

From the Chair

We once thought that the summer would be a quiet period for the society. How wrong could we be? This year, again, has seen members enjoying a variety of activities. Visits by and to neighbouring societies have become highlights of our calendar. Earlier in June we entertained twenty visitors from South Newington. They managed to convince us that they had indeed enjoyed themselves despite the awful weather. If so, it was doubtless due to another of Sue Shattock's famous spreads, whose reputation has local

such as Blenheim Palace and certain Oxford colleges. Any of our members who weren't there and who see an open day on offer in the future should seize the opportunity.

For our annual June social we visited Tooley's boatyard in Banbury, followed by refreshments (step forward Sue, once more) in the new museum. Members were enjoying themselves so much that they needed to be persuaded out of the building at 10.00 to allow poor Simon Townsend to lock up and go home.

On the afternoon of Saturday 24 July Moira Byast will lead an his-

torical walk in the Minster Lovell area. Last year's walk from Burford was terrific, and I hope to see you there.

Since I find it hard to believe that we have had Easter yet, I am reluctant to accept that September is only a couple of months away. Nevertheless, we begin our season on 8 September at the Windmill Centre. I look forward to seeing you there for a series of instructive and entertaining evenings [see page 4].

Chris Day

This year's summer visit to Chalgrove and its Manor must rank as one of our most interesting. Here members chat outside at sunset [see above] and the inside the of the roof space.



societies queuing up to request a visit.

Our members have enjoyed two away trips, to the canal museum at Stoke Bruerne in May, and to Chalgrove at the end of June. Both places have great attractions, but I would guess that the highlight for all of us was the private tour of Chalgrove Manor.

From the throwaway opening remark that the house contains work of every century from the 13th to the present, it was one highlight topped by another. The house is so important that it is listed as Grade 1, a status otherwise reserved for

Sixty years of village chapels

Continuing my research since the *Country planning* survey of 1943* I decided to look at the changes to the small chapels.

The first to be seen was the chapel at Hempton shown in the photograph as it is seen from the lane with the original entrance door and windows [photos of some of the chapels are on page 2]. It was built in 1920 and was attached to barns at the rear, some of the original wall hooks can still be seen today. It was still in use as a chapel up until 1955, although

it cannot be confirmed if any breaks occurred during that time, but for some of the time the barns were being used for cattle and as a milking parlour. It has now been converted into a private house and the barns included, but some of the original features remain, such as the gallery and its staircase.

Mr and Mrs Albert Payne, the son of the last preacher, live in Mount Pleasant, the cottage next door. He was born and lived in The Paddocks in Deddington and can remember

walking all the way to and from Hempton and Barford where his father also preached on occasion in the Wesleyan Chapel. Mr Payne senior also preached in the Congregational Chapel built in 1880 in Deddington. The Hempton Chapel was never licensed for weddings or funerals.

The village furthest west in the survey is Hook Norton. In 1943 it is recorded there were, apart from the Parish Church, three chapels plus a Roman Catholic chapel; today only one remains. The RC chapel and the Zion Chapel were what today would be thought of as a temporary timber structure and their sites are now occupied by houses. The Methodist Chapel was an unfortunate victim of the weather and the gable end blew out in a storm in 1985. Due to the cost of rebuilding it was decided that the rest should be demolished and the site together with the adjoining ground, mainly allotments, should be sold. It is now occupied by several houses and cottages: one needless to say, is called Chapel Cottage.

The one chapel which still remains and is well supported today is the Baptist Chapel with its own separate hall. Records show there have been Baptist Meetings in Hook Norton since 1641 although the present chapel only dates from 1718, being a gift from the estate of William Harwood. It was refurbished in 1787 when a gallery was added to the two sides; its age makes it one of the oldest Baptist chapels in England. As in the case of many non-conformist chapels—worship was not always plain sailing and the first Minister, together with his Pastor, were arrested on more than one occasion and imprisoned in Oxford castle and Witney town gaol: their property was confiscated and publicly auctioned.

When the Chapel was first built a row of cottages fronted the road in front of it—a requirement in the days before the Toleration Act of 1689—but these were demolished and the separate hall built in 1873.

The hall was originally built as a lecture room and became an overflow room for the village school across the road. The manse for the chapel was eventually sold and is now a private house.

The chapel and hall are both well supported today and there are plans to extend the hall at the rear.

A Friends' Meeting House was built in Hook Norton in 1704, near Southrop House, but it was demolished in 1950. It was built in local stone with stone slates on a gabled roof; it had two timber windows at the side. The stand [pulpit] was at the south west with a gallery at the opposite end. The site is now left bounded by a rubble-stone wall.

