

CONGREGATIONALISM
IN
SHROPSHIRE

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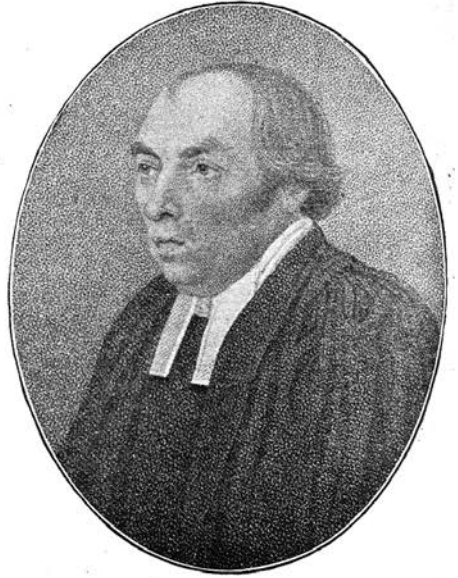
CONGREGATIONALISM

IN

SHROPSHIRE.



REV. SAMUEL LUCAS.



REV. PETER EDWARDS.



REV. JOHN WILSON.



REV. JOHN WHITRIDGE.*

The Four Founders

A HISTORY
OF
CONGREGATIONALISM
IN
SHROPSHIRE.

*EDITED ON BEHALF OF THE SALOP ASSOCIATION OF
INDEPENDENT MINISTERS AND CHURCHES BY*

ERNEST ELLIOT,

MINISTER OF STONEWAY CHAPEL, BRIDGNORTH.

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PREFACE.

At the Autumnal Assembly held at Prees on the 4th and 5th of October, 1895, the Association unanimously resolved that the undersigned, as a special committee, be appointed to hike whatever steps they deemed desirable in order to the suitable commemoration of the Centenary of its founding in February, 1796.

It was mentioned that the Rev. D. D. Evans, who was Secretary of the Association from 1866 until his death in 1886, published in 1872, "A Sketch of the History, Condition, and Work of the Congregational Churches of the County of Salop," in the introduction to which the author expressed the desire that "a work as complete as it can be made," one "that may comprise the history of each church," should be compiled.

For this task Mr. Evans possessed special qualifications, and the project thus set before himself he always kept in view, but did not live to carry out. At the request of the Committee, the Rev. Ernest Elliot, his present successor in the pastorate of Stoneway Chapel, Bridgnorth, accepted the onerous duty of preparing such a work, and it is largely due to his labours, together with the valuable help supplied by the various ministers of the county and other friends, that this volume, which is an effort to supply the want, has been prepared.

Great use has been made of the valuable material accumulated by Mr. Evans, which his daughter, Miss A. M. Evans, of Bridgnorth, placed at the disposal of the Association. Without this material the work would have been difficult, if not impossible, and the best thanks of the Association are due to Miss Evans for her kindness.

The County Celebration of the Centenary took place on the invitation of the Shrewsbury Churches at the Abbey Foregate Congregational Church on March 23rd and 24th, 1896, being presided over by the Rev. John J. Poynter, of Christ Church, Oswestry, Chairman for the year, who delivered an address on

“Our Denominational Ideal.” An address was also delivered by the Rev. A. Mackennal, D.D., of Bowdon, on “The Forgotten Duty of Ministerial Leadership.” The Centenary Sermon was preached by the Rev. T. Eynon Davies, then of Glasgow, now of Beckenham, from the words, “His name shall be called Wonderful.” The sermon was followed by a united Communion Service presided over by the Rev. T. Townsend, of Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury.

At a Centenary Conference, in the afternoon of, Tuesday, the account given at the commencement of this book of the general work of the Association was read by the Rev. J. B. Walton, B.A., LL.B., of Wem, who was Secretary from 1886 to 1895. The following resolution, moved by Mr. J. Evan Jones, J.P. (Shrewsbury), seconded by Mr. W. W. Coulson (Oswestry), and supported by the Rev. R. D. Green (Market Drayton), was unanimously adopted:—

“That the Assembly rejoices in the formation of the Salop Association of Independent Ministers and Churches a hundred years ago, and gives praise to God for the noble men who combined to found it, as well as for all the faithful ministers, who have, during the period of its existence, served the Association, and been a blessing to the churches, with all who have in every way assisted them to ‘feed the flock of God.’

“It gives thanks for all the great and varied Christian work, which, under the Holy Spirit’s influence, has been accomplished by them, and re-affirms its devotion to Free Church Faith and Principles. It prays for the continuance and increase of the Divine blessing on all the service to which the churches set their hands, ‘for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s,’ and for the abiding presence of the Master with them in their labours and witness-bearing for Him in the days that are to come.”

The Centenary Public Meeting was held on Tuesday evening, when Mr. W. Woodall, M.P., presided, and the Revs. Dr. Mackennal and T. Eynon Davies delivered addresses on the Free, Churches of the past, and the Free-Churches of the future.

It is important, perhaps, to record that the Centenary Year is remarkable for the achievement for the first time of an attempt to secure a minimum stipend of £80 for the pastors

of the aided churches in the county, a standard which was there-upon adopted by the Church Aid Society throughout England.

One pleasing feature of the celebration was the large attendance of laymen, and the prominent part they took in the proceeding. The Abbey Foregate hospitality was extended to the wives of ministers and delegates, and the whole of the arrangements were most admirably conceived and carried out.

The meetings will long be remembered for their cordial unanimity; and the spiritual blessing that attended them.

J. B. WALTON,
F. TINKLEH,
T. TOWNSEND
JOHN J. POYNTER.

Shrewsbury.

EDITOR'S NOTE.

IN bringing the present task to a close, I desire to express my hearty thanks to all who have in any way contributed to the production of this volume—to those who have sent me the histories of the churches with which they are connected, and to those who have lent photographs, by the reproduction of which the interest of the book has been so largely increased.

Especially does the work of the Rev. J. J. POYNTER and Messrs. WOODALL, MINSHALL, AND CO., who have greatly assisted in the revision of the proof sheets, as well as in many other ways, deserve cordial recognition.

ERNEST ELLIOT.

Bridgnorth,
February 1898.

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INTRODUCTION.

“One hundred years’ worth of the Salop association.”

No true history of the Association would do justice to this subject if it left out of sight the religious movements of the 18th century. In the earlier part of the century, Deism, like a nightmare, brooded over the nation, suffocating its best life, stifling its noblest aspirations, and yet its advocates sought to make it a bright evangel by leaving out patent facts in human life, telling only of what was bright and attractive to human nature. Dr. Bruce of Glasgow, gives a popular picture of Deism in his “Apologetics” which I will now quote: ‘There is so much light and so little darkness in the Deist’s world; so much joy and so little misery—at least so little misery that has not a bright side to relieve the gloom; so much goodness and so little absolute wickedness. The Deist moves about on this earth well pleased with God, with the creation, with his, fellow men, and above all with himself; his heart filled with tender sentiments, intoxicated with a sense of the beautiful in nature, passionately in love with virtue, cherishing high hopes of human progress in wisdom and goodness, until all the curses under which the race groans shall have disappeared and the dark shadows of superstition been chased away, and the age of reason and common sense been ushered in with millennial glory. You would not be surprised to hear him singing “O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches,” and again “The glory of the Lord will endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in His works. I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live ... my meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.”

The next stanza "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more," he would of course omit as unworthy of an enlightened age. He might say to himself, "what a pity the pages of that otherwise excellent Hebrew book should be disfigured by so inhuman a sentiment, and that there should be so much in it about sin and judgment and wrath and sacrifice!" And we in turn may say, "what a pity there is so much in the world to justify these darker elements in the Biblical mode of viewing God, man, and the course of providence, and to make the Deist's theory appear the romantic dream of one who refuses to see whatever is disagreeable to his feelings.' The effect that this doctrine of "An Easy-going God" had upon the masses of the people may be readily understood. In the National Church, the clergy, with rare but bright exceptions, grossly neglected their sacred duties—some scarcely knowing their parishioners—and others, leaders in anything but godliness. In the earlier part of the century our own ministers made no move in seeking out the lapsed masses—even Watts and Doddridge at first opposed a revival movement. There was light in their churches, but it aid little to attract those in the darkness outside. But in the end they lived to give their hearty adhesion to this work.

God was raising up and preparing men who would put forth every effort to reclaim the mass of neglected men and women. Here was the rebound from Deism. The story of the Wesleys, of Whitefield, of the Countess of Huntingdon, of the Oxford movement cannot be told here, and, although intensely interesting, there is no need for this to be done. The field preaching of these men and their companions brought about a marvellous change all over the country. Men of learning, and men too who were ignorant of everything save the gospel, went about preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God. The hymnology of that period stirred the people as much as the preaching. What was more natural than that the children who would be the men and women of a new generation should be taught to read the word of the truth of the gospel? Here and there attempts were made to gather the children of the masses together for this purpose, and it is believed that such was done at Oswestry and elsewhere by Dr. Edward Williams. But

when all credit is given to those who here and there gathered children together, Robert Raikes must have the honour of carrying this out in a more extended and systematic form. This was begun in 1780. It was quite in keeping with this that the spirit which had moved so many to mission our own country for Christ, should turn their thoughts to the heathen world. Foreign Missions were begun by Wesley in 1784, although the Wesleyan Missionary Society was not formally constituted till 1817. The Baptist Missionary Society was commenced in 1792, the London Missionary Society in 1795, the Church Missionary Society in 1799. Then followed auxiliary aids to missions at home and abroad. The Religious Tract Society 1799, the Bible Society 1804, and the British and Foreign School Society 1805. No contrast could have been greater than that of the earlier and the later halves of the 18th century. Deism was dead—the evangelical revival was revealing its force, at home and abroad.

ATTEMPTS AT ASSOCIATING

Were commenced on March 28th, 1786, at Market Drayton, where a number of Independent ministers belonging to several Congregational Churches in Shropshire, Cheshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire, met together and framed rules and orders which shew plainly that their Association was a ministerial one—not one of churches in the counties mentioned. It is true they held their meetings fit various churches, and so far, the preaching of the gospel must have been for their good. It would have been interesting did time and space permit to give a summary of their rules. One point, however, is interesting. After the first meeting its members were to be admitted by ballot, and if the fourth part object, the candidate be rejected, and secrecy be invariably observed. This Ministerial Association lived for many years, and. did good work. The writer of this paper had lent to him a report of a meeting of ministers held at Hanley, under the presidency of Mr. Whitridge, of Oswestry. There were eleven present, and their object was to form a seminary for itinerants to preach the gospel in the county. This is dated September 5th, 1799; that is more than thirteen years after its first formation. It may be taken for granted that this Ministerial

Association was not absorbed in that of the county. At any rate it could not be so as regards Shropshire, for three years, before this latter date, the Salop Association had been formed; shewing plainly that the Ministerial Association and that of the Salop Association had a separate existence.

We now come to the formation of the Salop Association of Independent Ministers and Churches. The story has been: told again and again in reports of various dates, but it must be told once more. On February 18th, 1796, four ministers met together in Wem to consider what could be done to preach the gospel in the dark parts of the county. The names of the ministers and churches represented are as follows: Rev. Peter Edwards, Wem, moderator; John Whitridge, Oswestry, secretary; Samuel Lucas, Shrewsbury; and John Wilson, Market Drayton. Mr. Joseph Parry, Shrewsbury, was appointed Treasurer. Two of these brethren, namely Mr. Whitridge and Mr. Wilson, were also members of the Ministerial Association referred to above.

In a circular letter dated 1807, that is, eleven years after its formation, a meeting was held at Drayton, under the presidency of its pastor, Mr. Whitridge still being Secretary. In this letter it would appear that the work of village preaching was done by settled ministers of the Association. After one year, however, through the liberality of friends, they were enabled to appoint a minister whose time should be wholly given to itinerant preaching, and after five years they were able to appoint a second, and then a third. Horse hire was a considerable item in the accounts of those days. Two of these brethren became after a time settled pastors—one over Hadnall, Clive, and Whixall; the other over Welshpool and Minsterley. The four churches at the beginning had become twelve at the end of eleven years, and in addition to these, more than twenty places were supplied by the itinerants and settled ministers. This is no bad record, when we remember the great difficulties of travelling.

In a circular letter of the year 1811, about fifteen years after the formation of the Association, there were fifteen churches. And in another letter of October 8th, 1813, there was one addition to the number of churches, namely Welshpool.

Evidently this had been a time of persecution, for the Secretary opens his report with these words, "Since we last had the pleasure to address you, we have mutually had occasion to lament over the revival of persecution on account of religion." But evidently the cloud had vanished, for he goes on to say, "but ultimately to rejoice in a defeat of opposition by the legislative establishment and extension of our liberties." Further on the reducing of the vast mass of ignorance and irreligion is referred to: "To this the Salop Association has contributed no small degree of assistance. With this in view it was first formed; for this its members have laboured ...". It relates that churches had been recently established (as for instance Bishop's Castle and Ellesmere) "and not being in a position to raise an adequate salary, the ministers are aided from the fund of the Association on condition of a certain part of their services being at their disposal. Thus Christian Societies in their infancy are provided with a pastor ... and are favoured with the means of increase by the itinerant preaching in their neighbourhood." Then follows the expression of a long felt wish for the establishment of a seminary in Shropshire for the education of ministers. "At present" it states "there are two young men under preparatory instruction, one at Oswestry, the other at Ludlow" (in a footnote we read that the friends at Ludlow contribute £10 per annum towards the support of Mr. Watkin, the student who is residing there). "These students are usefully employed in preaching in the villages around:" The report adds "We trust it is not too much to hope that this small beginning may ultimately lead to a regular Academical Institution."

The Academy became a reality in due course, and its first anniversary was held at Oswestry (where, I presume it was located), on Thursday, July 6th, 1820. In the circular issued on the occasion, we find the following items of great interest even now: "At 9-30 an Examination of the Students at the "Tutor's house, (1) In English (2) In Hebrew, to mark its grammatical peculiarities, and to read selections from the writings of Moses, David, and Isaiah. (3) In Latin, to translate one of Virgil's Pastorals. (4) Biblical Literature, to notice a few questions on the first twelve lectures of a series

upon this subject. (5) Two Essays." But this was not all—in the afternoon of the same day "Divine Service at the Old, Chapel, for the administration of baptism to the Tutor's child by the Rev. Mr. Barber, of Bridgnorth, and to preach an appropriate sermon. In the evening the Rev. Mr. Bell, of Wrexham, was appointed to preach a sermon on behalf of the Academy, after which a collection was to be made on behalf of its funds.

N.B.—A printed account of the Academy may be shortly expected for the information of those who may become its supporters and friends."

In a circular letter of 1823, we find Newport, Wollerton, and Dorrington, added since the last report in 1813. After a cheering account of the work of the churches in the county, Mr. Whitridge goes on to tell of the decease of Joseph Parry, and he evidently fears that the munificence he had shewn might in some cases tend to lessen contributions. He also says "The ministers of our Denomination were among the first in later times to unite as a county for the advancing of the Redeemer's Kingdom by means of itinerant preaching." Our friends at that time believed in special prayer, and passed the following resolution, "That a Special Union for Prayer to implore the more copious effusion of the Holy Spirit, be held once a quarter in each of the congregations of the county, namely on the evenings of the 3rd Monday in the months of January, April, July, and October."

In 1831 there were twenty-nine churches, and a new secretary appears on the scene, namely Rev. T. Weaver, of Shrewsbury. Ludlow withdraws, and for convenience sake joins the Herefordshire Association. At this time the reliance of the churches on the munificence of Mr. Parry was beginning to tell on the contributions of the churches, for outside Shrewsbury they were only £24 and there was a balance due to the Treasurer of £66 6s. 2d.

The report of 1839, which is a record of the previous three years, is most interesting as a story of ministerial work. Take the following extract: "In the neighbourhood of Bishop's Castle, there are seven stations regularly supplied, beside others where occasional services are held; at Cwm Cae a little chapel has been erected. In connection with Bomere-heath, there are nine stations, in addition to Harmerhill, where

a good congregation has been collected, and an interesting church founded. A favourable, and we believe providential opening having presented itself at Broseley, an interest has been commenced there, which we hope will soon, under the divine blessing, rise to vigour and efficiency. At Dorrington the minister occupies two out-stations, and renders occasional service in others. With Grimpo and Frankton there are four stations entirely, and one partially connected" (mention is made of the new chapel at Longden). Then the report goes on to say "Associated with Marton there are four villages or hamlets, where the word of life is dispensed. With Minsterley there are six. In the year 1837, a new chapel was built and a church formed at Ollerton, and which was worked by the ministers of Market Drayton. The Minister of Pant affords religious instruction to four other stations. In connection with Prees there are four stations, and the same number are regularly visited by the minister at Preeshenlle. In the vicinity of Ruyton and Wilcot, four places are supplied with the means of grace. And in the populous neighbourhood of Wellington, three stations are occupied. Of course our esteemed brethren, whose labours are thus directed to upwards of fifty stations, meet with various measures of encouragement and success. The result on the whole is highly gratifying." And yet our brethren of that day are not satisfied while rejoicing in their own success and that of kindred denominations, for they say, "A wide field is yet unoccupied, and there are multitudes in Shropshire living and dying without a knowledge of salvation." Have we not here in this report the same evangelical enthusiasm as we have seen in the early days of the Association?

But anxious times were at hand. In the report of 1839 and 1840, Mr. Weaver refers to the finances of the Association. During the first 30 years, the resources depended on subscriptions and collections in the different congregations. Then comes the story telling the amount of Mr. Parry's munificence. He had given £3,500, but this was reduced by £1,350, which ought to have been provided by the churches in collections and subscriptions. It was wise to put a stop to the reduction of the capital, if possible, so that the interest might be a

permanent, benefit to, the aided churches. But alas! In later years this was not regarded.

About eight months before the Jubilee of the Association, namely on July 23rd, 1845, a special, meeting was held at Wem, under the presidency of Mr. Pattison, to consider what could be done with reference to chapel debts. The previous period had been one of chapel building, and when we remember that during this time the churches had increased from four to thirty-two or more, and that the original chapels had to be enlarged or rebuilt, and that new chapels had to be erected in small towns and in many villages, we can quite understand that large demands would be made upon the friends of Congregationalism in the county. But the enthusiasm of the churches had led to grave difficulties; and the meeting to consider chapel debts in its first words laments the disastrous influence. They give a list of fifteen churches, and these nearly all belonging to the villages and all receiving aid from its funds, that are indebted for their buildings in sums varying from £10 to £250, in all no less a sum than £2,210. The Association resolves, "That for this purpose a subscription be opened in all the churches, on behalf, in those not included in the above list, of a general fund, and in those above enumerated of their own respective debts, for monies either payable at once or by monthly or weekly instalments, according to convenience. The general fund to be distributed in aid of such of the above-named churches as are unable to liquidate their entire debt, in proportion to the, amount raised by themselves towards it." A Shropshire Chapel Debt Liquidation Committee was formed of representative laymen from all parts of the county. "The ministers, though not on this committee, pledge their cordial support, to the effort thus recommended, and undertake to bring the, matter before their respective churches." But this is not all—they resolve "That for preventing the unadvised erection or alteration of places of worship or schools within the county, the treasurer and secretary of the Association, together with the district secretaries and seven lay members of the churches, to be elected at the annual meeting, be constituted a Board (to be named, the Chapel Building Board), for advising as to the erection or

alteration of places of worship and schools. And that no chapel or school case shall henceforth receive the sanction of this Association, unless the written approval of the Chapel Building Board shall have been obtained to such case before any expense has been incurred respecting it." There follows the last resolution, "That inasmuch as debts have not infrequently been incurred or increased by the neglect of churches to discharge their current annual expenses, it shall henceforth be required of all churches receiving aid from the funds of this Association, to present to the annual meeting at Shrewsbury a statement in writing, of their accounts, and in case any church shall fail to present such statement, or to meet any deficiency of income which such statement may disclose, the grant from this Association shall absolutely cease to such church until the account be presented, and the deficiency (if any) be satisfactorily provided for, and that this rule, come into operation before the next January meeting." That is in January, 1846, about six weeks before the Jubilee of the Association.

It would appear from the last of these resolutions that up to this time the churches aided had not sent in a financial statement. But now on account of the debts on several of the chapels, it was found needful that the Association should be kept acquainted from year to year as to their position and means. So far as the writer of this paper knows, the Jubilee was not kept. Was it because the state of the finances was such that they felt more inclined to pass it by than to make it known; or was it that they thought the best way to keep the Jubilee was quietly and without any fuss, to remove the existing debt on so many churches? The next report was not issued till 1849, and it is for the previous four years, namely 1845, 1846, 1847, and 1848. It states that the Association comprises twenty-eight pastors and thirty-seven churches, and evidently during this period the county had been divided into districts.

Nothing needs to be recorded till we come to the Bicentenary of the Ejected Ministers in 1862. Some of us remember that all over the country, our churches and County Unions, were filled with a new enthusiasm and an earnest desire that some-

thing should be done to commemorate in a worthy fashion this great event. And in this county we can see traces of it. Upwards of £260 was subscribed by the churches and friends of the county. And this amount was appropriated in the following ways: The extinction of chapel debts; for erecting new chapels; for the Salop Association's Account; for general national fund for Memorial Hall; for lectures, tracts, etc.; for Abbey Foregate Memorial Chapel; and for new schools at Swanhill.

Looking at the dates when some of our churches were built, we find that two Welsh churches were built, one in Shrewsbury, and the other in Oswestry, in 1862. During the last fifty years, eight new churches have been built; Oakengates, 1848; Quinta, 1858; Abbey Foregate, 1864; Church Stretton, 1864; Broad Oak, 1867; Madeley, 1872; Nantmawr, 1875; Weirbrook, 1883. In this period some of our churches have disappeared—Noble Street, Wem,—non-Congregational up to the early years of this century, when it became one of our churches, and remained so till its decease in 1874. Agden and Coton Mission Chapels in the Northern District have been sold to the Primitive Methodists, Another of our churches, that of Bomere Heath, is rented by the Calvinistic Methodists. Dawley, a mission station for many years, has ceased to exist. Wellington, too, has disappeared from our list, but it is hoped that some day it may be revived. We have lost a number of our churches across the Welsh border, but they are most of them flourishing churches of the North Wales Union.

Our churches, with but one or two exceptions, have Sunday Schools, and these, for the most part, are in a flourishing condition. Our pastors in many places have manses in which to dwell, which are a credit to the denomination and the churches. At the present time, fourteen or fifteen of such are to be found, and the majority of them have been built within the last twenty-five years.

As to the funds of the Association, soon after Mr. Thomas Barnes of the Quinta, was appointed treasurer, a challenge was given by him that if the churches would double their contributions, in other words raise £200 instead of £100, he would give £100, thus raising the income to £300 a year. Whether this

was taken up or not I am not able to make out. In several of the balance sheets there is no mention of this special amount, so the churches would appear to have failed to take up the challenge.

In 1876, the Secretary of the Cheshire Congregational Union wrote to this Association stating that the committee was prepared to give £50 a year for three years to the Salop Association for the augmentation of ministerial stipends, on condition that an equal additional sum be raised in the county towards that object. This neighbourly help was rendered in a most gracious way by the Cheshire county. Further, it may be stated that, just as the last year's promise was fulfilled, the Church Aid and Home Missionary Society commenced its operations, and this Association has every reason to be grateful for the aid so generously given up to the present time. This reference to the finances of the Association would be incomplete if no mention were made of the effort which was originated by our present treasurer (H. E. Rogers, Esq.), to raise all ministerial stipends to a minimum of £80. This we are thankful to say has been accomplished.

There are at the present time thirty-two pastors, several of whom are pluralists, having two or even three churches under their charge, and there are fifty-five chapels with some few out-stations.

This paper must not be closed without mention of the officials of the Association—its treasurers and secretaries. And first of all, the treasurers with the years they laboured on behalf of the county:—

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| Joseph Parry, Esq., Shrewsbury | ... | ... | ... | ... | to 1817 |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| Rev. John Whitridge, Oswestry | ... | ... | ... | ... | to 1820 |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|

(Mr. Whitridge was secretary as well, no treasurer being found during these years).

| | | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| Sir J. Bickerton Williams, Kt., of Wem | ... | ... | ... | ... | to 1855 |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| J. B. Grierson, Esq., Bridgnorth | ... | ... | ... | ... | to 1861 |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| Thomas Barnes, Esq., The Quinta | ... | ... | ... | ... | to 1887 |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|

(For a few months after the resignation of Mr. Barnes, Mr. Walton, the secretary, acted as treasurer).

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| Samuel Jackson, Esq., Shrewsbury | ... | ... | ... | ... | to 1892 |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| H. E. Rogers, Esq., Shrewsbury | ... | ... | ... | ... | to — |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|

The secretaries are as follows:—

Rev. J. Whitridge, of Oswestry to 1826

Rev. T. Weaver, Shrewsbury to 1852

(Mr. Weaver was joint secretary with Mr. Whitridge from 1822 to 1826).

Rev. Joseph Pattison, Wem to 1866

(Mr. Pattison was joint secretary with Mr. Weaver for five years).

Rev. D. D. Evans, Bridgnorth to 1886

Rev. George Kettle, from the spring to the autumnal meeting of

Rev. J. Brignall Walton, Wem to 1895

Rev. W. E. Jenkins, Shrewsbury to 1896

(At the end of 1896, on the resignation of Mr. Jenkins, the Rev. T. Townsend, of Shrewsbury, became secretary).

The writer of this paper, from what he has read, or from personal knowledge, has learnt to regard both treasurers and secretaries (with one exception, and that himself), very highly for their works' sake. Services without stint have been rendered by them, and while brotherly to all, they have sought, if possible, to be most brotherly to those who needed it most.

Can we learn from the old century any lessons that may be of service in the new? I think we may. (1) Does not the old evangel need to be filled with the new spirit? The enthusiasm of the men of the early days was like a very fire within the breast leading to great and constant self sacrifice. It was not kindled by man, but by the Spirit of the living God. (2) Our brethren were a united band in prayer. They had fixed times when, all over the county, they met in towns and villages and hamlets, to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Unity in this, to-day, would be an untold good. (3) Then as regards grants—Our forefathers, if I interpret them aright, paid their brethren for itinerant services. They did not make grants to churches, and call them "Aided," but to ministers, who were considered free like their richer brethren, the only difference being that they were paid for work done outside the sphere of their own church. Going back for a moment to the report of 1839, where there is given such a record of Mission work as one rarely hears of now, we find there were in, connec-

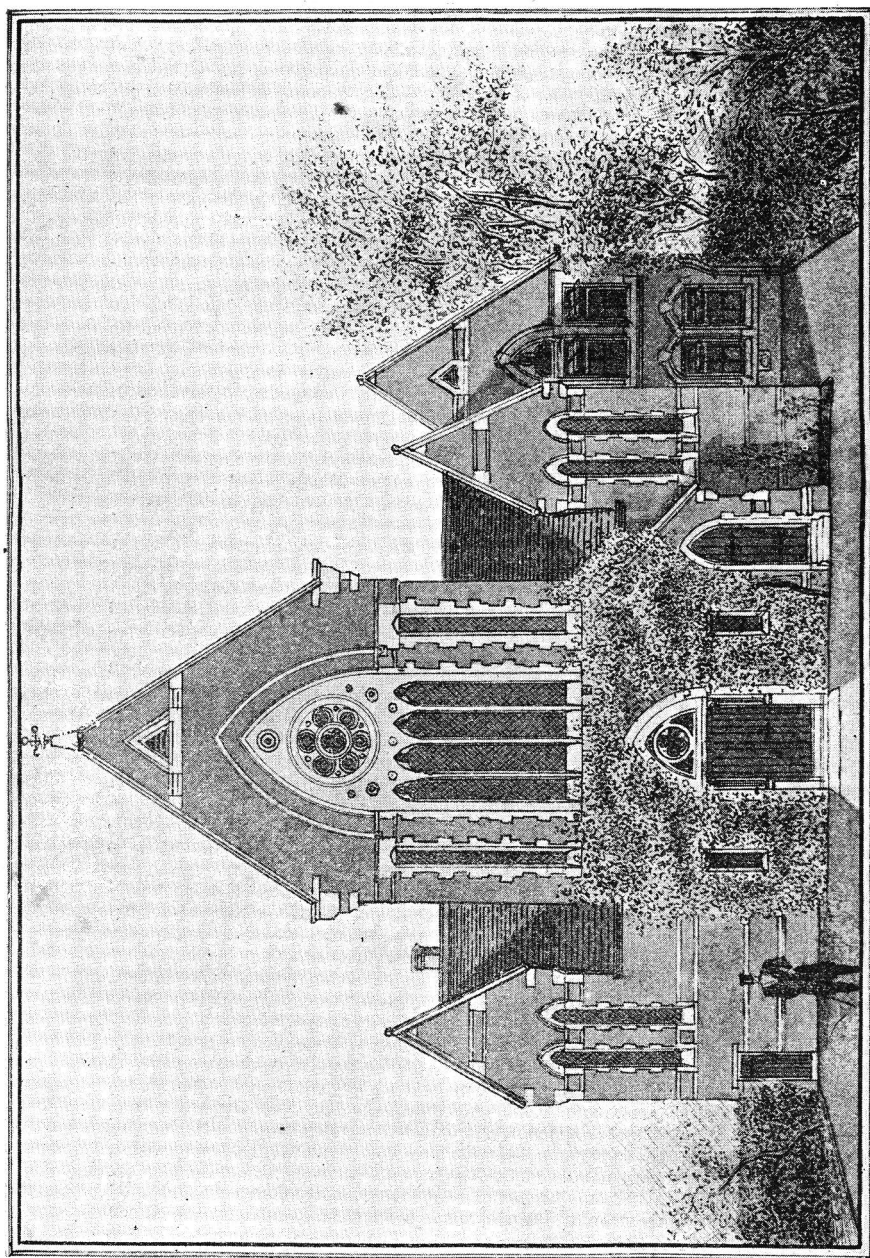
tion with the churches, stations varying from three to eight. 'What were these so called stations? I have asked one who knows a great deal about the Independency of that time, and am told that many of them were neither small meeting houses, nor schoolrooms, nor even farm houses (though there were a few of this kind), but cottages where they could gather but a handful of people together. These were the small rills that fed the stream of Independency in those days. Would they not do the same now? Undoubtedly our village churches, and those in smaller towns, would be strengthened as these were in the earlier half of the century. Let the central church and its ministers be free, but let them have grants for mission work done. This would be pleasanter for both ministers and churches, and would conserve a principle for which we as Congregationalists are very jealous, that is, our freedom.

One objection might be raised against, the outside work—that it would be a great burden to the ministers. This I do not see. We have our Christian Endeavour Classes, and these might be all the better and all the healthier if they had mission work to do. The writer of this paper knows of one such class that has gone out bodily to hold Cottage Meetings in the hamlets around the town.

In conclusion, we have in the churches of our Association all the elements that go to the making of its work a great success in the new century. We have the experience of past successes, and past failures to learn from. Let us, then, trusting to the arm that is mightier than the mighty, enter upon the new era with prayerful confidence and with a large hope. We have a place peculiarly our own—a work that we are especially called to do in this county—that is, to reveal the simplicity and freedom of church life and church work. "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

NOTE.—I am especially indebted in this paper to Mr. Joseph Parry-Jones, Oswestry (a descendant of Joseph Parry, the first Treasurer), Mr. E. Bickerton Williams, Birmingham (grandson of Sir J. Hickerton Williams, Wem Hall), and to Miss Evans, daughter of Rev. D. D. Evans, Bridgnorth, for papers, without which this history could not have been given, and which have been simply invaluable to the furtherance of that end.

J.B.W.



SWAN HILL CHAPEL, SHREWSBURY.



Swan Hill, Shrewsbury.

THE historian of the English Baptists conjectured that the Congregational Church, at, Swan Hill, Shrewsbury, was the oldest in the kingdom, though Hanbury, in his "Historical Researches," gives the precedence to the "Church worshipping in Union Street, Southwark," London. When Wycliffe and his followers restored the Bible, so long prohibited to the populace, an opportunity was created for the rise of Independency in England. Shrewsbury was the scene of some of the earliest labours of these godly, but persecuted men, In the reign of Henry IV., "the third Sunday after Easter," A.D., 1407, William Thorpe, or Thorp, a priest, whose parents had "spent mickle money" upon his education, having embraced the "faith," then called heresy, proclaimed it from the pulpit of St. Chad's Church. He condemned the favourite tenets of Popery, and many of its prevailing corruptions. Fox, in his Martyrology, calls him for so doing "a valiant warrior under the triumphant banner of Christ"; and besides chronicling his imprisonment and sufferings, has given his "Examinations" when brought before intolerant ecclesiastics, "storied with his own pen."

After the Reformation also, the people of Shrewsbury had abundance of "good seed" scattered among them. One of the "sowers" was Julines Herring, of Sidney College, Cambridge, who, for a season, preached every Tuesday morning at St. Alkmund's Church, and upon Sundays also. In addition, he repeated his sermons at several houses "by course." He was, however, often interrupted and suspended, and ultimately silenced. When the last calamity happened, he preached a most affecting discourse "in Draper's Hall, where he lived" on Neh. i., ii., and on Jer. xxxvi., 5, "I am shut up: I cannot go into the house of the Lord." When every hope of regaining

liberty for his ministry at Shrewsbury, where he had dwelt for seventeen years, was gone, he removed to Wrenbury, near Whitchurch. Thence in 1637, he retired to Holland, and became pastor of the English Presbyterian Church there. In that city he died on March 28th, 1644, aged 62.

The exact time of the appearance of Congregationalism at Shrewsbury is unknown. Conjecture may fix, upon the time when Mr. Herring was silenced. Nor is it improbable. But be that as it may, we know on the testimony of the Rev. Job Orton, that a society of Independents was certainly in existence before the restoration of Charles II. The Rev. James Quarrell was the minister. This society is believed to have existed in association with the Baptists. Such union was, not uncommon then. Wrexham and Pershore may be mentioned as instances.

In 1662, it was again proved that Shrewsbury was, a stronghold of Nonconformity, for in that year several ministers left the Establishment. Rev. Richard Heath was ejected from the living of St. Alkmund's. He was a very learned man, greatly valued at Cambridge, was part Editor of Walton's Polyglot Bible; he removed to Wellington in 1666, when the Five Mile Act came into force, and died there in a few weeks, declaring as to his Nonconformity, "Truly, I would not have done but as I did, for a thousand worlds."

Rev. John Bryan, M.A., was ejected from St. Chad's, whither he had removed from the Abbey Church. He was often fined and imprisoned. He fled to Shifnal to escape the effects of the Five Mile Act; but on King Charles's Indulgence in 1672, returned to Shrewsbury, when he preached, along with his colleague, until his death in 1699. Rev. Francis Tallents, M.A., was ejected from St. Mary's. He had been a "noted Tutor" at Cambridge. After his ejection, he travelled abroad, but returned in 1673, and preached with Mr. Bryan in the house of Mr. Hunt (Col. Hunt, of Boreatton), and from 1691 onward, in the High Street Meeting House.

But great as these worthies were, eminent for their liberal and charitable spirit, and revered as they have, been by the Congregationalists of Shrewsbury, they were not the founders of Congregationalism in that town, and are represented in direct line by no Nonconformists of this age.



REV. THOMAS WEAVER.

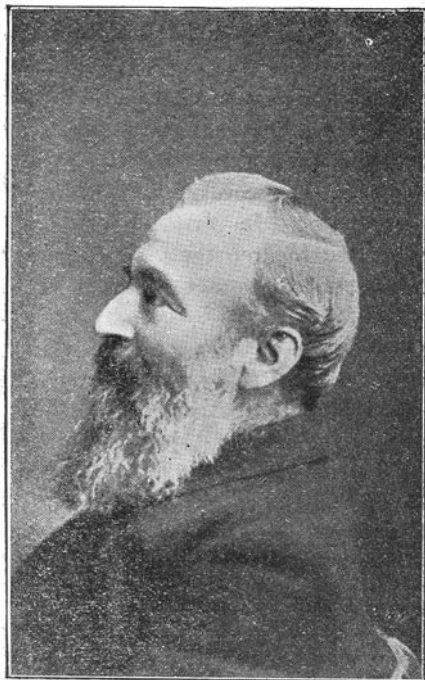
As has been already stated, a society of Independents existed previously to 1662, and the people worshipped at the King's Head. Or rather, as Owen and Blakeway say in their "History of Shrewsbury" (vol. ii., p. 482), "as we suppose, in the King's Head Shut (or passage), for one cannot believe that a religious assembly was holden in a public house. The King's Head Shut, now generally called the Peacock Shut, is that which runs from the bottom of College Hill into the High Street."

Soon after the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, the Rev. Titus Thomas, who was ejected from Aston Chapel, near Oswestry, became pastor. He was a man of great piety and usefulness. Philip Henry said of him that he was "a worthy good man, and not so straitlaced as some others." He died and was buried at West Felton in December, 1686.

Soon afterwards, another Dissenting congregation was formed in Shrewsbury. When the Revs. F. Tallents and J. Bryan returned to the town after the passing of the Toleration Act, they both eagerly embraced the privilege of again publicly proclaiming the Word of Truth. Thus another congregation was gathered together, and a chapel was built in 1691. On the walls, Mr. Tallents caused to be written, "This church was not built for a faction or party, but for promoting repentance and faith, and in communion with all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." This society was nominally Presbyterian. The Independents remained a separate congregation until 1741, when the Rev. Job Orton, an Independent, a native of Shrewsbury, who had been educated at its Grammar School, and afterwards at Dr. Doddridge's Academy at Northampton, was invited to become pastor of the Presbyterian Church, on the understanding that the two congregations should be united.

The Rev. Titus Thomas, the minister of the Independents, who died in 1686, was succeeded by the Rev. David Jones, whom we can trace as pastor in 1696, and as late as 1708; the Rev. John Allen, M.D., who removed to Nailsworth in 1725, and subsequently to London and Worcester; and the Rev. John Dobson, who removed to Walsall about 1740.

It is interesting to note that from about 1720 to 1729, the



REV. GEORGE KETTLE.

Independent Congregation consisted of 150 hearers, twelve county voters, eleven borough voters, and one esquire; and it is pleasant to know that the Independent and Presbyterian Societies maintained friendly relations with each other.

After the Rev. John Dobson's departure from Shrewsbury, only a few weeks elapsed before the "remains" of the Independents desired to join the Presbyterian congregation, and be united with them in one church, under the ministry of the Rev. Job. Orton, the favourite pupil of Dr. Doddridge, and the author of his "Life, Character, and Writings." Accordingly, on November 5th, 1741, they were admitted to fellowship, and had seats appointed them. Twenty-three were so received, Mr. Orton's father being among the number. A list of their names is preserved among the records of the High Street Chapel, in Mr. Orton's handwriting. On that interesting occasion it was unanimously resolved to drop the distinguishing names of Presbyterian and Independent, and to use only the name, of Christian.

Owing to the delicate state of the pastor's health, an assistant soon became necessary, and after the Revs. Francis Boulton and Moses Carter had served in that capacity, the church in 1748 invited the Rev. Joseph Founes, of Cradley, near Stourbridge. In 1765, Mr. Orton quitted the pulpit altogether, his last sermon being delivered on September 15th, which was his birthday. He afterwards administered the Lord's Supper several times.

The Rev. Benjamin Stapp, of the Academy at Warrington, now preached to the congregation with a view to becoming assistant to Mr. Founes. Although his services were disapproved by many, he clung to his admirers, and accepted an invitation from them. This produced a separation.

In a letter dated 1st January, 1767, and addressed by the dissentients to their "Christian brethren into whose hands it should come," they represent the "majority of the Trustees of the Chapel, and some subscribers, and members who were not subscribers (the whole about forty), as having chosen Mr. Stapp, against the judgment of the other Trustees, Subscribers, and members, who were not subscribers (in the whole about eighty)." They therefore call themselves a "great majority." They "did not approve of Mr. Stapp," they go on to say, "partly, because



REV. W. E. JENKINS.

he was in an unjust and unusual manner forced upon the congregation; but chiefly, because his strain of praying and preaching was not agreeable and edifying to them." They add—"as he chose to settle contrary to the most faithful representation of the number of those who were dissatisfied and their solemn remonstrance against his coming, this majority, with the advice and concurrence of their pastor, the Rev. Mr. Orton, thought it their duty to separate from their brethren, and to provide another place of worship, and minister, till Providence should open a way for their re-union." "This we have done," they declare, "on the principles of liberty, as Protestant Dissenters, to assert our undoubted right to choose our own ministers; and we trust also upon truly Christian principles, being desirous to have the vital truth of the gospel preached to us, and the interest of religion promoted in us and our posterity; And though it is with sensible regret that we have left the ministration of the Rev. Mr. Founes, yet we have been under a necessity of doing it."

The secession of a majority, double the number of the minority, leaving the latter in full possession of the whole property, is probably unique in the history of Congregationalism. A likely explanation is, that when the Independents united with the Presbyterians, the trustees of the chapel were members of the latter body—the building being theirs—a few Independents being added to the Trust afterwards. So that when the disagreement took place, the original body still had the majority of trustees, and were thus masters of the situation. The seceders retired to a large malthouse, belonging to Mr. Gaunsol, nearly opposite to Allatt's school. They met for worship for the first time on October 12th, 1766, Mr. Orton being present. Mr. Robert Gentleman, then a student at Daventry Academy, preached to a numerous assembly. His text in the morning was Hebrews iv., 16; "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." In the afternoon he preached from Ephesians iii., 18, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

On the 31st of that month, Mr. Gentleman was unanimously

invited to become their minister, and “assistant” to their “pastor, Mr. Orton,” which invitation he accepted. It is well to remark that Mr. Orton did not then consider himself their pastor. Indeed, he had taken up his residence some days before at Kidderminster, where he abode until his death.

As no prospect of re-union appeared, a piece of ground was purchased at Swan Hill in Mr. Brown’s garden, and on the 13th April, 1767, the foundation stone of a new meeting house was laid.

On Sunday, June 21st, 1767, Mr. Gentleman again preached at the Malthouse, this being the first time since he had accepted the invitation of the church. His text was Romans xv., 20, “And I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.”

The chapel at Swan Hill was opened on September 10th in the same year. On its front, the following inscription was engraved:—

This building was erected
in the year 1767,
For the public worship of God,
And in defence of the right of majorities
in Protestant Dissenting Congregations
To choose their own ministers.

At the opening there were “present nine ministers beside Mr. Gentleman, and about six hundred people. Mr. Gentleman being in the desk, the Rev. Mr. Morrice, of Leominster, went up into the pulpit, and began with prayer. He then read the 8th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings, and came down, while Mr. Gentleman read the 132nd Psalm, and sang it in metre. Then Mr. Cole, of Wolverhampton, went up, and prayed the long prayer. Mr. Gentleman gave out another Psalm. Mr. Robins, of West Bromwich, preached from Luke viii., 18, ‘Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.’ Much applauded. Mr. Gentleman then gave out a third Psalm to be sung; and Mr. Morgan, of Oswestry, concluded with prayer; all which took up near three hours time.”

Mr. Gentleman’s ordination service was still longer. It was held on April 6th, 1768, and the contemporary MS. from which the account of the opening service has been taken, says of it:—

“Rev. Mr. Maurice, of Bridgnorth, began with prayer, and then read two chapters out of Timothy and Titus, being St. Paul’s exhortation to young ministers; afterwards, by an introductory discourse, he opened the business of the day. Mr. Horton, of Nantwich, sang the 132nd Psalm, and, in the intermediate parts of the service, gave out five other hymns and Psalms suitable to the occasion. Mr. Cole, of Wolverhampton, prayed the second prayer. Mr. Robins, of West Bromwich, preached the sermon from 2nd Chron. xxxi., 4, ‘Moreover, he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the Priests and the Levites that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord.’ Mr. Morgan, of Oswestry, examined Mr. Gentleman by the usual questions, when Mr. Gentleman read the Confession of his Faith; and kneeling, all the ministers laid hands upon him. By which they expressed their approbation and consent of him to the ministry. Mr. Fawcett, of Kidderminster, gave the benediction with a prayer; Mr. Jones, of Walsall, gave the charge; Mr. Llewellyn, of Walsall, concluded with prayer.” The solemnity “lasted four hours and twenty minutes, N.B.—Rev. Mr. Reece, from Leominster, attended, but was only a spectator.”

Mr. Gentleman resigned his pastorate on June 24th, 1779, and removed to Carmarthen, to superintend the Dissenting Academy there. According to Rogue and Bennett, he did not long remain in that position, The Independents withdrew from the Academy, and Mr. Gentleman became minister at Kidderminster.

His successor at Shrewsbury was the Rev. Samuel Lucas, who had been a student at Homerton, and afterwards settled at Walsall. Mr. Lucas commenced his ministry at Swan Hill in July, 1779, and remained pastor until May 25th, 1797, when he resigned, owing to incapacitation by a paralytic seizure. He continued to reside in Shrewsbury until his death, which took place on January 29th, 1799. He was buried in the ground attached to the chapel. Mr. Lucas was one of the founders of the Salop Association.

He was succeeded by the Rev. Thomas Weaver, of Hoxton Academy, who entered on his work on 23rd December, 1798, and was ordained in July 1799. At the ordination service, the



MR. J. EVAN JONES, J.P.,
Chairman of the Association, 1897.

Rev. John Wilson, of Market Drayton, opened with prayer and reading of Scripture. Rev. Peter Edwards, of Wem, delivered the introductory address and received Mr. Weaver's Confession of Faith. Rev. Robert Simpson (afterwards D.D.), Mr. Weaver's Theological Tutor, offered the Ordination Prayer, and gave the charge from 1 Timothy iv., 12, "Let no, man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers in word, In conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Rev. Jehoida, Brewer, of Birmingham, preached to the people from 1 Thess. ii. 12, "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory." The service Was concluded with prayer by Rev. John Whitridge, of Oswestry. The hymns were given out by Rev. David Francis, of Welshpool, afterwards of Ludlow. In the evening, Mr. Brewer again preached. Several evangelical clergymen were present.

The Rev. William Thorp commenced his labours at Swan Hill in August, 1844. He had studied at Spring Hill College, Birmingham. On September 23rd, 1845, he was ordained to the co-pastorate. Rev. Joseph Pattison, of Wem, commenced the service by reading the scriptures and with prayer. Rev. Richard Fletcher, of Manchester, delivered the Introductory Discourse. Rev. Thomas Raffles, D.D., of Liverpool, who was unexpectedly present, received the Confession of Faith. Rev. Thomas Weaver offered the Ordination Prayer, and Rev. John Angell James, of Birmingham, gave the charge, based on Hebrews xiii., 7, "They watch for your souls, as they that must give an account." In the evening, Rev. T. R. Barker, Classical Tutor at Spring Hill College, gave the charge to the church. His text was 2 Cor. xiii., 9, "For we are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong; and this also we wish, even your perfection."

The Rev. Thomas Weaver continued his labours at Swan Hill until the 13th of February, 1852, when death very suddenly overtook him. He appeared in his usual health in the morning, and conversed with great cheerfulness and animation on the subject of the Protestant Alliance, recently formed in the town. He parted from his friends in the afternoon, and went to see on some business the Rev. C. E. L. Wightman, vicar of St. Alkmund's. Not finding him at home, he was shown into a

parlour to await his arrival. When the Vicar returned; he found Mr. Weaver lying prostrate beside the chair on which he had been sitting. Already life was extinct, and every feature and every limb showed that his spirit had passed to its heavenly home without a struggle or a pang. It was therefore with peculiar appropriateness that the Rev. John Angell James chose as the text for his funeral discourse, "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Mr. James's sermon on that occasion was delivered in Swan Hill Chapel on Tuesday; February 24th. On the Sunday after Mr. Weaver's death, his co-pastor, the Rev. W. Thorp, preached a funeral sermon from the words, "While He blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into heaven."

Mr. Thorp now became pastor, and continued his faithful ministry until ill-health compelled him in 1864 to resign his charge, to the great regret of his sympathising people.

The Rev. Geo. Kettle, of Burton-on-Trent, who had been educated for the ministry at Hackney College, was next chosen pastor, and commenced his labours on December 3rd, 1865. During his pastorate—in the year 1868—the chapel was enlarged and partly rebuilt. The original walls, being a yard: thick, were allowed to remain and to form a portion of the present beautiful structure. These alterations were made at a cost of £2,000, which was all paid at the time of opening. Commodious schoolrooms were erected in 1880 to supersede the old rooms, which were built soon after the Sunday School was established in 1799.

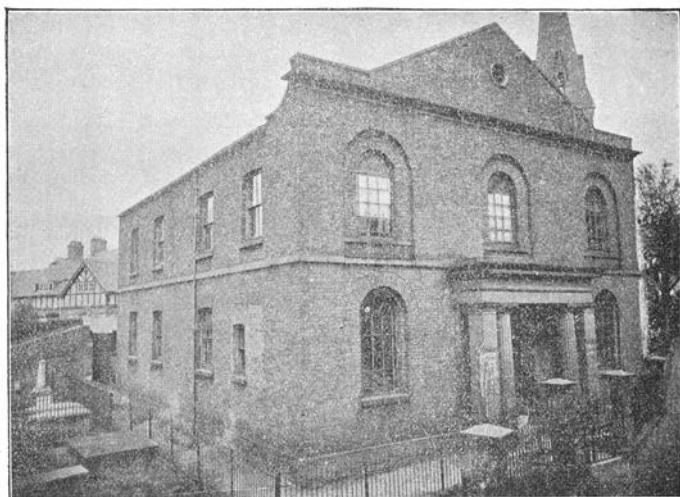
Mr. Kettle preached his last sermon on Sunday evening, December 23rd, 1888; and, by a most remarkable coincidence, chose as his text, "The prayers of David, the son of, Jesse, are ended." On the next morning, he was suddenly seized with an alarming illness. The doctors declared that the aortic valve of the heart was ruptured. He survived three days, and then quietly passed away.

The Rev. Geo. Kettle was only the fifth minister who had presided over the interests of this church from its origin in 1767 to 1888, a period of 121 years; and one of the ministers, Rev. William Thorp, had served eight. years as co-pastor before he succeeded his colleague as pastor.

In January, 1890, the Rev. W. Emlyn Jenkins, of Bagillt and Greenfields (Flint), formerly of Bangor College," commenced his ministry at Swan Hill, having received an absolutely unanimous invitation from the church to become pastor. The Recognition Service was held on March 10th in the same year.

The Rev. W. E. Jenkins, at the Autumnal Meetings of the Salop Association held at Prees on October 7th and 8th, 1895, was chosen secretary of the Association, in succession to the Rev. J. B. Walton, B.A., L.L.B., of Wem. Towards the close of 1896, he received and accepted a unanimous call to the pastorate of High Barnet. His farewell sermons were preached at Swan Hill on Sunday, January 3rd, 1897, and a hearty valedictory meeting was held on Thursday evening, January 14th.





THE OLD CHAPEL, OSWESTRY



Christ Church, Oswestry.

It is not possible to give the exact date of the formation of the church now assembling at Christ Church, Oswestry. There was no doubt a Congregational Church in existence in the township of Sweeney, two miles south of Oswestry, as early as 1651. A Meeting House, however, had been erected in Oswestry itself in 1659, and vestiges of the ancient burial ground are yet to be seen near the mansion at Sweeney—the residence of Mr. Stanley Leighton, M.P., who is a direct descendant of Mr. Baker, the then owner. Some of the gravestones are still legible. For example:—

“Here lyeth the body of A
blessed saint

.....

honest Jane, ye wife of Ambrose Mostin,
deceased, July 26th 1651.

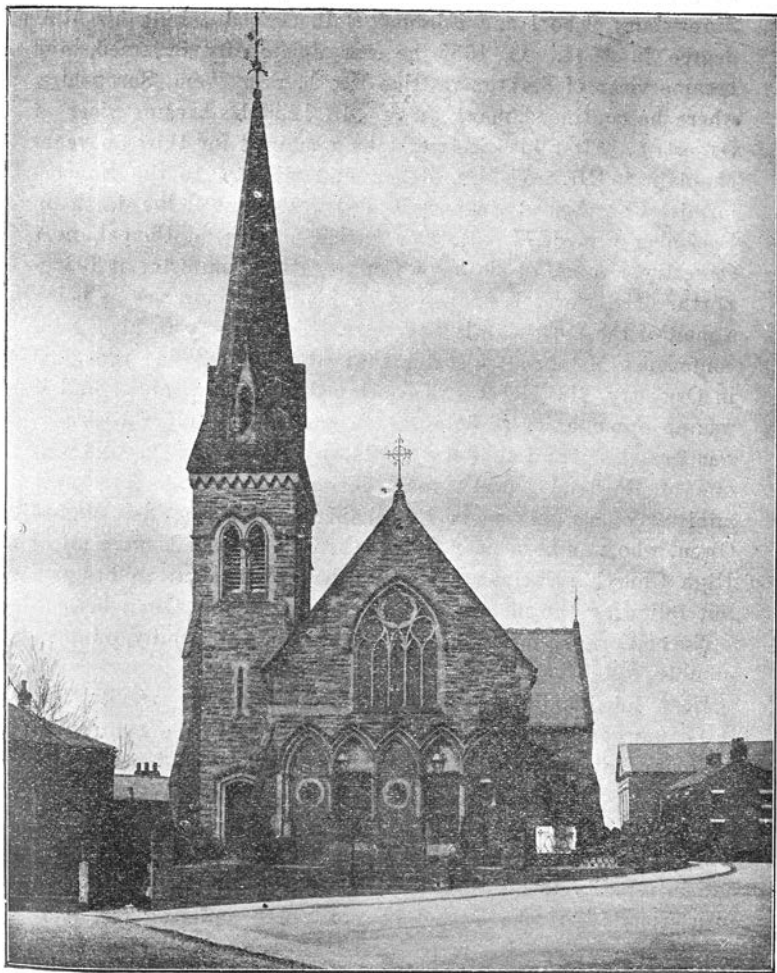
Witness, Walter Cradock with
all the saints that knew her.”

