

IM CHURCHES LEIGH AREA

Home of James Ashton, Lowton c.1806 – opposite St. Luke's. Became linked to IMs of Warrington & house became preaching place, amid much local opposition. At same time, group of Wesleyans at Lowton St. Mary's (Common) had day school which was used for services. Wesleyans abandoned work there in 1819 & IMs invited to take it up. Handloom weaving community. Church still continues in later building. Group at Ashton's house met for about 50 years – latterly people from Golborne. Formed church which still stands but which is now closed on High Street.

Also in early 19th. century Warrington IMs had cottage meetings in Culcheth & Croft – latter eventually closed but chapel built in Culcheth 1845 – later rebuilt at top of Hob Hey Lane – church relocated across road about 2 years ago.

1870s Leigh was growing – number of IMs living in town from other areas, esp. Lowton. IM evangelist started to hold services in rented property – v. successful – work soon started on chapel in The Avenue – opened 1877. Same evangelist heard of group of men meeting in smithy at Atherton – from that group came church at Atherton (Mealhouse Lane).

Over next 40 years Avenue flourished & people from it went to start churches at Tyldesley (Primrose St), Westleigh (Bright St – now Kirkhall Lane), Bedford (Mill Lane), Astley. All 4 still going. But Avenue declined & closed in 1980s. Most recently a new start in Croft, meeting in Youth Centre.

Over the years produced people significant in town – e.g. Hunter & Grundy.