Illustrations, running from bottom left and then from top to bottom right down the page: South Newington Independent Methodist, Adderbury Methodist, Hempton chapel, North Newington Independent, and the Wiggington Methodist chapels



The RC Chapel, which was only a temporary timber and corrugated structure, was probably built to serve the large number of Irish labourers who came to Hook Norton for the building of the the 'Banbury & Cheltenham direct Railway', which finally opened in April 1887.

Returning to the east end of the survey, Adderbury, where in 1943 there were a Friends' Meeting House and two Chapels. Of the two only a Methodist Chapel still functions. A separate group broke away from the Methodist Church in 1805 and used a private house for meetings until a new Independent Chapel was built.

This chapel functioned until its closure in 1955 when the adjacent schoolroom became the village library, this being transferred later to the Adderbury Sunday School building in Church Lane. The chapel and schoolroom are now used as a private furniture store.

The Methodist Chapel, which is still used regularly for services, is on the corner of Chapel Lane, previously called Penn Street. As can be seen from the stone tablet in the gable the chapel was built in 1893, so celebrated its centenary eleven years ago. Methodists, however had been worshipping in Adderbury long before this chapel was built and for the previous 82 years had used a chapel at the further end of the Lane which still stands, now converted as a garage and house, having been bought in 1927 for £50. This building, originally built as a chapel, was started in 1810 when Methodists are known to have met regularly for services.

The site for the present Chapel was given by Mr John Hone of Adderbury and the building was designed by Mr H Hopkins of Banbury. It is built in local stone, with dressings in Bath Stone. The official opening was by Mrs Mewburn of Wykham Park (now Tudor Hall School).

The first wedding held in the new chapel was of the parents of Jack Humphris, whose father was well known in Adderbury, serving the church for many years. It is recorded in the *Banbury Guardian* that an earlier centenary celebration was held for the anniversary of the Methodist ministry in the first chapel on 5 May 1912.

The survey does not note there

having been a chapel in Milton although it is recorded that the members of Church of England were having to share worship with the Primitive Methodists in the latter's chapel up until the new church designed by William Butterfield in the Decorated style was built in 1856-57. Presumably the chapel fell into disuse and it had been lost by 1943.

One village which still supports and maintains a local chapel is Wigginton. In 1983 the village celebrated the centenary of the building of Wesleyan Chapel and as the result of considerable research a full history of the lives and people of the chapel and village was carried out.

The census of 1881 shows the population of the village as being 265, living in 66 houses, almost all of them being engaged in agriculture, but by 1931 it had gone down to 224.

Methodism had come to the village in the early 1860s, but it was not until the 1870s that a Wesleyan Society was formed. Between 1878 and 1883 the membership fluctuated and in 1883 there were sixteen members with others attending services. In addition there were seventeen children of school age in the members' families who would also attend.

Until 1883 the meetings were held in a private house in the village, but at this time a decision was made that a larger place of worship was needed and action was taken to find a site for the building of a chapel.

A suitable site had become available in the early 1880s being occupied then by a barn, stable, sheds, yard and garden. By a conveyance in 1883 the properties and land were sold to the Trustees for a total of £59, to include an area of land adjoining. Building went ahead with the ceremony of laying the foundation stones on the 29 May 1883 and the whole being completed for the opening with a service of dedication on 17 August 1883. The chapel was built using stone saved from the demolition of the barn with stone supplemented by builder and the dressings done in Bath stone.

Nikolaus Pevsner's *Buildings of Oxfordshire* gave cursory treatment to the chapel in 1974: 'Wigginton Methodist Chapel 1883—small and humble with gabled porch flanked by lancets with plate tracery'. He

was not one to waste words. Additions were made in later years, the first being when a need was felt for a stable to accommodate the horse of the visiting preachers in 1889.

Electricity finally arrived in the village in 1948 and was installed in the chapel which allowed for the removal of the oil lamps which had been in use from the beginning. The work of the chapel has continued without a break. Renovations for the centenary in 1983 saw the fixed pews replaced and complete re-decoration.

One of the last chapels to be built, and in use in 1943, was in Swerford. Methodist services were first held in a long room over some stables and later in a wooden boarded hut with a corrugated-iron roof in true Primitive style. This continued until 1938 when a new chapel was to be built the site chosen being the old Post Office which had been burnt down some years before, and had remained just pile of rubble.

After the chapel was closed it was put up for auction and was purchased for private occupation in May 1994: it is little altered from the original.

