

# In the beginning ..

The education of the fishermen, I allow, is not very extensive.  
They have only studied two books, the Bible and the sea.”

Alphonse Esquiros, 1865  
writing about Cornwall

Records show that there have been Methodists in Port Isaac since at least 1748 when they held their meetings in the home of Richard Crabb. The evangelical vicar of St Gennys, George Thompson paid regular visits to the Society there and John Wesley visited many times between 1747 and 1789. Travelling Methodist preachers always found a welcome in the village and Port Isaac was described as “a place far removed from the vanities of the world.” John Wesley described it as “the liveliest place in the [Methodist] circuit”.

The first Chapel was built in Port Isaac round about 1750, rebuilt in 1770 and enlarged in 1784. The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel at the end of Middle Street, the Chapel in the Valley, was built by 1839.

In 1831 the Port Isaac Methodist Society had eighty-seven members, a strong congregation and a thriving Sunday School. Everything seemed to be going well until 1835 when a storm broke out about the government of Methodism in the

local Camelford Circuit to which Port Isaac belonged. One side argued that Methodism should remain autocratic as it had been under Wesley. The other side felt it should be more democratic and, under the leadership of Thomas ope Rosevear of Boscastle, the majority of Port Isaac Methodists openly rebelled against the old order and joined the Methodist Association (later to merge with the United Methodist Free Churches).

It was quite an uprising and a group of the Port Isaac reformers took over the Chapel on Middle Street, refusing to let the Superintendent Minister in and “hooting him through the town”. The loyalists eventually managed to reoccupy their Chapel but not before the reformers had removed the bell and candelabra for their new Church.

These tumultuous events are the reason there were two Methodist Chapels in Port Isaac – the Wesleyan Chapel at the end of Middle Street and the Roscarrock Hill Chapel for the United Methodists.

