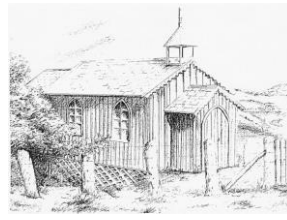


Minniesdale Chapel



A Short History

Back in the 1860's, the early Albertlanders came together every Sunday, for worship. These services were held at various homes in the district and all the while these settlers of Wharehine hoped for a chapel of their own. Rev. Edwin Stanley Brookes Senior, a trained Baptist Minister, appeared to them, at one of the openair services in 1866 held in fine weather, and said he intended to build a house of God in which they could hold Divine worship.

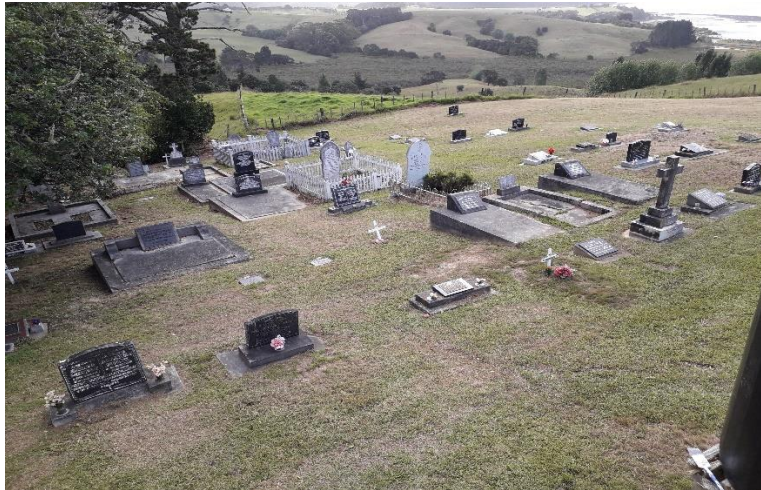
After many months of labour, the chapel was finally finished. On Sunday, December 29th 1867, Minniesdale Chapel was officially opened and there were two days of celebrations to follow. Over the next 30 or so years Minniesdale conducted many weddings, christenings, funerals and Sunday services. During 1897 and 1899 only five services were held by a visiting preacher, the Rev. J H Collins of the Baptist Union, Auckland, who in conjunction with local members, endeavoured to keep services continuing.

In 1902, Minniesdale was given to the district for the use of all denominations. A committee held regular meetings and endeavoured to keep things afloat. Then from 1922 things became more business-like and in 1925 Harold Marsh began 22 years as Chairman. Subscriptions enabled many minor repairs to be completed. Personal donations from local people have helped to preserve the chapel.

Saturday 27th December 1947, the community held the 80th Anniversary Reunion, afternoon tea was served and flowers placed on all the graves. At 11am the following day a thanksgiving service was conducted by Rev. E W Hames, the grandson of an Albertlander.



The chapel and cemetery are well cared for by a dedicated group of Trustees who meet regularly. A service was held December 2017 to mark 150 years since the first service, and the months preceding this, much work was done in preparation by the Wellsford Lions Club, trustees and local residents. The grounds are now maintained by the Lions for which the Trustees, and the community, appreciate their time and effort.



For more detailed history of this beautiful chapel there is a booklet for sale in the chapel – An Historical Record 1867-2017. In time, an update will be done, when current stocks are depleted. There is a facebook page and a website www.minniesdale.com that has photos, a timeline of events, surnames of those buried in the cemetery, recent newsletters, and a contact page if anyone wishes to purchase a plot or hire the chapel.

Thanksgiving Anniversary Service 7th January 2024

Once a year the Trustees host a Thanksgiving Service, on or near, the date of the opening service in 1867. If this falls too near Christmas or the New Year it is held over until the Sunday following. This allows visitors from afar to join in this significant annual event.

We dedicated this years' service to the memory of Edward (Ted) and Runa Halfpenny, departed this life, November 2000 and December 2023, respectively. The pencil sketch at the top of the page, was drawn by Ted as a teenager, and shows how much the chapel and surrounds have changed over the years.

January 7th, 2024 dawned a beautiful sunny day. Over 50 people attended Minniesdale Chapel and all survived the heat in the tiny confines, thankfully. Nothing much has changed in all these years, with only the double doors leading in and two windows opening behind the altar and pulpit, with a view of the Oruawharo River. The chapel was full to capacity, hosted by Clare Joensen standing in at the last minute, assisted by Albertlander Chris Hill who did the blessings for the day. Clare welcomed all the speakers and the hymns that were chosen for the service, Love Divine & How Great Thou Art, as per usual, sounded lovely within the walls of this beautiful building.

Our first speaker, Peter Marsh, gave us the history of two pioneering women in his family who came out with the early settlers, and then to follow we had a prayer for those early people who helped establish and settle the area.

HeartsAchord singers, sang 'Owen Sound' and 'Amazing Grace'. Both songs came to America (with settlers) from the UK, from 1700 to around 1850. These hymns and anthems were sung and played in English parish churches and nonconformist chapels in the same era. This selection was very appropriate, remembering all those nonconformists who came here to practice their own religion, without restrictions.

Jacob Garrett then read a scripture, Psalm 91, who was followed by our guest speaker, Phil van der Mespel, with a message based on this Psalm.

After the closing blessing the Trustees of Minniesdale Chapel gave thanks to those who helped plan this service and those in the congregation who came together on this day. Thoughts were expressed for those who could not attend. An invitation was extended to all to join in a shared afternoon tea at the Wharehine Hall.

A huge thank you must go to everyone, too many to name, who contributed to make this such a special day and have always been happy to offer their time. The Trustees do appreciate this.

Prepared by Barbara Lane
Trustee & Treasurer

