations which were formed in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as 'breakaways' from mainstream Methodism.

John Wedgwood and Hugh Bourne travelled widely on horseback across Cheshire and its neighbouring counties, stopping to preach on village greens and in other public places.

In October 1822 they reached Brown Knowl, a fast growing community in the township of Broxton, where they preached under a large oak tree at the top of the village.

John soon established a congregation there, organising its members into small groups which met during the week under class leaders for Bible reading and prayer, as was the common practice for Methodists.

Among the members were Richard and Mary Jones, who had provided hospitality for the two travelling preachers and who allowed their home to be used for Sunday worship until sufficient funds were raised to build a small chapel in 1835.

This first chapel was demolished to make way for the present chapel, opened in 1913 after the congregation had grown considerably from the seeds sown by Wedgwood and Bourne.

Having established the cause at Brown Knowl, John travelled on to Tattenhall, Beeston and Tarporley but Brown Knowl seems to have held a special place in his heart.

He returned there frequently to preach to the growing congregation and chose the spot for his final resting place.

It is said that when his coffin was brought from Crewe for his funeral in 1869 the line of mourners stretched all the way back to Bulkeley.

John Wedgwood is remembered as a striking figure, commanding the respect of his hearers as he stood preaching in the open air, always with his Bible in his hand. His portrait by W H Mote can be seen hanging in the Museum of Primitive Methodism at Englesea Brook, near Crewe, and is reproduced in the book by Wendy Bawn, Rebecca Dakin and Carol Shadbolt on the *'History of Broxton, Duckington & Harthill'*.

His legacy endures in the life of the vibrant chapel which still flourishes in Brown Knowl.

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