

Reverend James Read
(6th March 1819 – 4th November 1893)



Laid on the ground on a cross path in the middle section of St. Matthew's churchyard in Lightcliffe are the above three pieces of stone. The top and bottom pieces enable the story of the gentleman interred in the plot to be put together. What follows is his story.

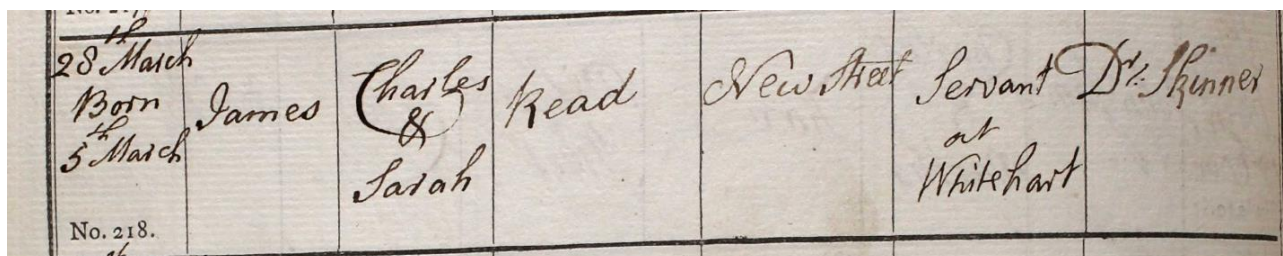


REV. JAMES READ

OF THIS PARISH

BORN MARCH 6TH 1819 DIED NOV^R 4TH 1893

It looks as if James Read was the son of Charles and Sarah Read who had him baptised at St. Thomas's Church, Salisbury, Wiltshire on 28th March 1819. [The date of birth given below is a day out from that on the memorial inscription above.] His father Charles Read was a servant and the family lived in New Street, Salisbury. On 23rd January 1815 a Charles Read had married Sarah Boxwell, from Stockbridge, Hampshire, at the same church and then had their eldest son Thomas Read baptised there on 27th October 1816. Later, on 9th September 1821, a sister Sarah Read would also be baptised at the same place.



James Read has not been found on the 1841 census. But on Sunday 30th March 1851 he was a visitor in the household of a Charles Payne, a china and glass dealer at New Canal, Salisbury. The thirty-year-old was a 'Student of Western College'.

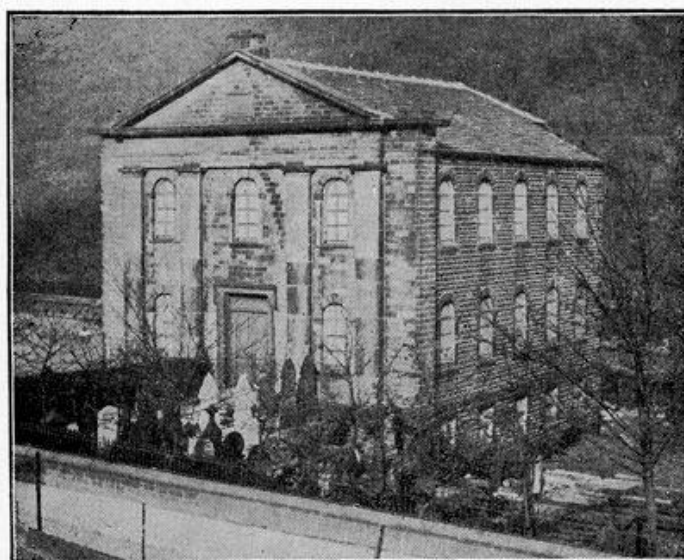
During Q3 1859 James Read married Eliza Dorothea Nelson, the marriage being registered in the Warwick district. Their daughter Eliza Harrie Read was born Q1 1861 in Atherstone, Warwickshire, as by then her father was a minister there.

1861 census

James Read	Head	40	Independent Minister Coleshill Street Chapel
Eliza D Read	Wife	25	
Eliza H Read	Dau	2/12	
Harriet S Nelson	Sister in law	16	
Elizabeth Laker	Servant	15	Domestic Servant
Address Owen St. Atherstone, WAR			

On the 23rd inst. Charles Nelson, the infant son of
Rev. James Read, Independent Minister of the
Coleshill-street Chapel, Atherstone, aged 1 year and
4 months

There was a happier event Q3 1864 when another daughter, Sarah Ellen Read, was born at Atherstone. Two years later the Read family moved to Todmorden when Rev. James Read was appointed minister at Eastwood Congregational Church, a position he would hold for eighteen years.