“Here lyeth Mrs. Abigail Chetwood,
daughter to Sir
Richard Chetwood, who died the 1st of
May, 1658.”

Burials also took place after Mr. Nevet formed the Congregational Church at Sweeney, and the record of one of these remains thus—

“Thomas Baker, Esq., deceased
Mar. 19th, aged 68,
A.D., 1675.”

Mr. Baker was member for Shropshire during the Commonwealth, and also High Sheriff. The Rev. Rowland Nevet was



CHRIST CHURCH, OSWESTRY.

ejected from the vicarage of Oswestry in 1662, and took refuge at Sweeney. He was born at Hodnet in 1614, educated at Shrewsbury School and Edmund Hall, Oxford, taking his M.A. degree in 1634. In 1635 he was episcopally ordained, and became vicar of Stanton-on-Hine Heath, near Wem, Shropshire, where he continued many years. In 1650 he became vicar of Oswestry. After his ejection, he remained for thirteen years chaplain to Mr. and Mrs. Baker, and minister to the Nonconformist Churches at Sweeney and Oswestry, until his death on December 8th, 1675. He was buried at Morton Chapel, near Oswestry. A son of his was a Congregational minister at Bridgnorth. Mr. Nevet is spoken of by his contemporaries as being a man of the most saintly character. Dr. Calamy in his "Nonconformist Memorials," states that when the plague prevailed in Oswestry, Mr. Nevet still continued with his people; and it was an opportunity of doing much good. His funeral sermon was preached from ii. Peter i., 14, by Philip Henry, who was one of Rowland Nevet's moot intimate friends. The next minister and successor in the chaplaincy was the Rev. James Owen, who was born near Carmarthen. His friends were all of High Church principles, and, they had preferment to bestow; but following the dictates, of his conscience, Mr. Owen became a Nonconformist, as did every member of the family, nine in number.

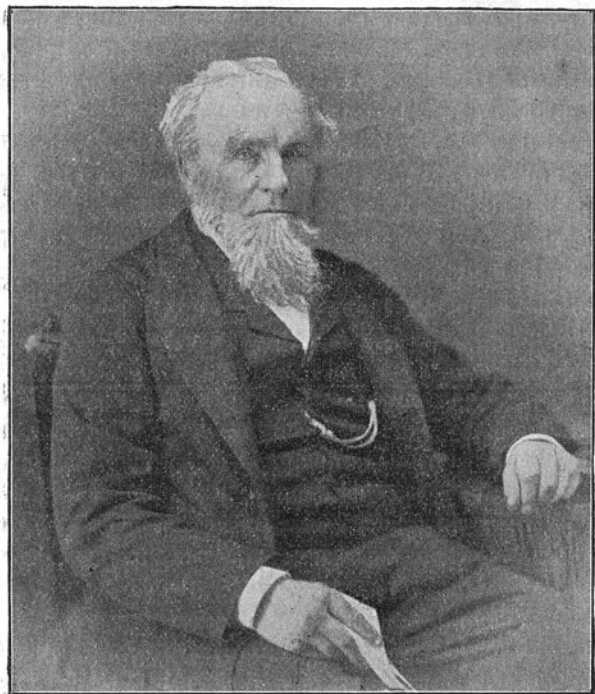
He studied under the Rev. Edmund Jones, of Brynllwarch, in Glamorganshire (the tutor of the first Welsh Nonconformist Academy), and entered upon his career during the heat of persecution. Spoiling of goods and imprisonment (of which details are given in his well-known biography by the Rev. Charles Owen) only gave augmented energy to his soul, and firmness and intrepidity to his character. From a prison he wrote thus to a friend: "If the Gospel be not worth suffering for, it is not worth preaching. It is indeed an honour after we have preached the truth to be called forth to suffer for it." Mr. Owen, in November, 1676, received his call to the pastorate of Sweeney, the duties of which he discharged with great fidelity in connection with those of chaplain to Madam Baker. In 1679, Mr. Owen removed on Madam Baker's death to Oswestry. By Royal license, dated 25th July, 1672, "a room or rooms in the



REV. JOHN WHITRIDGE

house of Hugh Edwards at Oswestry," had been licensed as "a place for the use of such as do not conform to the Church of England who are of the persuasion commonly called Congregational"; but the exact date when the first chapel was built is not precisely known. It was situate at the bottom of what is now called Arthur Street. There is no doubt the Congregationalists of the town of Oswestry had for years had a separate place of meeting there, and contemporary records give an interesting account of the persecutions they underwent. One record states that "all the principal women frequent the conventicle." Mr. Owen was a man of exalted piety, and very distinguished literary attainments. In the year 1681, Dr. W. Lloyd, Bishop of St. Asaph, summoned Mr. Owen to meet him at the Oswestry Town Hall on September 27th, "to give account of what right he exercised the ministry, not, having been ordained by a Bishop." The Bishop brought with him the famous Mr. Henry Dodwell, as assistant. Mr. Owen had two able supporters, the Rev. Philip Henry (who was a dear friend of his), and the Rev. Jonathan Roberts, of Llanfair. The discussion lasted seven hours, the Bishop and his co-adjutor asserting "that the episcopal is the only valid ordination," and Mr. Owen and his friends maintaining the contrary. No converts seem to have been made on either side. It must in fairness be said of the Bishop that he behaved with great courtesy and kindness towards his opponent, and, kept up his friendship with him until his death.

During his residence in Oswestry, Mr. Owen undertook the education of students for the Presbyterian ministry, supported by "the Presbyterian fund." His labours in North Wales were also incessant, and he published a large number of pamphlets, some of which—particularly those upon the "Occasional Conformity" controversy—passed through many editions. In 1696, and again in 1699, he received hearty invitations to Manchester. In the latter year he received also a call to Shrewsbury. For some time he wavered in his choice. Writing to his brother, he said: "I have yours and another from our good Manchester friends, whose importunities I am scarce, able to resist and less able to comply with. If I should remove, Salop will urge hard that they ought to come first in consideration. Pray for me



MR. THOMAS MINSHALL,
Several times Chairman of the Association,

that God will guide to the best. Oh that I knew what was most pleasing in His sight." In another letter he wrote: "There was a meeting of our county ministers, who unanimously declared for my removal to Salop, which I have, after many thoughts, at length resolved on; it being a public post, and near the Welsh country, as also to Oswestry and Wrexham, which are very uneasy at the thoughts of my leaving them, especially poor Oswestry, who keep themselves within no bounds of sorrowing." He removed to Shrewsbury in 1700. While there, he discharged the duties of the pastoral office with fidelity and acceptance, and also laboured at the head of the theological seminary, which was founded by Francis Tallents in the year 1663. His valuable life came to an end at the early age of fifty-two in 1706, and his intimate friend, Matthew Henry, preached his funeral sermon, in which he adverts in the most touching terms to the lifelong friendship of his father and himself with one "with whom many a time I have taken sweet counsel."

Mr. Owen's successor at Oswestry was the Rev. Jenkin Evans, of whom little is known. He began his pastorate almost directly after the resignation of Mr. Owen, and the following high tribute is paid to him by Matthew Henry: "He was a good worthy minister, and an excellent man. He was much beloved in Oswestry, and did good there and the country about."

While Mr. Evans was minister, a deed was prepared under the provisions of which the Rev. James Owen and others who had left Oswestry, made over their interest in pews and sittings in the chapel to their successors.*

In an old copy of Baxter's Works, in the possession of the minister of Christ Church for the time being, there is the following autograph of Jenkin Evans:—

"A Paragraph out of Sir Henry Ashhurst, Bart., his letter to me, January 20th, 1707.—'I do intend to give you Mr. Baxter's four great volumes for your life and your sons after you, if Dissenting Minister (or Ministers): but if not, I will give them to the Dissenting Ministers of Oswestry, in time to come.' Accordingly, this set was sent me.—JEN. EVANS."

* This "Deed for ye Seats in ye Chappel" is dated 1701.



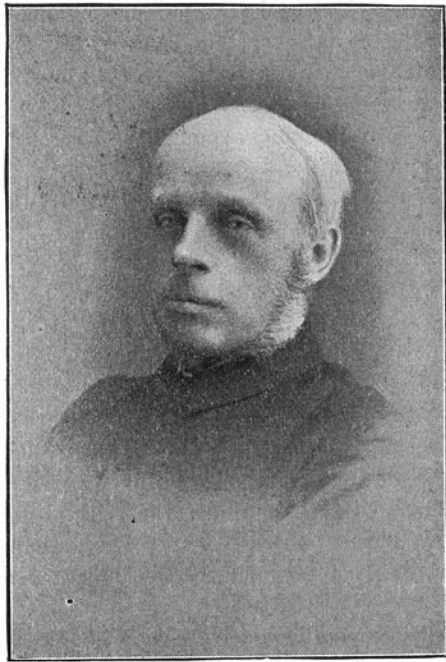
REV. J. LOCKWOOD.

Mr. Evans died August 19th, 1709, in his thirty-fifth year; Matthew Henry, accompanied by Mr. Kenwick, of Wrexham, and others, went to Oswestry to preach his funeral sermon from ii. Timothy i., 12, on the 25th August. Mr. Evans was a native of Glamorganshire. He translated the whole of Henry's "Scripture Catechism" into Welsh, and it was at his suggestion that Mr. Henry added the texts of scripture in proof of each reply.

From this period the records are for a time scanty. Whether Jenkin Evans was immediately succeeded by the Rev. Joseph Venables or otherwise, is uncertain; but from the copy of a letter still extant bearing date, January 31st, 174 $\frac{3}{4}$, it is manifest that Mr. Venables had been pastor for some years. In deed, from an autograph of his, found in the copy of Baxter's Works, it is clear he was minister in 1725.

The conduct of Mr. Venables does not seem to have been so consistent as the members of the church could have desired, and in 1734, a remonstrance was handed to him by John Felton, signed by twenty-one of his fellow members. Ten years later, his conduct was still more unbecoming a minister of religion, and the trustees sought an "opinion" from Mr. Thomas Hunt, junior, a barrister at Shrewsbury. By this time—1746—the differences between pastor and people had become very great. Eventually, chiefly through the instrumentality of Mr. Felton, Mr. Venables was induced to resign.

His successor, the Rev. Thomas Morgan, was a man of an altogether different spirit, and, under his ministrations, Non-conformity again began to prosper. In his time, the first regular chapel was built. Up to this period the meeting house was at the conjunction of "Street Arthur" and Willow Street; but in 1748, "a Building and Malt Mill, lying in Oswestry near the Castle Hill, and then, or late in the possession of John Evans," was purchased from "Richard Thomas, of Oswestry, gentleman." A circular was issued appealing for funds, addressed "to the Ministers of Christ and all other Charitable and well disposed Christians, to whom these presents shall come." It was signed by the pastor, deacons, and leading members "in ye name of all ye rest." A recommendation was appended, signed by the Revs Job Orton, Joseph Fownes, Ebenezer Keay, Jen. Jenkins, and Joseph Baker.



REV. T. GASCOINE.

The new chapel was opened for Divine worship in July, 1750. It stood on the same site as the present "Old Chapel," now converted into Sunday School rooms.

Mr. Morgan beginning to be pressed down under the weight of years, it became necessary that he should have an assistant. The choice of the church fell upon the Rev. Edward Dewhurst, a native of Lancashire, who had been a student in Coward College, then at Daventry, under the Rev. Dr. Ashworth. Before long, Mr. Morgan retired, and Mr. Dewhurst became sole pastor.

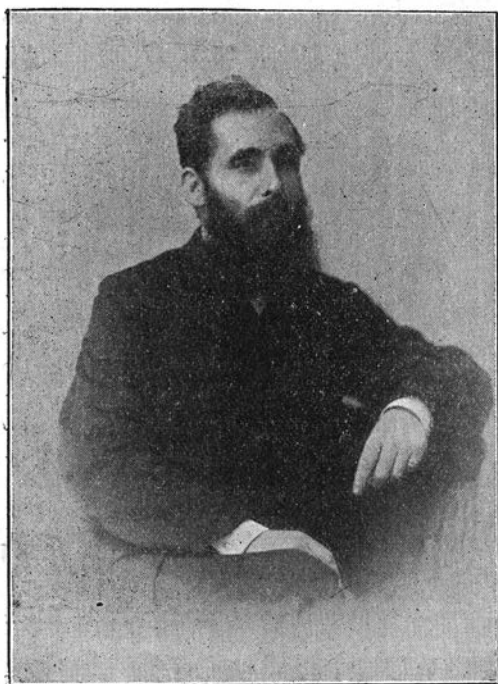
After remaining at Oswestry for some years, Mr. Dewhurst removed to Cottingham, near Hull, where he died about 1784. He is said to have been greatly distinguished by his modest reluctance to appear in public, though, as a preacher, he possessed no mean qualifications.

His successor at Oswestry was a Mr. Davies, who remained only a brief period, after which the church was for a season supplied by various preachers.

The 13th day of September, 1777, was the beginning of a new era in the history of the church at Oswestry. It was on that day that the Rev. Edward Williams (afterwards Dr. Williams), removed from Ross to Oswestry, who stated that there was then "scarcely anything belonging to a Christian Church besides the Meeting House." The church then finally assumed the Independent or Congregational form of government, and greatly revived and increased under the faithful and judicious ministry of this devoted man. The congregation became so numerous, that in 1783, the chapel was enlarged to meet its demands.

Dr. Williams consented to receive several of Lady Glenorchy's students, to educate for the Christian ministry, and in May, 1782, the Congregational Fund Board in London having appointed Mr. Williams, successor to Dr. Davies, the Welsh Academy was removed from Abergavenny to Oswestry.

After continuing his labours with great diligence, zeal, and success for over fourteen years, he accepted in 1791 a call to Carr's Lane, Birmingham. In 1795, he became the first Principal of Rotherham College, where he died in 1813. His distinguished career as Principal, and as author of many theological works, still of high repute, with the position he took as one of



REV. J. J. POYNTER.

the leaders of what may be called the Modern Moderate Calvinistic School, is well-known.

It was in the early part of Dr. Williams's ministry at Oswestry, that a Sunday School was first established. This was about the year 1781, and was either contemporaneous with, or even earlier than, the school founded by Robert Raikes at Gloucester. Dr. Williams also preceded Thomas Charles by several years in the establishment of Welsh Sunday Schools.

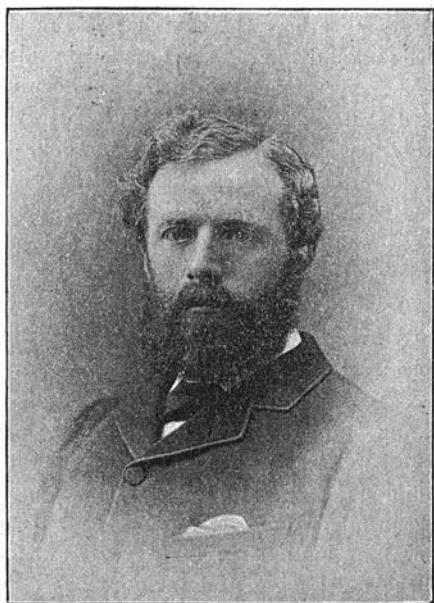
The Rev. John Whitridge was the next pastor at Oswestry. His pastorate began on March 25th, 1792, and did not end until his death on October 11th, 1826. His labours here were abundantly blessed. It is said that he was the first, or one of the first of our county ministers who took to London a collection for the London Missionary Society at its formation, and he was present (riding to London on horseback), at one of the first meetings of that society in September, 1795, at Baker's Coffee House, Change Alley, Cornhill. His predecessor, Dr. Williams, had written the first appeal for the new society.

He preached in numbers of the surrounding villages, being instrumental in aiding, with others, in the formation of the Congregational Churches (the members of which for a while were on the Old Chapel roll and attended communion at Oswestry) at Dovaston, Ruyton-xi-Towns, and other villages, such work being his great delight.

During his ministry, the chapel was twice enlarged; first in 1794, by the erection of a gallery, and again in 1808 by a considerable addition. He largely promoted and became first secretary of the Salop Association of Independent Ministers and Churches.

In course of time, the Rev. John Whitridge, junior, became assistant to his uncle, and also superintended the preparation of several young men for the Christian Ministry. At the end of five years he left for Manchester.

From Midsummer, 1826, until about two months after the elder pastor's death, Mr. Waterfield, of Rotherham College, came as a temporary supply. Mr. Whitridge was buried in a vault underneath the Old Chapel, the Rev. Peter Edwards, of Wem, conducting the service. On the following Sunday, the Rev. Thomas Weaver, of Shrewsbury, preached the funeral sermon.



MR. P. H. MINSHALL.
Chairman of the Association, 1890.

In April, 1827, the Rev. T. W. Jenkyn, D.D., of Wem, became pastor. He was exceedingly popular, and his labours were blessed to many. In 1830, it again became necessary to enlarge the chapel. Accordingly, the old building was all pulled down, with the exception of part of one wall, and rebuilt. The opening services were held in April, 1830, the preachers being the Revs. J. Thorpe (Chester), T. Weaver (Shrewsbury), and T. Raffles, D.D. (Liverpool). Dr. Jenkyn was most active in the establishment of Mission or Branch Churches in the neighbourhood, and among others the churches at Preeshenlle, Whittington, Carneddau, and Pant, were founded by him.

In 1835, Dr. Jenkyn removed to Stafford, afterwards becoming tutor at Coward College, and died in 1858. He was succeeded in the Oswestry pastorate at Christmas, 1835, by the Rev. William Reeve, a returned Indian Missionary. Owing to failing sight, he retired from ministerial duties after eight years service at Oswestry, and went to reside at Bristol. He became quite blind before his death. Mr. Reeve was succeeded by the Rev. John Davies, a minister of great ability, but feeble health. He remained a few years, and then removed to Welshpool. In 1851, the Rev. James Matheson, B.A., of Nottingham, became the minister. Mr. Matheson, although a man of delicate health, was of remarkable intellectual capacity and force of character. He was an earnest worker in every movement for the intellectual, moral, and religious welfare of Oswestry, and was greatly beloved by his people, some of whom still remember him after an interval of more than forty years, with the deepest gratitude for the quickening and invigorating influence of his ministry, which, considering how short it was, exercised a remarkable effect upon the congregation of the Old Chapel. He returned to Nottingham in 1855, and died in 1878.

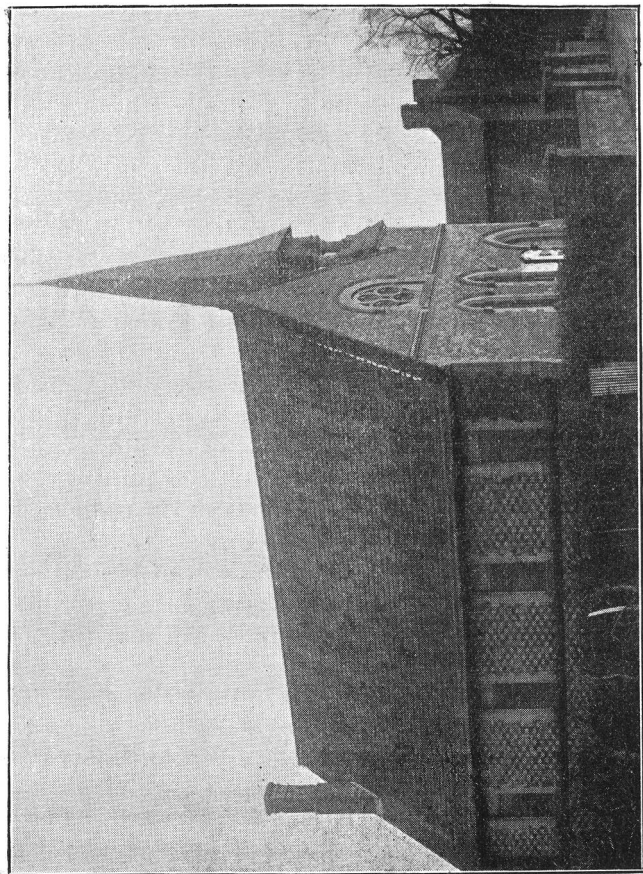
The next pastor was the Rev. John Lockwood, B.A., who came from Cheetham Hill, Manchester. Mr. Lockwood was a man of a gentle, cultivated, and devout spirit, and, in his own way, carried on the new order of things with regard to Congregationalism ushered in by Mr. Matheson. There are many who still remember his insight into character, wise counsels, ready and affectionate sympathy, and supreme unselfishness, which cared for others most and little for himself. "Retaining his own be-

lief in the Christian faith, his was one of those rare souls which-rejoice too much to meet with human goodness wherever it is, found to look at the garment in which it is dressed, or to care about the name by which it is called; the older he grew, the wider his spiritual horizon seemed to become, and his true catholicity, springing from a spirit of singular simplicity and unworldliness, gave an unusual charm to Mr. Lockwood's character, for those who knew him well." Mr. Lockwood left in 1863, and after pastorates at Paignton and Parkstone, died in September, 1888.

Mr. Lockwood's successor was the Rev. Thomas Gasquoine, B.A., who had been minister of Greenfield Chapel, Bradford. He began his pastorate on the 7th of February, 1864, and held it for about sixteen years. They were eventful years in the history of the church, for in Mr. Gasquoine's time, the building in Arthur Street, which had been for so long the Meeting Home of the congregation, was transferred after extensive alterations to the Sunday School, and a new church, henceforth called Christ Church, was erected in a much better position, adjoining the Old Chapel. The memorial stone was laid on the 7th of September, 1871, and the building, which was constructed at a cost of about £5,000, was opened on the 18th of October, of the following year. Mr. Gasquoine's activity was not confined to his own church, or his ministerial duties, which he discharged with an energy and devotion that had characterised all his life: Like other ministers of the Old Chapel, he took a prominent part in public affairs, and occupied an influential position in the town. When the first School Board was elected in 1876; he was one of the three Independent members, and he was an earnest adherent of the Liberal party, ready to take his share of work, and always counted among the most effective speakers on the platform. When he came to lay down his work at Oswestry in 1880, his departure was, felt as a loss to the public life of the town, and so well had his congregation worked, that during his pastorate, they had raised the sum of £13,000 for religious and philanthropic purposes.

Happily there was no long interregnum after the departure of Mr. Gasquoine. The choice of the congregation soon fell with practical unanimity upon the Rev. J. J. Poynter, then a student

at Rotherham, now the United Yorkshire College. In September, 1880, he entered upon his pastorate, which has already been the longest in the history of the church since the death of the Rev. John Whitridge. Mr. Poyntor, who was ordained October 8th, 1880, has seen four vicars of Oswestry, and all the other churches change their ministers, and is now senior among the clergy of the town. His untiring energy, often triumphant over feeble health, has enabled him not only to take a large share in the many and ever-increasing activities of Christ Church, but to discharge the duties of a citizen called upon to fill various public offices, of which one is the Chairmanship, for the second year, of the Oswestry Town Library, and another the Vice-chairmanship or the School Board, in both of which he shows the liveliest interest, as in everything connected with the welfare of the town. Mr. Poynter's ministry will be remembered, among other things, for the revival of activity in the Village Churches in the neighbourhood of Oswestry. Assisted by the liberality of the Oswestry congregation, the churches at Maesbury and Carneddau have been provided with a pastor, the first being the Rev. E. M. Edmunds, ordained 18th October, 1883, now pastor of the church at Ruabon; second, the Rev. John Williams, ordained 9th of October, 1890, now pastor of the church at, Dalton-in-Furness; and the Rev. J. Davies Jones, the present pastor, who was ordained September 25th, 1891, and, largely through Mr. Poynter's efforts, there has been a great increase of work and prosperity in the other village churches in the North-west corner of Shropshire. With all these demands he has found time also to devote himself to the interests of the North Wales English Congregational Union, of which he was Chairman in 1892; und the Salop Association of Independent Ministers and Churches, of which he occupied the chair in 1884. and, for the second time, in the centenary year, an appropriate choice, since his predecessor, Mr. Whitridge, was one of the founders, and the first secretary of the Association. The more Mr. Poyntor engages in work for others, the more acceptable his services seem to be at home, if we may judge by the large congregations which assemble Sunday after Sunday to listen to, his words at Christ Church.



MAESBURY CHAPEL.

Maesbury.

As far back as the year 1803, probably earlier, there was a Sunday School held at Maesbury, in the house of Mr. Richard Blunderfield. both he and his wife being members of the Old Chapel, Oswestry.

About the year 1830, Mr. Lacon, one of the Old Chapel deacons, began a Sunday School at Gwernybrenin in connection with which preaching continued in a dwelling house until in, 1831 a chapel was built, the opening services taking place on Good Friday of that year, when the preachers were the Rev. Thomas W. Jenkyn, afterwards Dr. Jenkyn, and the Rev. William Williams, of Wern, The Rev. John Roberts, of Llanbrynmair, preached there later.

There is record of individual members from this neighbourhood also attending service and communion at that time in the Old Chapel, amongst them Mr. and Mrs. John Evans, of Park Farm, Mr. John Davies, Mr. Edward Dodd, Mr. Henry Pool, and Mr. Edward Tunley, so that, as in other of the neighbouring districts, it is clear that Christian work was being carried on in the villages before chapels, were erected, and it may perhaps be said that the first rays of evangelical light in these villages in modern times were shed through the Old Chapel.

In 1851, Mr. Peter Blease, of Liverpool, of Her Majesty's Customs, came to Maesbury, and finding no place of worship or service held there, he began services in a house near the smelting works.

There were also preaching services in the stable of the lodge belonging to Llwyn Onn, and on this stable being required for its original purpose, they were removed to the kitchen of Union House, where the pulpit still exists, and on special occasions services were held in a malt kiln.

In 1855, it was deemed expedient to dispose of the building at Gwernybrenin, and with a small sum from the sale of it, and on a site given by Mr. Richard Evans, a chapel at Maesbury was built, the fittings being transferred from Gwernybrenin and made use of here. At this time the preaching was conducted by various lay helpers from Oswestry and elsewhere, under the superintendence of the Oswestry pastor, the preachers being en-

tertained by Mr. Whitfield, Woolston, one of the leading supporters of the place. In the list of Sunday School superintendents, are the names of Mr. John Jones, Mr. John Evans, Mr. Edward Humphreys (uncle of Mr. James Humphreys, the present superintendent), Mr. David Richards, who came from Meifod, and with his family rendered valuable service. Mention also should be made in this connection of Mr. Evan Davies (uncle of Mrs. Woollam, who, with her family, is devoted to the cause) and Mr. Richard Davies, who only recently passed away, Teachers, as in the case of Carneddau and Whittington, amongst them Mr. Jones, Printer, came regularly from Oswestry.

A new chapel was built in 1868, when 500 visitors sat down to tea, and in the evening an open air meeting was held, Mr. Thomas Barnes, of the Quinta, in the chair, and addresses were delivered by the Revs. T. Gasquoine, T. Davison, of the Quinta, George Kettle, of Shrewsbury, and Messrs. Thomas Minshall and D. C. Davies.

An account of the first anniversary service held on 15th May, 1890, appeared in the "Oswestry Advertizer" of the following Wednesday. The preacher at the morning and evening services was the Rev. D. Rowlands, B.A., then of Welshpool, now of Brecon Memorial College, and in the afternoon the Rev. John Jones, Wesleyan Minister, Oswestry. From a statement, read at a public meeting on the Monday evening following, by Mr. D. C. Davies, Mr. I. F. Whitridge presiding, it appears that the total cost of the new chapel, chapel house, and land, amounted to £900, of which there had been paid during the first year, £450. Addresses were also delivered on this occasion by Mr. Humphreys, Morton, Mr. Hughes, Maesbury House, and Mr. Whitfield, Woolston. The work at Maesbury has known perhaps more than the usual vicissitudes attending Christian effort in the rural districts, but as in the case of Carneddau, it has continued in spite of difficulties, and has in various ways helped to refine and brighten the village life, especially since the appointment of the assistant ministers, the Revs. E. M. Edmunds, J. Williams, and J. Davies Jones, referred to more fully in regard to Carneddau. Here also, there are week-night meetings for prayer and Bible study, also a Band of Hope, carried on under the superintendence of the Pastor.

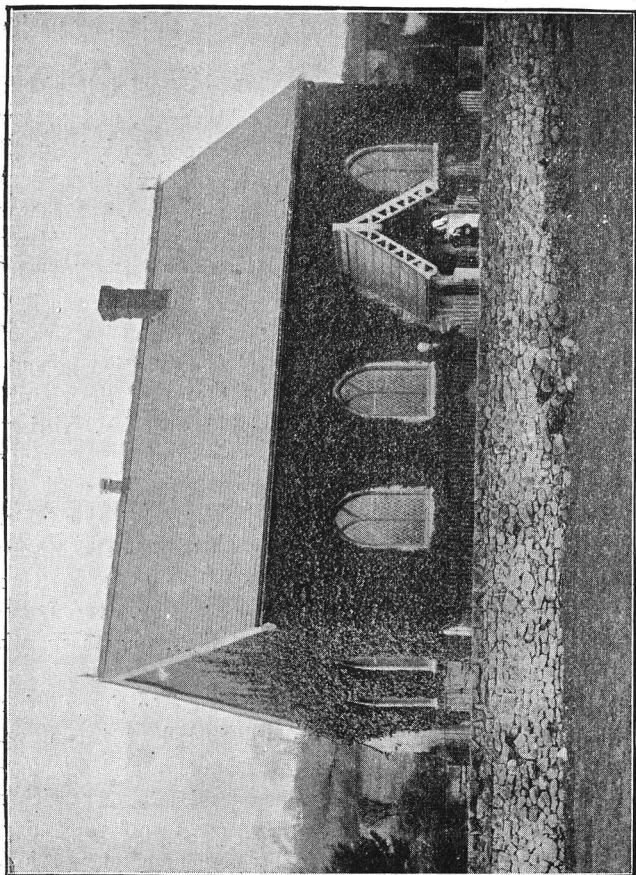
It may here be added that owing to the combined efforts of the congregation in town and in the villages at various times the buildings at Maesbury, Carneddau, and Whittington, are entirely free from debt.

Carneddau.

THE first preaching services in connection with our denomination at Carneddau were held some time before the opening of the present century in the house of a Mr. Richard Evans, who was in membership at the Old Chapel, Oswestry. These services were occasionally conducted by the Rev. John Whitridge; and side by side with work carried on by the Calvinistic Methodists (who built a chapel in 1793), may be considered to be the founding of Free Church life in that neighbourhood.

It should next be recorded that at an early period in the century there was Sunday School teaching at Gronwen, during Mr. Whitridge's time—probably about 1808—Mr. Sabine and Mr. J. Davies, of Oswestry, being teachers. Somewhat later than this a Sunday School was established at Craigforda, in the cottage of Martha Rogers, daughter of the wood-ranger. This school was presently transferred from Craigforda to the house of Mr. John Francis; Nantywiber, and not long after again was removed, this time to the house of Mr. Morris Jones, above Tynycoed. Here it was unusually well attended and successful. Still later it found a home on the opposite side of the valley in a cottage of two rooms, the lower with a sanded floor, on the Mill Bank, Llanforda.

A former resident at Candy, now living at Coedygo, has still in his possession a Bible inscribed with his name 2nd October, 1837, by Mr. Thomas Minshall, who had charge of the work at Llanforda, and with his sister Miss Margaret Minshall (afterwards Mrs. Richard Jones), Messrs. Charles and John Minshall, Knox, of Craigforda, Thomas Owen, of Sweeney, Abraham Davies, and employees from the Golden Ball, Oswestry, used to visit the neighbouring cottages systematically, and conduct prayer meetings and other religious services,



CARNEDDAU CHAPEL.

There were also occasional meetings under the care of Dr. Jenkyn, of the Old Chapel, Oswestry, with the aid of Mr. Knox and Mr. Thomas Minshall, when sermons were preached in both Welsh and English out of doors on Sunday afternoons. Amongst the recollections of this time is that of Foreign Missionary meetings, addressed, at least on one occasion, by native converts.

Concurrently with this, work yet another school established in 1831, was, carried on in a cottage at Trefonen, and prayer meetings were held in the house of Mr. Thomas Sockett, until the first Carneddau Chapel was built. The first superintendent of this school was Mr. Joseph Jones, of Oswestry. He was followed by Mr. Richard Jones (father of Mr. Parry-Jones, Town Clerk of Oswestry). Mr. R. Jones also taught the infants' class in this Sunday School for sixteen years; and it is recalled that there was at that time great opposition on the part of the clergyman at Carneddau, and that on one occasion he pursued the Sunday scholars round a field in front of the chapel with a whip. Mr. Thomas Yorke (father-in-law of Mr. William Jackson, of Oswestry), and his family were for many years warm local supporters of the cause.

The chapel itself, no doubt owing to the exertions of Dr. Jenkyn, was erected in 1834. The Llanforda School appears to have been closed in 1850, and the scholars transferred to Carneddau, but as late as the pastorate of the Rev. John Lockwood, there was preaching, by him and others, once a month at Gronwen.

The Carneddau pulpit was supplied from time to time during these years by neighbouring ministers, including the Revs. Evans, of Samey, John Griffiths, of Domgay, and by lay-preachers from Oswestry, the Old Chapel ministers exercising oversight and rendering occasional service, the members coming in to Oswestry for communion originally and for a long period.

It is interesting to note that the continuity of Sunday School teachers from Oswestry in this neighbourhood has remained unbroken, a number still going to Carneddau on Sunday afternoons. In addition to those already named as Superintendents the following may be mentioned, viz., Messrs. J. Whitridge Davies, Turner, John Morris, Gibson, Abraham Davies, and



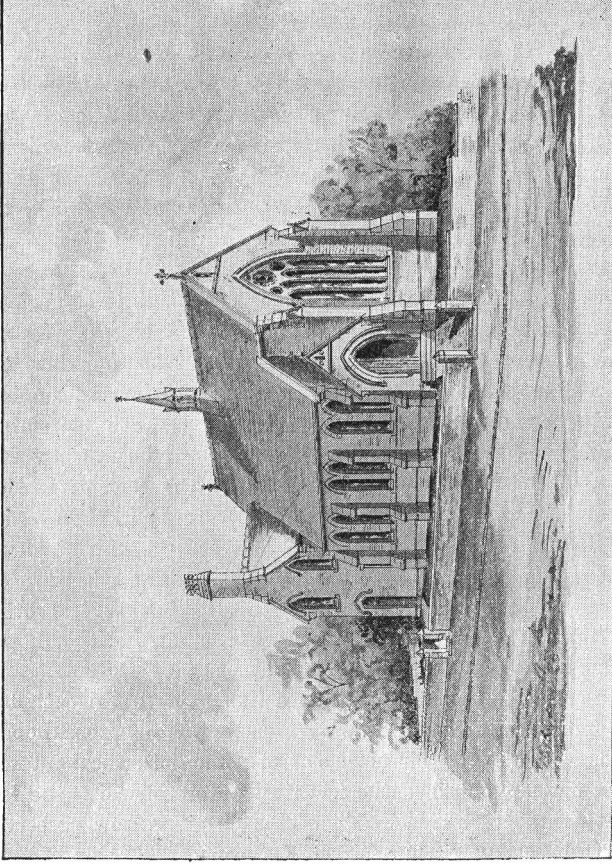
REV. J. DAVIES JONES.

Isaac F. Whitridge. With the advent of Mr. Whitridge, a new impetus was given to the work, and the chapel was restored. He died suddenly in March, 1894, and, by his own express wish, was, buried amongst the people he loved and served so well, in the chapel graveyard at Carneddau. This burying ground, which adjoins the chapel, was purchased as the result of subscriptions collected by Mr. John Hughes and other friends in 1868. The present superintendent is Mr. W. H. Davies, of Oswestry.

The growing necessities of the work in all directions having led the mother church at Oswestry to appoint an assistant minister for the villages, the Rev. E. M. Edmunds, of Bala College, was ordained in October, 1883. He was succeeded, on removal to Ruabon, by the Rev. John Williams, ordained October, 1890, and on Mr. Williams's removal to Prees by the Rev. J. Davies Jones, of Brecon College. Mr. Davies Jones was ordained September, 1891, and, full of activities of various kinds, including cottage prayer meetings, Band of Hope, and village Eisteddfodau, carries on the pastoral work jointly with that of Maesbury. The work at Carneddau, like most rural work, has suffered from agricultural and mining depression, as well as from the hostility of Established Church neighbours, but it has produced many excellent men and women, some of whom have passed away, and some have gone to live useful Christian lives elsewhere throughout the country, whilst many remain to bear consistent Christian witness in the district in which they have been brought up.

Whittington.

THE village of Whittington with its picturesque Castle ruins is situate some two miles from Oswestry. There were resident here sundry members of the Old Chapel, Oswestry, prior to the year 1840, when, owing to their efforts, public worship was begun in Whittington, and a Sunday School established. At the same time, it would appear from contemporary records, that the village "abounded in immorality and vice."



WHITTINGTON NEW CHAPEL.

In 1840, two cottages with land adjoining, were purchased, and converted into a place for religious meetings, the trust deeds of "lease and release" being made out in the names of "Thomas Roberts, of Plasucha, in the parish of Ruabon, of the first part; John Husband, formerly of Whittington, now of Manchester, of the second part; David Thomas, Samuel Roberts, John Davies, Thomas Davies, and James Vaughan, Oswestry, of the third part; and Nathaniel Minshall of the fourth part."

This was during the pastorate at the Old Chapel of the Rev. William Reeve, and the Oswestry Church minutes of that period have various entries with reference to financial aid to the Whittington branch of the church, in common with those of Carneddau and Maesbury, of the progress of the work, the proposing and receiving of members, the providing of "itinerant" preachers, etc.

From an interesting account in the "Evangelical Magazine" of December, 1844, it appears that "the want of a more commodious place of worship was so greatly felt as to induce the friends of the cause to venture in the direction of another chapel." The new-chapel was opened on Sunday, 8th September, 1844, when sermons were preached in the morning by Mr. Roberts, of Oswestry; in the afternoon by the Rev. J. Davies, Mr. Reeve's successor in the Oswestry pastorate; in the evening by the Rev. J. Minshall, of Spring Hill College, Birmingham. The account goes on to say that "as the congregation are extremely poor, and the church at Oswestry has several other local claims of a similar nature pressing upon it, it is hoped that some friends of the Redeemer whose eye this statement may meet, may feel disposed to render a little aid to this attempt for the moral and religious improvement of the neighbourhood," and it is noted as "a circumstance of some little local interest that the chapel contained the identical pulpit in which the late eminent John Howe preached." This pulpit is now preserved in the Old Vestry, Arthur Street, Oswestry.

The work in these earlier times met with no little opposition even from the clergy of the neighbourhood, and in the memory of many, and up till quite recent times, there were to be seen at Whittington in large, print painted upon the walls of prominent buildings such texts as "Mark them which cause divisions ...

and avoid them" in obvious admonition against those devoted workers for better life along evangelical and free church lines.

Mention is made of Mr. R. Sides, who lived for several years in the chapel house, Mr. Edward Husbands, a small free-holder at Babbins Wood, and Mr. Thomas Lewis, Iron Mills, as being, with others, instrumental in originating and sustaining the work. To these, in later days, may be added the names of Mr. Thomas Minshall, who took special interest in the cause, and rendered it excellent service, for several years' conducting the services with great acceptance one Sunday in each month, and Messrs. R. O. Wright, Thomas Davies, P. H. Minshall, and D. C. Davies.

In the Oswestry Church minutes of 4th April, 1851, amongst other appointments for the Country Chapels, appear those of Mr. T. Davies, and Mr. Edward Husbands, as Superintendents at Whittington, and as in the cases of Carneddau and Maesbury, the members have been considered up to the present time as forming an integral part of the Oswestry Church and under its pastorate, the Old Chapel ministers preaching occasionally, the communicants at first coming in to Oswestry for the, Lord's Supper, but at later periods there were quarterly afternoon communion services in the villages at which the Oswestry pastor presided.

With the appointment of the Rev. E. M. Edmunds, as assistant minister for the villages in 1883, a new era was entered upon for the work of Whittington as well as Carneddau and Maesbury. On Mr. Edmunds's removal to Ruabon, the Rev. W. E. Hughes, now of the Quinta, then of Preeshenlle, took partial oversight, preaching one Sunday in each month, conducting week-night preaching and prayer services and Band of Hope and other meetings. These duties have in his turn been taken over by his successor, the Rev. E. Garmon Roberts, who, still in connection with the Oswestry Church, is at present in charge of the work.

It having been long felt that a chapel more suited to modern requirements and in a better position should be erected, a suitable plot of land has generously been given by the trustees of the late Mr. Thomas Minshall, of Oswestry, not far from the existing building, plans have been prepared for a new structure, and a considerable sum already collected by local effort and friends

in Oswestry, so that it is confidently hoped that within a few months, in its new sanctuary, the work at Whittington may enter upon a future of still wider usefulness and still greater spiritual prosperity.

Penyllan Lane.

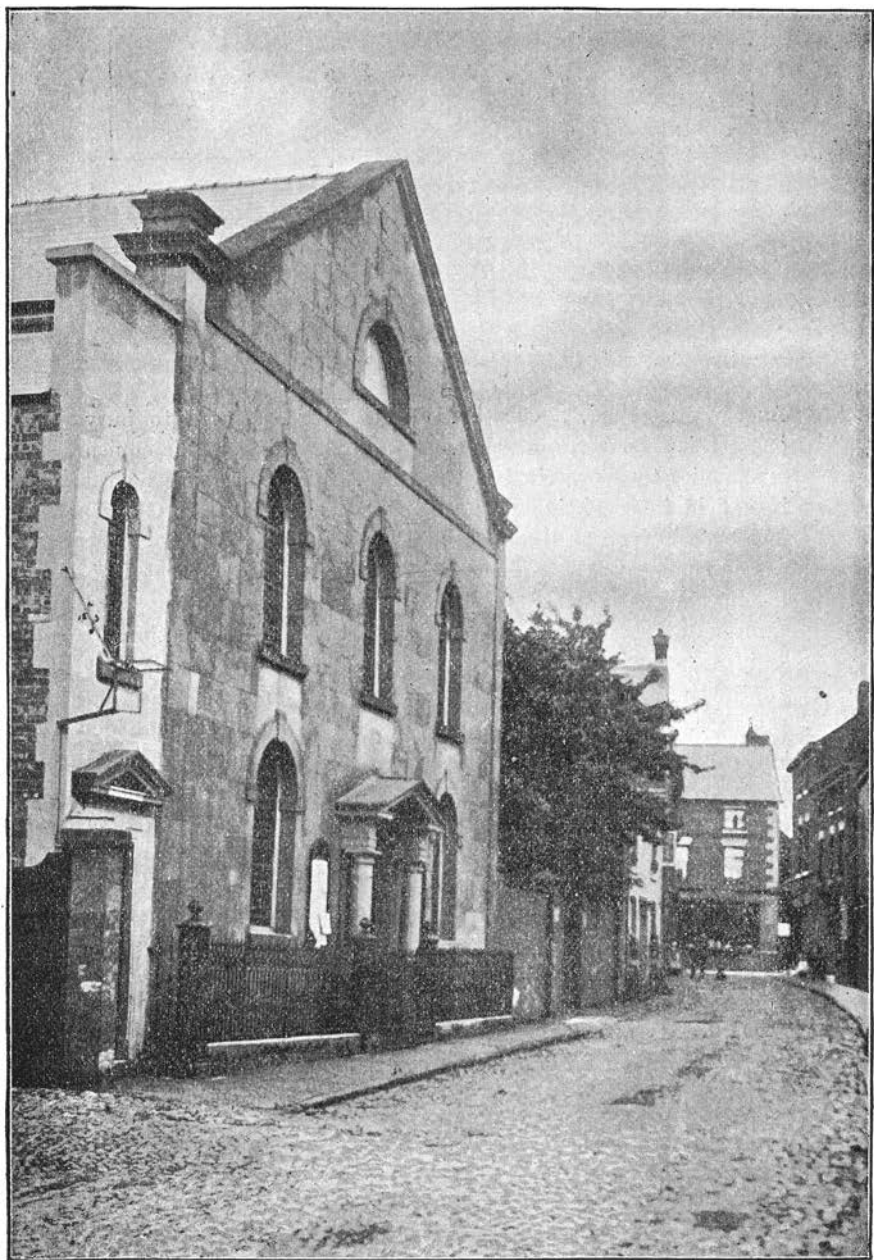
CHRISTIAN work of various kinds has been carried on here for several years past by members of Christ Church. The chapel originally belonged to the Welsh Wesleyans, but on their ceasing to make use of it, it was purchased by the late Mr. Charles Minshall, of Wilmot Croft, Oswestry, and lent for the purposes of the mission, a kindness which has been generously continued by the trustees of Mr. Minshall's estate.

Amongst the earliest of the devoted band of workers were Mr. R. O. Wright, senior, Mr. John Lewis, and Mr. John Powell, who still continues to, take part. Mrs. Askew Roberts also had a class for women, afterwards carried on by Mrs. J. Whitridge Thomas. In later days a committee, annually appointed in church meeting at Christ Church, has had charge of the various agencies in the building and amongst the people.

Like much other work of this kind, the effort here has had its vicissitudes, but besides those who have "entered into rest," there are men now in various parts of the world leading useful and honoured lives, who trace their first influences for good under God to the instruction received in the Penyllan Lane Sunday School, the Band of Hope, and Temperance meetings, and Sunday evening services for children and adults. which have continued in face of discouragements and difficulties to be held.

In connection with the mission, religious services have been held in a lodging house, and cottages in the neighbourhood, which have been attended with much blessing, and there is frequent visitation or the needy and suffering in their homes, A Penny Bank also is held every Saturday evening.

Of late there has been a considerable accession of helpers, and, with an increase in the attendance at the services, a general quickening of interest and with deepening spiritual influence, a feeling of hopefulness that still greater results may be looked for in days to come.



CHAPEL STREET CHAPEL, WEM.



Wem.

Noble Street.

As early as 1558, a curate named Barnard, refused to bury one William Glover, a gentleman who dissented from the popish ceremonies then practised in the town. His corpse was buried in a field in the neighbourhood. His brother, Robert Glover, had been burned at the stake at Coventry in 1555.

For some years previous to the passing of the Act of Uniformity, Wem had the privilege of the ministry of the Rev. Andrew Parsons, M.A., who took part in the ordination of Philip Henry in Prees Church, and whom Henry describes as an "active, friendly, generous man, and a moving, affecting preacher." The historian of Wem says of him, "Though devout and religious, laborious and pathetic, yet deeply infected with Puritanical principles." Mr. Parsons had been minister in Devon some years before the Civil War. Being driven to London, he became well-known to the celebrated Mr. Pym, who sent him down to Wem when it was garrisoned by the Parliament. In 1660, he was fined £200 for seditious words falsely sworn to have been spoken by him in a sermon, and ordered to be imprisoned until the fine should be paid. He removed to London, where he died in 1684.

The curate at the Chapel at Edstaston was the Rev. Samuel Taylor, of Magdalen College, Cambridge, and he became the pastor of a congregation at Wem, where he preached as often as liberty and health allowed. He was often in great straits for want of means to support himself and family; and his house was burned in the great fire which consumed a large part. of Wem in 1677.

In these early days, Mr. Taylor and his people met in private



REV. PETER EDWARDS.

dwellings, attended Divine worship in the Parish Church, and held their meetings at other hours of the day. But eventually, during the pastorate of the Rev. R. Latham, the people forsook the services at the church, being provoked by the continual attacks of the curate, the Rev. Moses Hughes; and a barn was fitted up as a meeting house in Leek Lane, now Chapel Street.

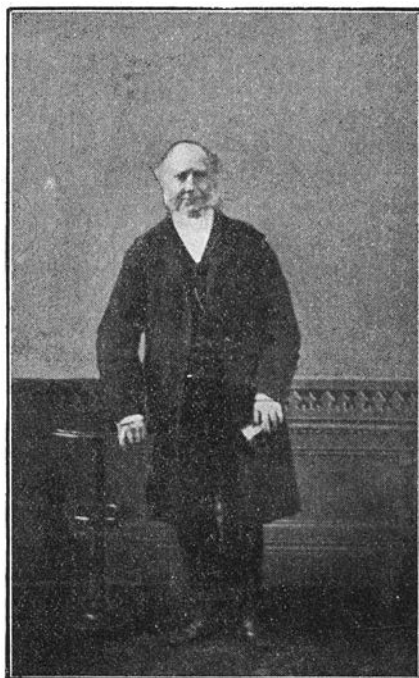
Mr. Taylor died in 1695, his funeral sermon being preached by Philip Henry. He is described by the clerical historian of Wem as a clean, nice, little, slender man. Philip and Matthew Henry often exchanged services with him. He is also mentioned in the sermon which the Rev. Francis Tallents preached on the occasion of Philip Henry's funeral. (This discourse was printed in the *Eighteen Sermons*, p. 297, October, 1816).

The next pastor was the Rev. Richard Latham, who died on March 20th, 1706, Matthew Henry preaching his funeral sermon.

After him came the Rev. Richard Lathrop, a native of West Felton, who had been educated at Sheriff Hales by Mr. Woodhouse. He resigned in 1706, and was succeeded in the pastorate by the Rev. William Fisher, who left for Ledbury in 1711, when Mr. Lathrop returned to Wem.

In 1715, the meeting house was pulled down by a mob and burned. In 1716, a new meeting house was erected on another site—"Sarah Thornhill's garden in Noble Street"—by the voluntary contributions of the Dissenters, added to the £60 which was paid by the High Sheriff as compensation for the damage to the old chapel.

Mr. Lathrop removed to Ledbury in the same year, and was succeeded by the Rev. Thomas Holland, a native of Madbury, in Cheshire, who had been educated at Mr. Chorlton's Seminary in Manchester, under the Rev. Joseph Cunningham. He married Mary, the daughter of Mrs. Savage, who was sister to Matthew Henry. He was "large, strong, and swarthy." Although Mr. Holland's income was small, he was generous; and it is said of him that he sometimes playfully boasted that he had educated ten children, three of them at Dr. Doddridge's Academy, in a manner that qualified them to fill respectable situations in a respectable manner; that he always had a place at his table for any friend that called upon him; that a beggar never left



REV. G. SMITH.

his door without some sort of relief; and that he never had a dun at his gate, for he paid ready money for every article he purchased, except his milk score, which was discharged every Saturday night.

One of the silver Communion cups was presented by him bearing this inscription: "The gift of the Rev. Mr. Holland, to the Dissenting Chapel in Wem, 1752." This cup corresponds to one given two years previous by Mrs. Bassnett.

The Rev. T. Holland re-organised the church, and his son Philip's name stands first on the list of members. He published two volumes of sermons, said to be remarkable for their eloquence. He died, September 26th, 1753, aged 63, and was buried in Wem churchyard by the side of Mill Street, exactly opposite the door of the Buck's Head Inn.

During his ministry, several friends increased the provision for the minister's support, and a chapel parsonage was purchased. In 1730, a library was presented by several individuals, containing a large number of large folio volumes, and it was directed that the hearers "who tarry after sermon" might read for their edification. The strength of the congregation at one time under Mr. Holland was reported thus—180 hearers, 25 county voters, 24 tradesmen, 14 farmers, 10 yeomen.

Mr. Holland's son, the Rev. Philip Holland, who was born in Wem, succeeded his father, and was ordained in the chapel, in 1754.

The Rev. Mr. Harrop followed, in whose time Unitarian views were adopted. He continued his ministry until 1781, and was succeeded by Mr. Haughton, who stayed until 1787, or whose ministry no particulars have been handed down.

Next came Mr. Hazlitt, who remained until 1813. He was the father of the celebrated W. Hazlitt. Samuel, Taylor Coleridge often visited him at Wem, walking there from Shrewsbury, reading on his way. One room in the parsonage is known as Coleridge's room.

The Rev. J. Whithead was the next pastor, who stayed until 1817. He was much esteemed. To do him honour, his people presented the chapel with two massive antique brass chandeliers, afterwards removed in favour of gas.

In 1817, the ministry of the Rev. Thomas Toller, or



SIR J. B. WILLIAMS.

Wymondley (Homerton) College, commenced. By him the original doctrines were preached in the chapel.

He was succeeded in 1820 by the Rev. Thomas William Jenkyn—afterwards D.D.—who, after seven years of successful labour here, removed to Oswestry. In his time the chapel was renovated at a cost of nearly £100.

His successor was the Rev. J. Frederick Mandeno, who left for Newport at the end of 1840, and who eventually removed to New Zealand. After he had left Wem, he was followed in 1842 by the Rev. Edward G. Sadler, of Rotherham College, who left for Nantwich.

The next pastor was the Rev. Geo. Smith, who came from Devon in 1853, and who died on April 2nd, 1874, aged 75.