In Sibford Gower in addition to the Friends Meeting House mentioned in the earlier article there remains a Methodist Chapel in use in 1943, and still in use today. It is recorded that in 1823 the Wesleyan minister in Chipping Norton obtained a licence for a Meeting House in Sibford which was at that time held in a private house.

In 1826 an appeal was made for the people to subscribe to the building of a chapel which resulted in the purchase of a site (previously a blacksmith's workshop) and a chapel was built and opened in 1827.

In 1927 at its centenary two services were held in the Friends' Meeting House, kindly lent to accommodate the near two hundred people who attended; after the first service tea was served to the congregation before a second service at 6.30pm, the service being presided over by Mr C W Early, the Witney blanket-maker, supported by six ministers and a large number of laymen. The Rev Dr T Farrier Hulme held the audience spellbound for over an hour with stories of old Methodist worthies of the last one hundred years, his address sparkling with humour

and with practical lessons for the present age. The object of the centenary effort was to raise £100 for additions and repairs to the chapel and this was reached by the end of the day.

In the two villages in the north of the area the original chapels no longer remain, the one in Shutford was closed down and removed some years ago and the site is now occupied by houses.

In North Newington the non-conformist chapel has been converted into a private house, the main structure being retained with the original pair of doors to the gable end; new windows have been installed with a side entrance door and covered way. The internal fittings have been removed, the pews now put to good use in the village pub!

The non-conformists started having their first meetings in North Newington in a private house as early as 1832 and after five years they built themselves their first chapel in 1837. In 1876 the original building was replaced with a new chapel and in August 1887 an anniversary meeting was held with 150 people attending with a meal and games, the latter held in a field kindly lent by Mr Herrieff, a local farmer; the remains of Mr Herrieff's farm buildings, opposite the Blinking Owl public house have now been converted to another private house.

The chapel remained in use until about 1960 when it closed for services and gradually fell into disrepair until it was taken over by a local couple who used it as a workshop for producing their own design of church and barbecue candles. Unfortunately they had to give it up when the oil crisis caused the price of their raw materials to become too expensive. They closed after four years and the chapel became a photographic studio, according to local legend largely pornographic, it only

stayed for a few months. It was finally converted to its present state some years ago.

In South Newington, as we have seen, the Friends' Meeting House became disused in about 1825 by the Quakers who had combined with their Friends in Hook Norton.

Both Baptists and Methodists had been holding services in South Newington generally in both licensed and unlicensed houses. William Taylor's house was registered in 1828, possibly for the Wesleyan Methodists, who were said to have had a resident Preacher. In 1847 they had a chapel, presumably the disused Friends' Meeting House. Their numbers grew and they were attracting congregations of some 90 for evening prayers. They subsequently built their own small redbrick chapel, with local stone at the gable end.

This wall has four stones to the foundation course, each incised, lettered and named, the corner stone being to Joseph Page-Baker. It is dated July 1875; the chapel was completed the following year, as shown by the date stone in the top of the gable. This stone with incised lettering says 'Methodest Chapel 1876' [sic]. It is recorded elsewhere as being a New Primitive Methodist chapel. It was closed in 1939 and has since been converted to a private house.

Some elderly residents remember that after it closed during the Second World War the Church Army used to visit periodically, bringing their own organ and would hold services in the field opposite and afterwards progress on foot to Barford St Michael and hold another service outside the the George Inn.

Alan Maddison

In preparing this article I am indebted-to:

Pauline Turner; the late Tom Rigg; Deborah Taylor-Lang; the Rev J Taylor; the Rev R Mann.

Reference was also made to:
The Banbury Advertiser, The Banbury Guardian, The Chipping Norton Advertiser.

*See 'The Friends over sixty years' in 224 number 16, September 2003. The survey referred to is *Country planning*, C S and C S Orwin, Oxford, 1943. This book formed the basis of the film *Twenty-four square miles*: the original survey was updated in 1975.

For a further study of chapels in the area see also *Village chapels*, Dr P Ashbridge. Kershaw Publishing, Hook Norton, 2004.

Why 224?

For the still curious: 224, the title of this newsletter, is taken from the sheet number used by the draughtsmen of the Ordnance Survey in the early years of the nineteenth century to identify an individual drawing made by the surveyors for the first edition one inch maps. For more information see 224 March 2000.

Programme for the start of 2004-2005 season

8 September: Alan Rosevear 'The turnpike roads of North Oxfordshire'

13 October: John Woolley, 'A history of policing'

A full programme is in preparation

Our meetings take place at the Windmill Centre at 7.30 on the second Wednesday of the month during the winter season

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