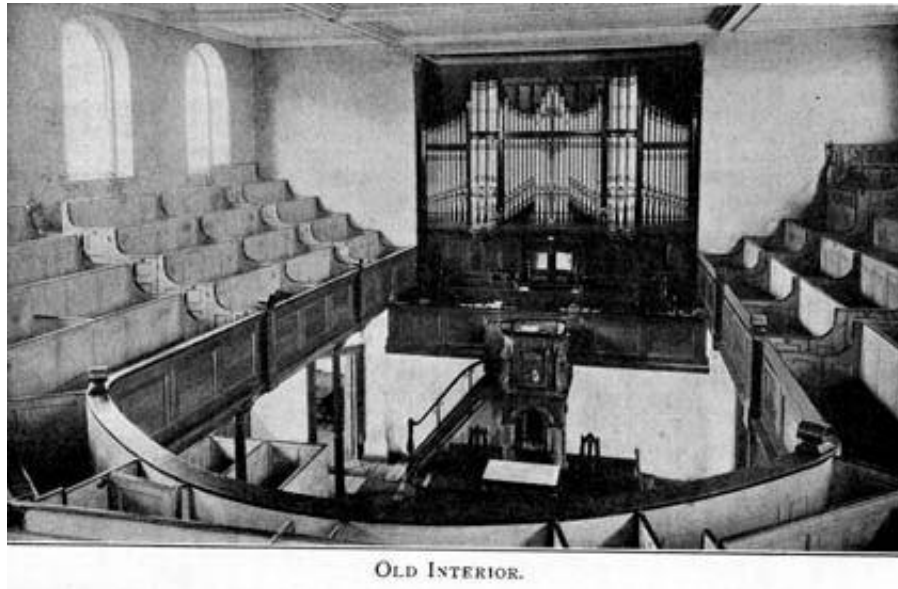


Eastwood Congregational Church.

Eliza H Reed Visitor 10 Scholar with Kendall family in Broughton, Lancashire

Sarah Ellen Read Scholar 16 at Milton Mount
College, Milton in Gravesend, KENT

In 1877, during the Reverend James Read's ministry, an organ was installed in Eastwood Congregational Church. Previously a volunteer orchestra had accompanied services. This information came from the website [Eastwood Chapel | Charlestown, Eastwood & Mytholm](#), With grateful thanks to them for the information and the two images of this non-conformist Todmorden church.



In 1884, due to ill health, the Reverend James Read retired. The Read family then moved to Roydlands Terrace, Hipperholme where they were on 5th April 1891.

1891 census

James Read Head 72 Retired Independent Minister

Eliza D Read Wife 56

Harrie Read Dau 30

Helen Read Dau 26

Address Roydlands Terrace, Halifax & Wakefield Rd., Hipperholme with Brighouse

A year later *The Todmorden & District News* for 6th May 1892 announced

NORWOOD – READ On the 20th ultimo, at St. Matthew's, Lightcliffe, by Rev. R. P. Norwood, B. A., father of the bridegroom, assisted by Rev. John Shafte Barry, M. A., Rev Robert P. Norwood, rector of Ampney St. Peter, Gloucestershire, to Harrie, elder daughter of Rev. J. Read of Lightcliffe.

The *Todmorden Advertiser and Hebden Bridge Newsletter* also gave more details about Rev. James Read in the following paragraphs published in articles about the bi-centenary of Eastwood Congregational Church.

From an article on 14th April 1893

He was followed in 1866 by James Read, educated at Western College, Plymouth, and previously minister at Axminster (1851) and Atherstone (1854) who after eighteen years of persevering labour, through failing health, resigned his charge. When he retired, there went from the ranks of local Nonconformist ministers one of the most popular and highly respected men of the district. On his withdrawal in the spring of 1884, Mr. Read was presented by his people with a flattering address and 70 guineas; and the Good Templars also gave him a substantial token of their regard.

From an article on 21st April 1893

A letter was read from the Rev. James Read, of Lightcliffe, who from 1866 to 1884 was the pastor at Eastwood. He apologised for his inability to be present that day, and said he looked back with pleasure at the many years that he lived and laboured amongst them. It was a great joy to hear of their bi-centenary commemoration.

Then a few months later on 8th November 1893, the *Halifax Evening Courier* reported on this funeral.

THE LATE REV. JAMES READ

FUNERAL TO-DAY

The esteem in which the late Rev. James Read, formally Congregational minister at Eastwood, was held was manifested in a simple but impressive manner this morning when the funeral took place. Shortly after eleven o'clock in cold and threatening weather, the cortege left the family residence at Roydlands. The coffin of pitch pine with furnishings of brass, had on it a plate bearing the inscription:- "James Read born 19th March 1819 [should be 6th March according to the memorial

inscription], died November 4th, 1893". Surmounted by a burden of lovely wreaths, the coffin was placed in a hearse with open glass sides. Preceding the vehicle walked several private friends and, in its rear, followed the carriages.