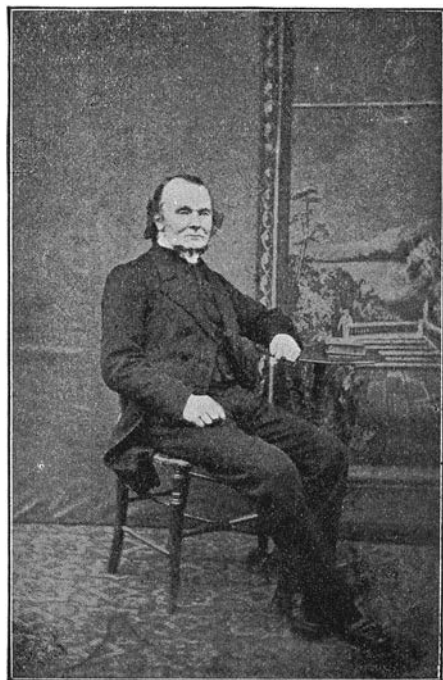
At the close of his pastorate the church ceased to exist, the members left uniting themselves with the Chapel Street Church. The property was afterwards dealt with by the Charity Commissioners, one part of the endowments being given to Chapel Street Church, and the other for charitable purposes connected with the parish of Wem. All these charities are in the hands of a committee, of which Rev. J. B. Walton was elected permanent chairman,

Chapel Street.

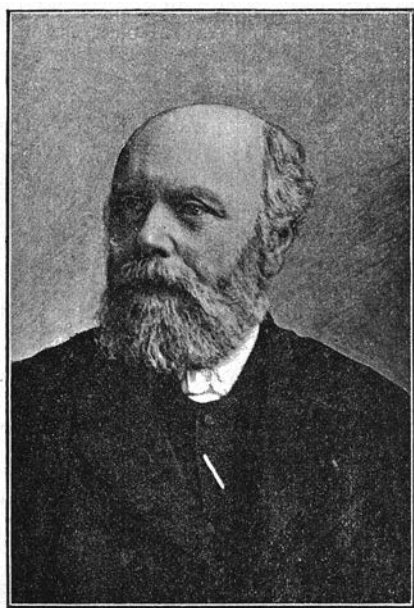
THIS place of worship was opened on August 20th, 1775. Mr. John Henshaw (solicitor, born 1734; died February 1st, 1701), who had become converted through reading the publications of the Rev. James Hervey, joined Sir Richard Hill, Mr. Lee, of Cotery, Mr. Poneys, of Berwick, and Captain Scott (afterwards Rev. Jonathan Scott), in extending the Kingdom of Christ, more especially in Shropshire. It was largely through Mr. Henshaw's zeal that the meeting house in Chapel Street, Wem, was built. In this chapel Jonathan Scott, Rowland Hill, and Cornelius Winter often preached.

In 1777, the Countess of Huntingdon sent the Rev. John Hawsworth, her favourite preacher, to Wem. He remained for some time and during his ministry a church was formed.

In 1781, Mr. Richardson, one of the Trevecca students, was, pastor; but how long he remained here is not known.



Rev. J. PATTISON.



REV. J. B. WALTON, LL.B.

About the year 1792, the chapel became Independent, and the Rev. Thomas Golding, who had been trained by the venerable Cornelius Winter, became the minister. He left in 1795 unordained, and was succeeded by the Rev. Peter Edwards.

Peter Edwards was born at Oswestry. He was educated for the ministry under the Rev. W. Clark, M.A., who was "eminently qualified by classical and Biblical literature for the duties of a tutor," and who, while pastor of Baptist chapels at Southwark and Exeter, had educated several persons for the ministry. His pupil, Peter Edwards, became pastor of a Baptist chapel in Portsmouth.

Mr. Edwards became an Independent through reading "Anti-paedo Baptism Examined," by Dr. Edward Williams (first of Oswestry, then of Birmingham, 1792, and afterwards, 1795 to 1813, Principal of Rotherham College). Mr. Edwards published his "Candid Reasons on the subject of Baptism" in 1795, and in the same year settled as pastor of Chapel Street, Wem, on the simultaneous but unpreconcerted recommendations of the Revs. Rowland Hill, Dr. David Bogue (Gosport), and Dr. Williams. He was undoubtedly a man of great individuality and pulpit power, and learning in some directions, for it is said that a Professorship of Hebrew was at one time offered to him.

Mr. Edwards remained pastor of Chapel Street, Wem, until his death, which took place in March, 1833, at the age of 82. He was one of the four founders of the Salop Association.

In the year 1826, the Rev. Joseph Pattison, of Rotherham College (who was born at the Leasows, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on October 21st, 1800), became assistant to Mr. Edwards, and was ordained co-pastor in 1828. The venerable pastor would often boast that there had never been a misunderstanding between them.

On the death of Mr. Edwards, Mr. Pattison became sole pastor. During his ministry, the chapel was rebuilt on a larger scale, a British School was opened, a cemetery was purchased, and a commodious Lecture Room was built. Mr. Pattison remained pastor until his death on May 29th, 1866. From 1847 he was Secretary to the Salop Association.

His successor at Wem was the Rev. W. Champness, of Spring Hill College, who commenced his ministry in June, 1867, and

was ordained on September 18th. The Rev. George Kettle, of Shrewsbury, commenced the service by reading and prayer; Rev. Mark Wilks, of London, gave an exposition of Congregational Principles; Rev. D. D. Evans, of Bridgnorth, asked the questions; Professor Barker, of Spring Hill College, offered the Ordination Prayer, and Professor Bubier, of Spring Hill, gave the charge to the minister. In the evening the charge was given to the people by the Rev. H. H. Carlisle, LL.B., of Southampton.

The Rev. W. Champness resigned in 1873 for a collegiate charge in Stockport, and was succeeded in November, 1873, by the Rev. J. B. Walton, B.A., LL.B., who had been pastor at Dukinfield Hall, Cheshire. During his pastorate, the harmonium has given place, to an organ; the chapel has been restored at a cost of more than £800; and a manse, one of the best in the county, has been built; the sum expended on the land and the building being £850. At one time a small church at Coton was worked by the ministers of Noble Street and Chapel Street Chapels, but this has been for many years in the hands of the Primitive Methodists of the Wem Circuit.





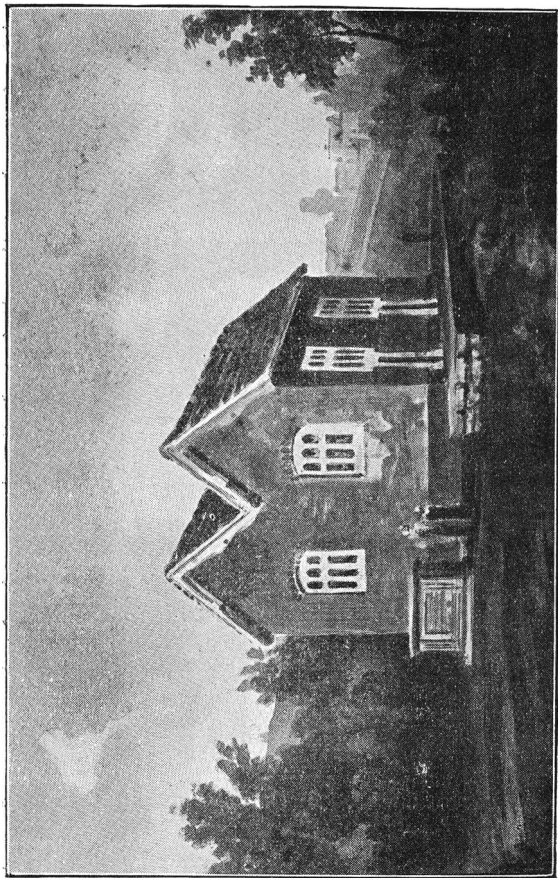
Bridgnorth.

THE congregation here was first gathered by the Rev. Andrew Tristram, M.A., Rector of St. Leonard's, Bridgnorth, who was ejected in 1662. Like many others of the ejected clergy, he practised medicine as a means of livelihood. He also preached privately in the town, and ministered in spiritual matters to those who, like himself, had become Nonconformists. Richard Baxter described him as "a man of more than ordinary ability in preaching and prayer—of an upright life."

The records, of the early history of the church are scanty, and we cannot tell where the Rev. Andrew Tristram and his successors laboured from 1662 to 1709, nor can we be at all sure who his immediate successors were.

Mr. Tristram, it would appear, died in 1706, and was buried in St. Leonard's Church. But he does not seem to have been the pastor of the Dissenting Congregation until the time of his death, for in Williams's "Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Welshmen" it is stated that Charles Owen was "privately ordained" minister of a congregation at Bridgnorth between 1674 and 1680, that he returned to Bridgnorth after a residence in London, and died at Ellesmere in 1712. This Rev. Charles Owen, unless he has been confused with a later man of the same name who was, minister at Warrington, wrote several controversial tracts in favour of the Dissenters. Calamy, in speaking of the Rev. Rowland Nevet, M.A., who was ejected from his living at Oswestry in 1662, states that his son John Nevet was minister among the Dissenters at Bridgnorth. He seems to have been here from 1680 until the time of his death, which took place in 1705.

Twenty years after the passing of the "Toleration Act," viz. in 1709, the Nonconformists of Bridgnorth erected their first



OLD STONEWAY CHAPEL

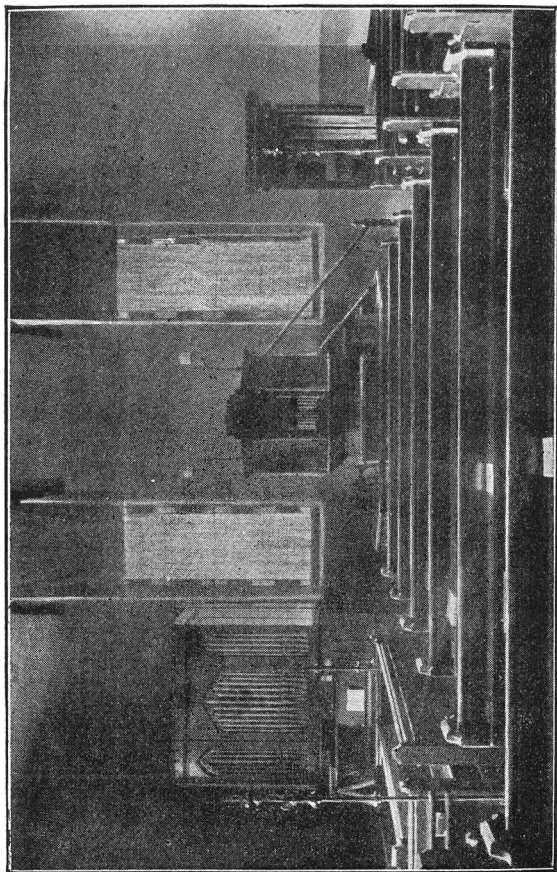
meeting house on Stoneway Steps. It was considerably smaller than the present building, and was a double-gabled or double-roofed structure, built after the fashion of Matthew Henry's Chapel at Chester. The chapel fronted the East, had a gallery on the West side, and a large, sounding-board over the pulpit. The roof was supported by two large pillars rising from the middle of the chapel. The cost of this erection is not known. The description of the site in the Trust Deed is "All that messuage, cottage, or tenements, with all the gardens thereunto adjoining and belonging on the North side of the Stoneway, the which John Wilson hath lately purchased from Mr. Thomas Wollastone and Anne, his wife, together with the new building thereupon since erected," etc. The deed is dated August 2nd, in the 8th year of Queen Anne, 1709.

This structure stood for 120 years. Some years before it was taken down to make way for a new chapel, an incident occurred which almost resulted in inflicting loss of life. One afternoon, the West side of the building fell on to Stoneway Steps. Just before this occurrence, two friends, one of whom was, going up the steps and the other going down, stood and converged in front of the chapel. Immediately after they parted, the wall fell. Had they continued talking together for one half-minute longer, both must have been buried in the debris.

From 1717 to 1729, the congregation is said to have consisted of 120 hearers, 9 county voters, 26 borough voters, 5 gentlemen, 9 farmers, and 28 tradesmen.

Of this period the records are very meagre. In 1717, the Rev. Samuel Taylor was pastor, but no details of his work have come down to us. After him, the Rev. Fowler Walker was minister, who in 1724 removed to Abergavenny, in which town his death took place in 1751. His work in Bridgnorth was very successful.

Between 1724 and 1747, the details are very confusing. Rev. John Richard Fleming was here in 1726, and is mentioned in Bogue and Bennett's "History of the Dissenters," as having conducted an Academy for the training of young men for the Christian ministry. But he was not pastor all the years between 1726 and his death, which took place about 1740, for it appears that the Rev. Josiah Owen, educated at Carmarthen



STONEWAY CHAPEL—INTERIOR

College, nephew of the celebrated James Owen, of Oswestry, was minister from 1733 to 1738 or 1739.

Rev. Edward Evans, a native of Newmarket (Flint), left Carmarthen College in 1745, and was ordained at Bridgnorth in 1747. A fellow student of his, the Rev. Thomas Morgan, who wrote an account of his College companions, has in different parts of his book these two notes about him:—

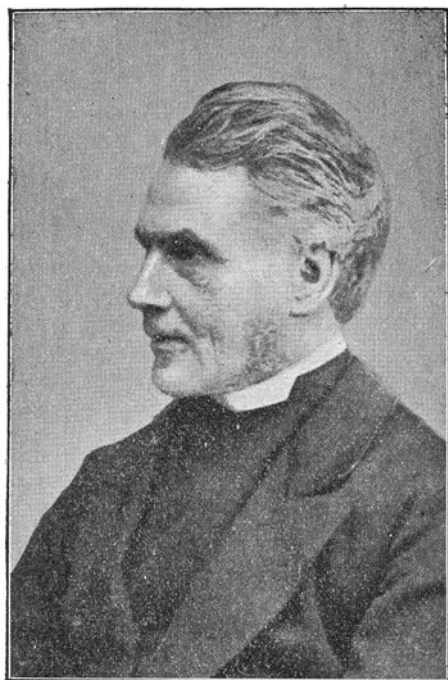
“Edward Evans ... a wild young man, but of good parts. I hear he is now reformed and likely to do good work at Bridgnorth (Salop).”

“He turned out very bad after all, and I have heard it said that he conformed in 1760.”

Such was the case. In Rees and Thomas’s “History of the Independent Churches in Wales,” it is stated, “He turned out an immoral man, and after being expelled from the Dissenting ministry, he conformed in 1760.” He became curate of Chetton, a village about four miles from Bridgnorth.

After him, the Rev. Thomas Andrews became pastor of Stone-way. He also conducted a school for young gentlemen in Diamond Hall. He published in 1766 a translation of Virgil, which was mercilessly criticised. His death took place between 1765 and 1769. He was succeeded by the Rev. William Maurice, who died before 1797, and was buried under the pulpit of the old chapel.

In the year 1797, came the Rev. William Evans, who was distinguished for his scholarship and deep piety. He was born at Bala in May, 1773, and when sixteen or seventeen years old joined the church at Llanwchllyn. He, became a student under Dr. Williams at the Oswestry Academy in 1791. Early in 1795, he became pastor of Lane Delph in the Potteries, and removed thence to Bridgnorth in February, 1797, and was ordained to the pastoral office on April 8th, 1801. In December, 1801, he was invited to Stockport, but although his Bridgnorth congregation was small, and his salary inconsiderable, he declined to go, when asked by his people to remain. In June, 1803, the invitation to Stock port being renewed, Mr. Evans accepted it, and entered upon his work there on September 29th. He would not leave Bridgnorth until compelled by the considerations of a large family, and until “he had heard of a minister whom his



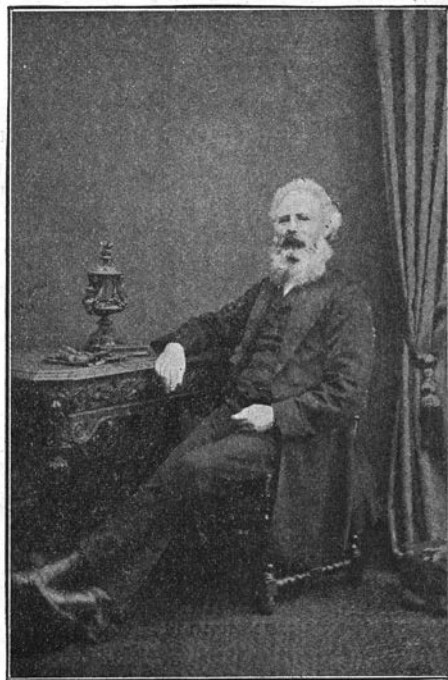
Rev. D. D. EVANS.

dear people could affectionately receive as their pastor." He died at Stockport on September, 29th, 1814. How heartily he was attached to the Bridgnorth people is shown by the following extract from a letter written from Stockport, April 16th, 1805, to Mr. Williamson, Gunsmith, Bridgnorth:—"You do not know, neither is it in my power to tell you, how much we are pleased at hearing from friends whom we can never forget, however little many of them may think of us. Every friendly letter is like cold water to a thirsty soul."

Mr. Evans's successor in the pastorate of Stoneway Chapel was the Rev. David Davies, a native of Llanybyther, on the borders of Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire. He was educated at Carmarthen College, and in 1787 was ordained pastor of the Independent Churches at Kidwelly and Penygraig. Afterwards he settled in 1790 at Holywell, and remained there for ten years. Soon after his settlement there, he began a Welsh publication, which inculcated principles very far in advance of the times. For this he was in danger of arrest, and had to fly for a time and hide himself in order to escape imprisonment. In 1802 he removed to Welshpool, and in 1803 became pastor at Bridgnorth. He lived in Bridgen Hall, where he kept a school. He remained pastor of Stoneway until his death in 1807. His body lies buried, inside the present chapel, near the middle window on the Eastern side. "David Davies was a good, pious, and scholarly man, as well as a gifted and ingenious preacher, though few of his contemporaries understood his worth and usefulness."—"Welsh Celebrities," p. 180).

The people at Stoneway, after having been without a minister for two years, gave an invitation in 1809 to the Rev. Samuel Barber, who had received his ministerial training at Rotherham College, under Dr. Edward Williams. He had left that institution to become pastor at Ulverston, and at the time of his call to Bridgnorth, had been settled there three years and a half. His ministry at Stoneway Chapel was long and successful. The congregations were so much augmented, that it was found needful to increase the accommodation. As the old chapel was sadly cut of repair, it was decided to take it down and to erect a new one—the present building.

The new chapel was built in 1829, the Rev. George Redford,



J. B. GRIERSON, Esq.,
Treasurer of the Association, 1856-1861.

M.A. (afterwards D.D.), of Worcester, preaching at the opening services on Sunday, October 25th, in that year. Mr. Barber preached in the afternoon, and the collections amounted to £74. The Pastor, at his own charge, had a representation of the old building made by Mr. Philip Brown, of Shrewsbury, on the morning when its demolition was commenced. It is still in the possession of Miss Barber. The new chapel is said to have cost £1,000.

It is interesting to note that Mr. John Sunderland, who was admitted a member of the Stoneway Church in November, 1826, afterwards went to Airedale College, and subsequently became minister at Bury.

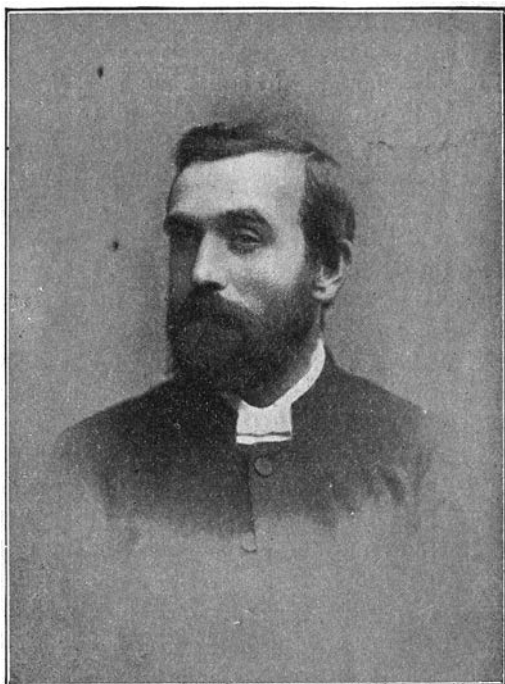
After the building of the new chapel, Mr. Barber remained pastor for sixteen years. His position was a difficult one, owing to the failure of the banks, and the consequent crippling of the resources of the people. But he met his difficulties in this respect by teaching, in which work he gained great efficiency.

The chapel was registered on June 3rd, 1837, for the Solemnization of Matrimony.

The foundation stone of the new school rooms, was laid on May 27th, 1841. The rooms were completed in 1842, at a cost of £483 10s. 10d., and were, built upon the site of an old house, which Mr. Barber had occupied for some time.

During Mr. Barber's pastorate, the church members entered into a covenant. They declared their belief in the Trinity, in the sinfulness of man, in the doctrines of the atonement, justification and sanctification, and their conviction that the Scriptures contain the word of God. They pledged themselves to keep free from the world, to maintain private and family devotions, to refrain "from scenes, of folly and dissipation—from the theatre, card table, ban room, and other places of amusement to which the multitude resort; to refrain also from inns, taverns, and public houses;" to fervently love one another, to duly attend the ministry they had chosen, and the means of grace, to seek their own and others' spiritual welfare, and to "study the prosperity of the cause of God in our own place of worship, throughout the county, our beloved country, and the whole world."

Mr. Barber's long pastorate came to a close towards the end of



Rev. W. J. P. WRIGHT, B.A.

1845. The following is, a copy of the entry in the Church Book, under date December 2nd, in that year:—

“He withdrew from a mourning church and congregation after a ministry of more than thirty-six years, during which, amidst all the fluctuations of so lengthy a period, he was the means of building two chapels (the Stoneway and Broseley) and the schoolroom, of increasing the church to more than four times as large as he found it, and the congregation he left still more increased. Gloria, gloria, Deo.—S. BARBER.”

For the remaining years of his life, the Rev. S. Barber continued to reside in Bridgnorth. He died in 1854.

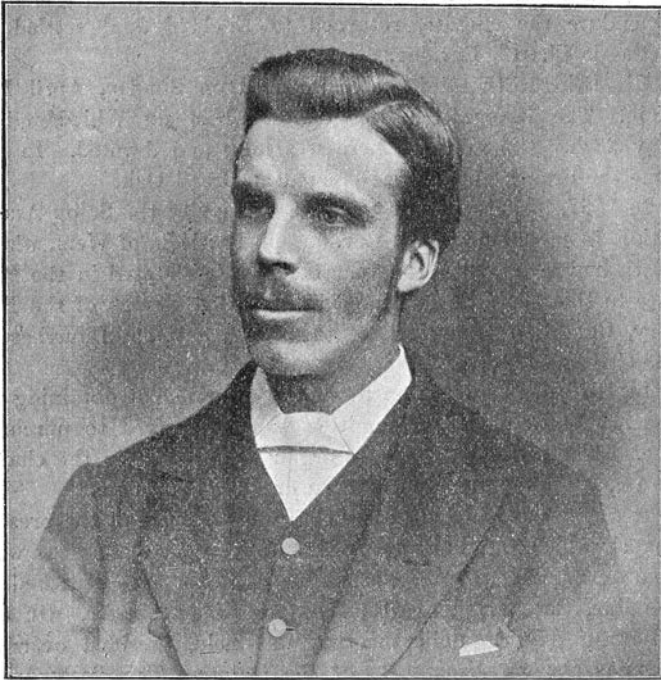
He was succeeded in the pastorate of Stoneway Chapel by the Rev. William Jackson, of Rotherham College, who commenced his ministry on August 4th, 1846. He was ordained on Tuesday, October 6th, when the Rev. John Hammond, of Hands-worth, offered the Ordination Prayer, the Rev. Professor Stowell, of Rotherham College, gave the charge to the pastor, and the Rev. John Angell James, of Birmingham, gave the charge to the church. Mr. Jackson remained here only for a short period. After many years of active ministerial service, he died at Bournemouth on September 24th, 1895.

His successor was the Rev. Joseph Shaw, also a student of Rotherham College, who had settled at Guisborough, Yorks. He commenced his ministry at Bridgnorth on June 27th, 1847. He remained here over two years, and added many members to the church. After two more pastorates, he accepted, in 1877, a call to Great Torrington, where he died on July 30th, 1893.

Rev. Samuel Clarkson, of Howard Street Chapel, Sheffield, settled at Bridgnorth in 1851, commencing his ministry on September 7th. A well-attended Recognition Service was held on November 4th. On July 1st, 1853, the pastor gave notice that he would resign at the end of September. Having been earnestly pressed to withdraw his notice of resignation, he did so, but left a year later, viz., in August, 1854, giving as his reason for so doing that the circumstances of the locality seemed to hinder the cause of Dissent, and to preclude the hope of substantial progress at present.

Mr. Clarkson died at Ilkley in 1886.

His successor at Bridgnorth was the Rev. David Daniel Evans,



REV. ERNEST ELLIOT.

a native of Blaenypant, Cardiganshire, who was born on October 14th, 1813. He entered Rotherham College in October, 1831, and remained there until July, 1836. He then laboured in one of the Yorkshire dales without a settled pastorate, and in 1838, accepted the oversight of Melbourne Street Chapel, Gateshead, where he was ordained on July 17th. His next pastorate was at Heanor, Derbyshire, where he remained four years, when he accepted a call to St. John's, Newfoundland; but being unable to endure the climate, returned to England, and settled at Bethesda Chapel, Burnley.

His Bridgnorth ministry commenced on Sunday, April 1st, 1855. The Recognition Meeting was held on Whit-Monday, May 28th. His ministry here was long and devoted. In his time the branch church was erected at Broad Oak.

In 1867, Mr. Evans was chosen Secretary of the Salop Association, in succession to the Rev. Joseph Pattison, of Wem, whose death had taken place the year before. As stated in the Preface to this book, he published in 1872, "A Sketch of the History, Condition and Work of the Congregational Churches in the County of Salop."

In 1873, a move was made in the direction of obtaining an organ. In October, a committee was empowered to purchase one. The result was that an organ was erected in the chapel at a cost of £53 10s., and opened on December 14th.

It was decided in 1879 to celebrate the Jubilee of the present chapel, which was built in 1829. Consequently, services were held on Sunday, October 26th, when sermons were preached by the Rev. George Hunsworth, M.A., of Kidderminster. On the following day a public meeting was held, presided over by Thomas Barnes, Esq., J.P., of the Quinta. The Pastor read a brief account of the Church's history, and a liberal collection was taken.

The long pastorate of Mr. Evans was terminated by his death on March 16th, 1886. On that day the Salop Association was sitting, and the following resolution was passed:—

"We, the members of the Salop Association of Independent Churches, tender to you, our dear friend and honoured Secretary, our deepest sympathy with you in your heavy and trying affliction. We pray that the Master in whom you have trusted,

and in whose service you have so honourably laboured, may fulfil His manifold promises of comfort and grace, enabling you, out of a calm and joyous experience to say 'I know in whom I have believed.' Allow us further to express our high appreciation of your self-denying exertions on behalf of our Association, and to assure you how sadly we miss your presence and counsel amongst us in our annual meetings to-day.

J. E. SAWDAY,

March 16th, 1886.

Chairman.

Before the resolution was sent, however, tidings of Mr. Evans's death reached the Assembly, and, in its place, a letter of sympathy was addressed to the members of Mr. Evans's family.

At his funeral, nearly all the Congregational ministers in the county were present, as well as the Revs. A. L. Oldham, M.A. (Rector of St. Leonard's, Bridgnorth), S. Goodall (Ilkley), A. Verran (London), W. J. Dyer (Baptist minister, Bridgnorth), and Thomas Peers (Wesleyan). Several prominent townsmen also attended.

Mr. Evans's death took place after a lengthy illness. In fact, his last sermon was preached on the last Lord's Day in 1885. During his illness, a Testimonial Fund was instituted. It originated with the Salop Association, but was subscribed to by many who had no connection with that body, or with the Congregational denomination. By this fund the sum of £313 12s. 6d. was raised.

It should be stated that at one period of his career, the Rev. D. D. Evans was offered a professorship at Spring Hill College, but declined it.

His successor at Stoneway Chapel was the Rev. W. J. P. Wright, B.A., a student of New College, London, assistant minister of Broompark Church, Sheffield. He commenced his Bridgnorth ministry on Sunday, October 3rd, 1886. The Recognition Service was held on Thursday, December 2nd, when the charge was delivered by the Rev. Professor C. C. Tyte, of Sheffield, and the Revs. George Kettle (Shrewsbury), J. B. Walton, LL.B. (Wem), J. J. Poynter (Oswestry), Samuel Evans (Broseley), T. T. Sherlock (Smethwick), and W. J. Dyer (Baptist, Bridgnorth), took part.

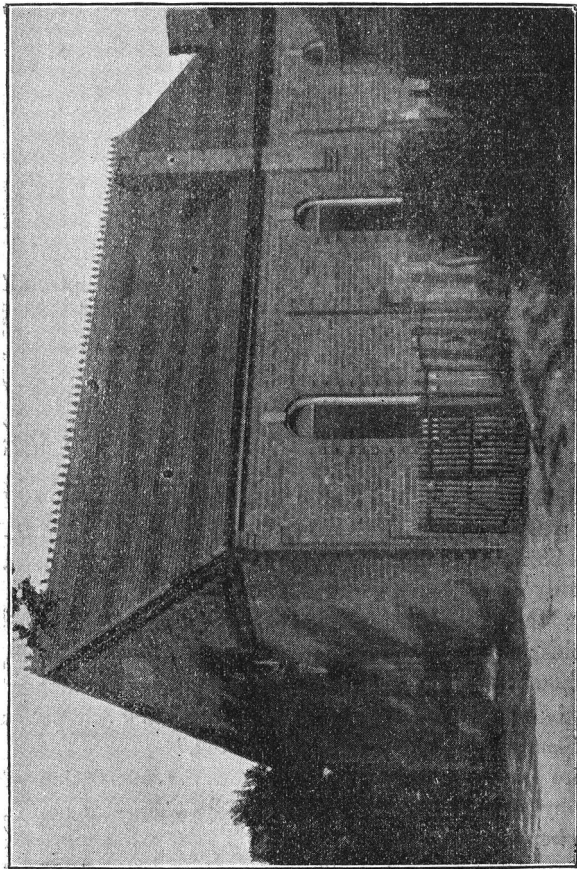
Many important events occurred during the pastorate of the Rev. W. J. P. Wright, the largest of which was the reseating of the chapel. At the same time the schoolroom was repaired, and enlarged, and a heating apparatus was put in. This renovation took place in 1888. After being closed for some weeks, the chapel was re-opened on Thursday, October 4th, by the Rev. W. F. Clarkson, B.A., who preached from John iv, 34; "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." The re-opening services were continued on the following Sunday, when the Pastor preached morning and evening.

About the same time, the congregation adopted the "Congregational Church Hymnal," in place of the "New Congregational Hymn Book" and Supplement, then in use.

In the summer of 1890, Mr. Wright received an invitation to the Congregational Church at Bilston. Being urgently pressed to remain by the people of Stoneway who assured him of a wide and deep appreciation of his labours, he decided to stay in Bridgnorth.

The Pastor resigned in March, 1893, having received a call to the co-pastorate of the church at Middlesbrough; which he accepted, and in which sphere he remained until September, 1895. A Farewell Meeting was held on Wednesday, April 5th, 1893, when an illuminated address was presented to the Pastor. Alderman McMichael presided, and addresses were delivered by the Revs. J. J. Poynter (Oswestry), W. F. Dawson (Madeley), W. J. Dyer and J. Parkes (Bridgnorth), all of whom testified to the high esteem in which Mr. Wright was deservedly held.

The present pastor is the Rev. Ernest Elliot, of Hackney College, London, who commenced his ministry on Sunday, January 21st, 1894, and was ordained on Thursday, February 8th, this being the first Ordination Service held in Stoneway Chapel since 1846, when the Rev. W. Jackson was, inducted to the pastorate; and singularly, the Rev. James Parkes, Wesleyan minister, who was present at the Ordination of Mr. Jackson, was also present at the evening meeting on February 8th, 1894. At the Ordination Service, the Rev., W. J. P. Wright, former pastor, presided. Rev. J. S. Drummond, of Wolverhampton, offered the Ordination Prayer; Rev. Professor J. Radford-Thomson, M.A., of Hackney and New Colleges, gave the charge



BROAD OAK CHAPEL.

to the Pastor; Rev. T. Townsend, of Shrewsbury, gave an Exposition of Congregational Principles; Rev. F. Tinkler, of Shrewsbury, asked the usual questions; and the Revs. J. R. Lewis, of Dorrington, and W. Prothero, of Broseley, also took part. On the following Sunday, February 11th, the Rev. Professor G. A. Christie, M.A., of Hackney College, gave the charge to the people.

Connected with this pastorate is a Branch Church at

Broad Oak.

IN the year 1858, Mr. and Mrs. Pilsbury settled here from Wombourne (Staffs.), and opened their house for Divine service. A lay-preacher, Mr. W. Northwood, of Wordsley, near Stourbridge, preached there, commencing in October, 1858. An out-building was fitted up, and public worship and the Sunday School were held there until 1867, when the chapel was erected at a cost of about £220.

Into this work, the Rev. D. D. Evans energetically threw himself. A circular was issued appealing for funds; the following is an extract:—

“Broad Oak is a small village or hamlet on the confines of the parishes, of Claverley, Quatt and Alveley, in the county of Salop, and of Bobbington and Enville, in the county of Stafford. It is considerably more than two miles from the very nearest Parish Church;* there is no Nonconformist place of worship within many miles; and the population of the immediate neighbourhood is about 400 souls. It is estimated that for the furtherance and success of the good work begun, a suitable chapel, with about 150 sittings, should now be erected.”

The site was purchased in 1865, and the foundation stone was laid by Thomas Bantock, Esq., of Wolverhampton, on Monday, October 22nd, 1866.

The chapel was opened on Thursday, July 25th, 1867, when the Rev. T. G. Horton, of Wolverhampton, preached. After tea,

* This was not true long. A church was built at Tuck Hill, half-a-mile away, in 1869.

a public meeting was held, when the chair was occupied by Thomas Barnes, Esq., M.P., and the following; gentlemen delivered addresses: Messrs. J. W. McMichael (Mayor of Bridgnorth), T. R. Peacock (Bridgnorth), R. Maddox (Shrewsbury), H. J. Jordan (Wolverhampton), J. Taylor (Stourbridge), Mather (Swindon), Stevens (Wombourne).

On Sunday, July 28th, the Rev. Thomas Gasquoine, B.A., of Oswestry, preached.

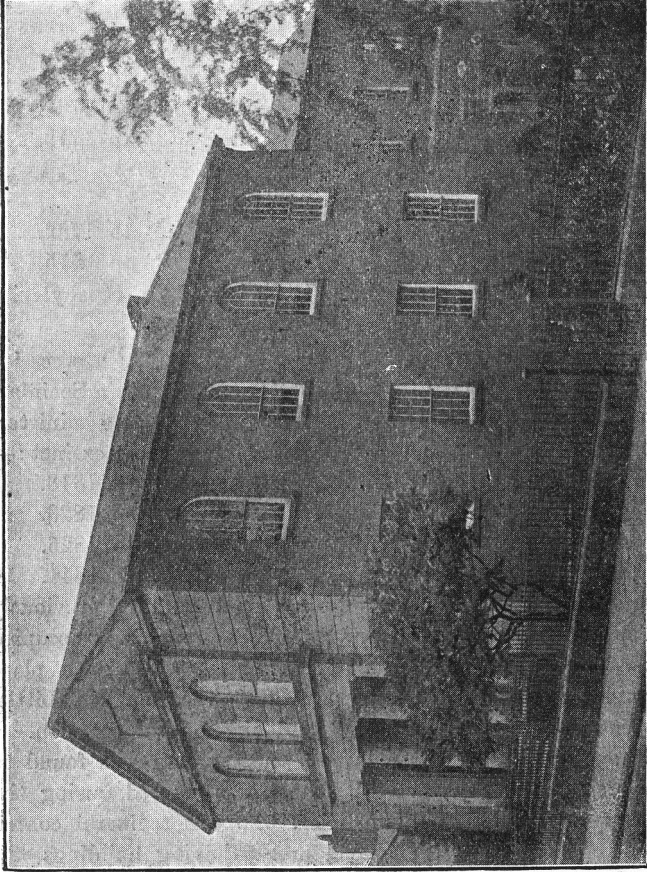
Previous to the building of the chapel, lay-preachers came to Broad Oak from Stourbridge, Wolverhampton, and Bridgnorth. At the present time the great majority come from Bridgnorth. The people at Broad Oak do not form a distinct society, but are members of the Stoneway Church, Bridgnorth. Mr. Thomas Lucas is the resident deacon, and is a tower of strength to the church there. Early in 1890, a movement was set on foot for the purpose of giving him a well-earned testimonial. At the end of January an appeal was issued asking for contributions. It commenced—"May we invite you to join us in doing honour to one of those many unconscious heroes of rural Nonconformity, of whom, as Congregationalists, we may well be proud." It stated—"For more than twenty years, our esteemed friend, Mr. Thomas Lucas, has been, under God, the mainstay of our work at Broad Oak ... During this long period, Mr. Lucas has laboured patiently and unostentatiously for his Master. He has acted as deacon and superintendent of the Sunday School. He has, found preachers, and when they have failed, he has preached himself. Members of his family have played the harmonium and led the singing. Mr. Lucas has also been most liberal with his substance, and we feel that, humanly speaking, it is to him alone that we owe the good work which has so long been carried on there." As a result, a handsome marble clock and a chair, together with an illuminated address, were presented to Mr. Lucas on May 15th, and earnest desires were expressed that he may long be spared to continue his labours, for the Master.



Whitchurch.

THE church here represents more or less directly that gathered at Broad Oak by the Rev. Philip Henry, M.A., after his ejection from Worthenbury. Henry's ministry at Broad Oak began in 1672, and continued until his death in 1696, after which his intimate friend, the Rev. Samuel Benion, M.A. (afterwards M.P.), became minister. Dr. Benion was the grandson of the Rev. Richard Sadler, who was ordained at Whixall in 1648, and removed to Ludlow, whence, on his ejection in 1662, he returned to live a private, life at Whixall. Dr. Benion studied at Broad Oak and in Derbyshire, and graduated at Glasgow. He lived and conducted an academy at Whixall, but ministered to the church at Broad Oak from 1696 to 1706. In 1706, he left Broad Oak at Mid-summer to succeed the Rev. James Owen as Mr. Tallent's colleague at the Presbyterian Meeting House, High Street, Shrewsbury; and the society over which he had presided removed to Whitchurch, where they almost immediately commenced building a meeting house, "There are many adversaries" said Matthew Henry, "but God can make an open and effectual door." And so it proved, for in September, 1707, the building was opened for worship by a sermon from Matthew Henry.

For about a year Mr. Robert Bell succeeded Dr. Benion, and Matthew Henry frequently visited the place. Then came Mr. Beynon, who was ordained April 12th, 1708, "the people being exceedingly pleased with this promising young minister, and Mr. Henry desiring to bless God for the fact, as an answer to prayer." Francis Tallents, Edward Lawrence, and Matthew Henry took part in the solemnities. David Jones, the Independent minister of Shrewsbury, preached on the occasion. The minister and people at Whitchurch, however, were Presbyterians.



WHITCHURCH CHAPEL.

Twenty years after its removal from Broad Oak to Whitchurch, Philip Henry's congregation was the strongest Presbyterian congregation in Shropshire, that of Shrewsbury exceeding it only in the number of hearers. There were "300 hearers, with 30 county voters, 6 gentlemen, 30 tradesmen, 44 farmers, and 20 yeomen."

Mr. Beynon died in 1725, and his successors were:—

| | | | | |
|------------------|-----|-----|-----|---------------|
| Thomas Colthurst | ... | ... | ... | 1726 to 1738. |
| Mr. King | ... | ... | ... | 1738 to 1739. |
| Ebenezer Keay | ... | ... | ... | 1739 to 1779. |
| John Jones | ... | ... | ... | 1780 to ... |
| Henry Rees | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Henry Procter | ... | ... | ... | ... to 1782. |
| Thomas Jenkins | ... | ... | ... | 1783 to 1815. |

This list was made from the old register of the Presbyterian Chapelby, Thomas Jenkins.

The present Congregational Church originated in a secession which took place in 1797, as the minister had become a Socinian. It may be worth while to give the list of succeeding ministers from 1815 to 1844, when the Unitarian cause became extinct:—

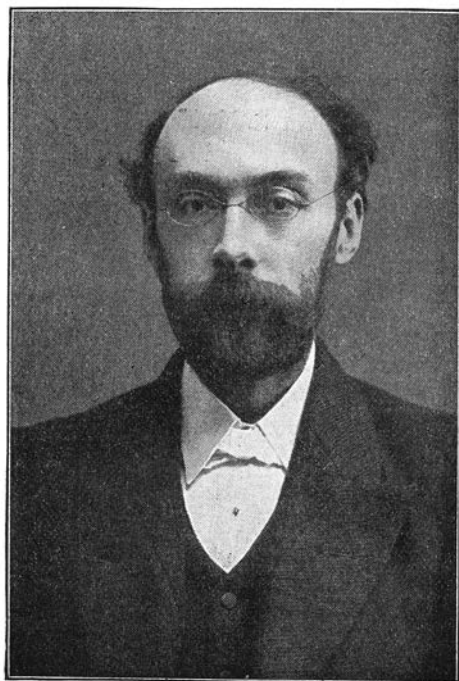
| | | | | |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|---------------|
| David William Jones | ... | ... | ... | 1815 to 1818. |
| Joseph Marriott | ... | ... | ... | 1818 to 1823. |
| John Philip | ... | ... | ... | 1823 to 1826. |
| Richard Shawcross | ... | ... | ... | 1827 to 1844. |

For some time the seceders met in a small building previously used as a currier's shop, which stood on the ground now occupied by the present chapel. This building was opened as a place of worship on the 8th of February, 1798, the Rev. Mr. Little, Independent minister of Hanley, preaching on the occasion.

Although several times enlarged, the building was found to be too small, and the present, chapel was erected during the ministry of the, Rev. William Tiler, who was a liberal contributor. The cost of the chapel and adjoining buildings was upwards of £2,000, which amount was raised in three years.

A Mr. Lewis commenced a ministry somewhere about 1800, but the church was not formed until between September 17th and October 6th, 1802.

Nothing more is obtainable of the church's history until the year 1812, when the church was re-formed and the first church



REV. C. MUSK.

meeting was held early in 1813, the Rev. J. Harris being minister, whe a new covenant was entered into. The meeting house was re-opened on February 17th, by Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool, and the Rev. Thomas Weaver, of Shrewsbury. On March 5th, Mrs. Jane Corrie, of Shrewsbury, made, over the copyhold of the Dodington Meeting House and premises, into the hands of appointed trustees. The Indenture read: "That for promoting the Christian religion as professed by Protestant Dissenters of the denomination of Independents, and in consideration of Five Shillings of lawful money current in Great Britain to the said Jane Corrie in hand well and truly paid by the parties of the second part, the said Jane Corrie surrenders out of her hands," etc. In the same year, Mr. James Howell and Mr. Joseph Burton were elected deacons. The Sunday School also was opened in 1813. The first anniversary sermons were preached by the Rev. Thomas Weaver, of Shrewsbury. In the same year, a code of rules for the Sunday School was entered on the statute book. The rules provided that parents should send their children to school washed and combed, regularly, and in good time, that they should give them a good thrashing if the superintendent desired it. The children were never to speak except to their teachers. Two years later additional rules were made; the children were not to tell tales of one another, and teachers and officers coming to school late had to submit to a fine.

In 1814, Mr. Thomas was added to the diaconate.

In the, year 1819, there is this entry in the Church Book. The Rev. J. Harris records that "his mind being made uneasy by the, conduct of some connected with us, he must resign his charge."

In September, 1819, the Rev. G. B. Kidd, of Rotherham College, was unanimously elected to the vacant pastorate. He made an effort, it is recorded, to secure six weeks' holiday, but his request was refused, "for it was said that it would not be pleasant for those who love their pastor that he should be absent so long."

The church records for 1820 mention the good done in the locality by another denomination. After stating that a place of worship had been opened at Prees Heath, the minute reads:

“It appears that the visits of those wandering preachers or itinerants, who call themselves Primitive Methodists, but are cailed by others Ranters, helve in this neighbourhood roused the attention of many to eternal things.”

On September 30th, 1820, the Rev. Rowland Hill preached at Whitchurch.

Mr. Kidd's ministry terminated in May, 1826, and in the same month, the Rev. T. Potter, of Wrexham, was invited “to the delightful but all-important office of pastor over us.” He accepted the invitation at a salary of £80. This leads to the conclusion that the affairs of the church had not been prosperous, for in 1819, Mr. Kidd was offered a salary of £130.

There is here a gap in the minute book, nothing further being recorded until 1833, when Mr. Potter resigned. Mr. Button came in 1834. The minutes of the church being very scanty at this period, a full history is impossible. There is a short notice of Mr. Eastman, who began his ministry on January 20th, 1839. In those days suspension and excommunication were frequent, telling of serious declension in the cases of some of the church members.

The Rev. William Tiler, of Ossett, began his ministry in 1843. In the following year, Miss Rowe bequeathed the sum of £500 to the church. Then began the agitation which resulted in the building of the present chapel. The copyhold was bought of the lord of the manor for £250. The last sermons preached in the old building were from suggestive texts: “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.” “Arise ye and depart, for this is not, your rest.”

The new chapel was opened on April 15th, 1846, by Dr. Raffles. In the following year, the, Rev. James Parsons, of York, preached the anniversary sermons of the new chapel on August 17th. On that day, and on the previous Sunday, the collections amounted to £236.

In June, 1848, the chapel was registered for the solemnization of marriages. In 1853, the Jubilee was celebrated, the pastor giving a history of the church from its formation. On June 5th in that year, the Rev. W. Tiler resigned his charge on account of physical weakness. His resignation was deeply regretted.

On the last Sunday of 1854, the Rev. C. E. Palmer commenced

his ministry. He laboured here until January, 1857, when, amid general regret, he left to undertake the pastorate of a church in Warrington.

In 1858, the Rev. J. Pattison, of Wem, recommended his assistant minister (Mr. Baycliffe) to the church. He commenced his ministry in September, and resigned on January 29th, 1861.

In May, 1861, the Rev. J. B. Scott became pastor, and remained until 1866. In the year 1862, the people erected a large and handsome minister's house, which, with some adjoining ground, cost £500.

On August 4th, 1867, the Rev. J. J. Thornton, late of Crewe, entered on his work, and was recognised on November 5th. He resigned in 1870.

After a year's vacancy, the Rev. J. A. Balshaw, late of Furness Vale, Cheshire, commenced his work here. His farewell sermons were preached at the close of 1878.

The next pastor was the Rev. Alfred Verran, of Western College, who commenced his labours in July, 1879, and was ordained in the following September. He remained until October, 1883, when he left for London.

Another year's vacancy occurred, after which the Rev. E. Tongue was invited in March, 1885. The present pastor states that in the year 1888, the church became affiliated for the first time, with the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

In June, 1891, the pastor left for Handsworth, where he still labours, and was succeeded by the present pastor, the Rev. C. Musk, who, entered upon his work in 1892, in which year the chapel was renovated and beautified.

The Rev. D. D. Evans said of Whitchurch in his "Sketch," "The chapel, schoolrooms, manse, and grounds, constitute a uation, is not excelled by any ecclesiastical establishment property which for magnitude, convenience, and beauty of sit-among the Dissenters of the county."

The people, of Whitchurch have two mission stations in connection with the church, one at Broughall, and one at Steel Heath.

Broughall.

FROM 1820 or thereabouts, a Sunday School was held in the house of Mr. Glassey, Crab Mill, near Broughall. Occasionally preaching took place there.

By 1834, the attendance had so much increased, that it was felt necessary to build a chapel. Mr. Becket generously gave the land and the clay for making the required bricks.

The chapel cost about £200. In an old account book we find entries which refer to customs now happily dying out:—

“To ale for men, 1s.”

“To ale and eating for men, 9s.”

By a most interesting entry, we are led to believe that the work was pressed on so hurriedly as to necessitate working at night—“To a lanthorn, 1s. 8d.”

Very few details are now obtainable as to the working of the mission. Mr. Jones laboured there in a spirit of self-sacrifice for some years. When he left it, there was a fear of its being closed. But through the instrumentality of two of the present members, Mr. Cartwright was induced to take up the work; and the Rev. C. Musk records that “God has greatly blessed the work under his splendid management.”

Steel Heath.

THE late Mr. Edward Jones, a deacon of Whitchurch, was one day sheltering at a place close to the spot on which Steel Heath Chapel now stands. While there, he conceived the wants of the neighbourhood, and soon afterwards generously built the chapel at his own expense.

The Trust Deed is dated November 12th, 1832.

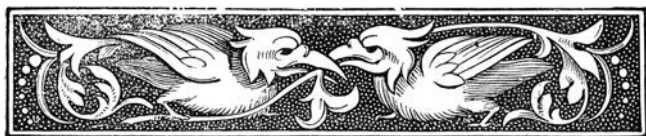
The building appears to have been used as a British School during the week, and as a meeting house on Sundays. The school was closed for a time, then revived, but finally became extinct.

In 1848, the church at Whitchurch formed Steel Heath into a branch church with seven members.

During the present pastorate, the attendances have increased, and an evening service has been commenced in addition to the one in the afternoon.

In addition to Broughall and Steel Heath, the people at Whitchurch had a mission church at Agden from 1831 to 1868. in 1868, it was handed over to the Primitive Methodists at a yearly rental of £5, to be terminated by six months' notice, and the right was reserved to the Congregationalists of preaching, in the chapel on the last Sunday in June of each year.





Ludlow.

IN 1662, the Rev. Richard Sadler was, ejected from the Parish Church, but he appears to have left the town at once, and not to have formed any Dissenting congregation.

In a "Register belonging to the Independent Church, Ludlow," the following remarks are made:—

"It has often been a matter of regret that no pains whatever have been taken to preserve from oblivion the circumstances that led to establish many of our Dissenting Churches. ... Owing to this, circumstance, obscurity covers with her vail many of the steps that led to the establishment of the Protestant Church in Corve Street, Ludlow. Not the shadow of a Church Book was kept in the place from the time the meeting house was erected till the year 1800, when all inquiry was made relative to the origin of the interest in the town; and the following particulars were obtained from the verbal testimony of two or three of the old members, and from a copy of an almost worn out Case, which the first friends of the Gospel in the town took to distant churches and friends, to obtain assistance in the erection of the meeting house in Corve Street."

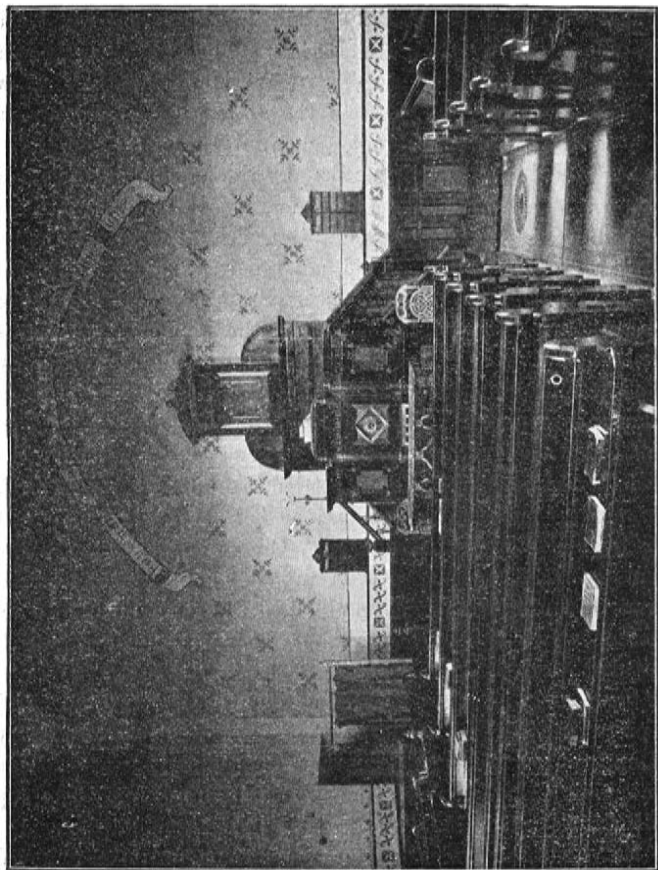
It was then ascertained that previous, to 1732 a few pious people had met together in private for prayer and praise. Sometimes they met at Hook's Barn in the immediate neighbourhood of Ludlow, sometimes in the town. When health and weather permitted, these few earnest people walked on the Lord's Day to Leominster, and worshipped either in the Presbyterian or in the Baptist Chapel there.

