

WILLIAM ALTON

William was born in 1852 in Duffield, Derbyshire the son of William & Grace Alton

He became a Primitive methodist minister in 1876

He married Sarah Louisa Walker in September 1880; they had three children.

He died in Keigthley in 1896 at the early age of 42.

Just two scraps of Newspaper items add colour to his brief life:

COLNE ROAD Primitive Methodist Chapel

On Sunday special sermons were preached in this place by the Rev William Alton.

The subjects were:

in the morning "Remarkable religious revivals in the past"
and evening

"Requisites for obtaining a permanent revival at present"

(Burnley Gazette 14 October 1891)

EBENEZER PSA

This class held its weekly meeting on Sunday under the presidency of Mr R Dawson.

There was a good attendance.

Miss Matson sung two solos very sweetly: - "Come unto me" and "Hold Thou my hand".

Miss F Grey recited very effectively "The Lifeboat".

The Rev William Alton delivered an interesting address on "Model Young Women".

Miss Carton presided at the piano.

(Hull Daily Mail 10 September 1894)

His obituary notice read

The Rev William Alton, Primitive Methodist minister of the Keigthley First Circuit, died on Saturday afternoon at his home, Holker - street, Keigthley, aged about 42 years, after a fortnight's illness.

Mr. Alton was a native of a village near Derby, where the interment is to take place on Tuesday.

His connexional work included pastorates at Leicester, Windsor, Burnley, and Hull.

He was a member of the recently formed Keigthley and District Non-conformist Council.

Mr. Alton leaves a widow and three children to mourn his loss, and he will be missed in a circuit in which he had laboured for about twelve months.

(Leeds Mercury 7 September 1896)

William's wife Sarah, who played a great part in supporting him during his ministerial career, sadly died a few years after him before their children had reached adulthood:

Mrs. William Alton

We very regretfully record what seems to us the premature decease of a dear sister and fine Christian woman. Mrs. W. Alton, of Derby, passed to her heavenly rest on Friday, Aug. 18th, in her 48th year. It is nearly nine years (September 1896) since her husband (Rev. W. Alton) finished his earthly course in the prime of life. Both deaths have caused shock and acute sorrow to not a few friends, and particularly to the bereaved children.

Mrs. Alton was a Primitive Methodist of the third generation. There has been a remarkable reproduction in her case of what the Apostle Paul mentions in his Epistle to Timothy, "The unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also." In many of the qualities which contributed to the excellence of her character, our sister profited by her family inheritance. Her mental alertness, practical sense, social geniality, and most of all, her religious thoroughness, are accounted for considerably by heredity.

She became a Christian disciple in early life, took her place forthwith among the workers of Kedleston Street congregation, Derby (in which circuit her father, Mr. W. Walker, was a local preacher), and has from that time exemplified a sustained and noble self-consecration. It was regarded as only a fitting development that eventually by marriage she should pass on to a wider service as the wife of one of our most devoted ministers. There was no laboured task of accommodation necessary on her part in doing this.

She was herself a true minister in spirit, and found delight in the responsible duties of this anxious sphere. Perhaps it may be ventured, that few ministers have been more fortunate in their marriage than was Mr. Alton. Mrs. Alton's purity, discretion, sympathy, and unabating interest in the work of God made her an invaluable help-meet. Her industry was great and without ostentation, and her name is affectionately cherished on the stations where they travelled. It is needless to say that much success was realised on these stations

Then came her period of heavy loss and trial. Widowhood became her lot, and the necessity of rearing single-handed her three children. The loneliness and anxiety of these years were known only to herself, and she did not speak superfluously about them. They were borne quietly and bravely.

Her spare time was still given unstintedly to her loved ministry, and for a few years she was engaged as a visitor by the Champion Street society, Derby. She was also a class leader in connection with this society till her death. There seems, however, little doubt that widowhood and its consequent cares were a burden too taxing for her constitution. Her physical reserve gradually spent itself, and the end inevitably came, though many were surprised it came so soon. Still none can say her rest has not been nobly earned, and all feel sure that she is with her dear departed one, and both with their Saviour.

The funeral on Tuesday, August 22nd, brought together a large company of mourning friends. The service was conducted by the Revs. F. Jeffs (Sheffield) and J. Bradbury (Grimsby), the first part of it being held in Kedleston Street chapel. We commend her sorrowing children to the prayers of our people.

(Primitive Methodist Leader 31 August 1905)

The respect for Susan Alton was recorded a few months after her death with a memorial to

CAMPION STREET PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL ANNIVERSARY

The Chapel Anniversary services in connection with the above place were held on Sunday last when two impressive sermons were preached by Rev G E Lloyd (Circuit Minister). On Monday evening a public meeting was held.....

.... The Chairman said that the principal object of their meeting that night was to unveil a memorial tablet to the late Mrs Alton, widow of the Rev William Alton, Primitive Methodist minister. He (the speaker) had known Mrs Alton from childhood closely watching her career first as Sunday school scholar then as teacher and worker, and afterwards as minister's wife. It was in the latter position that their deceased sister had exceeded all that might have been expected. Travelling with her husband on various circuits including Chesterfield, Hull Keighley, Burnley and others she had endeared herself to all whose acquaintance she made: taking at all times the greatest possible interest in the churches they were connected with, her great devotion to God's work was to a large extent the cause of Mr Alton's successful ministry. Mr Wain then asked Mrs Potter to unveil the memorial

"In loving memory of Mrs Alton, widow of Rev W Alton, Primitive Methodist Minister, born Oct 25th 1857. At rest Aug 18th 1906. She was an exemplary Christian, and a faithful worker in this church for five and a half years as district visitor, class leader and Sunday school teacher. The memory of the just is blessed."

An anthem "Happy is the man" was rendered by the Campion Street choir.
Most touching yet encouraging addresses followed(etc)

(Derby Daily Telegraph 21 November 1905)