The article went on to detail the funeral service at Lightcliffe Congregational Church and then the burial in the graveyard at old St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe. There is a list of the family and friends who attended and the floral tokens that were given.

Seventy-four-year-old James Read was buried in plot H37 owned by his wife.

1404	H 37	4 Nov 1893	Nov 8 1893	James Read	74	Eliza Dorothy Read
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On 10th November 1893 *The Brighouse Echo* reported on the inquest.

HIPPERHOLME

SUDDEN DEATH OF A RETIRED MINISTER

We regret to have to record the death of the Rev. James Read, retired Congregational minister, whose demise occurred somewhat suddenly at his residence, Roydlands, Hipperholme, last Saturday afternoon. Mr. Read, who had reached 74 years of age, had suffered from apoplexy for the last twelve years, but still nothing serious was anticipated just prior to his death. On Saturday afternoon, shortly before four o'clock, the Rev. J. H. Stowell, M.A., the resident minister at Bramley Lane Congregational Church, called to see Mr. Read for the purpose of returning to Mr. Read a book which he had borrowed from him. The two gentlemen entered into a spirited discussion on the merits of the book, and then, after a stay of about five minutes, Mr. Stowell left, Mr. Read accompanying his visitor to the front door. It appears that Mr. Read had been for some little time alone in the house, his wife having gone to inquire after a sickly child in a neighbour's house; and the daughter was out giving a painting lesson, an art which she excels at. Upon Mrs Read coming into the house about ten minutes after Mr. Stowell had left, she was horrified to find her husband lying dead on the hearthrug in the kitchen. Mr. Read having evidently been seized with apoplexy. The sad affair became speedily known in the district, and the greatest sympathy was expressed towards the bereaved family. The

facts of the case were reported by the police to the Coroner, and an inquest was held at the Whitehall Inn on Tuesday noon. Mr. W. Denton was foreman of the jury. The only witnesses called were Miss Helen Read, the Rev. J. H. Stowell, and Jane Lee, the latter having assisted to lay out the body. From the evidence given by Miss Read, it appears that her father had been subject to very severe pain, and at such times beads of perspiration studded his brow. Dr. Thompson, of Mytholmroyd, had previously been his medical attendant, but deceased had not seen the doctor professionally since the 14th of August. —The Coroner intimated to the jury that he had received a letter from Dr. Thompson stating that he had known Mr. Read to be suffering from a weak heart for a considerable time. In his (Dr. Thompson's) opinion death had undoubtedly been cardiac failure. The doctor also added in this letter that in Mr. Read's case he had expected such a termination for the last twenty years. --- The jury eventually returned a verdict to the effect that death was due to cardiac failure. The interment took place at Lightcliffe Parish Church on Wednesday afternoon, and previous to the interment a short service was held at the Congregational Church. The funeral was very largely attended. -- Mr Read was a native of Wiltshire where he was born in 1819. In 1866 Mr. Read became a minister at Eastwood Congregational Church, where he remained 18 years, retiring in 1884. Since that time, he has resided at Lightcliffe, where he was held in high esteem by all who knew him.

There is a probate record.

READ James of Lightcliffe Yorkshire independent minister died 4 November 1893
Probate London 28 December to George Henry Smith wire manufacturer and Alfred Creet
surveyor Effects £981 7s 11d

No one else was buried in Lightcliffe plot H37.

Rev. Robert P. Norwood became the vicar of Compton Abdale, Gloucestershire in 1894 moving into the vicarage with his wife and young daughter. This was where his mother-in-law, Eliza Dorothea Read née Nelson, died on 19th January 1896. She was buried at Compton Abdale on 21st January 1896.



READ Eliza Dorothea of Lightcliffe Halifax widow died 19 January 1896 at the Vicarage Compton Gloucestershire Administration 10 August to Eliza Harrie Norwood (wife of the reverend Robert Pickman Norwood clerk) and Sarah Ellen Read spinster Effects £745

James Read is one of a number of non-conformist ministers buried at Lightcliffe in St. Matthew's churchyard. The memorial inscription pays testament to his time at Eastwood.



FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS HE WAS THE MUCH BELOVED PASTOR
OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN EASTWOOD NEAR TODMORDEN

Other non-conformist ministers include Reverend Irvine Lister – read [Rev. Irvine Lister and family.pdf](#) - and **Reverend Matthew Stanley.**

D.M.Barker

August 2025