The first attempts which were made towards meeting together regularly in Ludlow, were at the house of a Mrs. Jones, of High

Street, the same, it is supposed, as that now in the occupation, of Mr. Phillips. The amount of opposition they met with will appear from the following:—

“The case, of the Protestant Dissenters, in Ludlow, in Shropshire. On March 21st, 1731, Lord’s Day, between 20 and 30 persons were met together in the house of Mrs. Jones for religious worship, where they had not been above half-an-hour; before the mob rose upon them, throwing stones, etc. Whereupon, Mrs. Jones and the bearers hereof, Peter Griffin and James Wynde went to the High Bailiff of the town to desire his assistance to suppress the mob; but he, instead of helping them, said ‘they were the, rioters, and, as such, should be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law,’ notwithstanding the said Mrs. Jones produced a license for her said house, signed by fourteen Justices of the Peace, at a general Quarter Sessions for the County of Salop. And some of the mob, hearing with what treatment they met, returned, and with more fury, broke all the windows in the house. Between one and two of the clock, the said Mrs. Jones and Peter Griffin were sent for to a house of a Justice, of the Peace for the said town, where were present the, High Bailiff aforesaid, and the Town Clerk, who told them they stood fined in £20, and bound in £10 each to appear at the next General Quarter Sessions, notwithstanding the aforesaid license. In the meantime, the mob continuing and increasing in fury, Mrs. Jones was obliged once more, in danger of her life, to go to the magistrates, to desire they would prevent them pulling down her house, which at five o’clock they were prevailed upon to do, and read the proclamation, though several were abused as they departed.”

A narrative of this affair was sent to the Committee of the Dissenting Ministers in London, and the Rev. Samuel Chandler, one of their members, took the matter up, and directed an attorney to prosecute the High Bailiff, and to defend the sufferers. In the preface to a narrative of the above transaction, published by Mrs. Mary Marlowe, it is stated, “It is well-known to several yet living (1772), that the gentlemen whose offices, and stations should have suppressed the riot, were subpoenaed to London, there fined, and brought to beg pardon. Yet, the worthy people generously forgave the fine, and required no more



LUDLOW CHAPEL—INTERIOR.

than to have the damages repaired and charges defrayed, as they only desired peace and quietness.”

The Dissenters were naturally most anxious to secure a small place where they might securely meet together for public worship, instead of being compelled to journey to Leominster, a distance of ten miles; and the above particulars formed the basis of an appeal* to the Christian public, in which it was stated that as early as the reign of William III., the Ludlow Dissenters had been subjected to the same kind of treatment. The appeal was signed by twenty-seven ministers.

The result of this appeal was that by the assistance of friends in London and the Country, the Dissenters at Ludlow were enabled to purchase a piece of ground in Corve Street with a house upon it. The house was altered and repaired, so as to make it a suitable place for Divine worship. So desirous were they of having a place of their own, that even the women aided in the work by carrying in their aprons stones for building purposes. The chapel was opened in 1736.

Thus encouraged, the people invited the Rev. Alexander Barr, from Glasgow. He was, to quote the Register, “one richly furnished for the work”; Mr. Barr settled in Ludlow early in 1737.

How long the first pastor remained is uncertain; nor can it be discovered who his successor was. One or two of the members remembered the settlement of a minister gaily inclined, who afterwards conformed to the Established Church. They also recollected one or two ministers whose moral conduct was such as to tend to impede the cause of Christ in the town.

In the year 1744, a large and handsome silver cup (date 1600) was presented to the church as a Communion cup by Mrs. Mary Reid, and at the same time there was a donation of books—Poole’s “Synopsis” and others—for the use of the minister. The cup is still in use and is highly valued by the church.

A Mr. Benison was pastor for some time, until he removed to Longtown, Herefordshire, and was succeeded by Mr. Jenkyn who came from Longtown, and whose Ludlow ministry was a long one. Towards the close of his pastorate, he preached a

* The “Case” quoted above.



REV. W. BURGESS.

course of sermons on the Advocacy of Christ, from 1 John ii., 1, 2. As he was nearing the end of his last discourse, he fell in the pulpit. Some friends ran to his assistance, and found him to all appearance lifeless.. But as they were carrying him along the aisle of the chapel, he exclaimed, "He is my Advocate," "He is my Advocate," and so breathed his last. His remains were buried in Ludlow churchyard, and a neat headstone, was placed to his memory. This stone had fallen into complete decay, when in the spring of 1867, a stranger from Wales came to the town to identify the spot where Mr. Jenkyn was buried. He explained that he had inherited Mr. Jenkyn's property which had increased in value, and he thought it his duty to erect a new stone to perpetuate the memory of so worthy a man. The order was given, and the stone was erected. It may now be seen on the West side of the churchyard.

The next pastor was Mr. Ingram who came from Maesgronnin, Brecon. This pastor died in 1788, and was buried in the chapel yard.

In 1797, the Salop Association provided supplies.

The Sunday School connected with this church was the first established in these parts, having been commenced in the beginning of the present century, and from it most of the Sunday Schools in the neighbourhood of Ludlow have branched forth. The compiler of the "Handbook to Ludlow" (pub. 1878) states that he was a pupil there when writing and arithmetic were taught on the Lord's Day, and adds, "It may be truthfully remarked that a number of young people from this school have turned out well in the world, many filling creditable positions in society."

In 1800, the Rev. David Francis, who had withdrawn from the Established Church, came from Welshpool to Ludlow and took charge of an almost extinct church. When he preached his first sermon, seven people formed the congregation; and for the first five years of his residence in Ludlow, his income from the chapel did not exceed £3 per annum. Mr. Francis laboured at the same time with pupils, and the Rev. Dr. Jenkyn, author of "The Atonement," "Life of Richard Baxter," etc., at one time minister at Oswestry, and afterwards President of Coward College, received his early training here.

As irregularities had crept in while the church had been without a pastor, it was deemed advisable to re-organise it. A church was formed of twelve members, one of whom afterwards joined the, Methodists, and another the Baptists. Under the ministry of Mr. Francis, the membership rapidly increased. Thus, at the end of the year 1800, there were fifteen members; 1803, nineteen; 1804, twenty-one; 1808, thirty-one; 1823, forty-five.

Things did not all go smoothly in those days. At the end of the year 1809, the pastor has this note: "No addition to the church this year; the number of members at the close of the year amounted only to twenty-two. The past year was a trying one. Several of the new members became very refractory, sought occasion to quarrel with their minister, and even went so far as to interfere with the trustees of the place with a view to injure his character in the opinion of the trust. But their plans not succeeding, they were requested to withdraw peaceably from the church, which several of them did. By this step peace was again restored to the distracted church."

Rev. D. Francis left Ludlow in June, 1824, and subsequently settled at Wheathampstead and Harpenden. Rev. D. D. Evans (Pastor of Bridgnorth, 1855 to 1886) states that when a boy at Harpenden School in 1836, he frequently heard the Headmaster speak of him as a thoughtful, scholarly man, and an able preacher, who had succeeded Rev. Maurice Phillips at Harpenden. Mr. Francis died in 1835.

His successor at Ludlow was the Rev. James Bidlake, of Teignmouth, who preached during July, 1825, and also from September 16th until the end of the year, when he was invited, to the pastorate.

In 1830, a new chapel was built in Old Street, which was opened on November 23rd. On November 17th, a special church meeting was held, and on the recommendation of the Rev. Dr. Redford, of Worcester, it was agreed, "That we, the members of the Independent Church at Ludlow, do approve of the proposal made by the trustees of our old meeting house and tenements to sell the same, and appropriate the proceeds to the liquidation of the debt upon the new chapel."

In 1834, there were forty-seven church members.

Rev. J. Bidlake removed in February, 1835, to Hamburg, and the people at Ludlow placed themselves under the temporary direction of Dr. Redford. The principal supplies were Dr. Redford, Dr. Boss, Rev. Messrs. Parry, of Lichfield, Palmer, of Glastonbury, Jupp, of Armitage, and Reeve (a missionary who had been in India and who was afterwards pastor at Oswestry). During the few months this arrangement lasted, the congregations considerably increased.

The Rev. Theophilus Davies, who had been ten years at Stourbridge, commenced his ministry at Ludlow on Sunday, October 11th, 1835.

On December 28th, 1836, a Centenary Meeting was held, the old Chapel in Corve Street having been licensed in the autumn of 1736. A lecture was given on the occasion by the pastor. At this date a debt of £500 rested on the, new chapel.

During Mr. Davies's pastorate, which ended in January, 1852, some members were lost through Mormonism and Plymouthism. Nevertheless, the pastor was most successful here. The church membership increased to sixty-eight in January, 1849, and during this ministry of over sixteen years, the debt of £500 was paid off, the chapel was repaired, the freehold was purchased, and £100 was raised for a schoolroom. A farewell tea meeting was held in the Town Hall. More than 200 people were present, and a gift of nearly £60 was presented to Mr. Davies.

On February 28th, 1853, it was agreed that the Rev. Edward Dillon, of Birkenhead, be invited to become pastor. He accepted and commenced work on Sunday, March 13th.

The new schoolroom was ready for occupation on February 8th, 1856. Collections and a bazaar brought in nearly £97.

On March 3rd, 1859, the pastor resigned and returned to Birkenhead.

His successor was the Rev. G. Soper, B.A., of Clevedon, who was called to the pastorate on June 22nd, 1859. Many members were received in his time, especially from among the young people.

In December, 1868, Mr. Soper removed to Liverpool, and on May 5th in the following year, the Rev. John Temperley Grey, of Olney, entered upon his work here, and remained until April, 1871.

The present pastor, the Rev. W. Burgess, of Stony Stratford, accepted a call to the oversight of the church on December 13th, 1871. During his ministry, the chapel in Old Street has been re-seated and beautified. Services are conducted by the pastor on Sunday afternoons in the old Corve Street Chapel, which was re-opened on December 15th, 1889, by Mr. Burgess.

This is the only Dissenting congregation in the neighbourhood which has a burial ground attached to it. The Ludlow Congregationalists had a burial ground in Corve Street, and also one in Old Street. In the year 1854, the Old Street ground was closed against further burials. Lord Palmerston turned a deaf ear to all the entreaties of the pastor on behalf of the church; but when Sir George Grey was appointed Home Secretary, a poor member of the church, who had buried an only child in 1840, and who considered the closing of the ground a needless hardship, petitioned Sir George on his own behalf. The Home Secretary sent down a Government official to inspect, and the result was an Order in Council for its re-opening without restrictions.





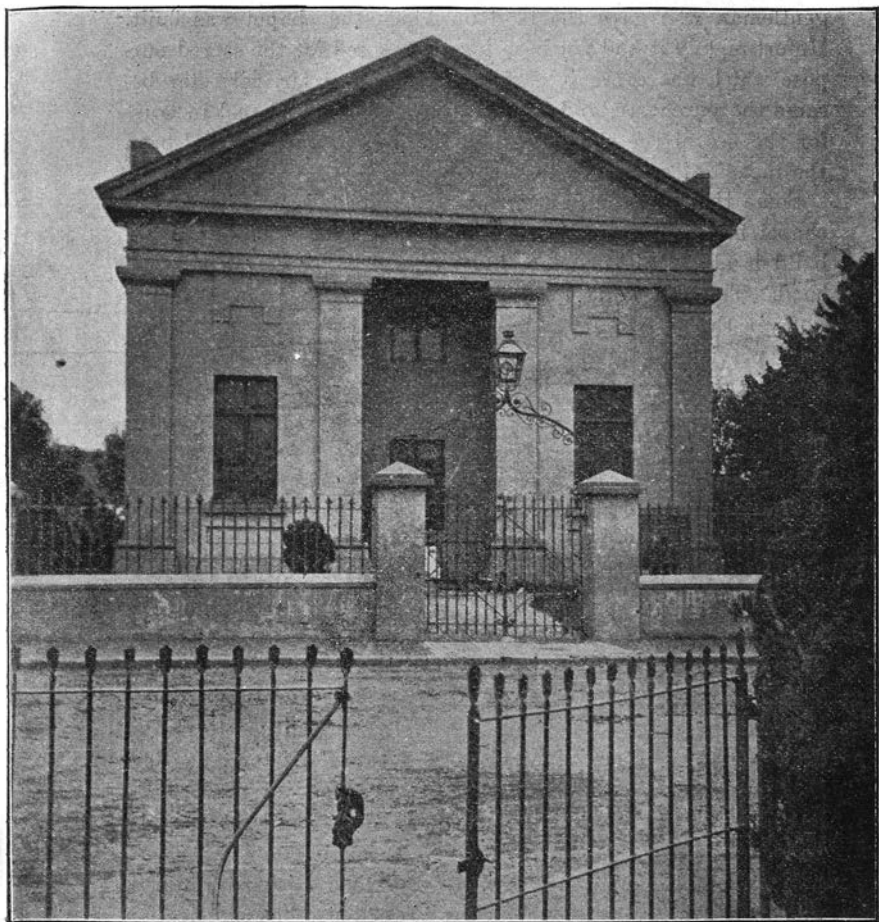
Newport.

THE Congregational Church in Newport originated in 1760. Mr. Jones, one of the celebrated six students who were expelled from Oxford for holding meetings for prayer, reading of the Scriptures, and spiritual conversation, possessed landed property in the town, and gave a piece of ground for the erection of a small chapel to Captain Scott.* For some reason this benevolent project failed. The small chapel which had been raised by Christian love and zeal was soon closed, and remained so for twenty years.

In 1792, Mr. Moses Silvester became a resident in the town. Being a Congregationalist, and finding that no body of people of that denomination existed in the town, and that the ministry in the Established Church was not of a nature he could profitably attend, it became with him a question of anxious and prayerful consideration, where he should worship. Having found that the chapel formerly occupied by Mr. Scott was still standing, though let for, the use of a small day school, Mr. Silvester communicated by letter with Mr. Scott on the subject of reopening the building for religious purposes; and on his, engaging to procure supplies for the pulpit, obtained permission to devote the chapel once more to its original purpose. The first sermon was preached by the Rev. George. Burder.

Other ministers officiated in succession by Mr. Silvester's generosity and hospitality. A regular congregation was collected, a Sunday School was organised, and a church was formed, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Silvester and a few other pious people.

* See under Market Drayton for particulars of Captain Scott's life and work.



NEWPORT CHAPEL.

In this silent and unostentatious manner the little cause gradually advanced, when Mr. Silvester received the painful tidings that the chapel and adjoining houses were to be sold by auction, having passed into the possession of the son of the gentleman who gave the land on which the chapel was built. Unfortunately it had not been legally secured for the sacred purpose which was contemplated by the donor. Mr. Silvester became the purchaser, and immediately vested the chapel in trust for the use of the church and congregation which he had been the means of gathering together.

Some time afterwards, a gentleman, who felt annoyed at the chapel being so near his house, offered to take it down and rebuild it fit his, own expense in another part of the neighbourhood. This was done, much to the advantage of the Congregation, as the situation was more desirable than that which had been previously occupied. The chapel, though small, was encouragingly attended, and still further improved by some internal additions. The Salop Association took up the work, and a minister was settled; surrounding villages were visited, and chapels built in two of them, now lost to the denomination, viz., at Bromstead and at Sheriff Hales, in which latter place a Nonconformist Academy was once conducted.

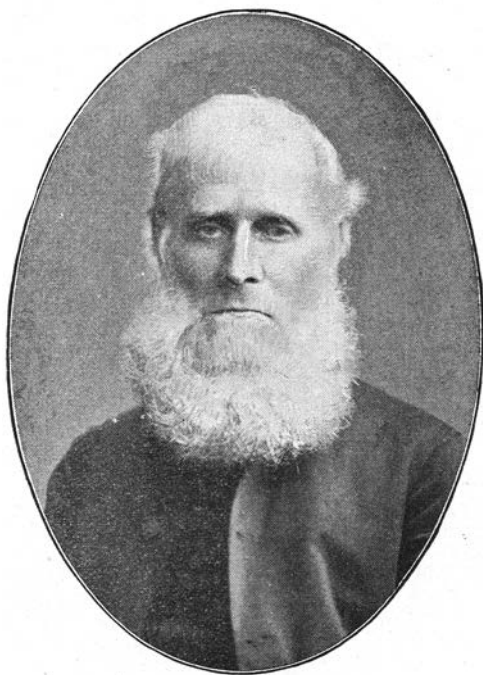
For some time the pulpit at Newport was occupied by the Rev. Mr. Hitchin, and afterwards by Rev. Mr. McDonald, both of whom ministered at Bromstead Heath, on the estate of the Rev. George Burder. Other ministers also continued to lend their aid, so that the means of grace were regularly furnished.

When the congregation was of sufficient magnitude to render desirable the permanent services of a stated pastor, the Rev. D. H. Creighton, of Dublin, took the oversight of the church, but shortly afterwards relinquished his charge and returned to Ireland.

Mr. Creighton was succeeded by the Rev. Richard Phillips, who kept a boarding school in the town, but whose connection with the chapel was of short duration.

The next pastor was the Rev. David Lewis, whose ministry was very successful. In his time a gallery was erected in the chapel.

In March, 1828, the Rev. John Whittenbury, son-in-law of



REV. W. PATON.

Dr. Edward Williams, commenced his ministry. The congregations increased so much that it was deemed desirable to erect a new chapel which should be more commodious, and the present freehold premises were purchased. The chapel, which cost £1,200, was opened, on September 26th, 1832, sermons being preached by the Rev. John Burder, of Stroud (whose father had preached the first sermon in the old chapel), and the Rev. J. Angell James, of Birmingham. The present chapel, which contains 400 sittings, is twice all large as the one which was vacated.

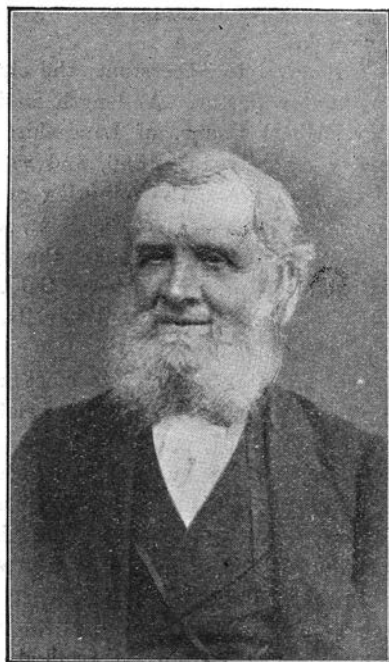
Mr. Moses Silvester lived to see the chapel commenced and partly erected, but died before its completion. Up to the time of his death, he supported and conducted a Sunday School which was accommodated at his own house.

Rev. John Whittenbury continued his ministrations until the close of the year 1837, when he resigned. His successor was the Rev. Thomas Jones, of Carmarthen College, who commenced his ministry in April, 1838, was ordained on June 5th, 1839, and remained about three years.

He was followed by the Rev. J. F. Mandeno, of Wem, who entered on the pastorate with the year 1841. At that period the congregation was numerically and financially in a state of considerable depression. Soon, God raised up a generous family of the name of Bell, who, by liberal contributions and active exertions, cheered the heart of the minister, and revived the drooping cause. During Mr. Mandeno's pastorate, a Sunday School was formed at the chapel, the school at Mr. Silvester's, house being still continued under the support of Mr. William Silvester and his sisters, and, being on neutral ground, succeeded well without injuring the school at the chapel.

To accommodate the latter, the present commodious room and the adjoining class rooms were erected at a cost of £350. The buildings were opened on December 7th, 1841. Mr. Bell and the congregation gave liberally, and the money was paid within three years. An infant day school was commenced in 1841.

Mr. Mandeno resigned the pastoral charge in 1848, and removed to Creaton, Northamptonshire. His successor was the Rev. W. B. Leach, of Robert Street Chapel, Grosvenor Square, London, whose failure of health in the metropolis rendered his-



MARK THOMPSON, Esq.,
Chairman of Association 1870, 1882.

removal to the country indispensable, and led to his settlement at Newport in September, 1849. His health was never robust enough to enable him to engage in much pastoral work, apart from his ministrations on the Lord's Day, which were a source of great joy and help to his hearers.

In 1850, the burial ground was enlarged at a cost of £43. Mr. Leach resigned his pastorate in 1855, and in March, 1856, the Rev. William Paten commenced his ministry, his services being especially attractive and helpful to the young people connected with the church.

On Mr. Paton's removal to Atherstone, the church remained for some time without a pastor. At length an invitation was given to the Rev. Albert Cooke, of Lancashire College, who opened his ministry on July 1st, 1866, and was ordained on October 16th of the same year, the following ministers taking part in the service:—Professor Newth, M.A., who gave the charge to the minister; Rev. John Cooke, the pastor's father, who offered the Ordination prayer; Professor Caleb Scott, LL.B.; Rev. George Kettle, of Shrewsbury; and Rev. D. D. Evans, of Bridgnorth.

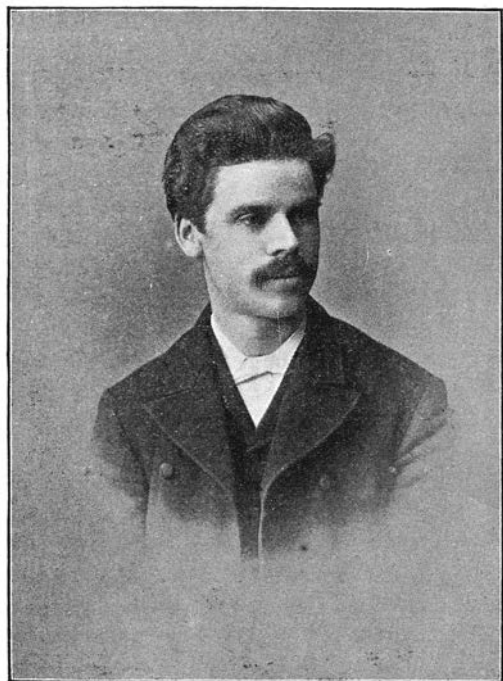
Mr. Cooke's pastorate at Newport was most acceptable and gratefully remembered, though it was very brief. He left on the last Sunday in June, 1867, and later on in the same year, accepted the pastorate of Sedgely, near Wolverhampton.

A brief and uneventful ministry followed. The Rev. E. G. Barnes, after staying a short time, and proving his lack of sympathy with Nonconformist ways, passed naturally into the service of the Established Church.

In 1869, the Rev. Hugh A. Campbell, M.A., of Todmorden, who had left the Established Church, accepted the pastorate, but did not long remain. In 1871, the schoolroom was enlarged at considerable expense.

The Rev. Henry Young settled in 1872. He opened his ministry at a time of great depression and discouragement, but there was soon a revival of spiritual life, accompanied by the increase of church membership. Mr. Young left in 1879 for a church in Cornwall.

He was succeeded in the same year by the Rev. Joshua Sidebottom, of Stockton-on-Tees, who accepted in 1881 a call to Macclesfield.



REV. W. H. JONES.

The next minister was the Rev. Joseph Overton, of Spring Hill College, who settled here in 1882, and was ordained, Principal Simon, D.D., giving the charge. Mr. Overton resigned early in 1884, and in the same year his successor came—the Rev. J. Clement Angel, of Nottingham Institute. He remained until 1889, and afterwards settled at Axminster.

The Rev. R. N. Goldthorp, of Sneinton (Notts.) next undertook the pastorate. He came in 1889, and left for Bradford in 1893.

He was succeeded in 1894 by the present pastor, the Rev. W. H. Jones, who came from Berkeley, and who is now labouring at Newport with much acceptance.





Market Drayton.

THE origin of Nonconformity in this town can by no means be clearly made out. Mr. T. P. Marshall, in his "History of Market Drayton Parish Church," ventures the suggestion that the Rev. Thomas Cooke, the Puritan vicar who was ejected in 1662, may have been a leader of some Nonconformists between that date and 1669, when he retired into Oxfordshire. This is not improbable, as Mr. Cooke signed along with the Revs. Thomas Porter, of Whitchurch, Andrew Parsons, of Wem, Aylmer Houghton, of Prees, and John Malden, of Newport, the "Testimony of the Ministers of the Province of Salop to the Truth of Jesus Christ and to the Solemn League and Covenant." These ministers, together with the Rev. Richard Steele, of Hanmer, were members of the Acting Class of Presbyters of the Hundred of Bradford North in 1657, giving great assistance to Mr. Henry, and it is only reasonable to suppose that the Rev. Thomas Cooke, who had joined his brethren in signing the "Testimony," would also join them, though perhaps not prominently, in preaching the Gospel after his ejection from the Established Church.

Around Hodnet, about that time, Philip Henry held many services, and for holding one at Weston on June 14th, 1661, was apprehended by two Justices of the Peace and fined £40, while the owner of the house in which the meeting was held (a man named Millington), was fined £25, another was fined £20, and about 150 persons who were present were each fined Five Shillings. The Baptists held meetings at the Hurst Farm, near Wistanswick, in the Seventeenth Century. Thus we see that Nonconformist influence extended throughout the neighbourhood, and it is unlikely that it would leave untouched Market Drayton-itself.

Coming from surmises to well-established facts; early in the Eighteenth Century there were Nonconformists resident in Market Drayton. About the year 1758, these people were accustomed to travel many miles to hear the discourses of their favourite preachers, journeys to Shrewsbury being very frequent. Next we hear of meetings at Shawbury. Although no Independent Church now exists in that place, it was then chosen as a place for meeting, because out of the county, and about equidistant from Shrewsbury, Wem, and Market Drayton. A regular minister preached at Shawbury, the meetings being held in a private house.

About the same time, a family of the name of Griffith left North Wales and settled on a farm at Little Heath Green, near Alington, on the Staffordshire border, just outside Market Drayton. One son named William was apprenticed to a joiner-named Grosvenor, who carried on his business in the part or Market Drayton then known as the Sheep Market, about the place where the Railway Station now stands. William Griffith joined himself to a small body of Dissenters, and accompanied them on their Sunday journeys. In the course of time he set up as a master joiner, and occupied the premises now known as the Dun Cow Public House, in Shropshire Street, his workshop being in the rear. This would be about 1768, as William had been born on June 16th, 1750. No sooner had he premises of his own than this young enthusiast allowed his brethren to meet in his workshop, which they did for some time.

An arrangement was made whereby a regular minister visited Market Drayton once in six weeks, and the walk to Shawbury became a monthly one on Sundays when the communion service was held. The company making the journey numbered from six to twelve. When a minister visited Market Drayton, he would sometimes take his stand on the site of the old buttercross in Cheshire Street, and preach, often being assaulted for his pains.

A few years afterwards, the Dissenters met in a cottage higher up Shropshire Street, on the site of the present Beech Tree House. Here their persecutors followed them, and they were frequently annoyed and disturbed during the services by town roughs. At last the occupier of the cottage, intimidated



REV. R. D. GREEN.

by threats held out to him should he continue, to shelter the worshippers, was afraid to let them meet in his cottage again, and entreated them for their own sake and his to find another place in which to worship. They had not commenced service, when they were told they must leave the building at once. Happily, a stranger—Elizabeth Vernon—happened to be among the small congregation that night. Where she came from no one knew, nor is it known at the present day. Only a few weeks previously to this occurrence she had opened a small shop in the place where Messrs. Bradley and Green now carry on their business. On the night in question, while the worshippers were consulting as to what they should do, Elizabeth Vernon rose and said, “Come with me! You shall have my house.” At once the people present left the building and passed down Shropshire Street. The crowd outside, yelled with triumph as they saw the Nonconformists leave the cottage without holding their service. They followed the congregation to the small shop, and after the worshippers had gained all entrance, vented their fury by breaking every pane of glass in the shop window. This, godly and determined woman continued to give this little church shelter, notwithstanding the damage done to her property. Not only so; she became their leader and guide, kept them together, and by her example and constant oversight stimulated and encouraged them amidst every opposition. She was not without pecuniary means, and subsequently, on the site of the cottage from which the band of Christians had been driven, she erected a building known as the Chapel House—now Beech Tree House, and made over this building for the good of the church to Jonathan Scott and Thomas Edward Poole as trustees in 1802; this property still belongs to the denomination.

About 1769, the Rev. Jonathan Scott came to reside at Wolberton, five miles from Market Drayton. As this gentleman was instrumental in aiding and building up many Shropshire churches, it will be well to give here a few details concerning him. He was the son of Richard Scott, the younger son of Scott, of Scot’s Hall, Kent, who married Mary, the eldest daughter and heiress of Jonathan Scott, of Betton Grange, near Shrewsbury, which was also a branch of the Kentish family. The Scotts, of Scot’s Hall, traced their descent from William, brother of John

Baliol, King of Scotland, who settled in Kent, and was known as Baliol le Scot. In course of time, the name of Baliol was dropped, and only that of Scott used. The Rev. Jonathan Scott was born at Shrewsbury on November 15th, 1735, and, after receiving a good education, embraced the profession of arms in his seventeenth year, thus following in the footsteps of his father, who had been a captain in the army. Commencing military life as a cornet, he rose in due time to the rank of captain-lieutenant in the 7th Regiment of Dragoons. For seventeen years he served in the army. During that time, while quartered at Brighthelmstone, he heard the Rev. — Romaine preach at Oat Hill in Sussex from John xiv., 6, "I am the Way," and dated his conversion from that event. While yet in the army he began to preach about 1766, and conducted services at Berwick, York, Leeds, Manchester, and many other places whither his military duties called him. On June 1st, 1768, he married Miss Elizabeth Clay, of Wollerton, who owned a handsome estate, and was also a lady of eminent piety. On March 16th, 1769, Captain Scott left the army, and from that time devoted himself to the work of the ministry, taking up his abode at Wollerton for several years.

A few years after his settlement at Wollerton, Mr. Scott began to preach at Market Drayton. He was just the man required by the small band of worshippers at the time. He put the members in a thoroughly organised state, and gained many converts. For this people he had a greater affection than for any other, and although he did not really become their minister, at their request he was ordained in order that he might officiate at the Lord's Supper.

Up to that time the Market Drayton Independents, although they met regularly, had not, been formally welded together into a church. But now, having obtained Mr. Scott's services as their teacher, they resolved that such a course should be adopted, and consequently a church of twenty-eight members was formed in 1776. The first deacons were the brothers John and William Griffith, the latter being the man who had opened his workshop for the use of the worshippers; and the first list of members contains the name of Elizabeth Vernon. Captain Scott drew up some articles of belief to which the members subscribed.

The members covenanted with each other in reference to the management of the affairs of the church, stress being laid upon their good conduct towards each other, constant attendance at public worship, and their walk before the world.

The Indenture of the church was made "the seventh day of September in the eighteenth year of the reign of our sovereign Lord George the Third King of Great Britain in the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy eight, between Samuel Davies, of Drayton-in-Hales, in the county of Salop, esquire, on the one part; and the Rev. Jonathan Scott, of Wollerton, in the said county, minister of the Gospel; John Henshaw, of Wem, in the said county, gentleman; Thomas Edward Poole, of Drayton-in-Hales, aforesaid, currier; Joseph Parry, of the town of Shrewsbury, in the said county, hatter; Thomas John Chester, cutter; and George Hodson, of the same place, soap-boiler, on the other part; whereas the said Samuel Davies, with an intent to promote and advance the cause and interest of religion, did generously propose to agree and give a plot or parcel of ground, purchased of one John Harper, and adjoining a certain lane in Drayton-in-Hales, named Church Lane, that a chapel or meeting-house with a vestry to the same might be built and erected on part of the said part or parcel of ground, for divine worship by a church or society of Protestant Dissenters of the Independent persuasion, and that the residue thereof might be appropriated for cemetery or other purposes," etc., etc.

The original chapel built in 1778 was a square structure, fitted with high-backed pews, and an old-fashioned pulpit. There were central doors, as now, over which was a porch; and the side-doors, now fastened up, were regularly used. William Griffith, being a joiner and builder, obtained the work of erecting the chapel, which was considered a very suitable building for the purpose.

Captain Scott's time was not wholly taken up with the Market Drayton church, but he was constantly going up and down the country engaged in preaching. In 1780 he opened a meeting-house at Nantwich; in 1781, or early in 1782, he fitted up a place for meeting at Congleton, where he built a chapel in 1790. In 1794 he removed to Matlock Bath, to undertake the pastorate of the chapel built some years earlier by Lady Glenorchy. This

place and Nantwich, were the chief scenes of his later ministry, and he died at Nantwich on Thursday, May 28th, 1807, the result of a carriage accident. His remains were interred within the precincts of Queen St. Chapel, Chester. He left his library, rich in the works of Nonconformist divines, together with property, to the chapel at Matlock Bath.

From 1794 to 1847 the records, are exceedingly scanty. Mr. Godwin says: "The church books were given into the hands, of Mr. Barrow [Pastor, 1841-1847], and at his leaving I found that all were destroyed; and only a new one, into which he had copied the names of the ministers before his settlement, was left."

The Rev. Jonathan Scott was succeeded by the Rev. John Wilson, a native of Huddersfield, who attributed his conversion to reading Mason's, "Self-knowledge." Shortly after his conversion he went to reside at Bristol, where he began to preach the Gospel. In 1791 he was invited to the ministry at Stafford, from which place he removed to Market Drayton in 1794, where he stayed for thirteen years. In 1807 he took up Captain Scotts work at Matlock Bath, and laboured there until 1831, when he retired to Nottingham.

The next pastor at Market Drayton was the Rev. William Macdonald, who occupied this position from 1808 to 1816. He was an able preacher and a worthy successor of the men who had preceded him. He upheld by his tongue and pen the principles of Independency, and the tenets of Calvinistic theology. One of his pamphlets had an amusing title. It was a work of 60 pages, and the title page read as follows: "Truth Established in proving Mr. Thomas Brocas's New Ideas and Universal Goodness to be Universal Nonsense; in an Address to Calvinists and Arminians." The full title of Mr. Brocas's pamphlet, which Mr. Macdonald attacked, was "Universal Goodness; or God's good will to every man, as manifested in the Scriptures of truth; showing that the election of some is no bar against, but favourable to, the salvation of all."

Mr. Macdonald left in the spring of 1816, and was succeeded in June of the same year by the Rev. Robert Carr, a native of Liverpool. He only remained pastor until November, 1817. Having become unsettled in his doctrinal views, he went back to Liverpool for a short period, returning to Market Drayton and

originating there the Baptist cause, "which has continued, though in a very feeble way, until now."*

After Mr. Carr left, supplies were procured until July, 1819; when the Rev. N. Higgins became pastor. In August, 1821, he went over to the Established Church.

Further supplies were obtained until May, 1824, when the Rev. Mr. Richards, of Attercliffe, began his ministry. He removed in March, 1826. Mr. Morris supplied the pulpit for twelve months, and was followed by other supplies, including Mr. Walker, who also preached for a year.

In August, 1830, the Rev. Jos. Barton settled, and remained until Christmas, 1839. Owing mainly to his exertions, the chapel at Ollerton was built.

His successor was the Rev. J. H. Barrow, who stayed from 1841 until September, 1847. This minister, who had been educated at Hackney College, found the congregation very small, there frequently being under a dozen persons at the services. His influence soon began to be felt, and not only did he succeed in getting the chapel filled, but the congregations so increased, that a gallery was erected, which also was soon filled. The cost of erecting the gallery, and of some renovations at that time, was about £350. The pastor resided at Beech Tree House, and kept a day school. Being well skilled in discussion, he was often engaged in discussion on religious topics. In 1843 he entered into a controversy with a curate of Stoke-upon-Tern, a man of a spirit totally different from that of the liberal-minded clergy now resident in those parts. Mr. Barrow published a pamphlet addressed to the curate, entitled: "Keen hatred and round abuse of the Church. A letter from a dissenting minister of Market Drayton to a clergyman of the Established Church." After its publication Mr. Barrow issued "An address to the inhabitants of Stoke, Ercall, Hodnet, and the surrounding neighbourhood." In September, 1847, the pastor accepted a call to Benton Park Chapel, near Leeds. Ultimately, he went to Australia, where he died.

* The Rev. H. Hustwick, in a letter to the Rev. D. D. Evans, October 17th, 1870.

From the end of 1848 to May, 1850, the Rev. T. E. Stallybrass was minister of the church. He made many friends among the Primitive Methodists of the town.

The Rev. D. W. Evans came in May, 1851, and left in July, 1855, and was succeeded by the Rev. Walter Mathieson, who commenced his ministry on March 23rd, 1856, and remained until May, 1857, when he went to Tasmania.

The next pastor was the Rev. Henry Sturt, of Hackney College, who commenced his ministry on April 24th, 1859. He remained until June, 1865, when he left for Dewsbury. During his pastorate, the pews on the ground floor were altered at a cost of £80.

The Rev. F. Wilson, of Haslingden (Lanc.), commenced his ministry on December 17th, 1865, and left in August, 1867. In his time substantial additions were made to the chapel, and the present schoolroom, capable of holding 300 scholars, was, erected on the spot where the burial ground formerly was, and the organ was bunt. These improvements cost £700.

After Mr. Wilson left, the church had supplies until January, 1869, when the Rev. Henry Hustwick came. The Recognition Service was held on May 28th, and was attended by the Revs. R. W. Lloyd, of Wollerton, D. D. Evans, of Bridgnorth, G. Kettle, of Shrewsbury, and C. Cross.

Mr. Hustwick left in July, 1872, and was succeeded by the Rev. W. Harvey, who stayed twelve months. The Rev. John Gibson, of Angaston, South Australia, was pastor from 1875 to the close of 1877, when he left for Warwick.

The Rev. Alfred Buckley, of Ruardean (Glos.), opened his ministry on May 7th, 1878, and remained until June 28th, 1885. In July, 1878, Centenary Services and meetings were held, extending over four days, when the following ministers took part:

Revs. D. Horne, B.A. (Hanley), H. Sturt (Dewsbury), S. Pearson, M.A. (Liverpool), G. Kettle (Shrewsbury), J. Taylor and J. Graham (Primitive Methodists), T. Clarke (Baptist), J. Gibson, J. Hall, and A. Buckley (Pastor). On Tuesday, the 23rd, the main meeting was held, in the course of which Mr. William Godwin, Senior Deacon, read a paper on the Church's History.

In 1886, the Rev. C. Waring of Ripley (Hants.), accepted a call to Market Drayton, but remained only a few months, removing to Clitheroe (Lanc.); at the end of 1887, the Rev.

Richard Davies Green, of Brecon College, a native of Carnarvon, was called to the pastorate. He commenced his duties, which he still fulfils, on the first Sunday in 1888. His ordination took place on Monday, May 14th, when the following ministers, with others, officiated; Rev. E. W. Watson, B.A., of Wollerton, who presided; Rev. Principal Morris, D.D., of Brecon College, who gave an Exposition of Congregational Principles; Rev. T. Williams, of Wistanswick, who put the Questions to the minister; Rev. J. Alun Roberts, B.D.; Rev. J. B. Walton, B.A., LL.B., of Wem; Rev. W. Harris; Rev. J. C. Sawday, of Prees; and the Rev. E. Tongue, of Whitchurch.

In 1895 considerable alterations were made in the building. The down-stairs pews were entirely done away with, and the previously open space between the gallery and the pulpit was boarded in (so that the whole of the interior is now on one floor), whilst the existing seats in the old gallery were repainted. The lower part of the building has been set apart, as class-rooms, which are well lighted.

On Sunday, September 15th, Mr. W. H. Jude, the eminent Liverpool organist and composer, held three services, which were attended by large congregations. On Sunday, September 22nd, the Rev. E. Garmon Roberts, of Gobowen, was the preacher.

The members and friends of the church worked very arduously to provide the necessary funds for the improvements, and at the end of the opening sermon, the pastor announced that the sum of £160 had been raised. One result of these improvements has been a steady increase in the congregations.





Ellesmere.

THE records relating to the earlier history of the church at Ellesmere are very meagre and confused.

For many years the Independents were the only Dissenters in this place, and they have preached here from as far back as somewhere about 1770, when Evangelical doctrine was introduced by the Rev. Edward Williams and his students from Oswestry.

Services were held first in the dwelling house of Mr. Francis Lee; then a house was fitted up in St. John's Hill, and afterwards one in Church Street.

The church was formed on Sunday, November 12th, 1786, when the Rev. Henry Hunt, a native of Dublin, and pastor successively of the churches in Stafford Street, Dublin (where he was ordained in October, 1762), Lancaster, and Delph (Yorks.); administered the communion, assisted by the Rev. Edward Williams, of Oswestry (afterwards Dr. Williams, of Rotherham College), to fifteen communicants, who entered into a Church Covenant. At the same service, Mr. Hunt was invited to the pastorate, which he accepted. He remained until Christmas, 1791, when he left for Stourbridge, removing thence after some years of labour to Back Street, Horseley-down, Southwark, in August, 1810. He died on June 26th, 1815, at about the age of ninety.

The pulpit at Ellesmere was supplied after Mr. Hunt's removal, by different ministers and students from Wrexham until June 24th, 1812, when the Salop Association undertook Ellesmere as a station, and Mr. Jeremiah Aubrey Thomas, formerly of Wrexham Academy, and for five years assistant to Mr. Whitridge at Oswestry, was ordained pastor. During his ministry a chapel was erected in 1815; and a member of the church,

John Jeffery, went in 1817 as a student to Blackburn Academy. After completing his College course, he went as a missionary to Madagascar, where he died in 1825, at the age of thirty-three.

Owing to painful circumstances, a division of the church took place on November 7th, 1824. The separating members worshipped in a convenient room, belonging to John Langford, Esq., and afterwards in Trimpley. Between three and four years afterwards a re-union was effected. The Pastor resigned in 1828.

In October, 1828, Mr. William Roaf, of Highbury College, supplied the pulpit. He was invited to the pastorate, accepted it, and was ordained in November, 1829. During his ministry the church enjoyed great prosperity. Mr. Roaf was very successful in his work among the young people. He removed to Wigan in June, 1839.

The Rev. Joseph Barton, of Market Drayton, commenced his labours in Ellesmere on February 2nd, 1840, and resigned in December, 1843.

In May, 1844, Mr. C. B. Holder, of Spring Hill Cottage, supplied the pulpit. He was invited to the pastorate, and ordained on August 1st. He left about the end of the following year.

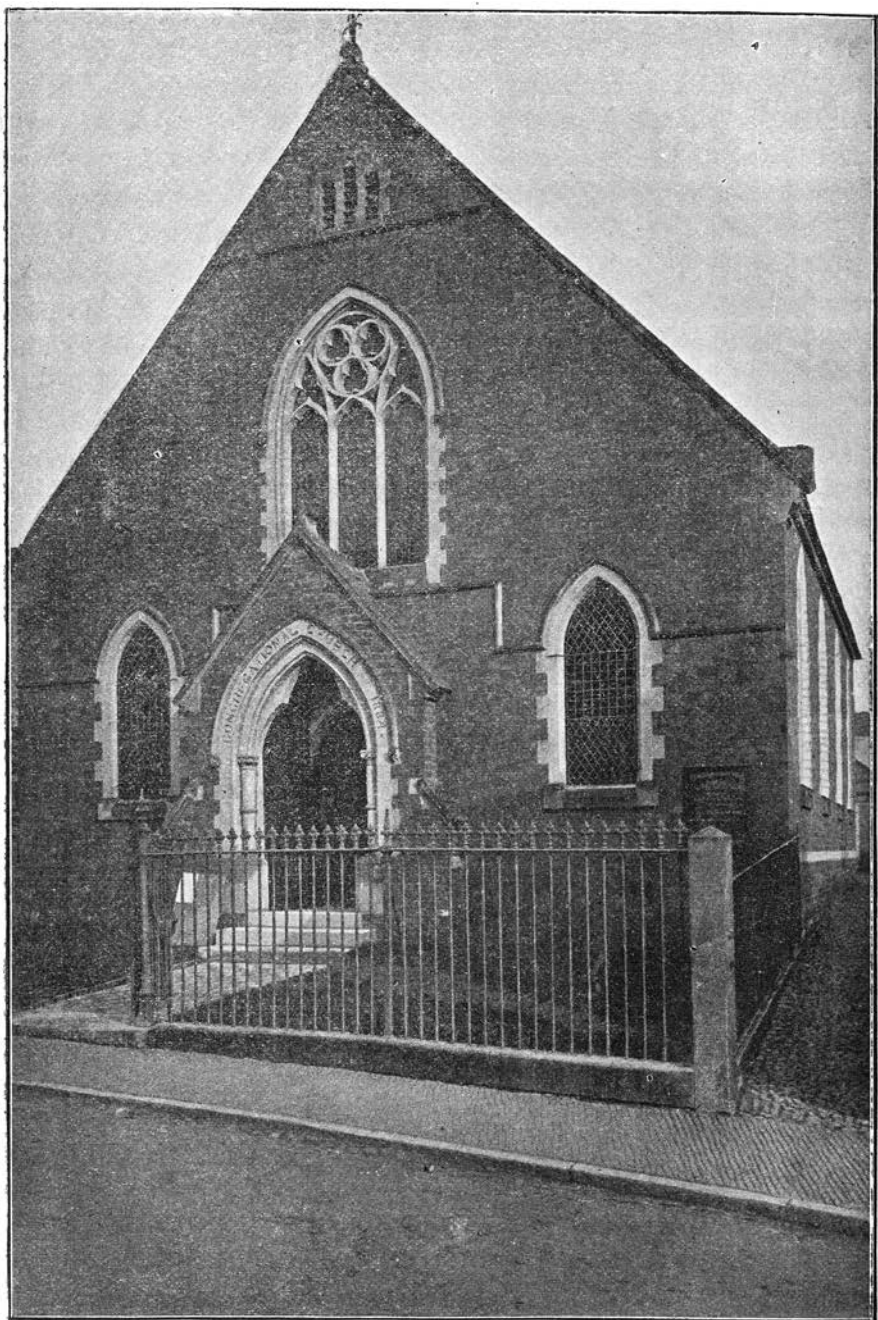
On March 29th, 1846, the Rev. Geo. Edge, of Congleton, commenced his ministry here, and remained until the beginning of 1851.

The next minister was the Rev. B. W. Evans, of St. Florence, Pembrokeshire, who commenced his pastorate on June 29th, 1851. He removed to Ebbw Vale at Christmas, 1853. A Mr. Tyson was pastor in 1854 and 1855.

In 1856, the Rev. John Thomas, of the Welsh Church in Shrewsbury, began his labours at Ellesmere, and remained until April, 1861, when he removed to Tredegar.

He was followed in January, 1862, by the Rev. Hy. Warner, of Eccleshall, who remained three years, returning to Eccleshall, in August, 1865.

The church was dissolved in 1865, at the suggestion of the District Committee. In the summer of 1866, the Rev. Charles Bateman, of Newmarket, undertook the charge of the congre-



ELLESMERE CHAPEL.



REV. S. T. WILSON BARKER

gation. The Salop Association gave a grant of £40 for two years, and £35 and £30 for the two following years. Mr. Bateman resigned in 1870.

The Rev. Richard Hurley Taylor commenced his ministry in January, 1877, and left in September, 1878.

From 1878 to 1887 the church was happy in having the help of the Rev. H. C. Welsford, who took the services on one Sunday in every month, and was always willing to be helpful in other ways. There is a record relating to December, 1881, which states that on two Sundays the Rev. H. C. Welsford supplied, the Rev. W. Thomas, of Frankton, preached on one, and a student from Lancashire College on the remaining Sunday.

In the year 1884, the old chapel, which had become unfit for use, was replaced by a new handsome structure, capable of holding 300 persons, at a cost of £520. The foundation stone was laid by Thomas Barnes, Esq., of The Quinta, on July 24th, when the following ministers took part in the service held on the occasion: Revs. J. B. Walton, LL.B., of Wem, D. D. Evans; of Bridgnorth, J. J. Poynter, of Oswestry, G. Kettle, of Shrewsbury, and H. C. Welsford. Alderman Minshall, J.P., of Oswestry, presided over a meeting held in the schoolroom in the evening, when the ministers named above delivered addresses.

The present pastor is the Rev. S. T. Wilson Barker, a student of Lancashire College, who commenced his ministry on Easter Sunday, 1887, and was ordained on October 14th, in the same year.



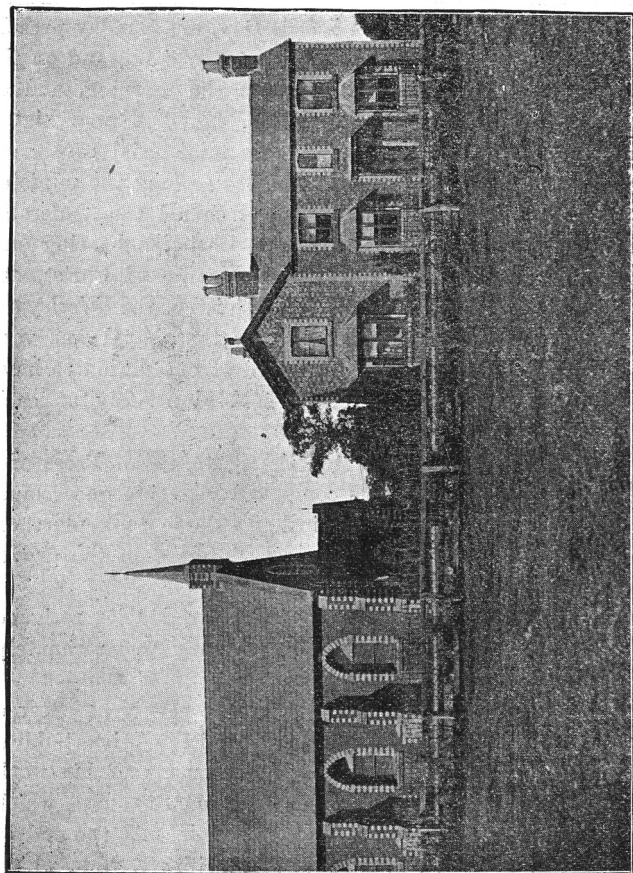


Whixall.

FROM the most reliable information that can be obtained, the church at Whixall was originated about the year 1790, by the holding of services at the farm known as "High Farm," which is situated near to the present chapel and manse, and where at one time young men received training for Christian work.

Great interest attaches to, the neighbourhood of Whixall, on account of the preaching of both Philip and Matthew Henry. Reference to the training institute mentioned above is found in Dr. Edward Calamy's "Nonconformist Memorial," which states, "Mr. Richard Sadler was born in Worcester, and, when young, went with his father into New England. After the war he returned, and was ordained at Whixall chapel, May 16, 1648. He removed from thence to Ludlow. Being turned out there upon the King's Restoration, he spent the rest of his days in privacy at Whixall, where he died in 1675, aged 55. He was a man of great piety and moderation. He had a wife and many children, with very little to live on, but was cheerful and hearty. A grandson of his, Dr. Samuel Benyon, was born and lived in his house at, Whixall, where he kept an Academy, and preached at Broad Oak after Mr. Philip Henry's death, till he removed to Shrewsbury."

The first Congregational Chapel was erected at Whixall in the early part of this century, Mr. Thomas Weston (brother of Mr. Samuel Weston, who built Prees Chapel) defraying almost the entire cost. The chapel was opened on October 9th, 1805, when the Rev. — Ralph, of Liverpool, preached in the morning from Isaiah lx., 7, 8, Revs. R. Everall and Peter Edwards offering prayer. Rev. Thomas Weaver (Shrewsbury) preached in the afternoon from 1. Peter ii., 4; and Rev. John Wilson, of Market Drayton, in the evening from Isaiah ii., 3.



WHIXALL CHAPEL.

Rev. R. Overall was the first pastor. He was ordained at Swan Hill, Shrewsbury, in 1802, for work at Whixall, Clive, and Hadnall.* His successor was Mr. Higgins, who was followed by the Rev. Samuel Minshall, who undertook, in 1826, the pastorate of Whixall, in addition to that of Prees. He usually conducted three services on the Lord's Day; one Sunday preaching twice at Prees, and in the afternoon at Whixall, and on the alternate Sunday preaching at Prees in the morning, and at Whixall afternoon and evening. Mr. Minshall was highly esteemed by his congregations, and his ministerial career extended to upwards of forty years. He was so long the minister of Whixall that during his lifetime the chapel was generally spoken of as "Minshall's Chapel." His Christian bearing and teaching, and his devoted efforts in the cause of Christ, are often referred to now. During his ministry the Wesleyans established a cause at Hollinwood. As the chapel was very near the Congregational, it was arranged at one period to have a joint service, the services being held alternately at each place.

The Rev. W. C. Davies accepted the pastorate of Prees and Whixall when Mr. Minshall was compelled to resign on account of old age and ill-health. Mr. Minshall's death took place on April 16th, 1861, and his remains were interred in the graveyard attached to Prees chapel.

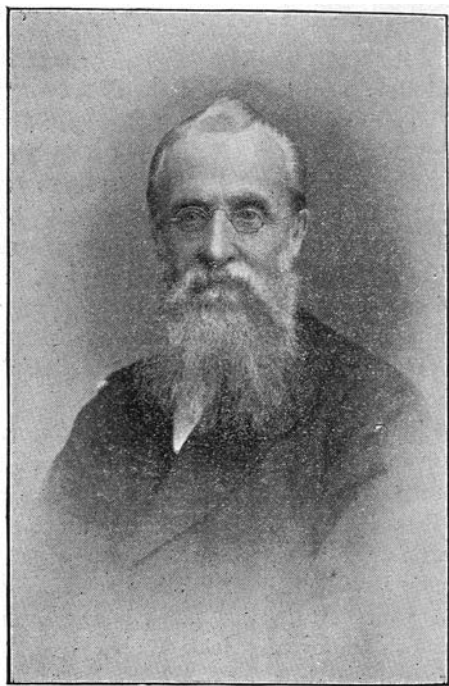
After a pastorate of about four years, Mr. Davies resigned his position as a Congregational minister, and was ultimately received into the Anglican church.

