

Good team work and sound production were evident all through the show, which got its full share of laughs.

at Victoria Methodist Church, Horwich, on Wednesday. Mrs. A. Scott was soloist and Mrs. J. Carr presided.

Bolton Royal Infirmary, where he was detained. Driver of the car was Mr. Fred Moore (21), Headless Cross, Anderton.

## RE-OPENING SERVICE TO-MORROW

# Ancient Rivington Chapel gets new lease of life

Thanks to the generosity of one of its members, the 250-years-old Rivington Chapel has been recently renovated. The work of renovation, which was urgently needed, has been carried out with great care in order to avoid spoiling the aspect and atmosphere of this ancient and picturesque chapel. To-morrow a re-opening service is being held.

Situated in delightful surroundings at the foot of Rivington Pike, in country that has for generations been the haunt of walkers and ramblers from industrial Lancashire, the building is one of the many interesting chapels erected in England following the Toleration Act of 1689.

The present chapel was built in 1703, but its origins must be sought some 50 years earlier, when Nonconformity became established as a permanent feature of the English religious scene. Its early ministers and worshippers came from those who were driven, for conscience's sake, to leave the Church of England.

The Nonconformists came into being as a result of the Act of Uniformity in 1660, when Charles II demanded that all Church of England clergymen should consent to a certain prayer book. Samuel Newton, minister at Rivington Church, was one of over 1,000 clergymen who refused.

### Services held at Noon Hill

Then the dissenting clergymen became known as Nonconformists, and were rigorously persecuted. The people of Rivington, loyal to Newton, were compelled to worship secretly at Noon Hill, on where seats were cut out of a de-

pression in the side of a hill, so as to form an amphitheatre, in the centre of which was a stone pulpit.

However, relief came to the Nonconformists with the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672. Along with Presbyterians, Independents and others they were allowed to conduct services provided they applied for and received a licence. Newton took three licences, including one for "the meeting-place, Rivington." This was undoubtedly the Episcopal Chapel or Church. It came into the hands of the Nonconformists and they worshipped there until the last decade of the century—even after the Act of Indulgence had been withdrawn.

With the passing of the Toleration Act in 1689, Nonconformists began building their own chapels, and in 1703 Rivington Chapel was built.

### The chapel becomes Unitarian

According to the first trust deed, the chapel was to be for "the assembly and meeting of a particular church or congregation dissenting from the Church of England". Thus succeeding generations were not bound to a particular creed. In the course of the 18th century the congregation became Unitarian, and today it is a constituent member of the General Assembly of

Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

The 12th Lord Willoughby's name appears on the Trust deed, and the Willoughby family were strong Nonconformists. To-day, the chapel still has the Willoughby pew, and an imposing monument to the family.

In 1717 the congregation numbered 329, more than the present population of the village. Among a long succession of ministers, notabilities have included the Rev. John Turner, who took the field against the forces of the Old Pretender in 1715. There was also Samuel Bourn, who was to originate the doctrine of conditional immortality.

Though there has been no resident minister since the early years of this century, a small, loyal congregation meets for worship each Sunday. The building of the reservoirs has depopulated the district, but the chapel is a favourite centre for summer outings and meetings of neighbouring Unitarians.

Anyone entering its ivy-covered walls to-day cannot fail to note its mullioned windows, square pews, and fine oak pulpit.

The recent restoration has made it more comfortable, but has not taken away its plain beauty. The chapel has been re-roofed, a new ceiling, electric light and heating have been installed, woodwork has been renewed, a new bell (a gift) hung, and a new organ (gift of Parklane Chapel, Wigan) will be in use. For years to come, visitors to Rivington who care to rest for a moment within its walls will find peace and spiritual refreshment.

Rev. F. KENWORTHY  
(Secretary, Unitarian  
Historical Society).