On February 18th, 1866, the Rev. W. E. Whereat entered upon the pastorate, but his labours were of the briefest duration, for the day which saw the commencement of his work witnessed also its close. He only delivered one discourse, which was upon the "new creature," in Prees Chapel. At the end of the sermon he was seized with an alarming illness, from which he never recovered.†

The churches were then without a pastor for about eighteen months. In the autumn of 1867, the Rev. E. K. Evans entered

* See under Minsterley.

† See under Prees.



REV. W. E. HOLT.

upon the work. During his pastorate a new chapel was erected, the corner stone being laid on June 7th, 1870, by Thomas Minshall, Esq., of Oswestry, nephew of the former minister of that name. At the ceremony the Pastor read a list of subscriptions promised to the new buildings, as follows: Mr. Thomas Massey, £100; Miss Massey, £50; Mr. Stephen Massey, £20; Mr. Joseph Batho, £10; Mr. Dickin, £10; Mr. Tudor, £10; Mrs. Tudor, £10; Mr. Maddox, £5; The Chesterfield Fund, £15. Rev. John Thornton, of Stockport, offered the Dedicatory Prayer, and Rev. T. Gasquoine, B.A., of Oswestry, Mr. T. H. Taylor, of Wem, and others, took part in the ceremony. Tea was provided in a tent, and afterwards a very able sermon was preached by the Rev. G. Robinson, of Hadnall, from the words "That ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (1. Thess. iv., 11). The attendance at the stone-laying, and the subsequent service, was exceedingly good.

The opening of the new chapel took place in December, 1870. Large congregations assembled, drawn from the immediate neighbourhood, as also from Whitchurch, Wem, Prees, and, elsewhere. The following ministers were present: Rev. E. K. Evans, Revs. W. Champness, G. Smith, and J. Hughes (Wem), Rev. A. Wylie (Baptist, Whitchurch), Revs. J. L. Jones and W. Tiller (Malpas), Rev. R. W. Lloyd (Wollerton), and the Rev. J. A. Maefadyen (Manchester), the special preacher for the day. In the afternoon, Mr. Macfadyen preached from Matt. xii., 6, "But I say unto you, that in this place is One greater than the temple," and in the evening from Haggai i., 4, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" Between the two services tea was provided in a tent, and was partaken of by about 450 people. The Rev. C. Croft, of Shrewsbury, preached on the following Sunday.

In addition to the new chapel, a manse was erected. The old chapel is now used as a schoolroom. Mr. Thos. Huxley, of Malpas, was the architect.

During Mr. Evans's ministry, Rev. John Owen became his assistant, and occupied the new manse at Whixall. He commenced his labours in the early part of 1870. His work was attended by considerable success. The congregations improved,

the Sunday School attendance was increased to sixty, and the spiritual tone of the church was raised. In his time, the Rev. Newman Hall, LL.B. (afterwards D.D.), preached at Whixall, on several occasions. After a ten years' ministry, Mr. Owen retired to Prees, where he died in 1889. During his pastorate the ministers of Prees—who were, successively, Revs. E. K. Evans, T. N. Oliphant, J. E. Sawday—generally preached at Whixall on Sunday afternoons.

Rev. J. Aston succeeded Rev. J. Owen in August, 1880, and remained about six years. Through the great liberality of Miss Massey, the manse was enlarged for his occupancy. Mr. Aston leaving in March, 1886, Rev. G. W. Swann became assistant minister, but resigned in May, 1887. After his retirement, Mr. Aston resumed his ministry as assistant to the Rev. J. E. Sawday, who was then pastor of Prees.

Mr. Sawday died at Southport on June 5th, 1890, after a faithful pastorate of twelve years, during which he won the high esteem and deep love of his congregations, in addition to making many friends outside his own denomination.

After a vacancy of eleven months, the Rev. John Williams, of Oswestry, accepted the pastorate of Prees and Whixall, and Mr. Aston remained his assistant until his retirement in July, 1892.

For nearly three years the Whixall manse remained unoccupied. Mr. Williams preached at Whixall Chapel on Sunday afternoons, the evening services being conducted by students and laymen.

In November, 1894, the Rev. W. E. Holt, of Oswaldtwistle (Accrington), was invited to succeed Mr. Aston. Mr. Holt accepted the invitation; and entered upon his work in May, 1895, labouring in conjunction with Mr. Williams at Prees, preaching at Whixall on Sunday evenings, and undertaking pastoral work during the week.

In February, 1896, Rev. J. Williams received a call to the pastorate of Dalton in Furness, where he opened his ministry on the first Sunday in May.

Mr. Bolt was meanwhile invited by the Whixall church to accept the full pastorate. The acceptance of this invitation marks a new departure in the history of the church, Prees and

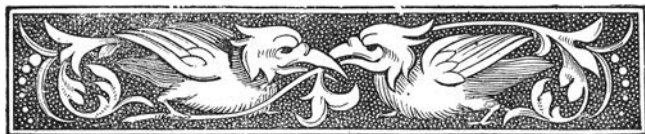
Whixall having been worked as a joint pastorate for the greater part of a century. The ordination of Mr. Holt took place on April 27th, the Revs. J. E. Waiton, LL.B. (Wem), C. Musk. (Whitchurch), D. R. Hamilton (Hadnall and Clive), A. A., Birchenough (Wem), and J. Williams taking part.

After the Ordination Service tea was served, and was followed by a public meeting, which partly partook of the nature of a Farewell to Mr. Williams.

The work at Whixall continues to make progress. The school-room is crowded on Sundays, the public services are well attended, and the spiritual tone of the church is encouraging.

As regards financial affairs, it may be recorded that Mr. Thomas Massey not only contributed freely to the building of the new chapel, but also left an endowment, of £500, the interest of which is devoted to the support of the, ministry. At other times other small endowments have been left with the same object. The Massey family also contributed most freely to the cost of the first part of the manse. Mr. Sutton paid for the purchase of land for the graveyard. When the manse was enlarged Miss Massey paid the entire cost. Others, too, have contributed freely, either in labour or money, for the building up, of the church at Whixall.





Minsterley and Pontesbury.

DISSENTING interest was begun at Minsterley at the end of the eighteenth century. Baptists and Congregationalists began work about the same time. The Baptists claim to have been the first, and to have invited the Independents to join them.

The first Nonconformist minister who is said to have preached at Minsterley was the Rev. John Palmer, a Baptist minister of Shrewsbury and Newtown. He preached first at the "Bridge Inn" on December 26th, 1794. As soon as an opening had been made, Mr. Palmer invited Independent ministers to unite with him in this good work; and it is extremely likely that the Rev. Wm. Whitefoot, of Dorrington, and the Rev. Richard Everall, who was ordained at Swan Hill, Shrewsbury, in 1802, to do itinerant work at Whixall, Hadnall and Clive, were among the first to accept this invitation. Mr. Everall was a native of this neighbourhood, his father, a weaver by trade, being known as "old Everall of the Rock," as his dwelling was near the Stiperstones. It is almost certain that he had been preaching at Lyth Hill, Minsterley, and the neighbouring villages, before he was set apart for the work of an evangelist in the county.

For some years these occasional services at Minsterley were held at the "Bridge Inn," until in 1805, Thomas Howly, Esq. of Cause, a member of the Baptist Church at Shrewsbury, fitted up, at his own expense, part of a farm house, which is still sometimes called "the old chapel." Rent was paid for this room by the two denominations jointly, and Baptist and Independent ministers officiated on alternate Sundays. Although considerable friction arose from time to time because of the difference in the mode of baptism, this arrangement continued for thirty years.

The church at Minsterley was formed in 1805, and the Rev. George Ryan, who had begun his labours here in 1804 under the auspices of the Salop Association, was in the year 1806 ordained its first pastor. He had previously been employed by the Association as an itinerant preacher. He, also had the oversight of the church at Welshpool, and in 1812 gave up his charge at Minsterley to confine his labours to Welshpool and the neighbourhood, where he remained until his death.

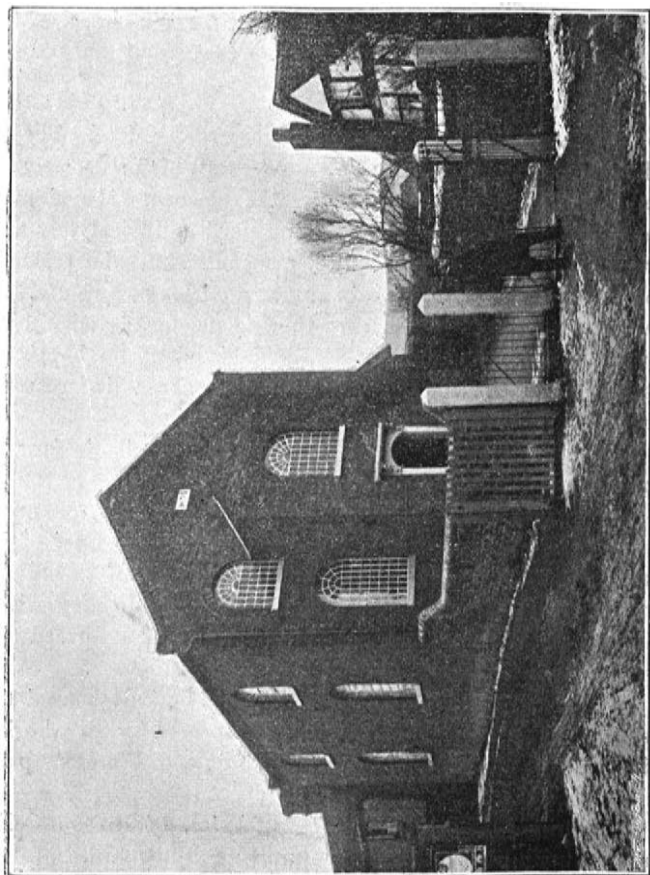
The first deacons were Mr. Joseph Williams, who was elected at the formation of the church or very soon afterwards, and who died in 1832, and Mr. Peter Parry, who was elected in 1810, and who died in 1840.

The second minister was the Rev. John Jones Beynon, a native of Pembrokeshire, who was ordained at Bishop's Castle in 1810. Leaving that place soon, he accepted an invitation to labour at Minsterley, Lyth Hill, and Dorrington. He began his work here about 1816, and preached in the villages for many miles round, in all directions, often being threatened with great violence. From the year 1824 he gave up his church at Minsterley, and confined himself to Dorrington and neighbourhood, where he worked with success until His death.

The next minister was the Rev. Thomas James, of Newtown Academy (now Brecon College), who came in 1825, and resigned in 1831, accepting an invitation to Wellington, Salop. After him a minister of the name of Barnes officiated here for a brief period.

Both denominations being now sufficiently numerous, they resolved to separate and build two distinct chapels. The Baptists built close to Snailbeach Mines, and the Independents at Minsterley. After considerable difficulty, a site was secured at the latter place through the zealous efforts of W. Nealon, Esq. An old cottage was bought for £100, and on that site, the present chapel was erected in 1833 at a cost of £463.

The church soon being again without a minister, the Rev. Thomas Jones of Ruabon and Llangollen (formerly a student of Newtown Academy), was invited, and commenced his ministry in the new chapel in 1833. He laboured here until his death, which took place in 1860, at the age of 65.



MINSTERLEY CHAPEL.

In 1862, the Rev. Walter Price, of Brecon College, received a cordial and unanimous invitation to take the oversight of this church as well as that of the church at Pontesbury. He commenced his pastorate in April of that year, and was ordained in the following June. Mr. Price is still labouring in this sphere. During his ministry the chapel has been reseated, and Sunday School rooms have been built over the chapel, at considerable outlay. The chapel will now seat about 200 people.

The church at Pontesbury is of more recent date. The Rev. Thomas Jones, of Minsterley, laboured, as all his predecessors had done, in the villages surrounding the place of their ministry. Among others, he preached at Pontesford and Plealy, at which latter place a chapel was built by a gentleman who resided in the neighbourhood, at his own cost, and on his own estate. The chapel was not put in Trust for the Independents, and when the gentleman who had built it, changed his views on baptism, it became a Baptist Chapel. Subsequently, for a like reason, it became a Wesleyan one.

When the chapel at Plealy was no longer available for them, the Independents resolved to build another; and one of the leading members, Mr. R. Croft, having given a site, the present chapel and minister's house were erected in the summer of 1839 at a cost of £596. The chapel was opened on Christmas Day of that year. The members of the church at Minsterley who resided at Plealy, Pontesford, and Pontesbury, now formed themselves into a separate church at the last-named place.

At the two churches, the Rev. Thomas Jones laboured faithfully until his death in 1860, being respected by all who knew him, and his ministry being, in the words of the present pastor, "an entire success."

In April, 1862, the Rev. Walter Price, of Brecon College, entered upon his work here, and remains pastor still.

In the year 1871, the interior of the chapel was thoroughly renovated, the Sunday School was re-roofed, and new rooms were added, and a plot of land adjoining was purchased for a burial ground. These improvements and additions cost a sum about equal to the original outlay, and all the debt was paid within



REV. W. PRICE.

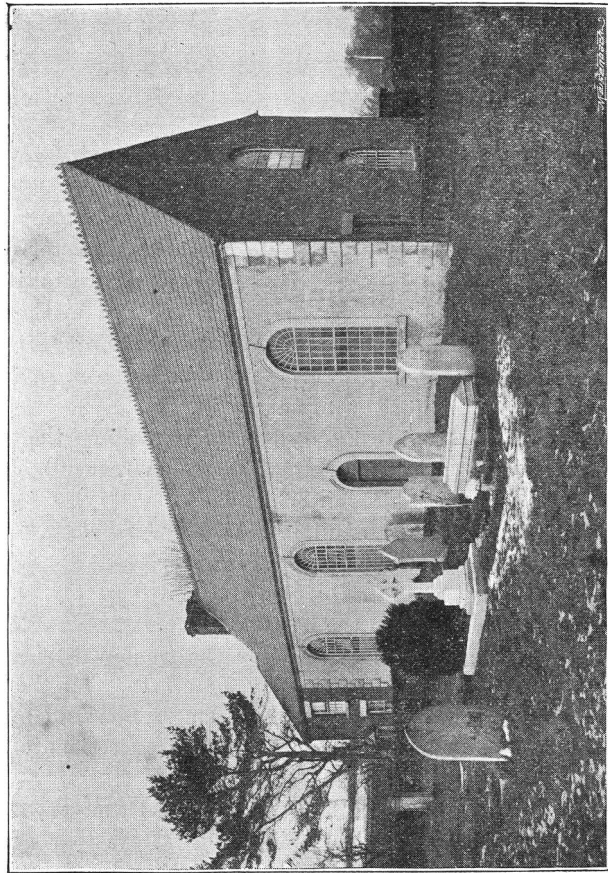
ten years after the work was done, The, chapel will now seat about 250.

The church here is quite distinct from the church at Minsterley, but it has always shared the ministrations of the same-pastor.

In connection with these two churches, there are two mission stations, That at Drury Lane is a room built, by the Calvinistic Methodists. When they failed there, the Congregationalists took the room at a rent of £4 per annum, which they have paid for it for many years. Previously to occupying this room, services were held for several years in various cottages in the neighbourhood. A preaching service is held in the mission room every Sunday afternoon, and a prayer meeting on one evening in each week, except during the summer months.

The other mission station is at Pontesford, a village about one mile to the north-east of Pontesbury. Prayer meetings are held there once a fortnight.





PONTESBURY CHAPEL.



Pant.

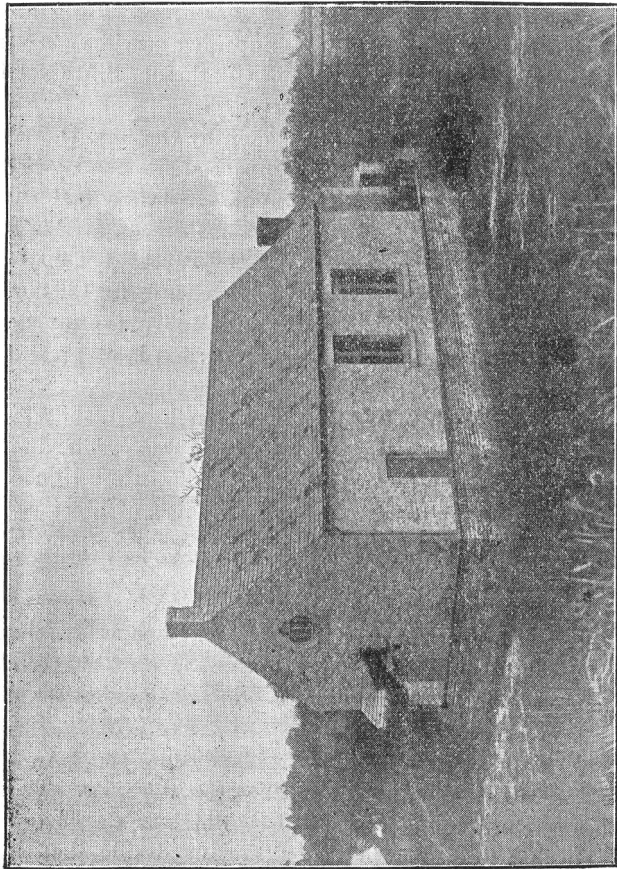
THE Gospel was introduced into the neighbourhood of Pant about the year 1796 by the Rev. John Whitridge, then pastor of the Independent Church at Oswestry. For many years it was preached without apparent success, those engaged in the work sometimes relinquishing and again renewing their efforts. In 1820, however, a branch was formed of the church at Oswestry, six persons being admitted into fellowship.

A chapel was erected, being opened for worship on the second Sunday in 1822. The Revs. John Pierce (Wrexham), Joseph Whitridge (Walsall), and John Whitridge (Oswestry), conducted the opening services. The building cost about £80.

The services were conducted by various persons for a time. In 1824 Mr. John Griffiths became the stated supply, and on July 29th was ordained to the pastoral office.

In 1832 a gallery was erected for the Sunday School; re-opening services were held on Monday, June 11th, when the Revs. T. W. Jenkyn (Oswestry), Roaf, of Ellesmere, Rees, of Sarney, and Morgan, of Welshpool, preached. The collections on this occasion amounted to £4 2s. 11 1/2d.

For some years Mr. Griffiths was pastor of Dovaston, as well as Pant; but eventually he relinquished Dovaston, and for several years held the pastorate of Llandysilio and Pant, until the infirmities of old age necessitated his resigning the former. He still continued his ministry at Pant, preaching when able to do so, and administering the Lord's Supper. In 1855 he wrote, To the end of this year, from the formation of this church, there have been received into fellowship 82 persons; but what a changing world is this. Out of these 32 have died; 22 have



PANT CHAPEL.

removed; 3 have returned; and 11 have been suspended. So we are still a little flock. May the Great Head of the Church increase their number." Mr. Griffiths resigned in 1858.

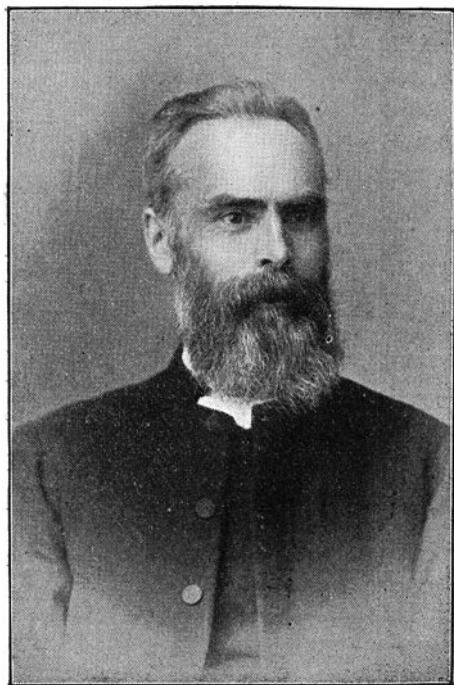
A new chapel was built in 1862 at a cost of £250. The largest subscriber towards this object was a Mr. John Watkin, a farm servant, who lived for many years at Plascarreg. He gave and left £60 to the building fund. The opening services were held in October, 1862, when the Rev. James Matheson, B.A. (Nottingham), preached.

The oversight of the church was taken by the Rev. D. Davies, of Sarney, from 1862 to 1868. He preached one Sunday in each month, and presided at the Communion Services and church meetings. Mr. Thomas Williams, who was deacon at this time, and who had most faithfully served the cause at Pant, commenced preaching at the request of the church in 1864. He entered Nottingham Institute in the year 1867, was minister of Wistanswick and Ollerton for some years, and is at present residing at Portland.

In 1868 the church united with the church at Llandysilio in giving a call to the Rev. J. B. Harker, who was ordained either at the end of 1868 or the beginning of 1869. He resigned the pastorate of Pant in 1870. Mr. John Williams, of Llynclys, was a deacon of the church from 1868 to 1870, when he removed to Oswestry.

In 1870 Mr. Francis Pugh, Llanymynech, and Mr. Joseph Sambrook were appointed deacons; and Rev. Thomas Jenkins, of Sarney, took the oversight of the church, preaching once a month, presiding at the Lord's Supper, and attending week night meetings as often as practicable.

In 1877 the church reunited with Llandysilio, and gave a call to the Rev. D. Horatio Shankland, the present pastor. The two churches received an equal share of the minister's services until 1881. In that year a manse was built at Llandysilio, that church deciding that a resident minister was needed for the place. Accordingly the proportion of service rendered by the pastor to each church was altered. At a church meeting held at Pant in February, 1881, it was unanimously agreed to ask Mr. Shankland to continue the pastoral oversight jointly with that of Llandysilio, preach one Sunday a month, administer the Lord's



REV. D. H. SHANKLAND.

Supper, attend the church meetings, and other week night services. This arrangement continues up to the present time.

The neighbourhood suffers much from change and fluctuations, and as a consequence the church suffers in every department of its work. The present number of church members is only 25, although the last member, just received, numbers 93 on the Church Roll, 68 having removed or died between 1862 and 1897.

There is also this change in the church and congregation: In the year 1870 old people were more numerous than young. The Sunday School was small. At present the reverse is the case; the Sunday School is large, the average attendance being from 90 to 100, and young people form the majority at all the services.

The singing has improved, a new organ has been lately purchased, and the building has several times been painted and renovated. Every effort is made to secure the best supplies for the pulpit during the pastor's absence, and Mr. Joseph Carsley, of Llyncllys, and several others work most energetically for the good of the church and Sunday School, to which there is a clothing club attached. The attendance of members at the Lord's Supper is very regular, the congregations being generally good, especially on the day the pastor preaches.

There is one small endowment. An old friend of the church left £50 as a token of respect for the minister and office bearers.

The church has received many marks of kindness from the present minister and former ministers and deacons of Christ Church, Oswestry.



Prees.

THE Gospel was preached by Nonconformists in this neighbourhood at a very early period. The Rev. Philip Henry was ordained in the parish church of Prees, when Aylmer Houghton was minister there, and, after his ejection from Worthenbury, preached at Westen, and other places in the locality of Prees. He and his son, Matthew Henry, often preached in this district.

After the passing of the Toleration Act in 1689, several houses were licensed as places in which to hold religious worship. Congregationalists and (in later years) Wesleyans laboured extensively here, though often persecuted by those in authority and vower, as well as by the ignorant and bigoted populace.

After a long and an arduous struggle, Dissent, and especially Independency gained strength and influence. Some persons of moderate means and standing in society professed their attachment to Congregational principles, and a few of the more earnest united to form a small Christian brotherhood.

Mr. Samuel Weston, of Coton, was one of the pioneers of Nonconformity in Prees. In 1807 he preached, together with others, at a house in Maypole End, now called Shrewsbury Road. The house was then occupied by one Humphries, a shoemaker. Mr. Weston took the precaution of licensing the house, for preaching in the Ecclesiastical Court. Unaware of this, fact, Mr. Wickstead, the presiding magistrate in the neighbourhood, and a bigoted Episcopalian, instituted an inquiry regarding the congregations which assembled there. When met for Divine worship, the constable, named Drury, entered and demanded, the names of the people present. A man named John Brooks. (who lived until 1869) said, at once, "I am here, with my wife Nellie—put our names down first." The case was tried at the magistrates' office at Whitchurch, and decision was given against

Mr. Wickstead, who was mulcted in costs. This circumstance-gave rise to the building of the chapel.

Mr. Samuel Weston was the chief promoter of the scheme for the erection of a place of worship, and built it almost entirely at his own expense.

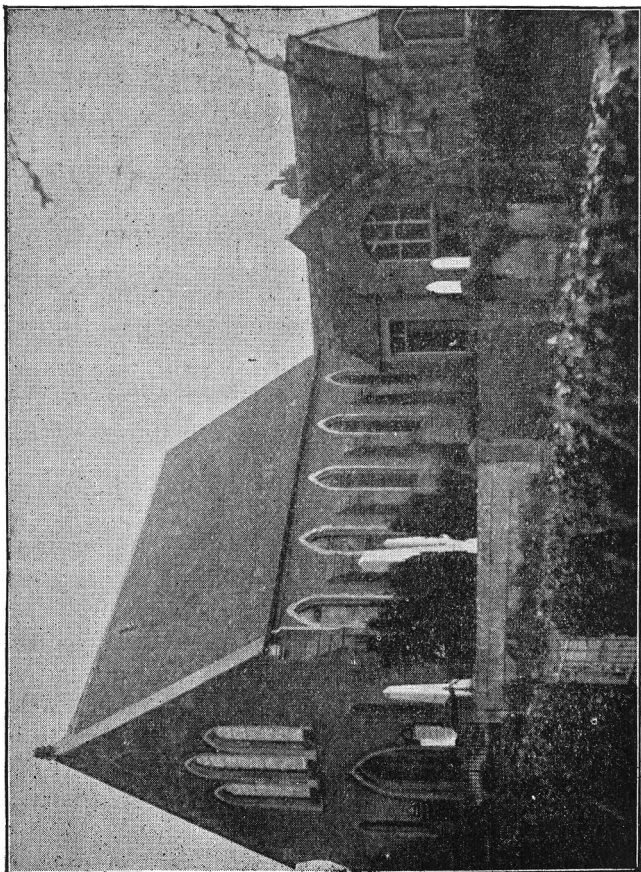
The chapel was opened for worship on March 10th, 1810, when the Rev. Thomas Weaver, of Shrewsbury, preached in the morning, and the Rev. Wm. Macdonald, of Market Drayton, in the evening. This chapel, together with the one at Bishop's Castle, built in the same year, cost £850.

The first stated pastor was the Rev. J. Harris, afterwards of St. Alban's, who died there in 1871, aged 88. At the time Mr. Hams was minister at Prees, a Mr. Lewis was pastor at Whitchurch, whose services were not considered so attractive as those of Mr. Harris; and it is said that the Whitchurch people offered £50 to the people at Prees on condition that they would consent to an exchange of pastors. It is at any rate a fact that Mr. Harris went to Whitchurch, and Mr. Lewis settled at Prees, The two ministers remained in their new spheres for only a short time, Mr. Lewis leaving Prees at the end of twelve months.

After his resignation the church had supplies until 1818, when the Rev. Samuel Minshall, for some time a schoolmaster at Oswestry, became minister. He seems to have resided in Wem, where he preached on Lord's Day evenings for the Rev. Peter Edwards, then an aged man.

In 1825, Mr. Minshall removed to Press, and, in the following year, became pastor of Whixall also. He taught a school at Prees. He was a man of Apostolic spirit and labour—of the most venerable mien in later life; and his name is still fragrant in the country where he lived. He continued to labour here until 1860, when, on account of growing infirmities and a stroke of paralysis, he was compelled to resign his charge, which he had honourably sustained for nearly forty-four years. He died on April 16th, 1861, and was buried in the burial ground adjoining the chapel, the Rev. Joseph Pattison, of Wem, officiating at his funeral.

Mr. Minshall was succeeded by the Rev. W. C. Davies, of Domgay, who commenced his labours at Prees and Whixall on



PREES CHAPEL.

April 14th, 1861, just two days before his revered predecessor went to his rest. Under the ministry of Mr. Davies, the present chapel was built, at a cost of £570.

A preliminary meeting was held for consultation on August 12th, 1861, at which it was resolved to commence the erection of a new chapel in the following spring, and the sum of £84 was promised towards the building fund. Soon afterwards Mr. Denham, architect, Lord's Hill, kindly offered to furnish plans and superintend the work.

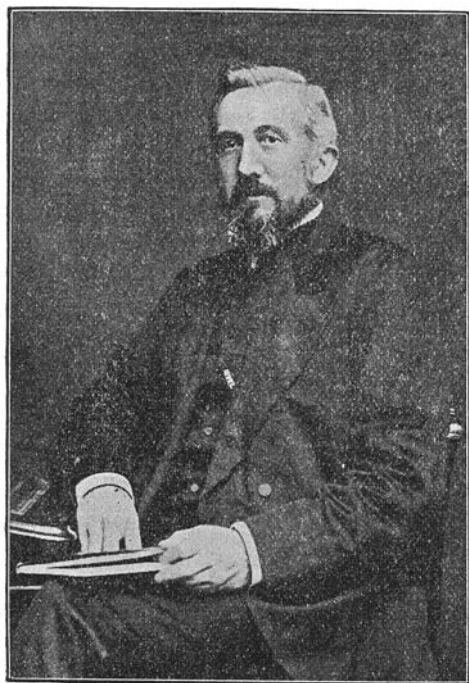
The first stone was laid by Thomas Barnes, Esq., M.P. (who had given £50 to the building fund), on April 21st, 1862, in the presence of six hundred people. The church was opened for Divine worship on March 10th, 1863, March 10th being the day on which the old structure was opened in 1810. In the afternoon the Rev. Joseph Parker, of Manchester (now of the City Temple, and D.D.), preached; the Rev. Enoch Mellor, M.A., of Liverpool (afterwards of Halifax and D.D.), preached in the evening.

The Rev. W. C. Davies held his pastorate until July, 1865, when he resigned and entered the ministry of the Established Church.

The Rev. W. E. Whereat, who had laboured as an agent of the Home Missionary Society at Harmer Hill, next accepted the pastorate, and began his ministry on February 18th, 1866. He became seriously ill after he had preached his first sermon, and continued so for some months. He removed to Bristol, in the hope that the change might prove beneficial, but he died on the 23rd May in his 28th year, and his remains were interred in the Cemetery at Bristol. The Rev. J. Pattison, of Wem, prepared two funeral sermons, and left them in his desk to be preached at Prees and Whixall on the very Sunday his own funeral sermon was preached at Wem by the Rev. Professor Newth, of Lancashire College.

The next pastor was the Rev. E. Kentish Evans, of Woolton, near Liverpool, who commenced his ministry on October 20th, 1867.

The churches at Prees and Whixall became independent of the aid of the Salop Association in 1869.



REV. J. E. SAWDAY.

In November, 1867, a vestry was built, the congregation worshipping in the Lion Room during the alterations.

On October 7th, 1868, a meeting was held in the vestry to consider the expediency of altering and improving the appearance of the church, when it was resolved to re-seat, paint and varnish the whole of the interior. The church was closed, and services, were held in the Lion Room until December 6th. On Tuesday, December 8th, the opening services were conducted by the Revs. W. Champness, of Wem, and George Robinson, of Hadnall, after which a sermon was preached by the Rev. G. W. Conder, of Manchester. On the following Sunday sermons were preached by the Pastor.

The Rev. E. K. Evans having resigned the pastorate, the Rev. T. N. Oliphant, of Walkern (Herts.), received and accepted a very cordial invitation, and commenced his ministry on Sunday, May 3rd, 1874. Mr. Oliphant resigned in 1877, and went to Burnley.

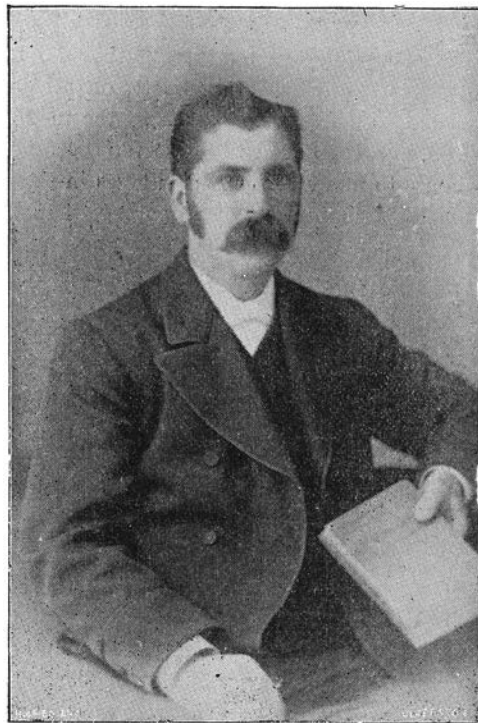
In 1878, the Rev. J. E. Sawday, of South Devon, accepted a call, and commenced his ministry on January 3rd.

A manse was completed in 1880, and occupied by Mr. Sawday the same year. It was built on a lease of ninety-nine years.

Mr. Sawday remained here upwards of twelve years, exercising a faithful ministry, and then passed to his reward. He was buried in the chapel yard, where stands a monument erected by his numerous friends.

In January, 1891, the Rev. J. Williams, of Oswestry, received and accepted a unanimous call to the pastorate. He remained five years, and in February, 1896, accepted, a call to Dalton in Furness. During his ministry a new school-room was built, and the chapel renovated, the whole of the money having been raised.

In the autumn of 1896, the Rev. W. Gee, of Oakengates, received and accepted a unanimous call to take the oversight of the church.



REV. JOHN WILLIAMS.



Wollerton.

THE congregation at Wollerton was first gathered by the Rev. Jonathan Scott, often called Captain Scott, on account of his original profession. He began to preach in the neighbourhood in the year 1768, and continued to do so for several years, extending his labours to many towns and villages in the surrounding country. He died as minister of Glenorchy Chapel, Matlock Bath.

The Rev. John Wilson, his successor at Market Drayton, would no doubt also preach at Wollerton.

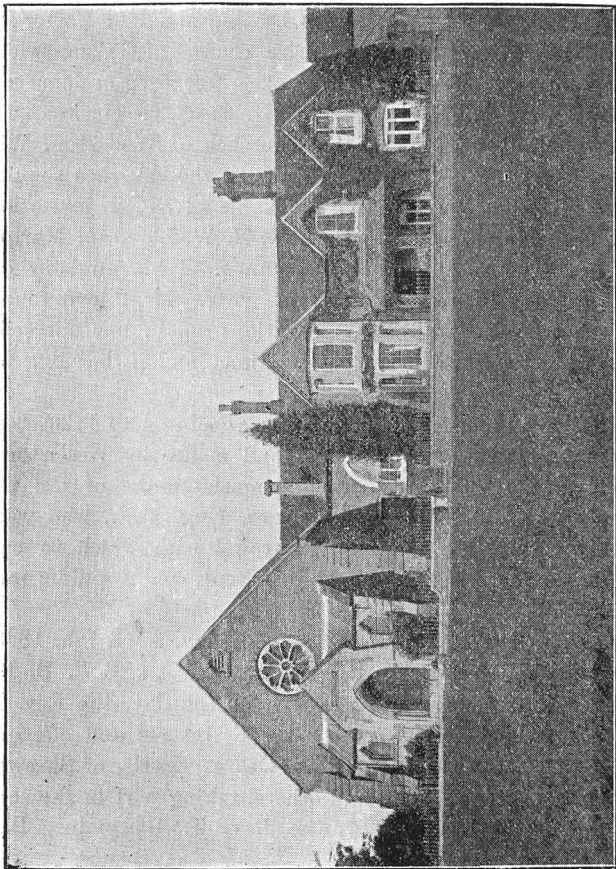
The first chapel and manse were erected by the Rev. Jonathan Scott about the year 1800. The money wherewith to build, together with an endowment of £300, was left by his wife (before her marriage, Miss Elizabeth Clay, a native of Wollerton), who was a lady of eminent piety.

Mr. Scott was, succeeded in the pastorate by Mr. Buffery, and he by Mr. Waste.

The Lord's Supper was first administered at Wollerton, and the church formed, on October 24th, 1813, by the Rev. Peter Edwards, of Wem.

On the 13th of October, 1814, the Rev. Samuel Roberts was ordained pastor of the churches formed at Wollerton and Wistanswick. Amongst those present were the Revs. Peter Edwards, of Wem, John Whitridge, Oswestry, John Wilson, Matlock Bath, John Harris, Whitchurch, and David Lewis, Newport. Mr. Roberts was a native of Duddestone, near Oswestry, and had been educated at Hoxton Academy. Owing to failing health, he resigned the work of the ministry in 1819, and undertook a printing business in Oswestry.

On the 25th of December, 1819, the Rev. D. Davies accepted the pastorate of the churches at Wollerton and Wistanswick,



WOLLERTON CHAPEL AND MANSE.

where he continued to exercise his ministry for forty-three years. Mr. Davies for the last few years of his life was blind, but continued to preach with great acceptance. He died at the chapel house, Wollerton, on the 20th of March, 1865, and was buried at the Congregational Church, Wistanswick, the Rev. J. Pattison, of Wem, officiating at his funeral.

In 1859, the Rev. J. Yeates became assistant pastor to the Rev. D. Davies, and took entire charge of Wistanswick and Ollerton. He continued in this office for three or four years.

In November, 1864, the Rev. H. Sturt, of Market Drayton, took charge of the associated churches of Wollerton, Wistanswick, and Ollerton, until such time as the churches should give a call to a minister. Acting under his advice, an invitation was given, in March, 1865, to the Rev. R. W. Lloyd, of Marton and Forden, who accepted it and commenced his ministry on the first Sunday in June in the same year. Mr. Lloyd found the churches weak and the congregations small, but succeeded in gathering together large congregations, and in building up the churches.

In May, 1866, a committee was appointed to take steps for the enlargement of the chapel and manse at Wollerton. On Friday, July 26th, 1867, the memorial stone of the present chapel was laid by Thomas Barnes, Esq., M.P., who was presented with a handsome silver trowel with which to perform the ceremony. Tea was held in a tent, and a public meeting followed.

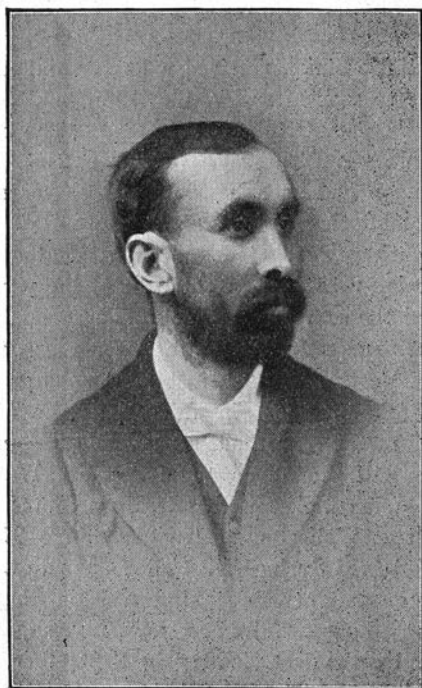
The new chapel was opened on Tuesday, April 7th, 1868, the Revs. Hy. Oliver, B.A., of Newport (Mon.), and F. B. Brown, of Wrexham, being the preachers for the day, the Rev. D. D. Evans, of Bridgnorth, reading the Scriptures and offering the dedicatory prayer, and the Revs. George Kettle, of Shrewsbury, W. Champness, of Wem, and others, taking part in the services. On the following Sunday, the Rev. T. Gasquoine, B.A., of Oswestry, officiated.

The building is of red and white brick, and fitted to accommodate 200 persons. The old chapel was utilised partly for the purposes of building a schoolroom, and partly for additions to the manse. A sum of £1,000 was incurred in this work.

In February, 1869, the Rev. R. W. Lloyd resigned the charge



REV. E. W. WATSON.



REV. D. PHILIPPS.

of Wistanswick and Ollerton, and devoted all his time and energies to the church at Wollerton, where he continued to labour until June, 1871, when he left to take charge of Great Boughton Church, Chester. During the six years' pastorate of Mr. Lloyd, the congregation at Wollerton became greatly increased, and many were added to the church. It may be stated here that the church became independent of the Salop Association at Easter, 1870.

The Rev. Mark Simon received a hearty and unanimous call to the pastorate soon after Mr. Lloyd left, and commenced his ministry on Sunday, October 15th, 1871. The ordination services took place on Tuesday, November 21st, in that year. After Mr. Simon had been pastor for three years, the debt on the chapel, amounting to £250, was cleared off. In 1878, the manse was entirely renovated and enlarged at a cost of £250, the money being raised before the close of the year by means of a bazaar, and the exertions of the minister.

After a very successful pastorate of ten years, the Rev. Mark Simon left in November, 1881, to take the charge of the Church at Toxteth Park, Liverpool, in which sphere he still labours.

The church remained without a pastor until April, 1882, when a unanimous call was given to Mr. E. W. Watson, B.A., of Spring Hill College, Birmingham. He accepted the call, and was ordained at Wollerton on Tuesday, June 27th, 1882, Dr. Deane, Professor of Spring Hill College, the Rev. D. D. Evans, of Bridgnorth, and others, taking part in the service. Mr. Watson laboured successfully here for ten years, and terminated his ministry on the last Sunday in September, 1892, having been selected by the London Missionary Society to undertake educational work in Madras. At a farewell meeting, he was presented with an illuminated address and a purse of gold as a token of the esteem in which he was held.

The successor of the Rev. E. W. Watson is the present pastor, the Rev. Dan Philipps, who received and accepted a call to the pastorate in March, 1893. Mr. Philipps commenced his ministry on Sunday, May 21st, 1893, and was recognised as pastor in the same year.

In the spring of 1895, the schoolroom was enlarged, a minister's vestry built, and an organ chamber erected. The organ

chamber was built by the wife of the late Mr. John Dunn of Tern Hill, in memory of her husband. The organ was presented to the church and congregation by the Rector of Hodnet, the Rev. R. H. Cholmondeley, M.A. The total cost, of the structural alterations and additions amounted to nearly £200, all of which was speedily paid.



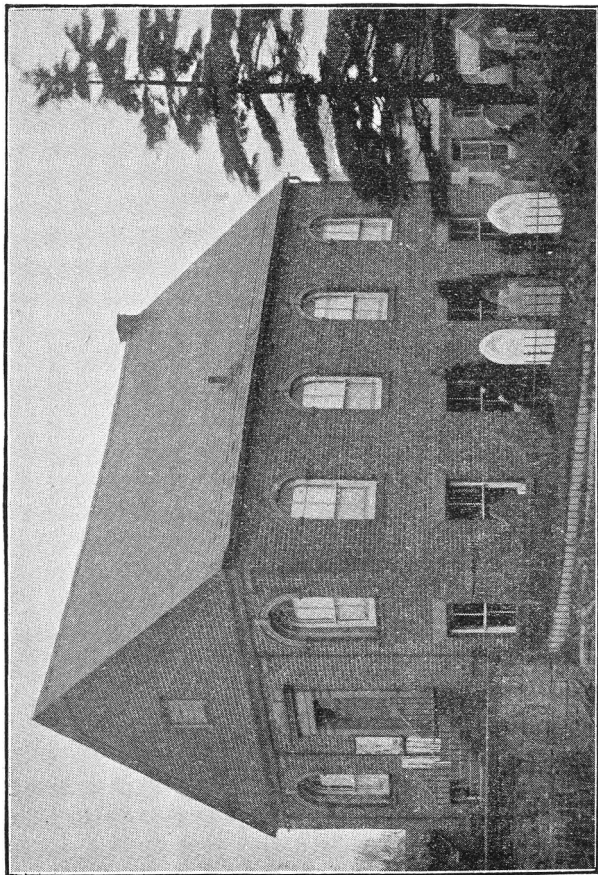


Preeshenlle.

THE church assembling at Preeshenlle was originated through the efforts of the Rev. John Whitridge, Oswestry, in the year 1800. Services were commenced in the house of Mr. Windsor, at Rhosygadfa, an outlying portion of Whittington parish. At that time the neighbourhood was very scantily provided with accommodation for worship and religious instruction, no church being nearer than the parish churches of Whittington, St. Martin's, Chirk, and Oswestry, and the Old Chapel, Oswestry.

Mr. Whitridge was sustained in his efforts by the two brothers—Messrs. Nathanael and John Minshall—who then resided in the neighbourhood, occupying Preeshenlle Farm, and also by Mr. Andrew Peplce, who occupied a small holding called Pen-y-Cae. The first two were deacons of the church at Oswestry, and attended the services at the Old Chapel on Sunday mornings, and also frequently conducted the services at Rhosygadfa on Sunday evenings. From the commencement the movement received the guidance and support of worthy and experienced men. Some time prior to 1804, Mr. Nathanael Minshall, of Oswestry, resided for a time with his uncles, Messrs. Nathanael and John Minshall, of Preeshenlle, and was in the habit of teaching such children and young people as chose to go, at 6 o'clock every morning, to the hall of the house at Preeshenlle.

For some reason, probably for convenience sake, the services were discontinued at Rhosygadfa about the year 1810, and thenceforth conducted at Pen-y-cae. In the year 1829 the Primitive Methodist Chapel was erected at St. Martin's Moors, and here, for several years, a joint Sabbath School was held under the management of Mr. Thomas Minshall, and afterwards, of Mr. Watkin Jones, both members of the Old Chapel, Oswestry. The scholars and teachers were drawn from the two congregations, and joined together in Sabbath School work without any discord. The arrangement, in some measure, still

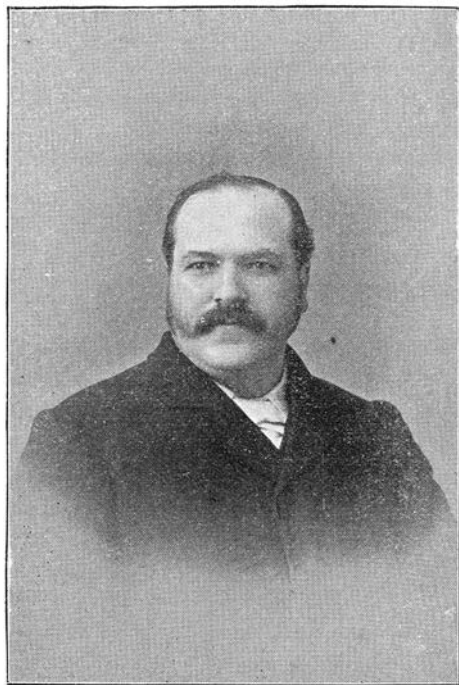


PRESHENILLE CHAPEL.

exists, for the present secretary of the church at Preeshenlle, Mr. Joseph Jones, Ebnal Lodge, is superintendent of the Sabbath School at St. Martin's Moors. In the year 1831 it was felt that the Congregationalists ought to make some permanent provision for the wants of the increasing congregations at their services. It was decided to erect a chapel on a portion of the present burial ground. The whole neighbourhood entered most heartily, into the effort, several of the neighbouring farmers giving their services most cheerfully in gratuitously carting the materials. The chapel, which was built of sandstone, was opened for worship on January 1st, 1832, when the preachers were the Revs. T. W. Jenkyn, Oswestry, W. Williams, of Wern, and Thomas Jones, of Minsterley, afterwards of Minsterley and Pontesbury. An inscription over the door read, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven."

Until the opening of the chapel no separate church existed, the assembly being regarded as a branch of the church meeting at Oswestry. It was now felt that a distinct society should be formed, and this was done at the close of the year by Dr. Jezkyn. A separate Sabbath School was also formed, and excellent service in connection with it was rendered for several years by Mr. T. Watkin Jones, Oswestry. (The only one connected with the church and school not present who has a recollection of Mr. Watkin Jones' work is Mr. Samuel Jones, Gobowen). The young church proceeded at once to secure a pastor, and invited the Rev. John Jones, a native of Bangor, N.W., to take its oversight. He continued to superintend the work until the year 1840, when he removed to Lancashire, The venerable Rev. Dr. David Roberts, Wrexham, who knew Mr. Jones well, describes him as a "good, inoffensive man, who always preached in a Geneva gown." After his departure the pulpit was supplied chiefly by lay preachers, principally from Oswestry, Wrexham, and Ruabon, while the Rev. James Barton took special charge of the church for a time.

After his removal in 1846, the people requested Mr. Samuel Roberts, a deacon of the Old Chapel, Oswestry, to take a kind of pastoral oversight of the church. Mr. Roberts was trained for the ministry at Hoxton Academy, and, on closing his course there, became pastor of Wollerton and Wistanswick, in which



REV. E. GARMON ROBERTS.

sphere he enjoyed the friendship of Rev. Reginald Heber, at that time Rector of Hodnet. Owing to failing health he was compelled to leave the ministry. He then settled in Oswestry as a printer and bookbinder, doing valuable Christian work as a deacon and in the Sunday School, and preaching in the Old Chapel, but more frequently at Preeshenlle and other out-stations. During a portion of 1849 he resided at Preeshenlle, and took entire charge of the church. After being laid by for some time from active service he died on Sunday evening, April 3rd, 1864, at the residence of his son, Mr. Askew Roberts, Caxton Press, Oswestry.

His place was taken at Preeshenlle by Mr. Edward Morris, Ruabon, one of the many young men who were inspired for Christian service through the ministry of Williams of Wern. For many years he continued his connection with Preeshenlle, beloved and respected by all. He died on a Sunday morning, on his knees, with his hands clasped in a devotional way on his open Bible. Valuable help was also rendered to the church during these years by Mr. John Randles, Wrexham, and Mr. D. Davies, Ebnal Lodge.

In the year 1862 the church decided to erect a larger and more commodious chapel to celebrate the bi-centenary of St. Bartholomew's Day, 1662, when the Act of Uniformity came into operation. The last sermon was preached in the old chapel by Mr. D. C. Davies on the fourth Sunday in August, 1862. The old chapel was taken down, and the present chapel was erected on an adjoining site, generously given by Mr. W. Jones, St. Martin's Moors, one of the deacons of the church. It was considered advisable to provide beneath the chapel a large school-room for Sabbath School work, and with a view to the formation of a day school. The "foundation stone" was laid by T. Barnes, Esq., The Quinta, and the Chapel was formally opened on June 8th, 1863, by the Rev. R. W. (afterwards Dr.) Dale, Birmingham, who preached two masterly discourses to large congregations. The chapel and schoolroom cost upwards of £500, a large portion of which was paid by the opening services. The remaining debt was gradually reduced, and in the year 1867, through the generosity of Mr. John Minshall, Oswestry, then residing at Ebnal Lodge, the whole was paid. After being thus relieved the church

decided to commence a British Day School. Mr. S. Lightbown (now of Shrewsbury) was the first schoolmaster, and he gave the school a good start. This early success has been well maintained. At present the school is under the charge of Mr. C. H. Hughes, a lay preacher and one of the deacons of the church, and the average attendance is higher than ever.

Early in 1867, after Mr. Edward Morris had given up the pastoral oversight, the church asked the Rev. Thomas Evans, who had lately gone to reside at Ivy Cottage, close by the chapel, to undertake this service, which he did until the close of the year. He died on December 21st, and was buried in the graveyard of the Independent Chapel at Llanfyllin.

At the request of the church Mr. D. C. Davies consented to preside at the monthly Communion Service.

In 1869, the church was registered for the Solemnization of Matrimony, and the first pair married were Mr. William Vaughan, of Chirk, and Miss Elizabeth Davies, who had been for some years a member of the church and choir, and a valued Sunday School teacher. A Bible and Hymn Book were presented to the newly-married couple by the Rev. T. Davison, of The Quinta.

In the year 1887, the church called the Rev. W. E. Hughes to take its oversight. His ministry was eminently successful, the congregations greatly increased, and much good was done. In June, 1889, he resigned and became pastor of the church at The Quinta.

The present minister, the Rev. E. Garmon Roberts, settled in October, 1890. During his pastorate a debt incurred in painting and cleaning the chapel has been paid, a new wall and palisading have been erected in connection with the enlarged burial ground, a large class-room, vestry, and out-offices have also been provided at a total cost of over £200. The building is entirely free of debt.

No account of the church at Preeshenlle would be complete without special reference to the self-denying labours of Mrs. Hughes, Esgob Mill. She was a woman of keen judgment and sterling moral worth. It is impossible to tell what the church owes to her guidance and influence. She and Mr. W. Jones, St. Martin's Moors, although they resided at a distance from the chapel, were pillars in the temple of God.



Clive and Hadnall.

A SMALL band of Wesleyans from Market Drayton, of whom Mr. Samuel Harper was the chief, held open-air services at Grinshill Grove in the closing years of the eighteenth century.

They appear not to have been successful, and their place was taken by a few sturdy Congregational laymen from Whixall, who bravely carried on their work under fierce opposition; for the Vicar of Clive was in the habit of collecting a number of farmers, whose hats bore bands on which were inscribed the ecclesiastical mottoes, "For Church and King," and "Down with the Ranters." These men were marched by the Vicar to the top of the hill, where he exhorted them to shout, and even to hurl down stones on the worshippers below.

Soon afterwards, meetings were held in the house of Barbara Jones, who conducted the Clive village school.

In the meantime, and as the result. of the labours of the Rev. Rowland Hill, his brother, Sir Richard Hill, of Hawkstone, Captain Scott, Mr. Henshaw, of Wem, and their fellow-labourers, services were conducted in the schoolroom and house at Hadnall, belonging to the Hawkstone family.

In 1802, the Salop Association selected as Evangelist, the Rev. Richard Everall, who for a few years had been engaged in preaching in Sir Richard Hill's chapel at Lyth Hill, to labour in the villages of Whixall, Clive, Hadnall, and Shawbury, and even in the neighbourhood of Peplow, in the Valley of the Tern.

Before entering upon his labours he was publicly ordained in Swan Hill Chapel, Shrewsbury. His services were confined to Clive and Hadnall from 1826 until 1830, when he retired to Whixall at the age of 72, to await the summons to his heavenly rest, which came in 1831. He was a man of very exceptional piety and Christian service.

In 1830, mainly through the kindness of Miss Martha Deacon, a chapel was built at Clive, which gave place to a better structure in 1844 (renovated 1879).

In 1833, the services hitherto conducted in the Schoolroom at Radnall were transferred to the chapel, kindly built and partially endowed by Dame Mary Hill, of Hardwicke Grange.

On the death of Mr. Everall, the pastorate of Clive and Hadnall was accepted by the Rev. David James, who commenced his ministry on May 22nd, 1831, and was ordained on the 18th of May in the following year. He discharged affectionately and vigorously the responsibilities of his office for thirty-five years, his death occurring on July 30th, 1866. It is impossible to estimate the measure and manifoldness of the services he rendered to his people; and he has, left behind him a name which will live among the most precious memories of those who knew him.

He was succeeded by the Rev. George Robinson, of Harmer Hill and Bomere Heath, who was ordained on July 16th, 1867, Rev. D. D. Evans (Bridgnorth), giving an exposition of Congregational principles, Rev. George Kettle (Shrewsbury) offering the ordination prayer; and Rev. W. Guest (Claremont Chapel, London), giving the charge to the Pastor and people. For some years Mr. Robinson had been a most intimate friend of Mr. James, and he faithfully followed him in his ministerial offices. In 1871 he left for Berkeley.

In the autumn of the same year, the Rev. James Simpson Swan, of Nottingham Institute, undertook the Pastorate, and he laboured with fidelity and zeal till he removed to Fulwell, Sunderland, in 1874. He was by no means a common-place man, but one of rare ability, rich thought, and deep practical earnestness.

The Rev. M. L. Cooby, of Nottingham Institute, succeeded the Rev. J. S. Swan, and commenced his ministerial duties on the first Sunday in January, 1875; and after a pastorate of nearly four years, he resigned his charge at Michaelmas, 1878. In spite of constant ill-health, he laboured with much heroism. At the present time he holds the pastorate of Bovey Tracey, South Devon.

On November 17th, 1878, the Rev. Joseph Crewe, of Bomere Heath and Harmer Hill, entered upon the work of the ministry

at Olive and Hadnall, and the churches passed through a season of great prosperity. As the result of his zeal and energy, a manse was built in 1883 at a cost of £650, the chapels, were renovated, and much spiritual good was done. He resigned on September 28th, 1884, and went to Oakengates.

His successor was the Rev. William Harris, a man of fine, genial spirit, and manifold ministerial services. He came in 1885, and left for Mevagissey (Cornwall) in 1889.

In the same year the pastorate was undertaken by the Rev. D. Russell Hamilton, of Lancashire College, who still remains in this position, labouring with much ability and acceptance. During Mr. Hamilton's ministry, the church at Clive has celebrated its Jubilee; and a Memorial Window has been placed in the church at Hadnall in memory of the late Mr. T. Heath, one of the deacons.





Dorrington and Lyth Hill.

THE church at Dorrington was built in 1808, owing to the exertions of the Rev. William Whitfoot, a minister of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, who was a native of Dorrington. The land was obtained after some difficulty at a cost of sixty-three guineas. The chapel was built for the sum of £193 10s., not including the pulpit and the outside fences.

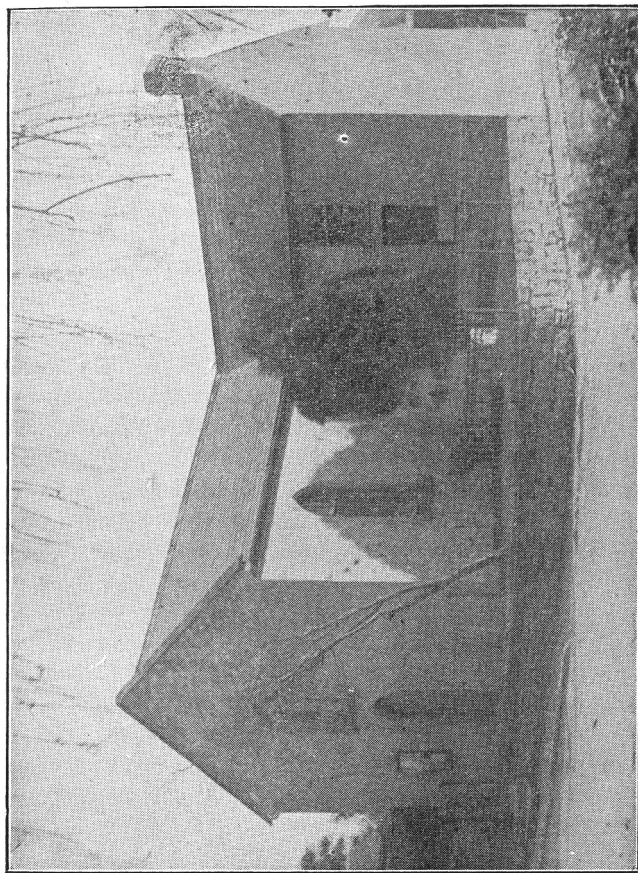
A gentleman—Joseph Pryce, Esq.—resided in the village, and attended the chapel. At his house the friends who came for some years from Shrewsbury to attend the Sunday School were entertained.

The first minister was the Rev. George Ryan, who was appointed by the Salop Association in 1804 to labour at Dorrington and Lyth Hill. He extended his labours over a wide district, including Longden, Plealey, Minsterley and many other villages. Mr. Ryan occupied this sphere until his removal to Welshpool. During his ministry service was held in Dorrington Chapel on Sunday evenings only.

He was succeeded by the Rev. J. J. Beynon who removed from Bishop's Castle in 1816, and cultivated this extensive field. He served the united churches for ten years. About this time Mr. Whitfoot died suddenly in the street at Enfield, having neglected to place the chapel in trust. His nephew and heir consented to place it in trust on payment of a sum of money which Mr. Beynon found great difficulty in procuring.

For some time no church was formed, and no one could be found to assist in holding a prayer meeting. In 1819, however, a church of seven members was formed. Three years later the chapel was pewed, and a small gallery erected.

In 1826 this large pastorate was divided into two, and sub-



DORRINGTON CHAPEL.

sequently into three:—Mr. Beynon retaining Dorrington and Lyth Hill, with several out-stations; Minsterley and Pontesbury becoming the charge of a second minister; and Longden—where a chapel was built about 1837—receiving the services of a third, in connection with Bayston Hill.

In 1840, the Dorrington Chapel was again enlarged at a cost of £205 3s.

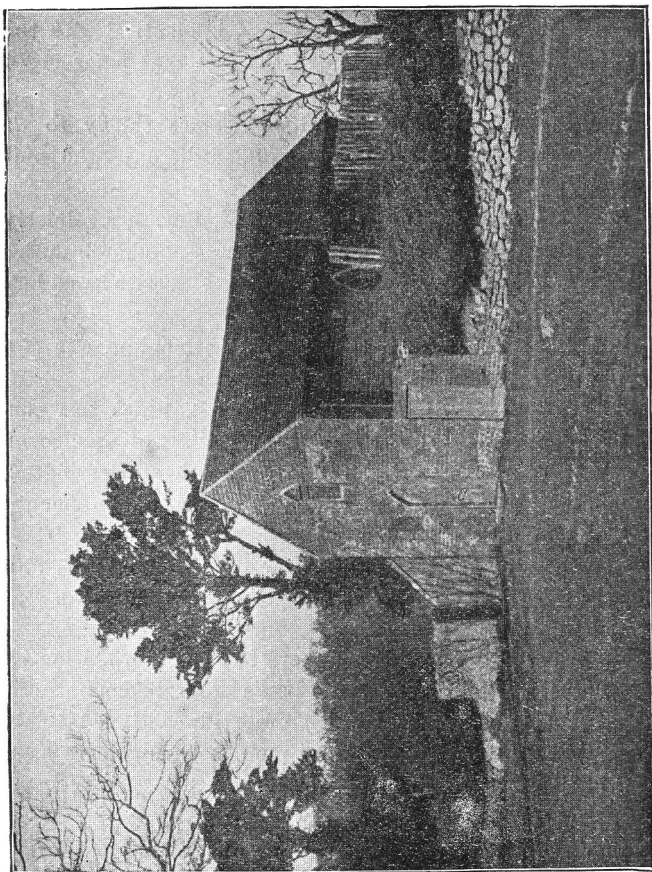
After a pastorate of thirty-seven years in Dorrington, the Rev. J. J. Beynon died in 1853. He was a good man and faithful minister. He was very fond of speaking on spiritual matters to individuals, and on one occasion came near to grave danger. Between Minsterley and Dorrington there lived a man who was in the habit of working in his garden on Sundays. One Sunday morning, Mr. Beynon spoke to him about the sinfulness of such a practice. On the following Lord's Day, as Mr. Beynon passed that way, the man stood in the middle of the road with an axe in his hand, and threatened to cut Mr. Beynon in two if he ever spoke to him again on the same matter. Mr. Beynon laboured at Dorrington under great difficulties. His pecuniary circumstances were much straitened, but he was providentially provided for in most remarkable ways. At one time his circumstances brought him to such a pass that he feared legal proceedings. One day when in great mental distress, he went out for a ride and was met by a man who inquired whether he were Mr. Beynon, and who drew out of his pocket a letter which greatly alarmed Mr. Beynon, for he supposed it to be a warrant for his apprehension. But instead of that, the letter contained a cheque for £100, accompanied by a short note from a gentleman asking his acceptance of it, and hoping it would be useful. With this money he was enabled to discharge his debts.

In April, 1854, the Rev. Lewis Roberts, of Sarney (Montgomeryshire), settled here. The vestry was enlarged and a room built over it in the year 1868 at a cost of £60. The Rev. L. Roberts laboured here until his removal to Dawley in October, 1870.

The present pastor, the Rev. Josiah Rhys Lewis, of Glasbury (Radnorshire), commenced his ministry here in April, 1871.



REV. J. RHYS LEWIS.



LYTH HILL CHAPEL.

In 1873, the chapel was renovated at a cost, of £130. In 1891, the building was painted at a cost of £48 14s. 4d.

There is an endowment of £200 invested in Government Stocks, the interest of which goes to the support of the ministry.

THE history of the pastorate of LYTH HILL is identical with that of Dorrington, with the exception of the fact that before 1802 the Rev. R. Everall laboured at the former place.

The chapel at Lyth Hill owes its, existence chiefly to the liberality of Sir Richard Hill, Bart., of Hawkstone, who built it in 1800 or earlier.

During the closing years of the Rev. J. J. Beynon's ministry, the church here became extinct, and there was no church during the ministry of the Rev. L. Roberts. One service was held each Sunday afternoon.

In 1876, the chapel was painted and a harmonium was purchased. The total cost was about £20.

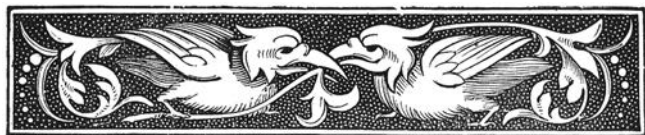
In 1880, a Sunday School was established, which has continued until now. In 1884, a church consisting of nine members was formed in connection with the church at Dorrington.

The building was renovated, and a new harmonium bought in 1889. The cost was £45.

Recently the church at Lyth Hill has been most active, and has proved itself a blessing to many in the neighbourhood.

IN connection with this pastorate, there is a mission station at PAPER MILL. In 1861, the Rev. Lewis Roberts commenced weekly services in a cottage, which are still continued there. As a result of these services, a good number of members have been added to the, church roll at Dorrington.





Wistanswick and Ollerton.

THE Congregational Chapel at Wistanswick was erected about 1805 by the Rev. John Wilson, of Market Drayton, at his own expense. He also left two, acres of land. The chapel was put in trust by his son in 1833.

Mrs. Scott, a native of Wollerton, left an endowment of £300, which was lost through the negligence of the trustees.

On October 13th, 1814, the Rev. Samuel Roberts was ordained pastor of the associated churches of Wistanswick and Wollerton. He was succeeded on December 25th, 1819, by the Rev. D. Davies, who continued his work here for forty-three years. He breathed his last in the Chapel House at Wollerton on March 20th, 1865, and his remains were deposited in the burial ground attached to the chapel at Wistanswick. The Rev. Joseph Pattison, of Wem, officiated at his funeral, and the Rev. Henry Sturt, of Market Drayton, preached the funeral sermon. Mr. Davies was a native of Radnorshire, and was educated at the Independent College, Wrexham (now Brecon).

In the year 1859, the Rev. J. Yeates was invited to undertake the pastorate of Wistanswick and Ollerton, and to assist Rev. D. Davies at Wollerton. During his ministry, which continued for three or four years, the chapel at Wistanswick was enlarged.

In November, 1864, the Rev. H. Sturt, of Market Drayton, took charge of the three churches at Wollerton, Wistanswick, and Ollerton, with a view to advise them in securing a suitable minister; and in March, 1865, the associated churches, on the recommendation of the Rev. H. Sturt and the Rev. Joseph Pattison, of Wem, unanimously invited the Rev. R. W. Lloyd, of Marton and Forden, to take the pastoral oversight of all three. After much prayer and thought, he accepted the call

and commenced his labours on the first Sunday in June, 1865.

Mr. Lloyd found the churches very small and weak. At Wistanswick, there were only twelve members, at Ollerton eight with a very poor congregation, and at Wollerton eight with a congregation of about thirty. The pastor laboured for four years with a good measure of success, adding to the church membership at Wistanswick, fifteen, at Ollerton, eighteen, and at Wollerton, thirty-five.

Finding the care of the three churches pressing too heavily, upon him and impairing his health, he gave up the charge of Wistanswick and Ollerton, and confined his labours to Wollerton, at the end of February, 1869.

He was happily, succeeded at Wistanswick and Ollerton by the Rev. John Landel Jones, of Ruyton-xi-Towns, who commenced his ministry on the first Sunday in March, 1869, and whose recognition service was held on Whit-Tuesday in that year. He resigned in the following year, and left for Malpas, preaching his farewell sermon on August 28th.

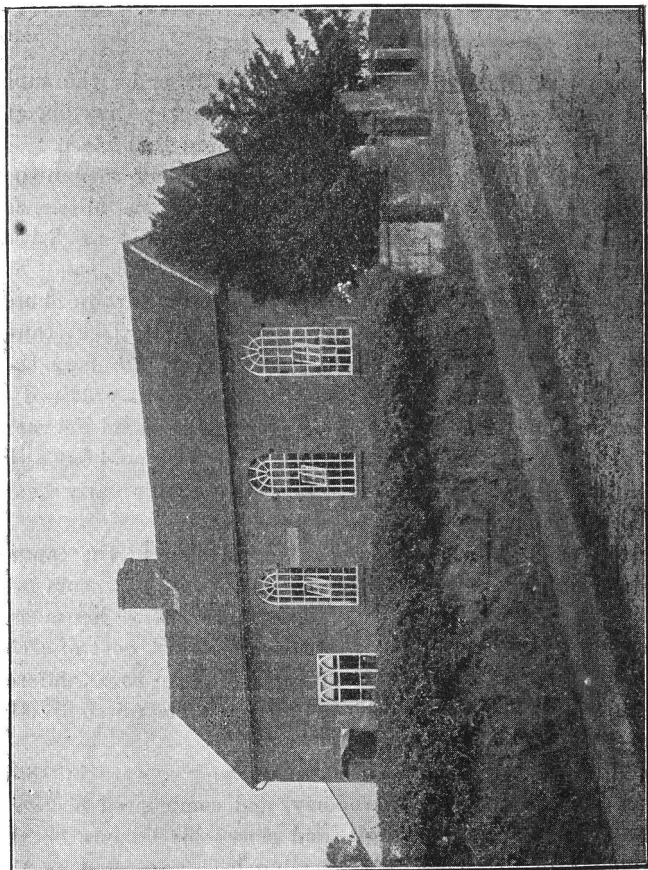
In the following month (September, 1870), the Rev. Thomas Williams, of Nottingham Institute, received and accepted a unanimous invitation to the pastorate. He commenced his ministry on October 2nd.

The two churches became independent of the aid of the Salop Association at Easter, 1870.

Mr. Williams was ordained on March 7th, 1871, the Rev. H. Hustwick, of Market Drayton, opening the service with prayer and reading of Scripture. Rev. T. Gasquoine, B.A., of Oswestry, gave an exposition of Congregational Principles; Rev. R. W. Lloyd asked the usual questions; Rev. D. D. Evans, of Bridgnorth, offered the Ordination Prayer; and Rev. J. Matheson, B.A., of Nottingham, gave the charge to the Pastor. At the evening service, Rev. H. H. Campbell, M.A., gave the charge to the church, and Rev. J., Matheson, B.A., the charge to the congregation.

A manse was completed in 1873 at a cost of £300, some of the work being gratuitously done.

The Rev. T. Williams resigned in June, 1889, and left in the following October for Faringdon (Berks.), and is at present residing at Portland (Dorset).



WISTANSWICK CHAPEL.

In April, 1890, the present minister—Rev. John Price—received an invitation to the pastorate of Wistanswick and Ollerton. He was then pastor of Cerrygeadarn, Breconshire. Having accepted the call, he commenced his labours on Sunday, July 7th.

THE chapel at OLLERTON was erected in 1838 under the superintendence of the Rev. Joseph Barton, of Market Drayton, and was for ten years supplied by the minister of that place.

The church was formed into a distinct society in January, 1848, when the Rev. John Parker, of the Home Missionary Society, settled as pastor. He had been trained as British School teacher at Borough Road College, London, and had conducted a school at Gateshead, where he took part in church work as a deacon. He studied theology under Mr. Jack (North Shields), and Mr. Reid (Newcastle) for a year. He was then accepted by the Home Missionary Society, and was ordained at Ollerton in 1849. He died after a lingering illness on February 22nd, 1852, aged 34, and was buried at Wistanswick. His labours at Ollerton were greatly blessed, and his early death was deeply lamented.

During 1852, John Topham, Esq., a member of the congregation generously left £300 to the church. This sum was augmented, and a little farm of eleven acres with house and appropriate buildings was purchased for £550. A debt of £150 remained, and Mr. Edward Bourne, of Child's Ercal, offered fifty guineas if the rest of the money could be raised by the end of 1871. This was done.

The Rev. George Greig succeeded to the pastorate in 1852. He came from Cotton End Academy, and commenced his work on the second Sunday in April, and closed his labours on the last Sunday in December, 1855, having been requested by Dr. Massie to remove into Monmouthshire.

The Rev. W. Mathieson, of Market Drayton, undertook to supply Ollerton at Dr. Massie's request, and commenced his labours there in April, 1856. Mr. Mathieson's successor, the Rev. Henry Sturt, having declined to supply the Ollerton



REV. J. PRICE.

pulpit, the church resolved to unite with Wistanswick and Wollerton.

The Rev. J. Yeates received, in 1859, a call to the pastorate of Wistanswick and Ollerton, and to assist the Rev. D. Davies at Wollerton. He continued his work for three or four years, after which the Rev. R. W. Lloyd was pastor of the three churches until early in 1869, when he confined his labours to Wollerton.

The churches of Wistanswick and Ollerton then invited the Rev. J. Landel Jones, and have ever since been united under the same pastorate.



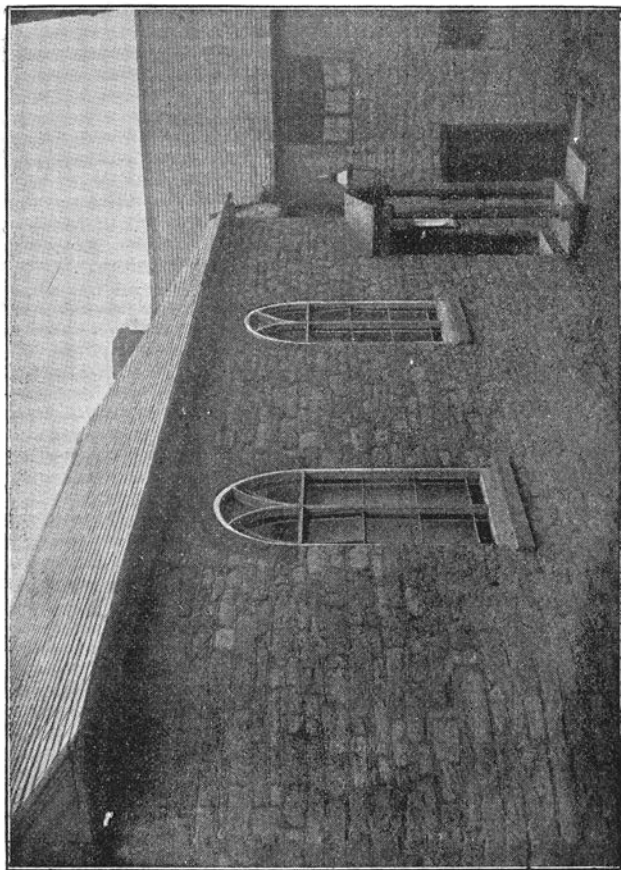
Bishop's Castle.

THE history of the Congregational Church at Bishop's Castle cannot be given in anything approaching to a satisfactory manner. There appears to have been no Church Book kept until one was presented by the Rev. J. Temperley Grey, one of the pastors, who resigned in 1863; and from that book four leaves have been cut, thus leaving a hiatus of about sixteen years—between 1864 and 1880.

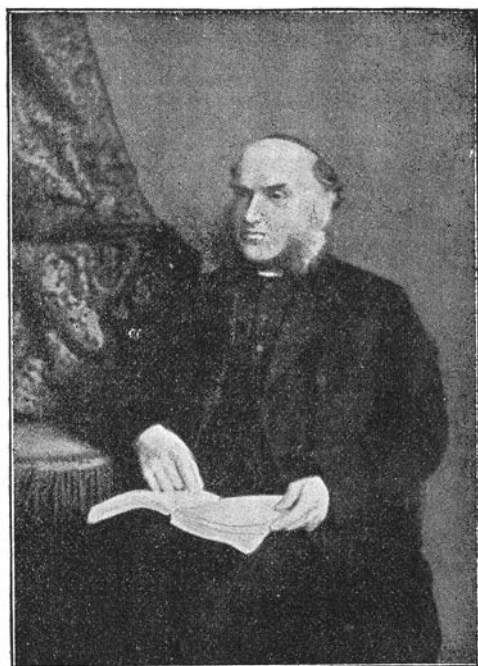
The town was possibly evangelised by Ludlow Independents. A chapel was built in the year 1810, and was opened in the same year, the Rev. Thomas Weaver, of Shrewsbury, preaching at the morning service, and the Rev. D. Francis, of Ludlow, in the evening. The chapel is built in an out-of-the-way place, and is reached through an unpleasant thoroughfare. This building, together with the chapel at Prees—opened in the same year—cost £800. It will seat about 120 people.

As far as can be gathered, the following is the list of pastors, which is necessarily very imperfect:—

| | | |
|------|---------|---|
| 1810 | to 1816 | Rev. J. J. Beynon. |
| | | Rev. Thomas Jones. |
| — | to 1835 | Rev. Evan Bebb. |
| 1836 | to — | Rev. B. Jenkyn. |
| 1839 | to 1843 | Rev. John Owen (came from Carmarthen and left for Marton). |
| | | Rev. James Phillips. |
| 1852 | to — | Rev. S. F. Rimbault (was ordained here). |
| — | to 1863 | Rev. J. T. Grey (Farewell Tea Meeting held July 28th). |



BISHOP'S CASTLE CHAPEL.



REV. S. JACKSON.

1864 to — Rev. — Pearson (late of Ryton-on-Tyne).

Rev. Henry Hoddle.

1869 to 1871 Rev. John Brown (late of Hambledon).

August 27th, 1871, to March 24th, 1872, Rev. John Hamer.

August 11th, 1872, to Autumn, 1873, Rev. W. Jenner (left for Dawley).

In December, 1872, the Congregational Hymn Book was introduced in place of Dr. Reed's Hymn Book. The Recognition Meeting, in connection with Mr. Jenner's settlement, was held on the 26th of that month, and was attended by the Revs. George Kettie, of Shrewsbury, and D. D. Evans, of Bridgnorth.

After Mr. Jenner resigned, the chapel was closed for a time. From March, 1875, it was supplied by a succession of students from Nottingham Institute. In August of that year, Mr. Constant undertook the pastorate for twelve months.

On May 9th, 1880, Mr. James Simkin, a member of the church at Eccleshall, became pastor. He resigned on January 1st, 1882, and went to Polesworth, near Birmingham.

On May 28th, 1882, Mr. J. Hubert Jones, B.A., became pastor. He resigned at the end of the year.

In 1883, the chapel was restored at a cost of £116, and about the same time the Rev. D. Phillips, of Bala College, settled as minister. He left in 1886 for Trecllyn (Mon.)

In September, 1887, Rev. W. Thomas, of Brecon College, was called to the pastorate and was ordained in December, Revs. Dr. Morris, of Brecon College, George Kettle, of Shrewsbury, J. R. Lewis, of Dorrington, and J. B. Walton, B.A., LL.B., of Wem, taking part. In 1892, he received a call to Farndon, Cheshire. During his ministry, the church was renovated (1891). On December 30th, 1892, the Church Deeds were sent for safe keeping to Messrs. Minshalls and Parry-Jones, of Oswestry.

On February 5th, 1893, the Rev. Noah Bevan, of Bangor College, accepted the pastorate. He was ordained in the same year, and resigned on July 8th, 1894.

In May, 1895, the Rev. S. Jackson accepted a call to the ministry. He reports increasing congregations and a growing Sunday School.



Marton.

IN the year 1809, Thomas and Priscilla Roberts removed from Minsterley, where they had been for several years, connected with the Independent Church, into the neighbourhood of Trelystan, Montgomeryshire. They were the only Dissenters for several miles round, and had to walk every Sunday to and from Minsterley, a distance of fourteen miles. This they continued to do for three years. They suffered much persecution on account of their fidelity to their principles.

In time they removed from Trelystan to a place named Bettows Farm, in the township of Marton, when they earnestly invited the Rev. George Ryan, of Welshpool, to preach in their Muse. After a long interval they succeeded in gaining his consent, and in the year 1814, he preached the first sermon there. Some time afterwards the congregations became too large to be accommodated in the house, and services were held in a barn which was fitted up with seats and pulpit.

This arrangement lasted for six years, until Mr. and Mrs. Roberts removed to a house close to the village; and at the same time two retired farmers of the name of Watts came to reside in the village. They were members of the Independent Church at Bwlchyffridd, Montgomeryshire. These four earnest servants of Christ deemed it advisable that regular preaching should be established in Marton.

They first procured a smith's shop for the purpose. Persecution and prejudice were rife, and Mr. and Mrs. Roberts with their son, Mr. S. Roberts (who supplied the materials for this history of the chapel at Marton), were often pelted with rotten eggs, stones and other missiles on their way to and from the smithy. The Rev. J. Roberts, of Llanbrynmair, frequently preached there. The congregation becoming large enough to-

encourage further efforts, the Rev. J. Whitridge, of Oswestry, was invited to visit the village, and he being a zealous supporter of village preaching engaged to find supplies once a fortnight. The place was then supplied by two lay preachers of his own congregation. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Whitridge succeeded in getting the Home Missionary Society to take Marton. under its superintendence. in connection with Forden, Montgomery, Churchstoke, Chirbury, and Worthen. After this, the North Wales Academy having removed from Llanfyllin to Newtown, some of the students engaged at Mr. Whitridge's request to supply Marton for the space of four years.

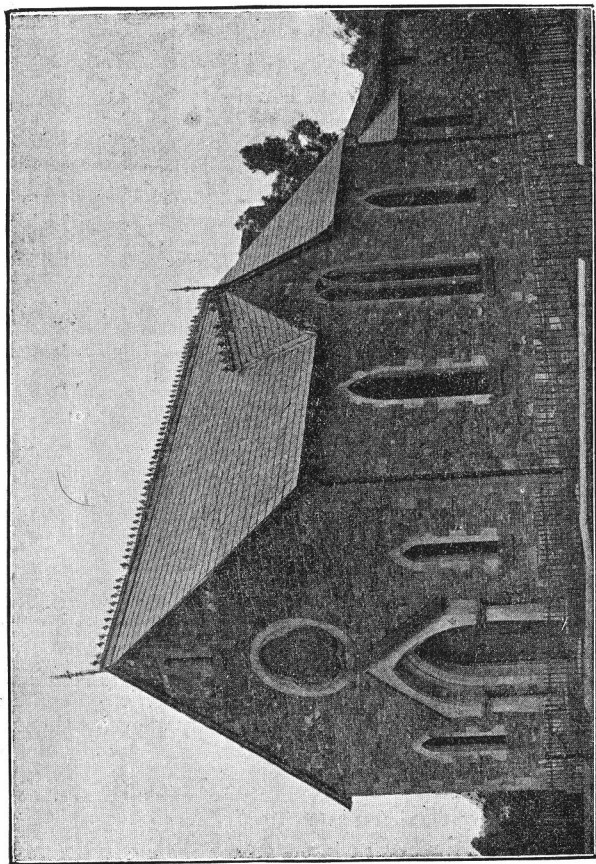
In 1823 some Wesleyans came to reside, in the village, and owing to party spirit, the Independents were prohibited from preaching in the smithy, and so were compelled to preach in barns or sheds and in the open air. In the following year the Wesleyans converted an old stable into a preaching house, and they then with some reluctance lent their place to the Independents, who used it every other Sunday until the chapel was opened in the summer of 1829.

In 1825, the Rev. J. Jones settled at Forden, and at the request of the Salop Association engaged to supply Marton, and a grant of £20 was given. This was subsequently lowered, and at the present time (1896) stands at £10.

In the year 1828, William Nevet, Esq., of Shrewsbury, bought an estate in the neighbourhood, and came to reside upon it. Being convinced that the Independents needed a more commodious and convenient place of worship, he determined to build a chapel, which he did at his own expense. On July 15th, 1829, the chapel was opened for Divine Worship, the following ministers preaching:—Rev. Messrs. Roberts, of Warminster (Wilts.), Kent, of Shrewsbury (Baptist), and Jenkyn, of Oswestry.

For some time after this the place was supplied by the Rev. J. Jones, of Forden, the Rev. J. Ashford (Baptist), of Welshpool, and the Rev. T. Jones, of Minsterley.

On October 11th, 1829, a church of twelve members was formed by the Rev. T. Weaver, of Shrewsbury, and the Rev. T. James, who preached from Matthew xxvi., 26. Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, Mr. and Mrs. Nevet, and several others became



MARTON CHAPEL.

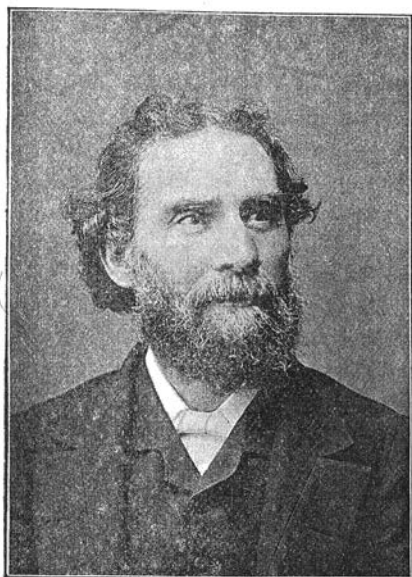
members. Mr. Nevet supported the ministry very liberally until his death.

From 1830 to 1832, the pulpit was, supplied by the Rev. T. James, of Minsterley, and the Rev. J. Jones, of Forden. In March, 1832, Mr. James received a call to Lane's End, Staffordshire, and accordingly left Minsterley. The church at Marton then requested the Rev. J. Jones to take sole charge. He complied, and removed in September to reside at Marton, but continued to be the minister of Forden, as before. In the same month, Mr. William Nevet and Mr. Thomas Roberts were chosen as deacons.

On November 30th, 1840, the Rev. J. Jones died in his forty-second year, and was buried in the ground attached to the chapel. After his death, the pulpit was supplied by various persons until 1843, when the Rev. J. Owen, of Bishop's Castle, became the pastor. He continued to labour here until July 19th, 1846, when he removed to Newtown.

The Rev. J. Peter Jones, of Newtown, then accepted an invitation from the church, and entered upon his work at Marten on the 26th of July, 1846. In 1854, he removed to Bromyard, Herefordshire. During Mr. Jones's ministry, viz. in 1847, Mr. T. Roberts, the venerable deacon, died and was interred in the chapel burying ground. Four years later, in 1851, Mr. Nevet removed from this neighbourhood to reside in Shrewsbury, where he died in 1856, leaving an endowment of £12 a year for the support of the ministry in the chapel he had built. His remains lie buried in the chapel. In May, 1851, Messrs. S. Roberts and E. Meddins were chosen by the church as successors to these two deacons.

After the removal of the Rev. J. P. Jones, the pulpit was supplied by various ministers until January 1st, 1855, when Mr. T. Peters, a member of the church at Bwlchyffridd (Mont.), entered upon his labours. He was ordained on June 21st of the same year, the following ministers officiating:—Revs. H. James, of Llansantfiraidd, H. Hughes, of Welshpool, J. Smith (Baptist), of Pontesbury, T. Jones, of Pontesbury, and J. Owen, of Bwlchyffridd. During Mr. Peters's ministry, the cause revived, and many were added to the church. He remained until the



REV. W. BOWEN.

autumn of 1857, when he removed to Common Hall Street Chapel, Chester.

The next pastor was the Rev. R. W. Lloyd, of Llanbadarn and Aberedw, Radnorshire, who commenced his ministry on October 18th, 1857. On March 10th, 1865, Mr. R. Lewis and Mr. J. Preece were chosen as deacons to act in conjunction with Mr. Samuel Roberts (son of the first deacon), who had served in that capacity for many years. Mr. Lloyd was a zealous and successful pastor, and mainly owing to his energies a house was built in 1860 for the residence of the minister, at a cost of nearly £300. In his time the church underwent a severe ordeal, losing all its chief supporters and most of its working members; in little over than twelve months it lost nearly thirty members by death and removals.

To the great grief of the church, Mr. Lloyd resigned his charge on May 28th, 1865, and removed to Wollerton. Before doing so he secured a successor in the pastorate of Marton Chapel, Mr. T. R. Davies, of Brecon College, who was ordained on October 3rd, 1865, when the Rev. W. Price, of Minsterley, asked the questions, Rev. L. Roberts, of Dorrington, offered the Ordination Prayer, Rev. H. Oliver, RA., of Pontypridd (Glamorganshire), gave the charge to the minister, and Rev. R. W. Lloyd gave the charge to the church.. Mr. Davies laboured here for three years, and in August, 1868, resigned his charge and removed to Bolton, Lancashire.

In 1870, the present pastor, Rev. William Bowen, of Bala College, was ordained.

In 1874, a new chapel was built. The foundation stone was laid by William Nevet, Esq., son of the gentleman who erected the first chapel. The new structure cost £450. It was opened on Thursday, December 31st, 1874, by a sermon by the Rev. D. D. Evans, of Bridgnorth. Services were, held on the next day, January 1st, 1875, being conducted by the Revs. D. D. Evans, R. W. Lloyd, W. Price, of Minsterley, and others. On Sunday, January 3rd, the Rev. R. W. Lloyd was the preacher.

ASSOCIATED with the church at Marton is that at FORDEN in Montgomeryshire. The history of the latter church belongs

therefore to the history of Congregationalism in that county, but as it is united with Marton under the same pastor, a brief account of it will not be out of place here.

Regular services having been held in a small cottage for some time, it was determined to form a church, which was done on October 8th, 1826, when five members were received into fellowship. A chapel was built by subscription in the same year. The opening service's took place on December 12th and 13th, and at the same time the Rev. J. Jones, of the North Wales Academy, was ordained pastor of the newly-formed church. He was a native of Llanddeusant (Anglesey), where he was born on July 23rd, 1798. He studied at the North Wales Academy under the Rev. George Lewis, D.D., and the Rev. E. Davies. In the opening services, the following ministers took part:—Revs. T. Weaver, of Shrewsbury, L. Roberts, of Llanbryn-mair, G. Ryan, of Welshpool, E. Davies, of Newtown, J. J. Beynon, of Dorrington, J. Davies, of Llanfair, J. Rees, of Sarney, T. James, of Minsterley, and others.

In May, 1834, two deacons were chosen—Richard Wilcox (who resigned in November), and Benjamin Davies.

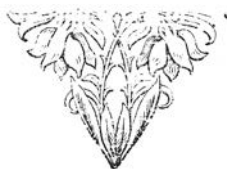
On November 30th, 1840, the Rev. John Jones died. He had removed some years before to live at Marton, where he conducted a seminary for the education of ministers. He was buried in Marton burial ground. At his funeral, Revs. J. Owen, of Bishop's Castle, Isaac Francis, of the Bog Mines, and T. James, of Minsterley, officiated. His funeral sermon was preached by Mr. E. Jones, his last student. A short memoir of him will be found in the "Evangelical Magazine" for October, 1842.

After Mr. Jones's death, Mr. Henley preached with great acceptance until his death, after which the pulpit was supplied by the ministers of the church at Welshpool, until it was deemed advisable to place the church under the pastoral charge of the Rev. John Peter Jones, then minister at Marton. When the pastor removed to Bromyard, lay preachers (Messrs. John and Richard Phillips, of Newtown) supplied the pulpit, after which the Forden Church united with that at Marton in giving a hearty

invitation to Mr. T. Peters. From this time the history of the pastorate is identical with that of Marton.

IN connection with this pastorate there is a mission at CHIRBURY, which was commenced early in the year 1863 by the Rev. R. W. Lloyd.

The present pastor, Rev. W. Bowen, writes:—"Chirbury is a small village, and Church influence is very strong there. The congregations, especially in winter, are encouraging, and we hope the day will come when a Mission Chapel will be built there, and services held on the Sabbath. At present we have only week-night services."



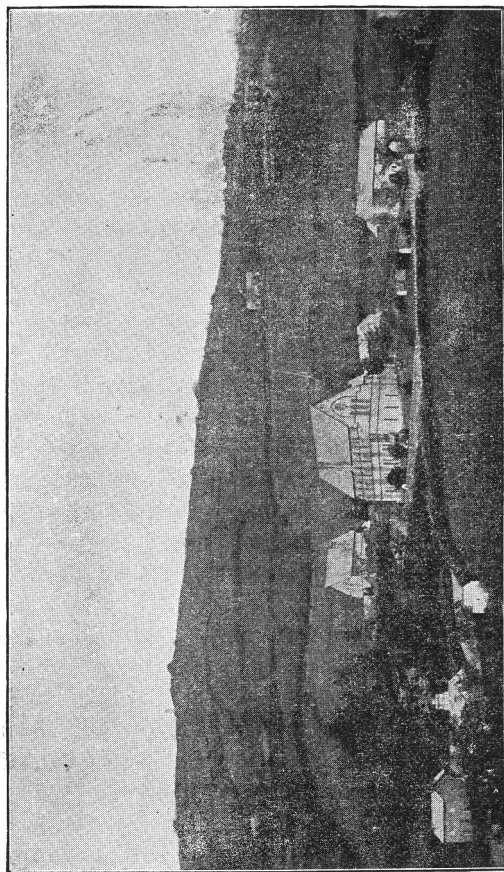


Nantmawr and Bethel.

NANTMAWR is a scattered district rather than a village, and is distant about four miles west of Oswestry. The history of the Congregational Church at Nantmawr is closely connected with that of Bethel, the two churches having always been under the same pastorate.

In the year 1818, Mr. Thomas Davies, The Mill, and other brethren from Penygroes, in the parish of Llanyblodwel, began to preach in the neighbourhood of Nantmawr in a small house called "The White House," occupied by Mr. John Morris. A Sunday School was also established. Afterwards services were held at Tydraw, afterwards at Tycoch, then at Frondeg, the home of Mr. John. Rees, who gave great assistance to the weak cause. Students from Llanfyllin College came here to preach every other Sunday, Rev. J. Ridge, of Penygroes, taking charge of the week-night services. Mr. Edward Davies, of Cutiau, Mr. Lewis Pugh and Mr. Rowland Roberts, of Bala, preached here occasionally.

In 1825, Rev. J. Ridge left Penygroes and went to Bala, and Rev. E. Davies, of Treflach Wood, took charge of the church that assembled in the house of Mr. Edward Rees. The church at that time numbered fourteen. Services were held at Nantmawr every Sunday evening. Mr. William Tannat, Y Graig (the Rock), built a chapel in 1830 on a piece, of land which he leased, and rented it to the worshippers for £2 per annum. The Rev. E. Davies preached in the new chapel on April 24th, 1831, from Rev. ii., 8, 9, 10, and named the chapel Smyrna. On the following Sunday, a school was opened and attended by 100 persons. The formal opening of the chapel took place on June 9th and 10th, 1831, when several ministers preached.



NANTMAWR CHAPEL AND MANSE.

Rev. E. Davies laboured successfully here until he had a paralytic stroke which compelled him to retire. He still took a great interest in the church and found preachers to supply the, pulpit, and Rev. J. Williams, of Llansilin, came, monthly to administer the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

In May, 1838, at a church meeting held in the house of Mr. Edward Rees, Frondeg, it was decided to build a chapel at Sychtyn. The care of this undertaking was entrusted to Mr. Edward Rees and Rev. J. Williams, Llansilin. Mr. Rees sold a piece of land, 11 yards long and 8 yards wide, for £6 10s. The foundation stone was laid by him on June 17th, 1838, when two sermons were preached, one in Welsh and one in English. The chapel was opened on November 5th and 6th, several ministers preaching on the occasion. The chapel was, named Bethel. The cost of the building was £117. Mr. Edward Rees and some friends in the neighbourhood carried all the building materials free of charge. Mr. John Rees, the son of Edward Rees, conducted the singing in Bethel for many years.

In May, 1839, Mr. J. Howes was ordained to the work of the Christian ministry at Llansantffraid, and he took charge of Bethel and Smyrna until June, 1840, when he accepted the pastorate of Llansilin.

On November 26th, 1840, Mr. Robert Thomas, of Llanwrst, was ordained minister of Hermon (Oswestry), Bethel and Smyrna. He laboured here successfully until May, 1858, when he left for Rhyl.

On November 17th, 1858, Mr. Lewis Jones, of Brecon College, was ordained pastor of the three churches. Finding the work too much for him he soon confined his labours to Hermon, Oswestry.

Smyrna and Bethel were then without a pastor until January 3rd, 1863, when Rev. James Bowen, of Llansanan (Denbighshire), accepted the call of the churches. Bethel at this time had a debt of £50 upon it, and another £50 was expended in needful renovation. The energetic pastor wiped off the amount in less than two years. In 1868, another renovation was made at a cost of £40 which was speedily collected by Mr. Bowen.

At Nantmawr, however, much more was needed. A new



REV. J. HOWELLS.

chapel became absolutely necessary. An appeal for funds was issued in 1872, and a freehold site procured at a cost of £50. The foundation stone was laid by Thomas Barnes, Esq., of the Quinta, on January 25th, 1875. Mr. R. S. France, who worked limestone rocks in the neighbourhood, generously promised all the stones and lime which might be required as well as a donation of £5 to the Building Fund. His gift is estimated at £120. The chapel, which will accommodate 240 people, was opened on August 3rd, 1875, by the Rev. A. Mackennall, B.A., of Leicester (now of Bowdon, and D.D.), the Rev. J. C. Galloway, M.A., of London, and others. The buildings, which comprise chapel, schoolroom, and minister's house, cost £2,500, which was collected for the most part by the pastor.

The English language had made such progress in this neighbourhood that it was deemed desirable to conduct the services in that tongue. For the sake of a few Welsh people, a sermon is preached once a fortnight in that language on Sunday afternoons.

In January, 1884, the chapel was duly registered for the solemnization of marriages.

On the last Sunday in December, 1888, the Rev. James Bowen closed his ministerial career, after labouring here for twenty-six years. He now resides at Southport.

On January 1st, 1890, Rev. T. Nicholas, of Cefnyvaenor and Byrwydd, took charge of the two churches until the last Sunday in 1891, when he left for Malpas and Threapwood, Cheshire. During his ministry a school-house was built at a cost of £240.

The present minister is the Rev. J. Howell, of Arthog, who commenced his pastorate on January 1st, 1893.





Dovaston.

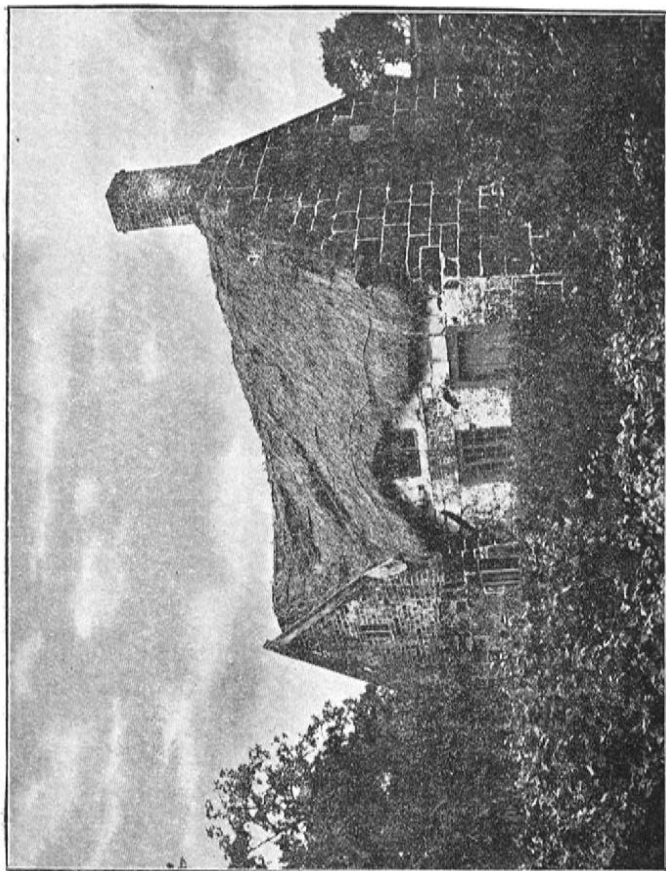
Dovaston is a township of the parish of Kinnerley. It is eleven miles from Shrewsbury, which in former years was its chief market town, a position which is now occupied by Oswestry, from which place it is distant a bout seven and a half miles.

The beginning of the present century found the inhabitants of this neighbourhood far behind the age. Savage sports, such as dog-fighting, cock-fighting, badger-baiting, and the like, were indulged in at regular intervals around a pole erected in some heath land near the site now occupied by the Congregational Chapel, the Parish Church being about a mile distant.

During this state of things, on one Sunday afternoon in 1823 or 1824, there might have been seen standing upon a large stone at the corner of the road just below the present chapel a man of gentlemanly appearance and manner, with a burning zeal for the salvation of souls, preaching the words of Divine truth to as dark and benighted a gathering as it was possible to meet with during this century. Very soon the attractive power of the Cross was exercised upon the heart of a mall named Thomas Williams, who opened his house for the preaching of the Gospel.

Preaching was continued there for two years, and as time has dealt gently with the old house it may still be seen standing with its thatched roof and paved stone floor.

Whilst the services were being conducted in this house, the adjoining farm became occupied—through his connection with the then newly appointed Rector of Llandrinio,—by one of the few survivors of the 21st Light Dragoon Regiment which so narrowly escaped being annihilated in the battle of Waterloo. This farmer, whose name was Mr. Robert Cambridge, was a



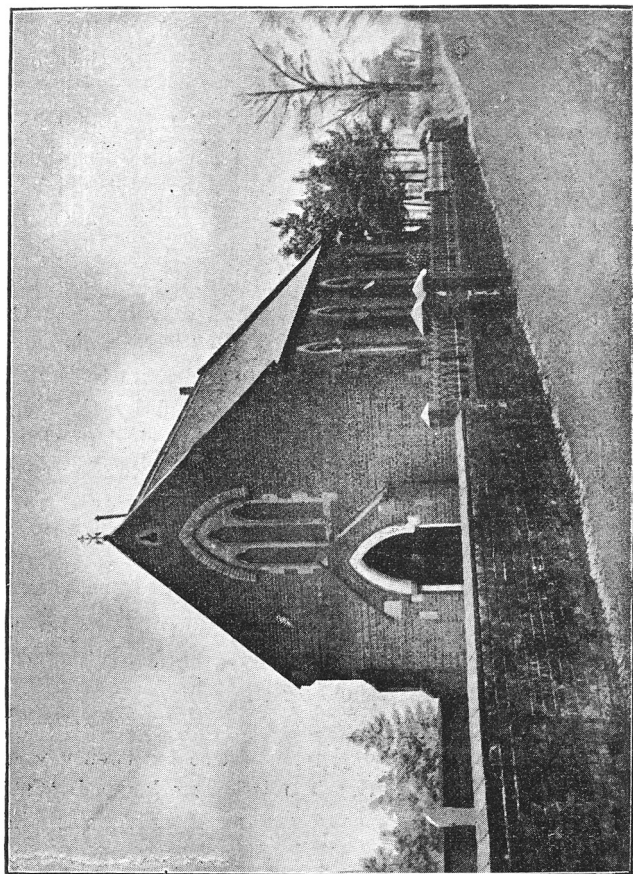
THE COTTAGE, DOVASTON.

man of stern and inflexible disposition, being feared by all, respected by many for his integrity, but loved by few. He was a strict Churchman, and together with his family, which consisted of three sons and two daughters, attended regularly the services at the Parish Church. So severe was his discipline at home that his children were strictly forbidden to go within hearing distance of the Gospel that was preached in the cottage. He endeavoured to reform the services at the Parish Church, which at that time were irreverently conducted by a non-resident clergyman. All his efforts were in vain; he received but scant sympathy, and was told that the services had always been conducted thus and would continue to be. At length a crisis came, when one of the players at ball, in a stripped condition, rushed into church during service to fetch out the ball which had bounded in during the game.

This kind of thing disgusted and disheartened the man who had been seeking to bring about reform. One Sunday afternoon he was met on the road and invited to the meeting in the cottage. He accepted the invitation, and was so impressed with the devout and reverent character of the service, that he became a constant attendant.

Soon afterwards, when a daughter of Thomas Williams fell victim to a virulent disease that made it impossible to conduct the services in the cottage, Robert Cambridge held them in his own kitchen, for which act the landlord gave him notice to quit the farm, saying he "would have no howling Ranters in his house." The farmer doubted his landlord's right to proceed in such a way, and so refused to yield possession. Consequently his rent was doubled. The next year he removed into the adjoining farm, which has continued in the possession of the family to the present time.

The friction between landlord and tenant referred to showed how necessary it was to have a building set apart for the worship of God. In the year 1826, Mr. Cambridge canvassed the neighbourhood for subscriptions towards the erection of a chapel. The amount collected was £7, a sum that appears very disproportionate to the undertaking contemplated. But when the conditions of those times and the sacrifice it involved to raise



DOVASTON CHAPEL.

that sum at such a period are taken into consideration, £7 was a respectable amount to secure.

The money question did not dishearten those who were convinced of the necessity for a place of worship, but building operations were at once begun, and a chapel was erected, and opened on Christmas Day, 1826, by the Rev. J. Whitridge, of Oswestry, the servant of Christ. who had preached the Gospel on the stone by the wayside.

In the services Mr. Whitridge rendered to Dovaston he was assisted by a band of willing. helpers from his own church. Special mention must be made of Mr. Thomas Davies and Mr. Griffiths, who afterwards became pastor of the infant Church.

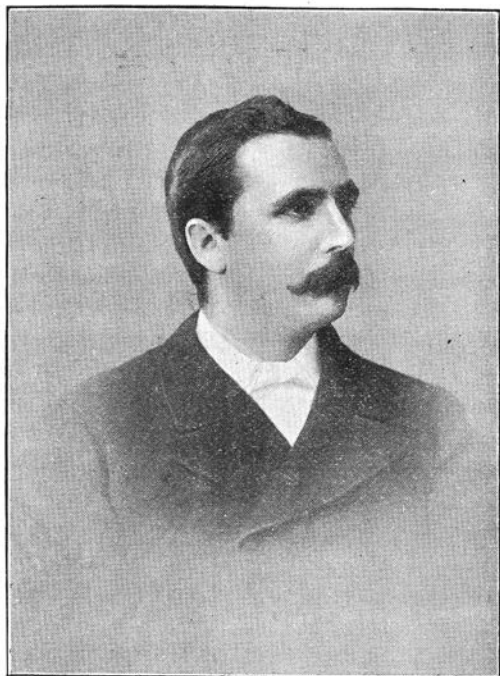
In the following year, a Sunday School was opened. It seems to have consisted of one class, old and young together. In that class some received their first and only lessons. One who knew some of its elder scholars says, "They would have taken it as a slight had anyone offered to find them the hymns, many of which were better known and found by the finger marks on the pages than by the numbers attached to them." The Sunday School at that early period and down to the present time has been a powerful element of the church at Dovaston.

To return to the history of the church. A separate community was organised in 1829, the people being up to that date members of the church at Oswestry.

The Rev. J. Griffiths held the pastorate for ten years, during which time the church greatly prospered; at the end of that period he accepted an invitation to Llandysilio.

The church was next placed under the charge of the Rev. D. Harris, of Ruyton-xi-Towns, and remained so for twenty years. During the ministry of Mr. Harris, mission work was begun in outlying districts, and a new cause started at Molverley mainly through the efforts of Mr. John Price.

On the resignation of Mr. Harris, the charge of the church was undertaken by Mr. George Cambridge, son of the man who had been military officer and zealous churchman. Of Mr. George Cambridge the church record says, "He well sustained the pastorate until 1863, when God took him. A man of whom



REV. A. WHITTINGHAM.

it may be truly said, He lived highly respected and beloved and died sincerely and widely lamented."

From 1863 to 1868 the pastorate was vacant, and the pulpit was supplied from various sources. In April, 1868, the Rev. J. Landel Jones, of the Memorial College, Brecon, was called to the pastorate which he held for twelve months.

The Rev. Lewis Weaver, of Ruyton-xi-Towns, took the oversight of the church in June, 1869, and retained it until 1875.

The pulpit was then supplied from various sources for some time. In 1876 the congregations had so increased that a larger building became necessary to accommodate them. There were considerable difficulties in the way, and it is not until 1879 that the necessary accommodation could be provided. The plans for the new chapel were prepared by Mr. John Price, an old friend of the church, and in the summer of 1879, the foundation stone was laid by Alderman Thomas Minshall, Oswestry. The building was opened on Christmas Day of the same year by the Rev. J. C. Galloway, of London. The cost of the new chapel was £400. The debt was cleared off, and the building renovated in 1890.

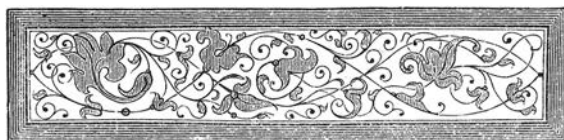
The Revs. Dr. Jenkyn, Thomas Gasquoine, B.A., and J. J. Poynter, all of Oswestry, deserve special mention in this sketch for the signal services rendered by them to the church at Dovaston.

In 1881, Mr. John Price retired from business and made his home at Dovaston, and up to the time of his death, which took place on January 22nd, 1892, acted as a kind of lay pastor of the church, also taking the oversight of little country causes in the surrounding neighbourhood. Under his care the church flourished; of him the Rev. J. J. Poynter writes, "Such men are in our rural churches still, and in John Price's death we are reminded again of the debt the large town churches owe to smaller ones in unknown country places where the problems of rural Nonconformity are being worked out, amidst much difficulty and opposition, by unknown but brave and true-hearted Christian men."

In December, 1892, the Rev. Albert Whittingham, of Brecon

College, was invited to the pastorate. He accepted the call, and commenced his duties in July, 1893, and was ordained in September of the same year. The union has proved to be a happy one, and has been productive of much good. The church is the scene of great activity, and, Mr. Whittingham reports, "is felt to be an increasing power in the neighbourhood."





Bomere Heath.

THE first religious services at Bomere Heath were commenced not by natives but by people who had come to reside in the village. Some of these may be mentioned. Two sisters of the name of Ash, who had lived together for many years in the service of a Mr. Craig, of Shrewsbury, determined after their master's death to live at Bomere Heath. Another Shrewsbury woman, widow of a tea dealer named Wilkinson, came soon afterwards to reside on her own property at Yeaton Villa, about two miles distant. It is probable that these three women were members of the church at Swan Hill, Shrewsbury.

Richard Allen came here in 1821, and built a malthouse which he worked for several years. He was a native of Madeley. Francis Oliver, a native of Yorkshire, was bailiff or land steward to a gentleman at Leaton Knolls, a place not far from Bomere Heath. William Maddocks, a farmer, came to reside at Grafton, about three miles distant, in 1824. He was a native of Bangor, in Flintshire, a pretty village two miles distant from Worthenbury, where the renowned Philip Henry had once ministered. Mr. Maddocks's ancestors had lived at Bangor for many generations, and one of them—his great great grandfather—was the "Cousin William Maddocks" mentioned by Mr. Henry.

These earnest people commenced holding religious services about the beginning of the year 1824 in a small place known as the Crab Mill. An old lady, still living, remembers the large wheel in a trough and a press which was used for making cider. The building is now occupied as a cottage.

The first preachers were members of Swan Hill Church, Shrewsbury, then under the pastoral care of the Rev. Thomas Weaver. At the commencement the hearers were few, but at

length considerable attention was aroused. The preacher who had for some time made regular visits to the place being removed by death, application was made to the Salop Association for a stated pastor, the people undertaking to contribute to his support. The request was acceded to, and Mr. George Rogers, of Carmarthen College, was invited to preach at Bomere Heath and the surrounding places, His introduction to the place was as follows:—Mr. Weaver met him and said to him, “Rogers, there is an opening for a man like you at Bomere Heath, but it is a poor benighted place, and you will not get much.” “I will go” was the ready reply.

As the congregations continued to increase, it soon became necessary to build a larger place of worship. Mrs. Wilkinson, of Yeaton Villa, purchased a piece of ground and gave it as a site for the erection of a chapel, and weekly contributions were commenced with the object of providing the needful funds.

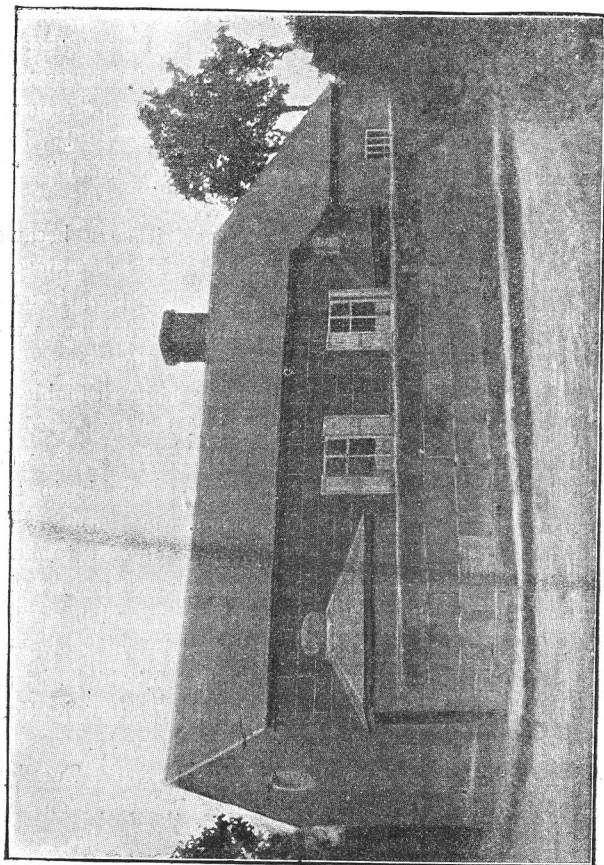
The result was the erection of the present chapel, capable of seating about 300 persons, and at the end of 1827 reported to be “frequently full.” It was finished, as a stone in the wall shows, in the year 1827, and was opened for worship in the same year. It was built of red stone from the Harmer Hill quarries. An old account book shows the total cost to have been £226 3s. 8d., and gives the names of nineteen people who gratuitously undertook the necessary haulage, as well as a list of articles “presented as gifts to the chapel by benevolent friends,” e.g., the chandelier, three windows, pulpit bible, hymn book and cushion. This book also gives a list of contributions from Congregationalists in other parts of the county.

The church of nineteen members was formed on Tuesday, November 13th, 1827, by the Rev. Thomas Weaver. The list of the first members is as follows:—

Mrs. Hill, Mr. Oliver, Misses H. and E. Davies, Mr. and Mrs. Beddow, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Williams, Mr. and Mrs. Nunn, Mr. and Mrs. Withers, Miss J. Pate, Mr. Bunce, Mr. Davies, Mr. Oliver, Mr. Allen.

The two first deacons were Messrs. Richard Allen and Francis Oliver, who have been mentioned above.

The pastor was ordained in May, 1828. He married Miss



BOMERE HEATH CHAPEL.

Hickson, a niece of Mrs. Wilkinson, with whom he lodged for some time. This lady is still living.

The Rev. George Rogers preached in the villages and hamlets surrounding Bomere Heath, holding periodical services at eleven different places. At Harmer Hill, about three miles distant, the success was so great and the state of things so promising that a chapel, with a manse attached, was erected in the year 1834. Here Mr. Rogers resided until his resignation of the pastorate in 1859. He resigned the charge of Harmer Hill in 1859, and of Bornere Heath in 1864; and died at the age of seventy-one on July 21st, 1868, and was buried in the Chapel Yard at Bomere Heath.

Mr. Rogers worked exceedingly hard to collect the money for the building of Harmer Hill Chapel, going to London among other places for the purpose. He told an amusing story of his visit to the metropolis. One gentleman would give him nothing towards the building fund, but expressed his sympathy with Mr. Bagel's personally, and asked him whether he needed anything for himself. He replied that he had walked about London so much that he had worn out his shoes, whereupon the gentleman gave him money for the purchase of another pair.

Mr. Rogers did good service by training young men for the Christian ministry. Four may be mentioned, John Hughes, who joined Bomere Heath Church in 1833, was ordained minister at Huddersfield where he remained until his death in 1849; Edward Morris went to Sale, near Manchester, and remained there until he died in 1889; Thomas Windsor went to Skipton (Yorks.), where he still remains; John Harper is the Baptist minister at Ledbury. These four young men—all members of Bornere Heath Church—received private lessons from Mr. Rogers previously to their going to college.

The next pastor of Bomere Heath was Mr. James Park, late of the University of Aberdeen; who came in 1867 or 1868, and remained until 1874, when he retired to Scotland on account of ill-health.

Mr. Joseph Crewe, of Wem, undertook the charge of Bomere Heath and Harmer Hill in 1877, and was ordained in the same

year. He remained until November, 1878, when he left to become minister at Hadnall and Clive.

When Mr. Crewe had removed, the Calvinistic Methodists, after a lapse of about twelve months, rented the Bomere Heath Chapel at the rate of £4 a year.

At the present time the Independents and the Calvinistic Methodists worship together.

The chapel was renovated in 1886, when a new pulpit and new pews were provided.





Wellington.

THERE appears to be no record of any clergyman ejected from Wellington in 1662 through the passing of the Act of Uniformity. But it is stated in Palmer that Mr. Wright, of Wellington, was among the first Puritans of Shropshire, though he conformed; and that Mr. Richard Heath, who was ejected from St. Alkmund's, Shrewsbury, removed on the passing of the Five Mile Act to Wellington, and died there on May 28th, 1666, exclaiming on his death bed to Mr. Lawrence of Baschurch, "Truly I would not have done but as I did for a thousand worlds." He was a scholarly man, and edited the Syriac and Arabic portions of Walton's Polyglot Bible.

Wellington, however, had little connection with Nonconformity in its earlier history, and has had less connection with Congregationalism than with some other forms of Nonconformity.

The first mention made of this town in the books of the Salop Association occurs under date 3rd of November, 1823. At the meetings then held at Oswestry, the Rev. D. Francis, of Ludlow, was requested to visit the town and endeavour to procure a suitable place for the purpose of preaching, the expense of his journey being borne by the Association. On January 7th, 1824, the Rev. Messrs. Weaver, of Shrewsbury, Everall, of Hadnall, and Lewis, of Newport, were requested to visit Wellington with a view to finally fixing on the site for it chapel. It was also agreed that a "Case" be drawn up by these brethren, expressive of the persuasion that it is of importance that a chapel should be erected there and that they adopt measures for its erection and for raising funds to defray the expense. At the next meeting of the Association which was

held in May at Market Drayton, every member of the Association was requested to apply to his own congregation for subscriptions towards this object.

From the Trust Deed, which bears the date October 6th, 1824, we learn that "all that piece or parcel of land or ground, formerly a skin-yard, but now a fold-yard, forty-eight feet square," was purchased from John Griffiths, of Wellington, butcher, for the sum of £80. This deed, signed by fifteen trustees, was enrolled in the High Court of Chancery, March 8th, 1825. It provides that the trustees shall permit a meeting house, vestry, and other offices to be built as and for a place of public religious worship offered by the Society of Protestant Dissenters called Independents, No creed is specified. The provisions as to church government are such as are usual in Congregational Churches. When the number of trustees is reduced to five, vacancies are to be supplied by the male subscribers being members of the Society or communicants therein, of one year's standing, or by the major part of them at a meeting duly convened for the purpose.

On January 5th, 1825, at a meeting of the Association, "the desirableness of erecting a chapel at Wellington being obvious, and Mr. Houlston of that town (subsequently of London), having expressed to Mr. Weaver his willingness to join the ministers in the responsibility connected with the above measure to the amount of £300 upon his part, it was resolved that the sum of £300 be borrowed with a view to expediting the above object, and that it be advanced as a loan, the Deeds being held by the Treasurer, and an explanatory memorandum being signed by friends at Wellington in recognition of the claims of the Association to lawful interest on the whole amount, till the same shall have been collected and repaid."

The chapel was accordingly built, though the gallery was not added until later. In 1841, the gallery was said to have been "recently erected."

Another sum of £100 was lent in January, 1826, and a fifth £100 in April of the same year.

No account appears to have been preserved of the opening meetings and services. In 1826, the minister supplying the

pulpit was Mr. T. L. Lamb, who was urged by the Association to make "immediate application to those congregations in the county which have not yet contributed" to the building fund. Perhaps he came to Wellington in 1825. He appears to have remained until Midsummer, 1827. Mr. Lamb was a native of Weymouth where he was born in 1794; he joined the church then under Dr. Cracknell, and went to Hoxton Academy in 1820. He was never ordained and never properly settled as pastor anywhere. After leaving Wellington, he resided in or near London, engaged in occasional preaching and literary work, and died in 1848, leaving a bequest of £50 to the London Missionary Society.

The Rev. Thomas Weaver was requested to confer with the friends at Wellington after Mr. Lamb's removal. In July, 1827, the Salop Association resolved that Mr. Richards, who had become pastor of Market Drayton in 1824, be allowed one guinea per Sunday during his visit to Wellington, and that if subsequently the people there desire his settlement with them and he consent, he be allowed £30 for one year as an experiment, upon condition of his preaching once on each Lord's Day, and twice in the week in the adjacent villages; and that after Mr. Richards's visit of three weeks terminates, the brethren who may visit Wellington preach there in the evening only, and that half a guinea per Sunday be allowed for expenses.

Mr. Richards seems to have settled here in October, 1827. On September 15th, 1828, a church was formed of twenty-eight members, the Rev. John Angell James, of Birmingham, preaching on the occasion, and afterwards presiding at the Lord's Table.

On July 2nd, 1834, at a meeting in Wem, the Association considered their cause at Wellington to be in a discouraging state, and the Rev. T. Weaver was instructed to inform Mr. Richards that the allowance hitherto made to him must terminate at the end of the year. In January, 1835, an application signed by Mr. Richards on behalf of the church, was made to the Association, then meeting at Shrewsbury, for help, and several members consented to supply the pulpit, the Association allowing a guinea per Sunday for expenses.

The next meeting of the Association was held at Wellington

on April 8th, 1835, eleven members being present, and it was agreed that £20 be granted for one year to the minister who might settle at Wellington, on the condition that he gave one service every Lord's Day, and at least one other every week in different places in the locality. In the accounts of the Association of those times there are several items of £3 10s. paid for rent of a preaching place at Ketley.

As the usual order of discipline in our churches had fallen into disuse, the church was re-organised on February 15th, 1835, the members present on the occasion entering into a covenant of six articles, by lifting up their hands. The Rev. T. W. Jenkyn, of Oswestry, preached on the occasion and presided at the Lord's Table. There were then nine members.

The Rev. Thomas Jones became the minister of the re-organised church in April, 1835, and remained until September, 1838, when he removed to Cheadle. Mr. Jones was born in 1800, entered Newtown Academy in 1821, had become pastor of Minsterley in 1826, and of Longton in 1832.

After the lapse of six months, on March 24th, 1839, the Rev. Samuel Evans, of Hackney College, undertook the pastorate, and sustained it for six years and three months until June 30th, 1845, during which time forty-eight members were added to the church. The building was registered for the solemnization of matrimony on January 12th, 1842.

On December 14th, 1845, the Rev. Frederick John Falding, M.A., of Rotherham College and Glasgow University (afterwards D.D., and Principal successively of Rotherham College and the United College, Bradford), became the minister of a church of thirty-two members. He was ordained here, the Rev. John Ely, Dr. Stowell, and Dr. Raffles taking part in the service. At the end of 1848, he left for New Road Chapel, Bury; and was succeeded by a fellow-student, who had been in youth a Roman Catholic, the Rev. James Nugent, of Chesterfield, who remained for eighteen months and then removed to Nuneaton.

The next ministry was the longest in the church's records. The Rev. John Maysey came here from Welling (Kent), in 1851, and removed to Manchester in 1863.

At the beginning of November, 1863, the Rev. Henry Bake,

of Malpas, became the pastor, and found a church of thirty-seven members. He closed his pastoral life with his resignation of his charge at Wellington in June, 1869.

His successor was the Rev. Charles Callaway, M.A., of Kirkby Stephen, who entered on his pastorate in October, 1869, and left at midsummer, 1871, for Bradford.

The Rev. Thomas Davies entered upon his duties in May, 1872, removing from a pastorate in Weyland (Pembroke). During his ministry the people at Wellington purchased for £250 a plot of building land for the erection of a new church house, thinking that more prosperity would be their lot if they had ampler room, more comely surroundings, and more fitting appliances for doing church work.

But for reasons then deemed adequate, this site was soon resold, and the proceeds were gradually used to meet the working expenses of the church.

Owing to the removal of some members, the death of others, the declining health and growing infirmities of the minister, and other causes too numerous to mention, the congregations dwindled, the cause suffered, and things generally reached a low ebb. Just previously to the pastor's resignation through old age, the Salop Association was called in by the church and minister for counsel and advice. A strong and representative Committee was appointed to investigate and advise. It was found on consulting the late Mr. W. Marcus Cooke and the few friends who remained, that the condition of the buildings was very bad and the position of the chapel unfavourable, and that all things considered, there would be a much greater hope of success, if it were possible to make an entirely fresh start in new premises.

Meanwhile an offer to purchase the old premises was made, which was ultimately accepted. The purchase money was deposited in the names of Mr. W. M. Cooke, sole surviving deacon, and two members of the Committee—Rev. J. B. Walton, LL.B., and Rev. T. Townsend.

After the sale of the premises, an enquiry was at once begun as to the possibility of buying a new site, and the prospects there were of gathering a nucleus of supporters through whom the movement for a new church might be begun and sustained.

On neither of these points could anything of an encouraging nature be obtained. Several sites were visited, but none appeared eligible. Many people whose names were given to the Committee as likely to sympathise with the, object were summoned to several meetings, but scarcely any came. So after weeks of earnest effort and enquiry, the Committee felt compelled, though with great reluctance, to report to the Association that as far as they could ascertain there was not at that time an opening for the formation of a new Congregational Church.

The report was adopted by the Association, and it was agreed that the question of Wellington should remain in abeyance. Since then it has often been asked whether the time has not come for making a fresh start at Wellington; and though as yet the Association has not felt free, to answer that it has, still hopes are held out by many that at no distant date the lost ground may be recovered.





Grimpo.

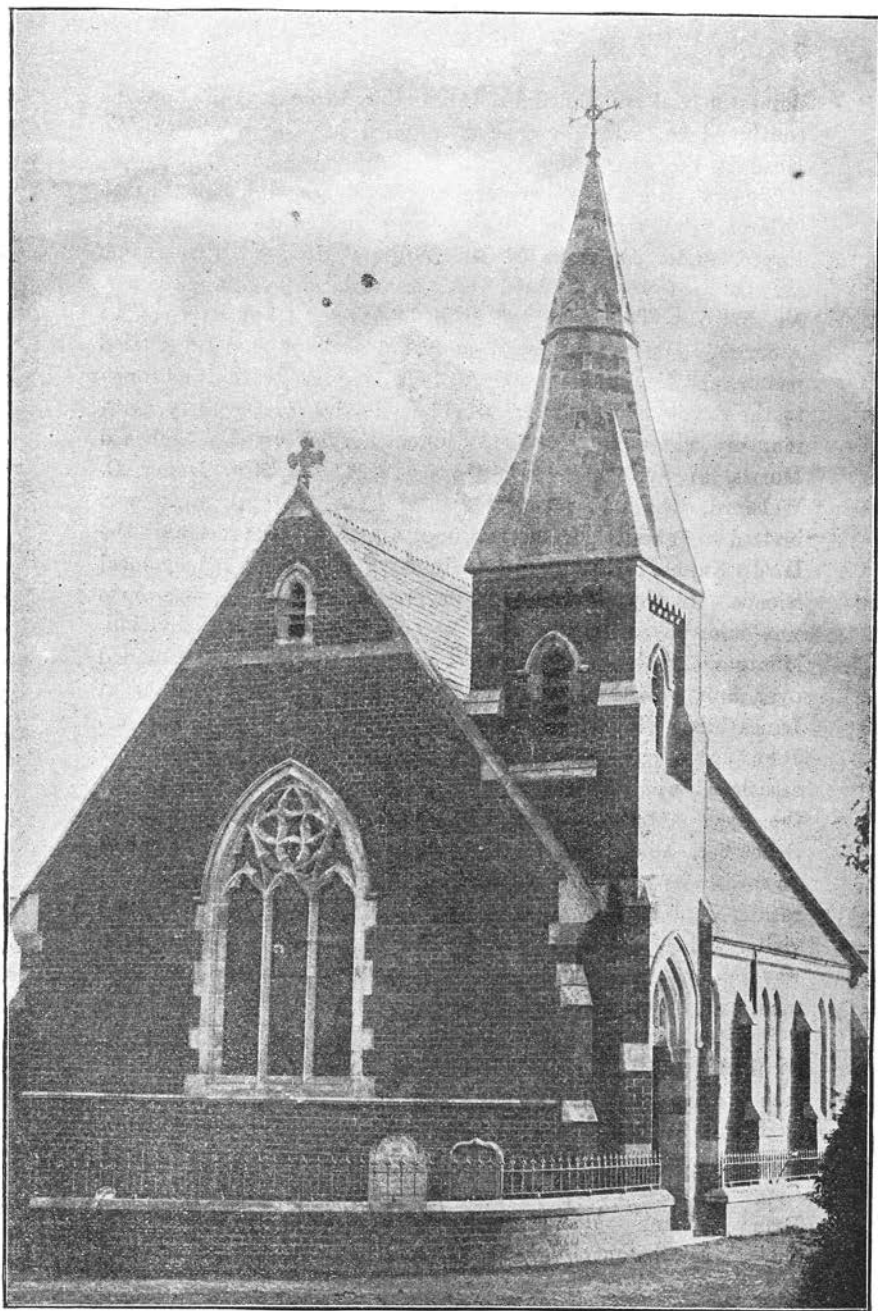
CONGREGATIONALISM had a representative at West Felton in the 17th century. The Rev. Titus Thomas, who was ejected from Aston, close by, in 1662, and was for some time pastor of Swan Hill Church, Shrewsbury, had a house at West Felton in 1684, where he practised medicine, and "was enabled to be very useful," up to the time of his death in December, 1687. It was not until nearly 150 years later, however, that our present church was planted in the adjacent hamlet of Grimpo.

In the year 1830, at the instance of the apostolic Dr. Thomas W. Jenkyn, of the Old Chapel, Oswestry, open-air services were begun in the lane at Wootton by Messrs. Jonathan Francis, John Wills, Thomas Davies, Thomas Minshall, and others. These services were so well supported, that at a meeting on September 2nd, 1831, at the house of Mr. John Jones. The Wood, Wootton, Dr. Jenkyn and Mr. John Davies, one of his deacons, being present, a branch church was formed. The new community consisted of ten persons: Sarah Kynaston, Elizabeth Lloyd, Jane Grafton, Ann Morris, Sarah and Richard Gittins, Lydia and Thomas Hollis, Thomas Killon, and John Jones, the younger. Sunday afternoon services were continued at Wootton, and also at Queen's Head, for many years, but upon the formation of the church, the chief meeting place was transferred from Wootton to Grimpo, at the house of Mr. Ambrose Johnson, near the present church premises. Here, in the face of some local opposition, the work grew rapidly, and a more suitable building soon became necessary. Ambrose Johnson generously offered a piece of land for the purpose at a nominal sum, and this was afterwards exchanged for a better site belonging to Mr. William Mostyn-Owen, of Woodhouse. The chapel was completed within a few months, and was opened

on Easter Sunday and Monday, 1832. The deed of conveyance, dated 12th April, 1834, names as trustees: The Rev. Thomas William Jenkyn, Thomas Vaughan, of Henbarns, John Minshall, of Haughton, Joseph Hignett the younger, of Dandyford, John Davies, Mercer, John Lacon, Ironmonger, Samuel Roberts, Stationer, Thomas Davies, Glazier, Thomas Gregory, Jeweller, Edward Wynne Thomas, Mercer, Thomas Minshall, Gentleman, all of Oswestry, and Jonathan Francis, Llwynymaen, Book-keeper.

The new building at once opened the way for a Sunday School and this work was taken up with great spirit by Mr. George Jones, Mr. George Edwards, Mr. John Hughes, and others, who, week by week, walked over from Oswestry to Grimpo. One of these leachers, Mr. George Jones, afterwards entered the ministry, and was pastor of churches at Lyme Regis and Portsmouth.

For some time, probably two or three years, the members at Grimpo partook of the Lord's Supper at Oswestry, and continued their relation as a branch church; but as numbers and strength increased, other arrangements became desirable, and ultimately the young society was permitted to have a church life of her own. The first resident minister at Grimpo is said to have been a Mr. Evans, and he was succeeded about the year 1835 by Jonathan Francis, formerly in business at Oswestry, but at this time pastor at Frankton and Bagloy. The ministry of Mr. Francis lasted about seven years, and after his removal the church had no pastor for a considerable time. In 1844, an invitation to the charge was accepted by the Rev. John Morris, who was then living at Gobowen. The call was dated June 17th, 1844. Mr. Morris had shortly before resigned his pastorate at Maen and Meifod, where he was ordained in 1833, after a course of study under Dr. Philips, at Neuaddlwyd. Whilst he was minister at Grimpo, Mr. Morris lived at, West Felton, and supplemented his very small stipend by keeping a day school in the chapel. He was a man of sterling character, quiet and unassuming in manner, and his very earnest advocacy of total abstinence provoked some hostility, but his labours as a whole were much blessed. A sad

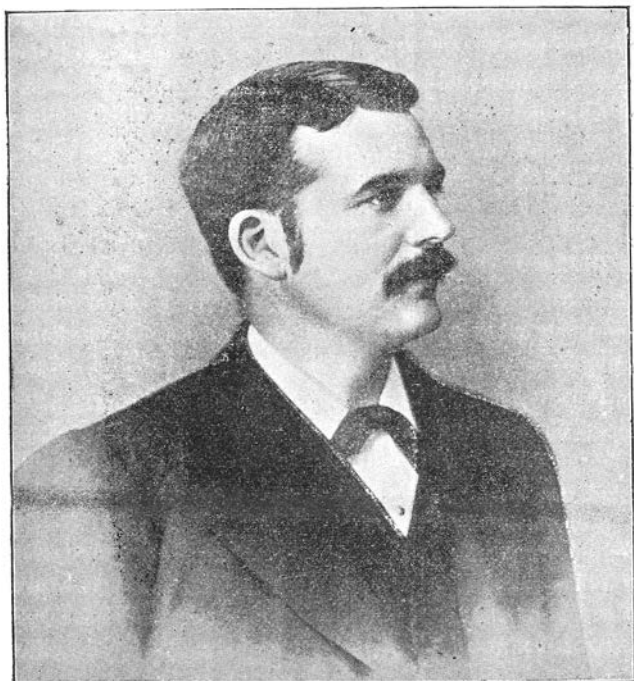


GRIMPO CHAPEL.

domestic trial compelled his resignation in June, 1852, but he continued to preach occasionally until his death at Queen's Head in the year 1860.

Shortly after the retirement of Mr. Morris, the churches at Grimpo, Frankton, and Bagley, were united as a joint pastorate, under the care of Mr. William Hodges. The same arrangement was continued three years later by his successor, Mr. William Tort, who left in 1858, and afterwards went to America. During the next ten years, Grimpo had no settled pastor, and for the greater part of the time the work owed much to the devoted help of Mr. David C. Davies, of Oswestry, with monthly visits for the Communion Service by Mr. Edward Morris, of Ruabon. In 1863 or 1864, the Rev. Henry C. Welsford, who had recently retired from pastoral work, was invited to conduct the services once a month and preside at the Lord's Supper; the remaining Sundays being supplied by local friends. In the year 1868, however, the long vacant pastorate was undertaken by the Rev. Isaac Watkins, of Bwlchyfridd, Montgomeryshire, whose earnest and untiring labours extended over four years, when he accepted a charge at Horwich, in Lancashire. By his marriage with a daughter of the late Mr. John Jones, of Queen's Head, Mr. Watkins became closely associated with Grimpo, and he cherished a warm interest in the place and its work. He died after a short illness in December, 1894, at Bretherton, near Preston. From 1872 onwards, for eighteen years, once more the church had no resident minister. Mr. Welsford now resumed his periodical visits, which were continued for several years. Generous help was also rendered by various neighbouring ministers and laymen, and by students from the colleges.

The twelve trustees appointed in 1834 were gradually reduced by death, until only three remained. A new deed was therefore executed, June 1st, 1882, adding ten persons to the trust, as follows: Thomas Cartwright, The Buildings, David Gittins, The Lees, Edward Davies, Paradise, David Davies, The Fords, George Davies, Pool perva, William Jones Woodhouse, Richard Drury, Sutton, Joshua Brookfield, Grimpo, Thomas Jones, Queen's Head, and John Pierce, Eardiston. After fifty years'



REV. J. CHARLES

wear, the chapel began to show signs of decay, and on April 7th, 1884, it was resolved to acquire more land, and put up a new and larger building. The preliminary arrangements having been made, a large public assembly took place on Monday, November 3rd. At the service led by the Revs. H. C. Welsford, D. D. Evans, Bridgnorth, J. J. Poynter, of Oswestry and others, Mr. Thomas Minshall gave an historical account of the church, and foundation stones were laid by Mr. Thomas Barnes, J.P., The Quinta, and Mr. John Jones, of Queen's Head, the latter being the sole survivor of the ten persons who formed the church in 1831. The opening services were held on Monday, May 11th, 1885, at which sermons were preached by the Rev. E. R. Barrett, B.A., of Liverpool, and the Rev. T. Townsend, of Shrewsbury. The church is a pretty Gothic structure in red brick, faced with Shelvock freestone. It has a small tower, surmounted by a graceful spire, which rises fifty feet above the entrance doorway, and at the east end facing the pulpit is a handsome traceried window in three lights filled with obscured and tinted glass. The hammer-beam roof and internal fittings are of pitch pine, and the seating provides for 200 persons. The total cost, including heating apparatus, boundary walls, etc., was £560. Towards this sum, £350 was assured at the opening day, and the remainder was raised by a bazaar and other efforts which were made afterwards. The building is certified as a Place of Public Religious Worship, and was registered for Marriages on April 19th, 1888.

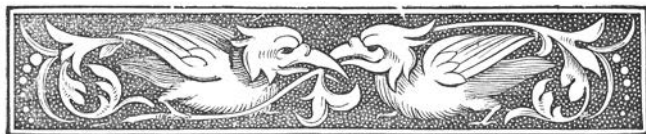
In November, 1889, steps were again taken to secure a pastor. After much conference, in which all concerned were indebted to the interest and wise guidance of the Rev. John J. Poynter, of Oswestry, the union of the small church at Weirbrook with Grimpo under one pastor was agreed to, and application for a grant in aid of a minister's salary was made to the County Association. On April 24th, 1890, a unanimous call was addressed to Mr. John H. Charles, a student at Brecon College, who accepted it, and entered upon his work on Sunday, June 8th. The new pastor received a hearty welcome at a meeting on the following day, the Rev. Isaac Watkins, his predecessor, being chairman. Ordination services, the first in



REV. HENRY CRANE.

the history of the church at Grimpo, were held on the 15th and 16th of September. The scriptures were read by the Rev. T. Nicholas, of Nantrnnwr, the Rev. T. Townsend gave an exposition of Congregational principles, the questions were asked by the Rev. J. Charles, of Oswestry, the Rev. J. J. Poynter offered the ordination prayer, and gave the charge to the people, and the charge to the minister was delivered by the Rev. J. B. Walton, LL.B., of Wem. Mr. Charles remained at Grimpo six years, in harmonious and useful service, and removed in April, 1896, to become minister of the church at Cefu, in Denbighshire. Two months later, on June 14th, a cordial invitation was sent to the Rev. Henry Crane, of Middlesbrough, who is the present pastor.





Ruyton-of-the-Eleven-Towns.

NONCONFORMISTS made repeated attempts in the latter part of the last century and the early part of this, to gain a footing in Ruyton.

In 1785, it Richard Richards obtained a license to hold religious services in his house. The original license has kindly been presented to the Ruyton Congregational Church by J. Parry-Jones, Esq., Oswestry. The following is a copy:—

“SHROPSHIRE.—At the General Quarter Sessions of the Peace of our Sovereign Lord the King held at the Guildhall in Shrewsbury in and for the County of Salop on Tuesday in the week next after the Translation of Saint Thomas, The Martyr, to wit the twelfth Day of July in the twenty-fifth year of the Reign of our Sovereign, Lord George the third by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, and so forth, and in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty five. Before Edward Pemberton, John Gardner, John Kynaston, Esquires, and others their Fellow Justices assigned to keep the peace in the County aforesaid, and also to hear and determine divers Felonies, Trespasses and other Misdemeanours in the same County done and committed.

Robert More, Esquire, Sheriff, ordered that the Dwelling House of Richard Richards at Ruyton in this County, be recorded as a Place of Religious Worship for his Majesty's Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England and it is hereby ordered accordingly.

By the Court,

J. LOXDALE.

D.J.C.P.”

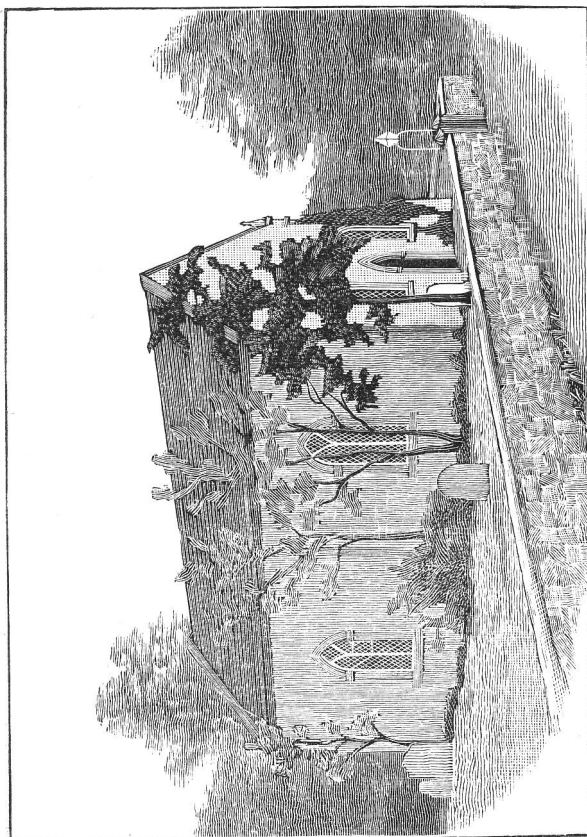
How long services were held at this place and why they were discontinued is unknown. Nor is it known who Richard Richurds was. Probably he was a Baptist, as the Baptists appear to have been the first Dissenters to hold religious services in Ruyton, and at the close of the last century there were several members of that denomination in the neighbourhood. Among the most zealous was Hannah Price, the grandmother of Mr. John Price, Dovaston.

In a paper which Mr. John Price read at the Jubilee Meeting of Ruyton Congregational Church in March, 1883, he said: "Dissenters had tried at various times to obtain a footing in the place but failed. First the Baptists from Shrewsbury obtained permission to preach in a cottage not far from the Vicarage, owned by two maiden sisters, known in the village as Peggy and Batty; but this was not allowed to continue for long. The Misses Kynaston, of Shrewsbury, who owned Ruyton Hall, purchased the cottage from the old ladies and then forbade preaching to be carried on in it."

In their addresses at the Jubilee Meeting, both Mr. John Jones, one of the deacons (then nearly an octogenarian), and Mr. Price referred to the intellectual, moral and religious condition of the inhabitants before Nonconformists preached here.

According to the "Oswestry Advertizer" for March 28th, 1883, Mr. Jones "said if they had gone through the place from fifty-three to sixty years ago on a Sunday, they would have found but one place of worship in it, and that was the parish church; and at the time of service they would have found but few persons in the church, but the public houses full and many sitting outside around the doors and others carrying drink to them, while others were playing at 'pitch and toss.' There was but one service in a week in the church. ... In those days the people of the village were very ignorant and of lax morality, but God had looked down in mercy upon them and put it into the hearts of His servants to come and preach the Gospel unto them. He remembered two Primitive Methodist preachers preaching in the streets and they were mobbed out of the place and gave up coming."

Mr. J. Price said: "Fifty-two years ago it may truly be said of Ruyton that darkness covered it and gross darkness the



RUYTON-OF-THE-ELEVEN-TOWNS CHAPEL.

people ... Some of the farmers who lived at a distance from church and used to attend its service on Sunday mornings, used also to order their lads to come to church and to bring their plough coulters with them to the blacksmith's shop to be sharpened while they were in church, so that they could take them back with them. In fact, I am much mistaken if there is not one with us to-day who has taken part in those deeds of darkness." He also stated that "Sixty years ago, the village was notorious for pugilists. He had seen twenty men or more stripped in a field in the middle of the village fighting. He remembered seeing the parson's horse in the blacksmith's pent-house being shod on a Sunday morning while the service was being conducted in the church, for the horse to be ready for the parson to go out on in the afternoon."

The attention of the Rev. Dr. Jenkyn, of Oswestry, having been called to the place, he visited the village in the spring of 1832. He always drove in, and drew up in front of the "Admiral Benbow," and using his gig as a platform, conducted services in the open air. The opposition was at first very strong, the pugilists and village roughs being supplied with drink beforehand and armed with old kettles, pots, pans, and brass instruments with which they tried to drown the preacher's voice; they had also rotten eggs and apples and dead cats to throw at him. On one of the first occasions the Doctor announced his intention of preaching on the following Sunday and bringing with him a legal friend. When he drove into the village on the following Sunday, he was accompanied by Mr. T. Lacon, an ironmonger, of Oswestry, whom the crowd inferred to be a lawyer. Although the roughs were supplied with bags of flour, the preacher was not molested, and Dr. Jenkyn preached from Luke xxiii., 33.

Seeing that they had a man of steel to deal with, the mob soon ceased to interfere with the Doctor, who preached in Ruyton every Sunday throughout the summer of 1832, sometimes in the open air, sometimes in an old barn which stood in the field adjoining the present "hearse house." Ruyton Park farm house had recently been built and Mr. Samuel Bickerton opened his door to Dr. Jenkyn to hold services in the spacious kitchen



REV. T. MORGAN.

during the following winter. There are several still living who attended these services.

The site of the chapel and the graveyard were bought from Mr. S. Bickerton for £15. The garden on the east side of the chapel was bought for a nominal sum to be used as a burial ground, but up to the present the yard on the west side has sufficed.

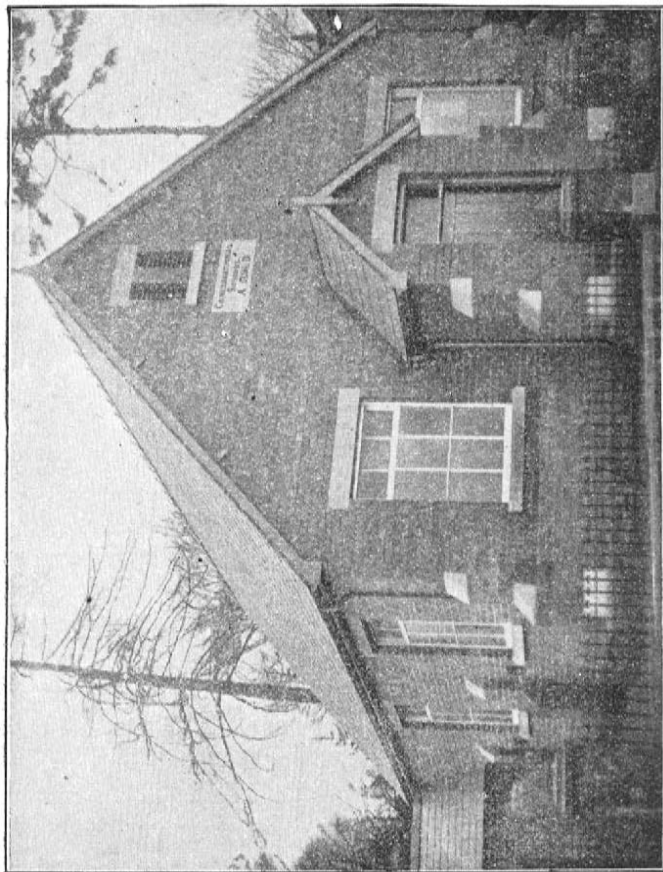
The Trust Deed was signed on December 26th, 1832, and the chapel was, completed in the spring of 1833. It contained several old-fashioned square family pews, and also it number of benches in the middle. It had seating accommodation for about 200 people, and cost about £500. Mr. Nathanael Edwards, of Ruyton, was the builder.

While the chapel was being erected, an invitation to the pastorate was sent to the Rev. D. Harries, of Carmarthen College, who accepted it and settled here soon afterwards.

Even before the walls were plastered, Dr. Jenkyn preached in the new chapel, which was formally opened on Good Friday, 1833, when Dr. Ross, Kidderminster, and Dr. Jenkyn preached the dedicatory sermons.

In August the church was formed and Mr. Harries ordained. Dr. Jenkyn gave the charge to the minister from the words, "Do the work of an evangelist." Rev. Thomas Weaver, of Shrewsbury, preached to the people from the text, "I beseech you therefore that you confirm your love towards him." Rev. J. Pattison, of Wem, offered the Ordination Prayer. Revs. J. F. Mandeno (Wem), D. James (Hadnall), J. Griffiths (Dovaston), — Rogers and — Cooke (Baptists, Oswestry), also took part. Mr. J. Price, who was present, states that the tone of Dr. Jenkyn's charge was so very severe that the congregation sympathised with their young minister. In addition to Ruyton, Mr. Harries had charge also of the churches at Wilcot, Dovaston, and Molverley. During the latter years of his life, he had charge of only Ruyton and Wilcot.

Mr. J. Price joined the church in August, and was elected one of the first deacons. He and his wife lived for a short time in a cottage which stood nearly opposite "The Stores." Here a prayer meeting was held each Sunday before the evening service,



RUYTON CONGREGATIONAL SCHOOL.

and the worshippers would afterwards march to the chapel, singing as they went, and would be joined by others.

When Mr. Price removed to the house on the Brown Hill, now occupied by Mr. William Nicholls, the first Sunday School in the parish was held there. Mr. John Jones, one of the deacons, Mr. Robert Mansel Wilde, now of Wilcot, and Mr. J. Morris assisted in this work. Mr. Wilde also held classes in his house, Croft Cottage, Holden Lane, until the increase of numbers caused their removal to the chapel.

Among the first members of the church were the Rev. David and Mrs. Mary Harries; John and Elizabeth Price; John and Martha Jones; Edward and Ann Jones; Richard and June Bullock; Robert Mansel and Sarah Wilde; Mary Griffiths; and Thomas Edwards. Of these the only survivors are Mrs. Martha Jones, now residing with her son in Shrewsbury, and Mr. R. M. Wilde, Wilcot.

After much opposition, Mr. Harries and his wife won the esteem of the people, so that it was customary for many of them to attend service at the parish church in the morning and at the Congregational Church in the evening. Several of the principal farmers in the neighbourhood joined the church, and for several years the cause was in a flourishing state. For a long period the pastor and his wife conducted a school, which was most successful.

The chapel was registered for the solemnization of marriages on December 7th, 1866.

After prolonged ill-health, the Pastor succumbed to an attack of paralysis on February 27th, 1867, in his 60th year, having just completed a faithful ministry of thirty-four years. After his death the church paid £100 to the executors of his will for the house in which he lived and the garden attached to it.

As Mr. Harries had been unable to attend to his pastoral duties during his later years, the congregations had become small, and there was urgent need of securing a successor. The churches at Huyton and Wilcot on July 9th, 1867, invited Mr. J. Landel Jones, who shortly afterwards settled here. Ordination services were held on January 2nd, 1868. Rev. T. Gasquoine, B.A., of Oswestry, expounded Congregational Principles; Rev. C. Bateman, Ellesmere, asked the questions; Rev.

D. D. Evans, Bridgnorth, offered the Ordination Prayer; Rev. Dr. Morris, Brecon, gave the charge to the Minister from Mark ix., 29; and Revs. H. Griffiths, of Brecon, G. Kettle, of Shrewsbury, J. Watkins, of Grimpo, and W. Price, Minsterley, took part.

In the summer of 1868, the chapel was re-seated and refloored at a cost of £88. Re-opening services were held on July 23rd. The service in the afternoon was conducted by Rev. W. Crippen, of Boston Spa, and Rev. D. D. Evans, of Bridgnorth, who preached from 1. Peter i., 12. Thomas Barnes, Esq., M.P., presided over a public meeting in the evening.

On January 10th, 1869, Rev. J. Landel Jones resigned his charge and he left at the end of March. Though brief, Mr. Jones's ministry here was successful. Finding only fourteen members on the roll, he soon raised the church and congregation to a more vigorous state.

The Rev. Lewis Weaver, who had been for some years in the Primitive Methodist ministry, was invited on June 13th, 1869. On June 28th, the deacons of the Ruyton, Wilcot, and Dovaston churches, met at Wilcot along with the Revs. L. Weaver and D. D. Evans, of Bridgnorth. It was then arranged for Mr. Weaver to take the oversight of these three churches. He entered upon his labours in the following month. During the first few years of his ministry, the work made good progress, the congregation increased, new members were admitted, and the debt was gradually paid off. But, unfortunately for a time the prospects of the church did not continue so bright.

The Jubilee Meeting was held on Good Friday, 1883. The Rev. L. Weaver, who presided, gave a lengthy statement of the work done during the fourteen years of his pastoral charge. The substance of the addresses delivered by Messrs. John Jones and J. Price has already been given.

Mr. Weaver initiated the movement to form the church at Weirbrook. In October, 1887, he resigned, and left for Liverpool, where he still labours.

For the next seven years the church had no resident pastor, the pulpit being supplied by lay preachers of the district. During this period severe losses were sustained through the death of the deacons, Mr. John Jones and Mr. Thomas Rees,

both or whom had served the church faithfully for many years. The death of Mr. J. Price, of Dovaston, was also a great loss to the church. He was one of its first deacons and first lay preachers, and to the last he faithfully and lovingly served it.

On Sunday, September 9th, 1894, it was unanimously resolved to invite the present pastor, Rev. T. Morgan, to take charge of the church; the invitation was accepted, and Mr. Morgan commenced his ministry on the first Sunday in October.

The Ordination Services were held on Wednesday and Thursday, November 7th and 8th. On Wednesday evening, Rev. T. Townsend, Shrewsbury, delivered the charge to the church, from the words, "For the people had a mind to work" (Neh. iv., 6). On Thursday afternoon, Principal E. Herber Evans, D.D., Bangor College, gave an exposition of Congregational Principles based upon the text, "The church of the living God" (1. Tim. i ii., 15). Rev. W. E. Jenkins, Shrewsbury, offered the Ordination Prayer; and Rev. J. B. Walton, B.A., LL.B., Wem, delivered the charge to the minister. In the evening, Dr. Evans preached to a crowded congregation from Genesis i., 26. Revs. J. J. Poynter, J. Davies-Jones (Oswestry), and E. G. Roberts (Preeshenlle), took part in the proceedings.

Immediately after the new pastor took charge, a Sunday School and Band of Hope were formed, and week-night services held.

In the summer of 1896, a new and commodious school was erected. The memorial stones were laid on July 9th by Mrs. P. H. Minshall and Mrs. James Edwards, Oswestry, Mrs. W. Tomlinson, Ruyton, and W. Jones, Esq., J.P., Shrewsbury. The Pastor presided over the proceedings, and addresses were given by W. Jones, Esq., and H. E. Rogers, Esq., of Shrewsbury. In the evening a public meeting was held under the presidency of the Rev. J. J. Poynter, and inspiring addresses were given by Revs. A. Whittingham, Dovaston, E. G. Roberts, Preeshenlle, W. E. Jenkins, Shrewsbury, and Messrs. J. Edwards and P. H. Minshall, Oswestry.

The building was completed early in October, and the opening services were held on the 29th. In the afternoon, the Pastor preached from Matt. vi., 10, "Thy Kingdom come"; and in the evening, Rev. Stanley Rogers, Liverpool, preached from the

words, "To-day I must abide at thy house" (Luke xix., 5). The building has seating accommodation for 250, and cost £324, of which £114 was paid in 1896.

The roll of members has steadily increased, and is now (1897) larger than it has ever been. Special attention is being paid to the children and young people. A Christian Endeavour Society has been formed, and all branches of the work are in a vigorous and encouraging state.





Frankton.

A FAMILY who formerly resided at Grimpo removed to the neighbourhood of Frankton in the year 1832, and as there was no chapel close at hand, invited the Rev. J. Francis, of Grimpo, to preach in their house occasionally. After Mr. Francis and other preachers from Oswestry and district had continued their ministrations for some time, a church was formed in the year 1833 in a house occupied by Wililam Gittins in Frankton Lane. The following ten members were united in Christian fellowship: Samuel Teggin, Edward Jones, Jane Jones, William Davies, Thomas Newnes, Richard Gittins, Joseph Davies, Margaret Davies, Thomas Roberts, and Margaret Hughes. Over this church the Rev. J. Francis presided for nine years.

In 1834, as the congregations had greatly increased, a place of worship was erected at a cost of £420, after considerable difficulty had been experienced in procuring a building site. The Revs. T. W. Jenkyn, of Oswestry, and W. Williams, of Wern, preached at the opening services.

In the year 1843, Wimam Hodges became the minister.

In 1846, a stable and other requisites were built at a cost of £45, which was soon subscribed.

In 1852, some new pews were made and other alterations were undertaken, involving an expenditure of about £37.

Mr. Hodges continued to be minister at Frankton until 1857, when he left for Bretherton (Lancs.) Soon afterwards Mr. J. S. Toft accepted a can to the pastorate. In his time a difference arose between Mr. Toft and some of the leading members, in consequence of which fifteen church members and sixty of the Sunday scholars withdrew from his ministry and worshipped at the house of Mrs. Hewitt, some distance from the chapel.

Towards the end of 1863, Mr. Toft retired, preaching his farewell sermon on the last Sunday in 1863. The party who had with-

drawn then returned; and on Thursday, February 4th, 1864, a meeting was held under the presidency of the Rev. William Hodges, when twenty-two persons were received into fellowship, and the church members on the following Sunday entered into a covenant with one another, resolving to watch over one another's spiritual interests, to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, to attend regularly the house of God, to contribute cheerfully of their substance, and to watch specially over the children in the Sunday School.

After the church had remained without a minister until 1867 the Rev. Isaac Watkins entered upon the pastorate of Frankton and Grimpo on October 13th in that year. In the latter part of 1871, he accepted a call from the church at Bretherton. Before leaving, he arranged with four of the leading members of the Frankton Church to be responsible for finding and entertaining supplies for three months, of the year each, and in this way the pulpit has been filled up to the present time.

In the year 1877, the interior of the chapel was thoroughly renovated, the old high-backed pews being taken out and the gallery removed, and movable pitch pine seats being placed in the chapel. A pitch pine rostrum was substituted for the old pulpit. The whole of the work cost £120, which was raised at once by the Frankton Church without appealing for help from outside.

Mrs. Paddock, of the Ridge Farm, generously found, in the year 1880, sufficient money (over £100) for a new Sunday School adjoining the chapel. It is well filled, the scholars numbering between eighty and ninety. Mr. Carsley, of Montreal (an old scholar), provides a free supply of magazines every month for the scholars.

During the last fifteen years, two new harmoniums have been purchased for the chapel and school, and also two heating stoves.

The finances of the church are in a flourishing condition. The late Mrs. Paddock bequeathed about £600 to the chapel.

The church membership at present numbers twenty-five.



Harmer Hill.

THE Chapel at Harmer Hill* was built in 1834, mainly through the efforts of Mr. R. Bickerton, of Newton on the Hill, a village adjoining Harmer Hill. He was a staunch Congregationalist, and his generosity led him to give the site on which the chapel now stands. His efforts to gather funds to build the chapel were unwearying.

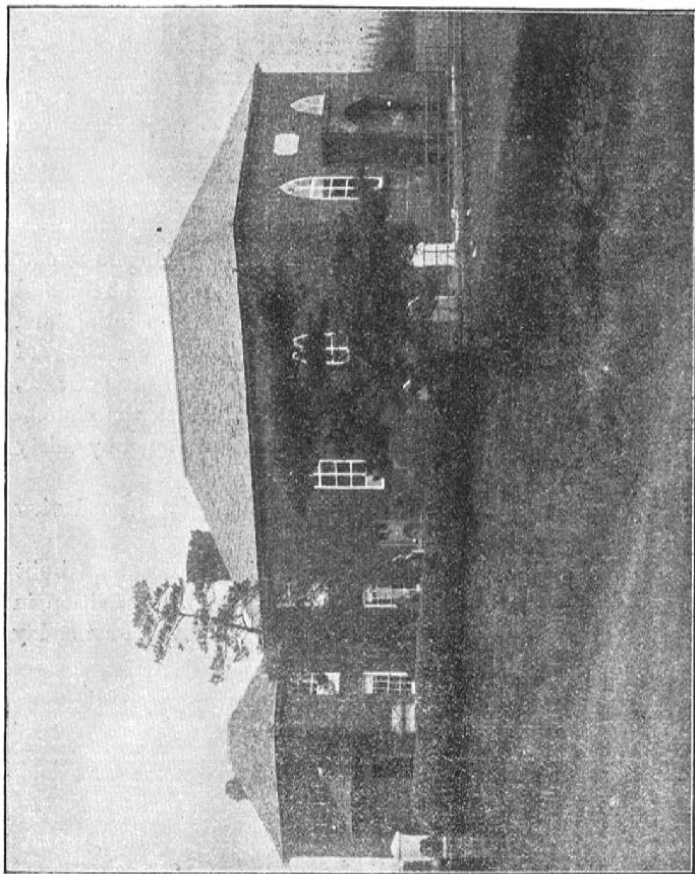
Prior to this there had been no place of worship in the immediate neighbourhood, which was noted for drunkenness and low morality. Under the ministry of the Rev. George Rogers, the standard of morality was speedily raised, the Pastor gathering round him a band of workers whose mode of life influenced the village for good.

A schoolroom was built in connection with the chapel, and a day school was commenced which was conducted by Mr. Rogers for several years with a large measure of success.

Rev. George Rogers resigned the pastorate in 1859, and in 1861, the Home Missionary Society adopted Harmer Hill as a station, and Rev. W. Alnwick was located here. He laboured steadily and sincerely for some time, and was succeeded by a very able preacher and zealous pastor, Rev. W. E. Whereat. Under his ministry the congregations steadily increased. He left for Prees, where he commenced his ministry on February 18th, 1866, and died almost immediately afterwards.

Mr. Whereat was succeeded at Harmer Hill by the Rev. Joseph Crewe, who, leaving his trade as a cooper, was ordained to the ministry. He laboured here in connection with the church at Bomere Heath, which, at his removal, was let to the Calvinistic Methodists, by whom it is still held.

* For additional details, see history of Bomere Heath Chapel (pages, 208–212).



HARMER HILL CHAPEL.

Since the close of Mr. Crewe's ministry, the Harmer Hill church has had no regular pastor, but has been supplied with lay preachers of various denominations, chiefly from Shrewsbury. The Rev. J. B. Walton, B.A., LL.B., of Wem, has kindly officiated on special occasions.

Notably among the workers of the past should be mentioned Mr. Enoch Eaton, of Myddle, and Mr. J. Leech, two unostentatious workers who steadily served the cause of Christ. Both have gone to their rest, but the widow of the latter, who has been a valuable supporter of the chapel and a regular attendant, still survives.

The church at the present time is in a fairly flourishing condition and is free from debt. In 1893, the worshippers undertook to have the building thoroughly renovated and relighted with more modern and expensive lamps. The painting and decorating were ably done by Messrs. Marston and Son, of Shrewsbury. These improvements incurred a debt of over £40, which, with the help of donors not connected with the church, was speedily paid. There is a Sunday School attended by thirty or forty scholars.

The chapel is beautifully situated, commanding a good view of a very picturesque village.

Some years after its erection, the Church of England built a spacious edifice in a more central and convenient position in the village, where they hold a well-attended service on Sunday evenings.





Wilcot.

THE village of Wilcot is situated about midway between Oswestry and Shrewsbury. The Congregational cause there was founded in 1834, through the instrumentality of Dr. Jenkyn, who at that time was minister of the Congregational Church at Oswestry. This was the seventh chapel he had succeeded in building during seven years. Before the chapel was erected, Mr. Harries, of Ruyton-xi-Towns, had preached at Nib's Cliffe, and during the winter a cottage had been placed at his disposal.

Owing to the hostility of some clergy and gentry, and the fear of them on the part of farmers and smaller landowners, much difficulty was encountered in obtaining a site on which to erect a chapel; and apparently it would have been impossible but for a circumstance which may well be regarded as an interposition of Divine Providence. A respectable resident landowner (Mr. Payne) felt inclined to give a piece of land for the site of a chapel, but being a churchman, and affected probably to some extent by the adverse influences already alluded to, could not persuade himself to take that step. But very soon he was influenced to do so, as the following extract from Dr. Jenkyn's diary will show. After stating that while he (Dr. Jenkyn) was in one parlour at Mr. Payne's house waiting to see him in order to endeavour to arrange about the land, the Vicar was in the other parlour trying to persuade him not to give the land, he says: "We proceeded to the spot which he intended to present to us and which we thankfully accepted. Still there was an air of mystery about this unexpected and generous conduct of Mr. Payne towards Dissenters. I did not understand it until I went to Bridgnorth, when Mr. Barber (Rev. S. Barber, Minister of Stoneway Chapel), who kept a boarding school, told me the eldest son of Mr. Payne had been to his school, and was

afterwards articted to an attorney at Oswestry, and used sometimes to turn into our chapel on Sunday evenings. During his stav in Oswestry he became ill with consumption, and returned home to Wilcot. After we were turned out of the barn, this young man expressed a wish to his father that he would give us a piece of land for a chapel, but the father was decidedly opposed and adverse to it. A few weeks after, the son was worse than usual; he said to his fater: 'Well, father, since you will not give Mr. Jenkyn a piece of ground, I intend to leave him as much money as will enable him to purchase a piece somewhere in the neighbourhood.' This he could do, as he had property independent of his father. When Mr. Payne saw that his son had set his mind on it and really and calmly desired it, he complied and thus gratified his dying wishes, for he died in a very short time after we had the promise of the ground."

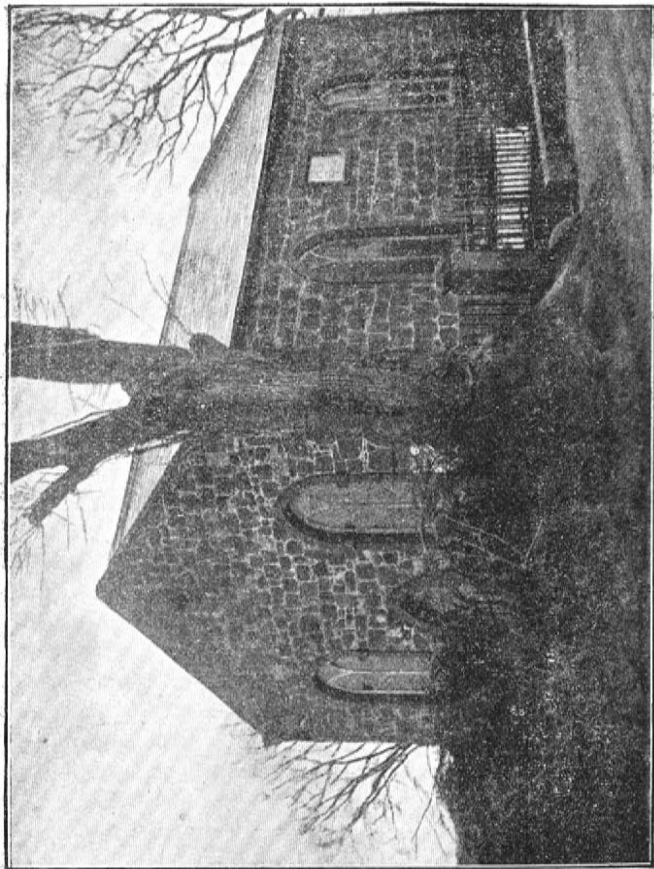
The above extract from Dr. Jenkyn's diary was given by Alderman Thomas Minshall, J.P., of Oswestry, who presided at the Jubilee Meeting on Monday evening, June 2nd, 1884.

The church has been successively under the charge of the Revs. David Harries, J. Landel Jones, and Lewis Weaver, and Mr. John Price. It supplies a real need in the neighbourhood, though its story has been one of constant struggle for existence. Its distance from any town has caused considerable difficulty in keeping the pulpit supplied, but through the efforts of a few devoted Christinn find sturdy Nonconformists, this difficulty has been met throughout the years the cause has been in existence.

In the early part of 1876, the chapel, which seats about 120 people, underwent rostoration and improvement at a cost of £200.

In December, 1892, the church at Wilcot united with the church at Dovaston in inviting Mr. Albert Whittingham, of Brecon College, to become their pastor.

There are very strong influences in the neighbourhood which work against Nonconformity, yet, reports the Rev. A. Whittingham, "Neither pastor nor church is discouraged thereby, and although the numbers may be small, and there are, lacking signs which in the eyes of the world may be evidence of success, yet they are conscious of meeting a need in the neighbourhood which can only be supplied by our church."



WILCOT CHAPEL.

At the commencement of 1897, on Mr. Whittingham taking the oversight of Mclverley in addition to Dovaston, it was decided to ask the Rev. T. Morgan, of Ruyton, to take charge of Wilcot. Mr. Morgan shortly afterwards formed a Sunday School and Band of Hope, and decided to hold a week-night service.





Bayston Hill.

THIS village being near Shrewsbury, used to be the Sunday resort of many who took part in out-door sports, racing, dog-fighting, etc., and was sadly in need of religious instruction.

A few of the young people connected with Swan Hill Chapel, Shrewsbury. held cottage meetings, when the site of the present chapel was an open common.

In the year 1834, land was purchased and a chapel erected. The church was a branch of the one at Swan Hill, and the members went to the mother church once a month to partake of the Lord's Supper.

A band of young men and women went from Shrewsbury every Sunday morning, superintended by Mr. John Woodall and Mr. Benjamin Evans on alternate Sundays. A very successful Sunday School was held morning and afternoon. Each teacher took dinner and had it in the vestry, after which a thorough visitation of the district was made and tracts were distributed.

After afternoon school, service was held, being conducted by the Rev. T. Weaver and lay preachers. In the evening, the services were taken by the Rev. Mr. Belk, pastor of Longden. At this time it was the only place of worship in the village, and Miss Flavel, of Pulley Hall, attended and helped most efficiently.

The arrangement mentioned above lasted until 1843, when many of the teachers who had been in the habit of visiting Bayston Hill, joined in forming Castle Gate Church. Soon after, the school and chapel were closed, meetings being occasionally held in the open air.

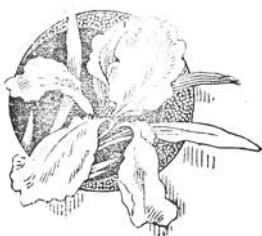
In 1856, Mr. J. Whitridge Woodall took charge of the place, and was assisted by Mr. Milton, Mr. Marks, Mr. Murray, Mr.

Morris. Captain, afterwards Sir George, Brooke Pechell, and others. The school was re-opened, Mr. Woodall going every Sunday afternoon to superintend it. Mainly by the help of Sir George Pechell, a branch chapel was opened at Pulley Common.

About the year 1880, the chapel was renovated, and the three Shrewsbury ministers, with Mr. Woodull, supplied the pulpit in rotation on Sunday afternoons, various lay preachers taking the service on Sunday evenings.

For want of friends resident in the village to take an active interest in the chapel, it was again closed for a time.

It is now re-opened and worked by Mr. W. G. Napier, assisted by other Shrewsbury friends. It is hoped that the school may be re-opened and a flourishing cause again sustained.





Longden.

IN 1836, a plot of land was purchased at Longden Common in a commanding position which was accessible from Longden, Longden Common, Exford's Green, Plealey and Pulverbatch. Most of these places have since been supplied with chapels of their own.

On this land a chapel, a school and a minister's house were erected, and the Rev. Mr. Belk was appointed minister. The new cause was supported by the village tradesmen, small farmers and freeholders.

After Mr. Belk left the cause suffered, and eventually, the chapel was closed. The church at Castle Gate, Shrewsbury, in addition to its arduous work at home, desired to extend its operations into the villages. Mr. John Woodall, afterwards of Ravenscroft, walked over to tell the old members their chapel was a bout to be re-opened, and the news was very joyfully received.

With the help of the Salop Association, the Rev. Alfred Crisp was appointed minister, and his work was attended by great success. A flourishing Sunday School and Day School were carried on.

When the grant of the Association was lowered, Mr. Crisp removed to Alfreton, in Derbyshire. The services were then conducted mainly by Mr. Thomas Young, a working man belonging to Castle Gate Church, who, after a hard week's work, walked twelve miles each Sunday and preached twice. In 1856, he persuaded Mr. J. Whitridge Woodall to join him, also the late Mr. Milton and others.

After the departure of Mr. Young for America, Mr. J. W. Woodall, in conjunction with the Shrewsbury Independent Local Preachers' Society, with help from Mr. Worthington and others,

worked the place, the preachers often going to Lyth Hill to take the afternoon service.

In 1876, Mr. Thomas Marks took the oversight of the church and watched over its interests until he went to reside in London, after which time supplies for the pulpit were obtained by Mr. William Thomas, who died a few months ago.

The chapel is now being worked by Mr. Walker, of Pontesford, in conjunction with a committee chosen by the District Meeting of the Salop Association.





Broseley.

EFFORTS were made as early as the year 1834 to establish in this neighbourhood an Independent Church.

The Salop Association, at the Quarterly Meeting held in Shrewsbury on January 9th, 1834, requested the Revs. Samuel Barber, of Bridgnorth, and R. Richards, of Wellington, to preach alternately at Ironbridge on Sunday afternoons, and to report to the next meeting. There is no record of any report having been given.

At the meeting of the Association held at Oswestry on October 5th, 1836, the Revs. J. F. Mandeno (Wem), S. Barber (Bridgnorth), and Thomas James (Wellington), were requested to endeavour to obtain places for preaching at Wenlock and Ironbridge, and to report to the next meeting what prospect of successful work there was in those places.

At a meeting at Shrewsbury, January 4th, 1837, on Mr. Mandeno's recommendation, Revs. S. Barber, T. James, and G. Rogers were requested to obtain places for preaching at Wenlock and Ironbridge; and when that had been done, Mr. Rogers was directed to preach there regularly for a month on trial.

When the Association met at Wem on July 13th, 1837, Messrs. Barber and James reported that they had been led to attempt the introduction of preaching at Broseley. They had there secured the use of the Friends' Meeting House* for the purpose, and had conducted services in that building for the last few weeks.

The Association voted the sum of four guineas, the rent of one year, and requested the brethren to supply the place in turn

* The present Schoolroom.

for the next three months, granting to each a sum not exceeding £1 for expenses. At the same time it was resolved to apply to the Rev. George Collison, of Hackney Theological Seminary, to provide a minister for Broseley and to assist in his support.

As a result of this decision, the first pastor was the Rev. James Roome, of Hackney Seminary, who came in the latter part of 1837. The Association in 1838 voted him £10 for six months, together with his travelling expenses. He seems to have left in 1839.

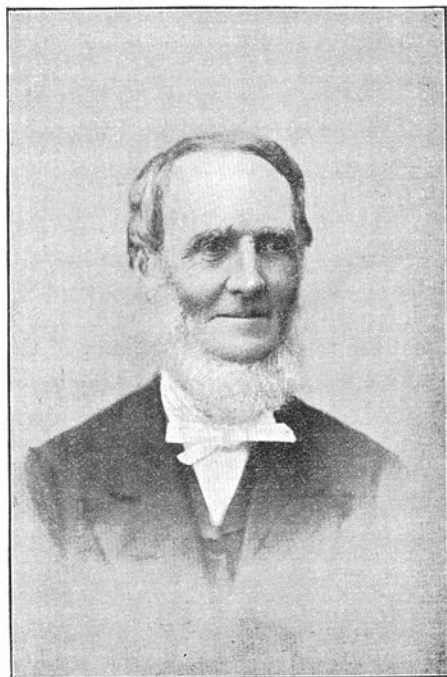
Rev. Charles Harrison, also of Hackney Seminary, was the next minister. He remained at Broseley for one year.

At a meeting of the Salop Association on October 8th, 1840, it was reported that a chapel was in course of erection at Broseley, and the secretary was authorised to give to the undertaking the recommendation of the Association.

The chapel, which cost £700, was opened on Tuesday, April 20th, 1841. At the service held in the morning, Rev. S. Barber, of Bridgnorth, offered the Dedictory Prayer; Rev. J. Watson (Wesleyan), read the Scripture and prayed; Rev. Dr. Redford, of Worcester, preached from Jeremiah xxx., 21; and Rev. J. F. Mandeno, of Newport, closed the service with prayer. In the evening, Dr. Redford preached from Romans x., 11; and Revs. Samuel Evans (Wellington), T. Jones (Minsterley), and S. Barber took part in the service. On Sunday, April 25th, the Rev. S. Barber preached in the absence, through illness, of the Rev. Thomas Weaver, of Shrewsbury. The collections at these opening services amounted to over £40.

In 1841, the Rev. — Nott, of Twyford (Berks.). accepted the pastorate. He left in 1842, and was succeeded by the Rev. Samuel Newth, M.A. (afterwards D.D., and Principal of New College, Hampstead). Mr. Newth was ordained at Broseley on April 18th, 1813. Rev. John Barton, of Ellesmere, offered prayer; Rev. Alfred Newth, of Oundle, delivered the introductory discourses; Rev. Samuel Barber offered the Ordination Prayer; and the Rev. Thomas Weaver gave the charge to the minister. Rev. Joseph Pattison, of Wem, gave the charge to the church, and Rev. J. F. Mandeno, of Newport. addressed the congregation. Mr. Newth left about 1848.

The remaining records of the church's history are exceedingly



REV. S. EVANS.

scanty. For the next few years, the following ministers were at Droseley, though the list is almost certainly incomplete:—

— to 1849.—Rev. James Lee, B.A., of Western College.

Jan. 12th. 1850 to May, 1852.—Rev. James Nevit,

1853 to 1855.—Rev. — Fisher (left for Orrns Kirk).

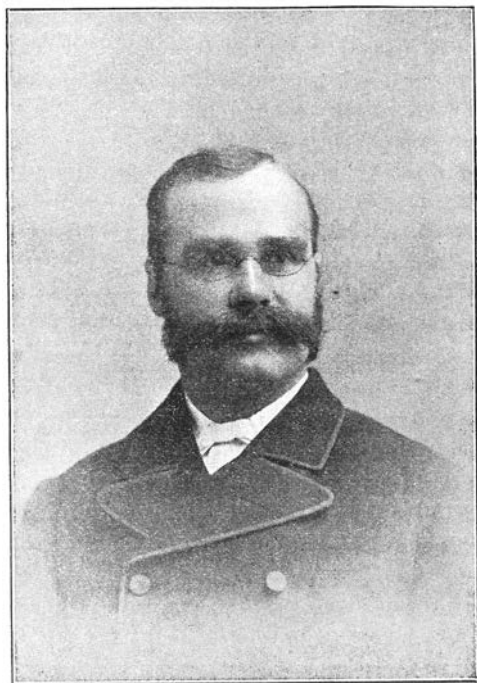
1855 to early in 1858.—Rev. Edward Thomas Bromfield.

April, 1858, to early in 1859.—Rev. Job Hawkins (left for Spilsby; died in 1869 at Paignton).

For several years the Congregational interest had declined. Changes of residence and death took away the leading spirits, while contemporaneously a great change took place in the Established Church. For forty years it had been under the ministry of one quite indifferent to the spiritual interest of the people. He was succeeded by a clergyman full of zeal and piety, and thoroughly evangelical, also connected with families holding property in the neighbourhood; he attracted so many from the Dissenting places of worship, that during his ministry the Congregational Church became almost extinct. In 1859, the Rev. Samuel Evans, who had come to live at Ironbridge to manage the business of an aged relative, at the request of the ministers of the district and a few adherents that remained, consented to take the oversight of the church at Broseley.

Mr. Evans was born in Bala, and came of a godly Welsh stock, his paternal grandfather, John Evans, being celebrated in North Wales for his Christian life and labours. After studying at Hackney College, Rev. Samuel Evans held charges at Wellington (Salop) and at Tutbury. On resigning the latter pastorate, he went to reside at Ironbridge. For eight years he preached at Broseley Sunday after Sunday, twice a day, conducted week-day services, and, as far as possible, under the exigencies of business and distance of residence, performed the duties of pastor to the little flock.

Mr. Evans then came to reside at Broseley and the church henceforth had the advantage of his constant supervision and fostering care. Evidences of new life were manifest, and the chapel became the centre of Christian activity and influence. The building at this time was in quite a dilapidated condition. Little or nothing had been done since the opening towards its preservation, the people being few and poor and totally unable to undertake any



REV. W. PROTHERO.

financial burden. In 1868, Mr. H. P. Dunnill, afterwards Alderman and Borough Magistrate, came to reside in the neighbourhood, his liberal support and enterprising spirit proving a great acquisition to Congregationalism.

About this time the chapel was renovated and made to appear as attractive as circumstances would permit. A new school room was also added to the one already existing, which proved too small for the increasing numbers that attended for religious instruction. Under the zealous superintendency of Mr. Thomas Howells, who has a record of over forty-three years in this department of service, and also holds the office of deacon, the school became exceptionally numerous for a small community, and for many years has been the mainstay of the church,—nearly all the present members being the offspring of the school.

For nearly twenty-eight years, Mr. Evans watched over the interest of the church in this place with a tenderness and solicitude for which he was distinguished. His sweetness of disposition, lowliness of mind, and loyal service, won for his office and church hearty and general respect, his ministry being ever spoken of with the utmost admiration and thankfulness.

Taking into account the difficulties of the sphere, shrinkage of population and the migratory tendency of the people, together with the overlapping of churches, Mr. Evans's ministry may be considered a success in numbers, which was, however, insignificant compared with the far reaching influences of his consecrated life and faithful interpretation of the gospel.

Owing to age and infirmity, he resigned the pastorate in 1886, and he passed to his eternal rest on Saturday, June 28th, 1890. He died—to use his own almost last articulate words—"full of peace, full of consolation."

In 1887, the pastorate was undertaken by the Rev. Henry Gardner, of New College, who resigned after a brief pastorate on accepting the oversight of the church at Hamilton Square, Birkenhead. At the present time he is minister at Tettenhall Wood, Wolverhampton.

He was succeeded at Broseley by the Rev. W. Prothero, who still remains.

The Jubilee of the church was celebrated on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, April 19th, 20th, and 21st, 1891. Sermons were



MR. H. P. DUNNILL,
Chairman of the Association, 1893.

preached on the Sunday by the Rev. Samuel Newth, D.D. A Tea Meeting was held on the following day, attended by 300 people. This was followed by a Public Meeting, over which Mr. Alderman Dunnill presided, addresses being delivered by the Revs. Dr. Newth, J. B. Walton, LL.B. (Wem), C. S. Home, M.A. (Kensington), W. J. P. Wright, B.A. (Bridgnorth), and the Pastor. On Tuesday, a sermon was preached by the Rev. C. S. Horne. The collections at these meetings and services realised over £50.





The Tabernacle, Dogpole, Shrewsbury (Welsh).

ABOUT the year 1810, the attention of the Congregational ministers of Montgomeryshire was called to the need of a Welsh Congregational Church in this town. The case was brought before the Quarterly Meetings, and, after some two years' deliberation, it was decided to commence a Welsh cause.

A convenient room for holding the services was found in Howard Street. The first service was held there on July 24th, 1842, when the Rev. H. James, Llansantffraid, preached. A church was formed by the Rev. H. Thomas, of Oswestry, the membership at the time being only four, viz. Mr. W. Williams, Mardol, Miss Margaret Lewis, and Miss Elizabeth Jones, from the English Congregational Church, Swan Hill, and Miss Anne Baxter, from the Calvinistic Methodist Church. The ministers of Montgomeryshire preached to the small congregation from July, 1842, until the summer of 1843. Mr. David Jones, Llansantffraid, also rendered valuable assistance by supplying the pulpit on several occasions. The services during the years 1843-44, were conducted for the greater part by Mr. Evan Thomas, who was afterwards ordained at Welshpool.

In the year 1844, a call was given to the Rev. John Thomas, of Dinas Mawddwy, to become pastor, and the invitation was accepted. Mr. Thomas's ministry proved a great success. The church and congregation very soon increased under his stirring preaching, so much so that the room in Howard Street was found to be too small for them. Consequently in 1845, a site was purchased on Pride Hill, and a small chapel erected on it at a cost of £800. This was opened on Christmas Day, 1845. Though £800 may not seem a very large amount, yet, for a

church that had only been in existence some three years, and with only four members at the outset, it was a big- undertaking; and it was no wonder that part of the money was owing on the opening day. Mr. Thomas, however, threw his whole energy into the task of liquidating this debt. He travelled up and down the country—through England, Wales, and Scotland,—to collect towards it, and in a short time had the satisfaction of clearing off the last penny.

In 1856, Mr. Thomas left to take charge of an English church at Ellesmere, and the church depended on supplies for about three years. In 1859, a call was given to the Rev. John Davies, of Henryd, Carnarvonshire, who was minister here until he removed to Ruthin in 1864. During his ministry the present handsome and convenient “Memorial” Chapel was erected on Dogpole at a cost of £1,821.

Mr. W. Williams, Mardol, and his family were very faithful and liberal to the cause from its commencement in 1842, until 1863, when they, with some other members, left and joined the English cause.

In the year 1866, a call was given to the Rev. John Davies, of Sirhowy, Mon., which was accepted. The Recognition Services took place in September of that year. The following account of the event appeared in the “Dysgedydd” for November, 1866:—

“On Saturday night, September 29th, Mr. Jones, Wrexham, went through the opening service, and sermons were preached by the Revs. S. Edwards, Machynlleth, and W. Ambrose, Portmadoc. On Sunday morning, at 7.30, a Prayer meeting was held, and at 10 a.m. the Rev. John Davies opened the service, and Messrs. Edwards and Ambrose preached. At 2 o’clock in the afternoon, the Recognition Meeting took place, when addresses were given by the Revs. S. Edwards and J. Jones, Smethcote, and letters of recommendation were read from the church at Sirhowy, and the Monmouthshire Association. Remarks were made about the difficulties of a Welsh minister in an English town by Mr. Edwards. The meetings were encouraging in every respect, and it was pleasing to notice the unanimity in every branch of the church; the congregation is on the increase,

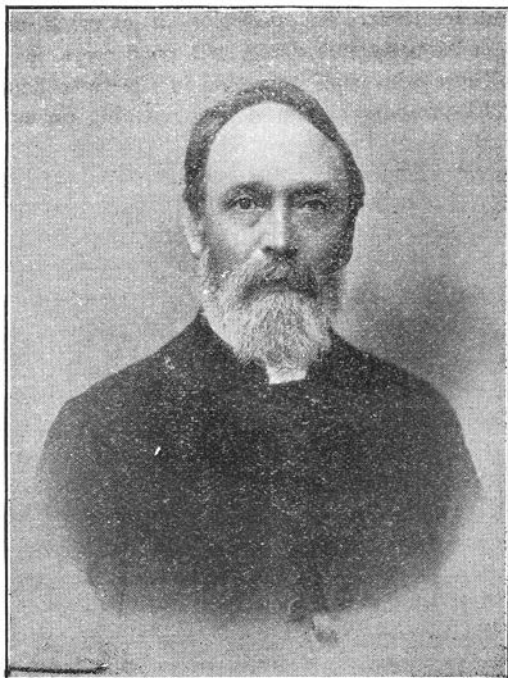


TABERNACLE, DOGPOLE, SHREWSBURY.

more interest taken in the Sunday School, and the church is progressing very favourably."

The Rev. John Davies is a native of Llansamlet, near Swansea. His parents, John and Margaret Davies, were distinguished for their piety, and he was specially indebted to his mother for the good impressions he received in his youth. He was received into church membership when only ten years of age, and commenced to preach when about seventeen. At the end of about twelve months, during which he exercised his talent in preaching on Sundays in the chapels of the neighbourhood, he went in 1855 to the Normal College, Swansea, which was at the time presided over by Dr. Evan Davies, a learned man and excellent school-master. In 1856, he went to Bala College, which was then under the care of the Rev. M. D. Jones. In June, 1858, he was received into Brecon College, where he earned for himself a good name as a successful student and an acceptable preacher. He had for his fellow students the late Principal E. Herber Evans, D.D., of Bangor College, and Professor D. Rowlands, B.A., of Brecon College. At the end of his course he received a unanimous call from the Congregational Church at Sirhowy, Monmouthshire, which was then, as it is now, one of the most influential churches in South Wales. His predecessor was the late Rev. Noah Stephens, afterwards of Liverpool, one of the ablest preachers of the past generation. Here he laboured with diligence until the year 1866, when he received a call from Shrewsbury. Though a Welsh pastorate in an English town is beset with many difficulties and discouragements, owing to the shifting nature of the congregation, and the difficulty of retaining the children, Mr. Davies stuck to his post for more than thirty years. In September, 1896, he was compelled to resign in consequence of ill-health, to the great regret of his people, by whom he was greatly beloved. He was presented with a purse of gold on his retirement.

The church has suffered very considerably through deaths and removals during the last twenty years. There are but very few remaining that were members when Mr. Davies commenced his ministry in 1866, namely the deacons—Mr. W. Humphreys, who was present at the first service in 1842, Messrs. S. Evans and J. Jones,—and Mr. and Mrs. Watkins and Mr. and Mrs. Harris.



REV. JOHN DAVIES.

In 1888, the chapel was thoroughly renovated and was reopened on September 3rd of that year, when the Revs. D. Roberts, D.D., Wrexham, and W. Jenkins, Newtown, preached. The chapel had not been decorated since it was opened in 1862.

The Sunday School is typical of the Welsh institution—more adults than juveniles,—and the annual Christmas Meeting is looked forward to with great interest by old and young.

The chapel is now free from debt, the last instalment having been paid in 1880. The difficulty of carrying on a Welsh cause is continually increasing, but good work is being done amongst those who come to reside in the town from over the border. At present the church is depending on supplies.



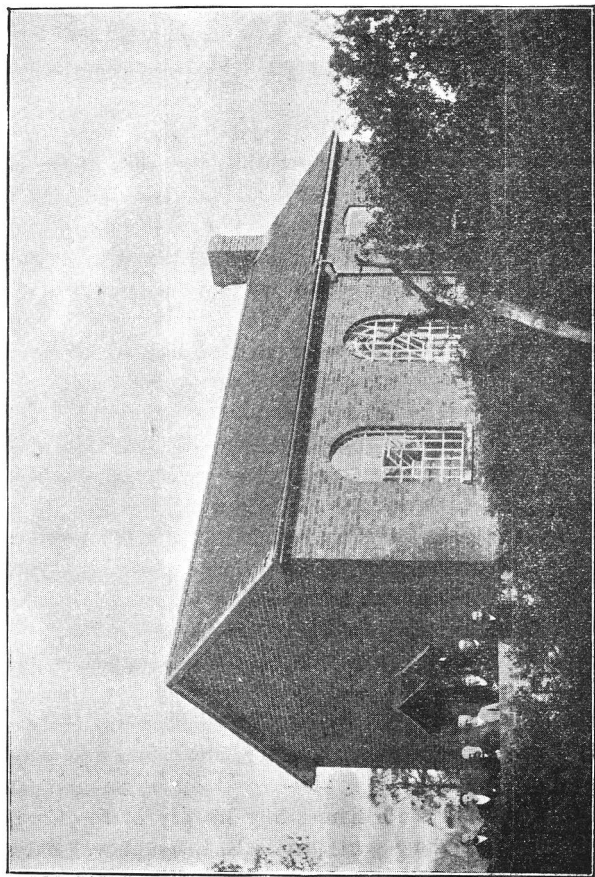


Melverley.

It is difficult to say with accuracy when the work at the remote village of Melverley, situate in the midst of the low lying marsh land between the rivers Severn and Vyrnwy, began, but it dates from an early period in the century, and probably belongs to the time of awakened evangelical activity, during which so many churches were founded from the Old Chapel, Oswestry. Preaching services at first were held on the open road side, and in the midst of opposition. In August, 1842, a Mr. Matthew Hale, of Dewsbury, Yorkshire, transferred for the nominal sum of £5 sterling, land on part of which a chapel and adjoining cottage with small farm buildings were erected. This property was conveyed to the following trustees in October, 1845: Rev. David Harries, Samuel Bickerton, the elder, William Croft, Thomas Pugh, Samuel Bickerton, the younger, Richard Croft, Henry Pugh, John Lacon, Pryce Owen, John Price, George Cambridge, George Warren.

As the name of the Rev. David Harries appears amongst these trustees, it would seem that the Melverley Church was under the care of that at Huyton. The pulpit was chiefly supplied by a lay agency from Oswestry, Dovaston, and Ruyton; amongst the preachers were Messrs. John Price and George Cambridge, without whose names any history of the Congregational Churches of those parts would be incomplete. After the Rev. David Harries resigned the charge, the church found an invaluable friend in Mr. William Croft (Farm Hall), who was chiefly the means of keeping the place open for some years.

The work, especially in earlier years, was subject to occasional interruptions by reason of the floods, which, especially in the winter and spring, spread for miles about the neighbourhood,



MELVERLEY CHAPEL.

and practically isolate the building; and a few years since, owing to difficulties in connection with the trust deed, the chapel was entirely closed, and services were abandoned. During the whole of this time, the Rev. J. J. Poynter, Oswestry, of whose services to this and the other churches in the district it would be impossible to speak too highly, made renewed attempts to have the difficulty settled and the place opened for worship. For a while the case seemed hopeless, but Mr. Poynter continued untiring in his efforts, and through the persistency which characterizes all he does, at last succeeded, and that at a time when his duties in other directions were most arduous, viz. during the term of his chairmanship of the Salop Association in the Centenary year. In June, 1896, the building was repaired and renovated, and re-opening services were held on Thursday, the 4th, when large numbers of visitors thronged from far and near, including friends from Oswestry and Shrewsbury, the Revs. J. J. Poynter, J. Davies Jones, Albert Whittingham (Dovaston), T. E. Morgan (Ruyton), and Messrs. H. E. Rogers, and William Jones, of Shrewsbury, taking part. On the following Sunday the services were continued. The Rev. J. Idrisyn Jones, of Welshpool, preached in the morning, the Rev. J. J. Poynter in the afternoon, and the Rev. Albert Whittingham in the evening. and the church itself was solemnly reconstituted with the observance of the Lord's Supper on the succeeding Tuesday evening. Mention must be made of Mr. Edward Williams, The Green, who has proved a devoted friend and rendered valuable service in various directions, also of Mr. Morris Jones, it young man of sterling worth who has proved himself invaluable in the Sunday School and other services. He comes of a sturdy Nonconformist family, and promises to be a source of strength to the church. A Bible, for pulpit use, and various other valuable gifts have been presented to the church by Miss Jenkins and Mrs. Lewis. After six months of honorary pastorate by the Rev. J. J. Poynter, the church has been grouped with Dovason, under the care of the Rev. Albert Whittingham, and with a promising Sunday School, under the superintendency of Mr. Morris Jones, continues its new life with every prospect of such success as the remoteness of the neighbourhood permits.



Castle Gate, Shrewsbury.

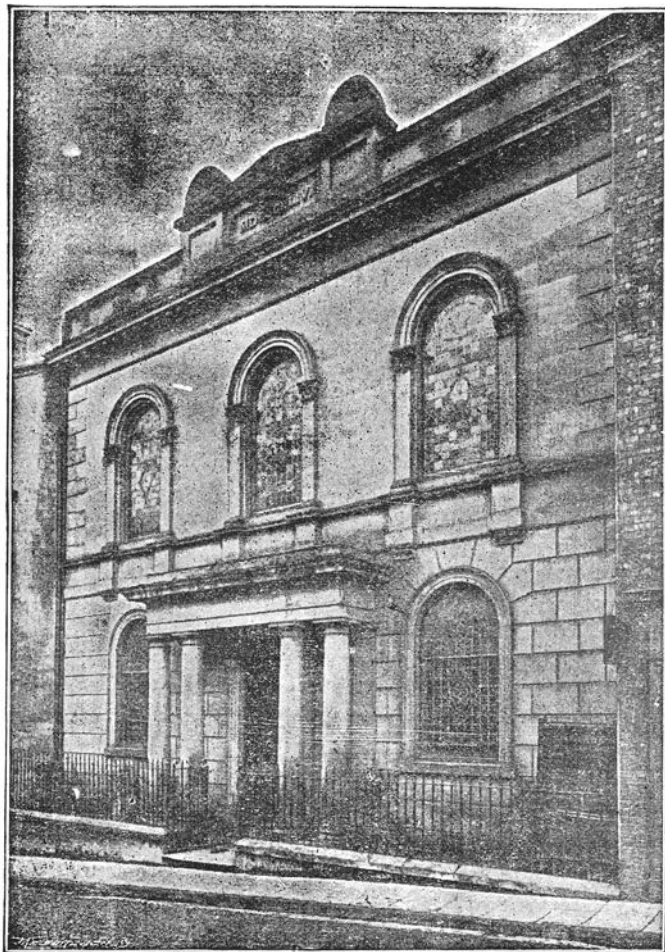
ACCORDING to the "Congregational Magazine" for April, 18-15, this place of worship originated as follows:—

"The majority of the church and congregation worshipping at Swan Hill Meeting House in this town, thinking it desirable to have a co-pastor, and finding it impossible to carry their wishes into effect so as to maintain 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,' ultimately determined that since they could not work in peace and harmony together, they would leave the old place of worship and endeavour to establish a second church, into which they might throw all their energies in order to extend the Kingdom of Christ.

"It will naturally be asked, whether there be room for two Independent Churches in Shrewsbury? To which the best answer that can be given is, to state the number of the population, which is about 23,000. Up to the present time, there has been but one Independent Chapel here, and that not able to seat 600 persons.

"All who know the town can bear ample testimony that there is abundant room for two large and vigorous interests; and to all who pray for the prosperity of Zion' it must be a matter of grief that there should not be such. The sincere prayer and the chief aim of those who have made this effort is, that this object may be speedily accomplished."

The devoted men and women who thus formed the new church were allowed to meet for worship at the Ebenezer Chapel, Town Walls, on Sunday, September 10th, 1843, at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Finding the hour for morning service to be inconvenient, they entered into a temporary arrangement with the Trustees of the Baptist Chapel, Castle Foregate, for the use of that building,



CASTLE GATE CHAPEL.

paying the interest of their chapel debt as an acknowledgment of this kindness.

Between September, 1843, and April, 1844, thirty-two ministers, tutors, and students preached with much acceptance, and Mr. Edward Hill, of Spring Hill College, Birmingham, was ultimately and almost unanimously elected to the pastorate, which he entered upon in July, 1844.

On the first day of meeting for worship the Sunday School was formed; and on the day the minister was chosen (April 29th, 1844), the first operations towards erecting the new chapel were commenced.

As early as October, 1813, those "who had left Swan Hill" expressed "the unanimous intention to do all they can to build a new chapel, and they are of opinion that they are in a position to accomplish it, at least every effort will be made to do so." At the close of the same month, it was resolved to carry out their intention. In the appeal "to the Christian Public" for subscriptions, it is stated that the undertaking "is for the cause of our common Saviour," and "we are bold to press it with all the earnestness of right-hearted enthusiasm." "We ask you to help us to erect a new Independent Chapel in this town." As the congregations were gradually increasing, the appeal continued, "The friends are desirous to build a place of worship ill an eligible situation, which shall unite in it simplicity without meanness and commodiousness without extravagance." The following words are a proof of the strength of their conviction and zeal, "We have resolved to raise not less than half the cost ourselves, before we commence to build, and for the remainder we solicit your kind assistance."

On January 29th, 1845, the Schoolrooms were opened. On Tuesday, March 4th, the opening of the chapel took place, the Rev. Dr. Baffles preaching from Matthew xvi., 18, and the Rev. John Angell James taking part in the service. Rev. William Urwick, D.D., preached on the following Sunday. The collections at these services amounted to upwards of £100.

The Foundation Stone had been laid by Mr. Jeffrey Lewin, on June 25th, 1841. In the cavity of the stone was deposited a bottle containing an account of the origin of the chapel. This account stated, in addition to the particulars given above,



REV. FRANCIS TINKLER.

that the number of members at that time was fifty-six. Mr. R. D. Hill, of Birmingham, was the architect, and Mr. James Vaughan, of Oswestry, the builder. At the stone-laying, Mr. Lewin made the following remarks: "I lay this stone as a Foundation or Corner Stone of a building to be reared and dedicated to Almighty God by Protestant Dissenters of the Congregational Faith and Order, in which His holy Gospel will be faithfully preached, and we trust, through His mercy, very successfully preached." "This 'Castle Gate Chapel' is also intended to recognise and maintain the undoubted right of majorities in all Protestant Dissenting Churches, to choose their own ministers and to manage their own affairs." The ministers present at the Stone-laying were Revs. J. J. Beynon (Dorington), John Davies (Oswestry), David James (Hadnall), J. H. Barrow (Market Drayton), Samuel Newth, M.A. (Broseley), Henry Watts (Town Walls, New Connexion), G. Hunter (Scotch Church).

On the day after the Chapel was opened, i.e. Wednesday, March 5th, 1815, Mr. Edward Hill was ordained. Rev. Thomas Weaver (Swan Hill), opened the service; Rev. T. R. Barker (Classical Tutor at Spring Hill College) expounded Congregational Principles; Rev. Francis Watts (Theological Tutor), offered the Ordination Prayer, and Dr. Willinm Urwick gave the charge to the Minister, basing his remarks on Titus i., 7. In the evening, Rev. John Haven, of Dudley, preached to the people. The other ministers who took part in the opening and Ordination Services were Revs. Samuel Newth, J. B. Pike, William Thorn, W. H. Dyer, Samuel Barber, J. Pattison, and John Pearce.

The first Pastor continued his ministry until March 18th, 1866, when he left to undertake the pastorate of King Street Chapel, Northampton. He wrote in the Church Book:—"That God may abundantly bless the Church of which for nearly twenty-two years I have been the pastor, and my successor, is my earnest prayer."

In June, 1866, Rev. William Wooding, R.A., of Spring Hill College accepted the pastorate and he was ordained in 1867 on June 22nd, the following ministers taking part: Revs. W. Bake (Wellington), George Kettle (Shrewsbury), D. D. Evans (Bridg-

north), R. G. Soper, B.A. (Ludlow), T. G. Horton (Wolverhampton), and Professor Barker, D.D. Mr. Wooding closed his ministry here in April, 1869. For about twenty years he has been doing successful educational work at the City of London School.

His successor was the Rev. J. P. Driver; of Dawley, who settled at Castle Gate in 1871, leaving in 1873 for Tettenhall Wood, Wolverhampton. Before settling at Dawley, he had been a Wesleyan, and after being at Tettenhall Wood for some years he went over to the Anglican Church.

On June 7th, 1874, the Rev. Francis Tinkler began his pastorate, preaching in the evening from Nehemiah iv., 6, which by a singular coincidence was the text taken by Dr. Urwick on the evening of the first Sunday the chapel was opened. Mr. Tinkler entered upon his ministry, after spending six years at Spring Hill College, and still continues his office and work here.

During the fifty-three years' history of the church, many faithful and worthy men and women have been connected with it. A branch church was formed by Mr. Hill at Church Stretton on February 14th, 1860, and in 1863, it numbered twelve members.

During Mr. Hill's pastorate, 259 members were admitted to fellowship, forty during Mr. Wooding's, sixteen by Mr. Driver, and 185 have been received by Mr. Tinkler.

In the earlier history of Castle Gate Church, the service of praise was assisted by the violin, bass-viol, etc.; but in Mr. Wooding's day a good harmonium was purchased which was exchanged for an organ in Mr. Driver's time, the balance of the money being left to be raised by his successor. The chapel having been renovated, the organ was paid for, and a few years later extensive alterations were made, towards which the late R. Maddox, Esq., contributed £60.

The Jubilee was marked by the gift of stained glass windows in memory of George and Martha Mitton, James and Susanna Rainford, Nellie Pace, Eliea Brookfield, Francis Forgham Ferrington, John Woodall, Richard and Jane Hinton, by surviving children and parents; also by the placing of a window on the Station side of the building to the memory of the Rev. Edward Hill, the subscriptions for which were obtained by Mrs. Rainford.

A special effort, which proved successful, was made for the complete renovation of the chapel.

The special services which were held to commemorate the Jubilee were worthy of the occasion, and proved "times of refreshing" to many. The preachers were Revs. T. Townsend, W. E. Jenkins, G. N. Williams, Dr. Hunter, W. Wooding, B.A., and G. S. Barrett, D.D. (Chairman of Congregational Union of England and Wales). A Lecture by Rev. J. G. Rogers, B.A., on Nonconformity, was added through the kindness of the friends at Swan Hill.

It should be stated here that on October 27th, 1862, eighteen members of the church tendered their resignation, "wishing to form themselves into and recognise each other as members of a separate and distinct society of the same order." They felt that they could thus best promote the spread of the Redeemer's Kingdom and their own souls' welfare. There was also a conviction that Congregationalism was not sufficiently represented in Shrewsbury, and that the time had come for the starting of a third and larger church. This was done, and the step has been abundantly justified by the prosperity which has attended the undertaking, and by the increased life of Congregationalism in the county town. "Castle, Gate," writes the present Pastor, "is proud of its descent. and its progeny. The members rejoice in the success of Abbey Foregate, so well organised and worked, and in the vigour of the 'Mother of us all,' so full of glorious traditions and present energy.

"This church, like many others in the county, has passed through changes which have under God been made to tend toward the deepening of spiritual life and increasing activity. The Sunday School is well supplied with a band of earnest teachers, and in church and school promises of true spiritual prosperity and growth are not wanting for the future."





Oakengates.

IN the year 1843, the, Congregational Church at Wellington, then under the pastoral care of the Rev. Samuel Evans, made an effort to establish Congregationalism in Oakengates. Public services and a Sunday School were held in the club room or one of the inns. For this room the Salop Association paid £4 per annum as rent for many years.

Mr. Francis Ferriday, now the senior deacon, has preserved one of the circulars announcing these first services. It reads as follows:—

“Oakengates. The Rev. S. Evans, Independent Minister of Wellington, will preach at the above place every Sunday afternoon in an upper room belonging to Mr. Bourne, Innkeeper, of that place. The first service, will be held on Sunday next, February 19th, 1843, commencing at 3 o’clock in the afternoon. A Sabbath School in which children of both sexes will be carefully taught to read and understand the Holy Scriptures will be instituted at the same time. The school will commence at half-past ten in the morning, and at half-past one in the afternoon.”

This movement, together with later ones, has been much blessed. Oakengates was formerly renowned for prize-fighting, cock-fighting, and bull-baiting; but the aspect of the whole place has been totally changed.

The workers from Wellington worked earnestly here for some time, walking the three miles in all weathers and without complaint, and undaunted by fierce opposition. They were much encouraged by the Sunday School children going out to meet them.

The work becoming too much for the Wellington Church to maintain, the matter was submitted to the Salop Association. That body engaged to supply £60 per annum for a term of

three years towards the support of a minister, and a committee was formed for the purpose of building a chapel and securing a pastor. In the meantime, the late Dr. F. J. Falding, who was then minister at Wellington, took the oversight of Oakengates.

The choice of the committee fell on the Rev. H. Ollerenshaw, who commenced his ministry on Sunday, April 25th, 1846, and laboured here faithfully for about five years.

The foundation stone of the chapel was laid on Monday, May 24th, 1847, by Mr. W. Sims Bull, the Pastor, Rev. F. J. Falding, and the Rev. Messrs. Mandeno, Barrow, Shaw and others taking part. The schoolroom, which is under the chapel, was opened for worship on Sunday, November 21st, in the same year. The chapel was opened on Wednesday, April 26th, 1848, by the Rev. Dr. Raffles. It cost about £1,000.

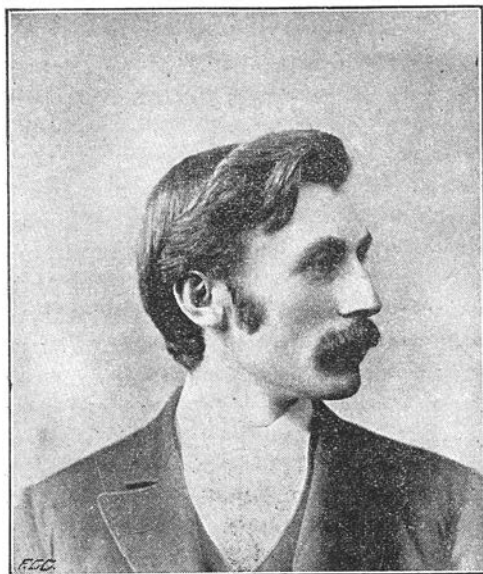
Eighteen persons from Oakengates had been admitted into temporary fellowship at Wellington, and at the end of 1848, twenty-one members were dismissed from Wellington to form a separate church at Oakengates.

The Rev. H. Ollerenshaw resigned his charge on September 21st, 1851, and was succeeded by the Rev. J. Burrell in the next year. During Mr. Burrell's pastorate, the church enjoyed much prosperity, and the debt on the building was wiped out. Owing to failing health, the pastor resigned after three years' service. Rev. W. Bealby succeeded him in April, 1855, and resigned after two years had elapsed.

The next minister was the Rev. A. Warner, during whose ministry the side galleries were erected, owing to the crowded congregations. Classrooms were also built. A large number of people joined the church at this time as the outcome of a stirring revival, and some are still members of the church.

Mr. Warner's successor was the Rev. W. Marriott, who gave much attention to the young people of his congregation, and held classes which are still gratefully remembered by those who were privileged to attend them. He resigned in 1868, and at the present time resides in Oakengates.

On June 21st, 1868, Mr. Frederick Robinson, of Nottingham Institute, was called to the pastorate, and entered upon his work on the first Sunday in July. He was ordained on Good Friday, March 26th, 1869, when the Rev. John Whewell, of



REV. W. W. GEE.

Coventry, expounded the principles of Congregationalism, and the Rev. Dr. Paton, of Nottingham Institute, gave the charge to the minister. Mr. Robinson terminated his ministry on November 17th, 1870, and removed to Burton Joyce (Notts.)

On the second Sunday in July, 1871, the Rev. John Stevenson, late of Tetsworth, commenced his ministry, and he was recognised as pastor on October 24th. In his time a "record" collection was made, £80 being taken in one day. Mr. Stevenson resigned in 1875, and went to Thornton, Bradford.

His successor was the Rev. David Jones, of Itchen, who opened his work at Oakengates on Sunday, March 18th, 1877, terminating it in December, 1883, when he left for Pinchbeck (Lincs.)

Rev. Joseph Crewe, of Hadnall and Clive, was the next minister. His pastorate commenced on the first Sunday in January, 1885, and terminated on December 25th, 1887.

The church was then without a minister until the early part of 1889, when Rev. W. Willoughby Gee, who was then acting as assistant to the Rev. R. Baldwin Brindley, of Nottingham, accepted a call and commenced his ministry on May 5th.

Mr. Gee's work at Oakengates has been of a high order. The congregations have considerably increased and nearly ninety additions have been made to the church roll. A most successful work has been carried on among the young people, and the psalmody has been improved. The church has been renovated and a new organ built.

In February, 1893, the Jubilee of the church was celebrated by a month of special services, in which the following ministers, among others, took part: Revs. W. Cuthbertson, B.A., C. S. Home, M.A., T. T. Sherlock, B.A., W. J. P. Wright, B.A., and M. Astbury.

In the autumn of 1896, the Rev. W. Gee, having overtaxed his strength, and feeling the need of a quieter sphere of labour, accepted the unanimous invitation of the church at Frees, being: soon afterwards succeeded by the present Pastor, Rev. M. Williams, B.A., of Lancashire College.



Shipley.

THE church here owes its origin to the labours of the members of Queen Street Chapel, Wolverhampton, which exerts itself in teaching and preaching on all sides, and in this case has extended its operations into Shropshire.

The cause commenced by the holding of a prayer meeting at the house of Mr. Robinson of Long Common. In August, 1857, Mr. Robinson applied to one of the Queen Street lay preachers to conduct a service in his house. Since then the connection of Shipley with Wolverhampton has been unbroken.

On May 22nd, 1860, a piece of ground formed by cross roads at New Inns was purchased for the erection of a chapel. New Inns is a small hamlet in the parish of Claverley, and is distant half-a-mile from Shipley, and about as far from Budge Heath.

Upon this ground a Gothic chapel was erected. It was opened for worship on Tuesday, April 30th, 1861. The Rev. R. D. Wilson, of Birmingham, late pastor of Queen Street Chapel, Wolverhampton, was the preacher; the Rev. J. P. Palmer, of Snow Hill Chapel, Wolverhampton, and the Rev. D. D. Evans, of Bridgnorth, taking part in the service. On the following Sunday, Mr. J. R. Peacock, of Bridgnorth, and the Rev. J. Richards, of Stourbridge, preached.

The total cost of the chapel was £420 11 s. 6d., which was all paid by 1866. The friends who engaged in the work of preaching at Shipley collected the greater part of the money.

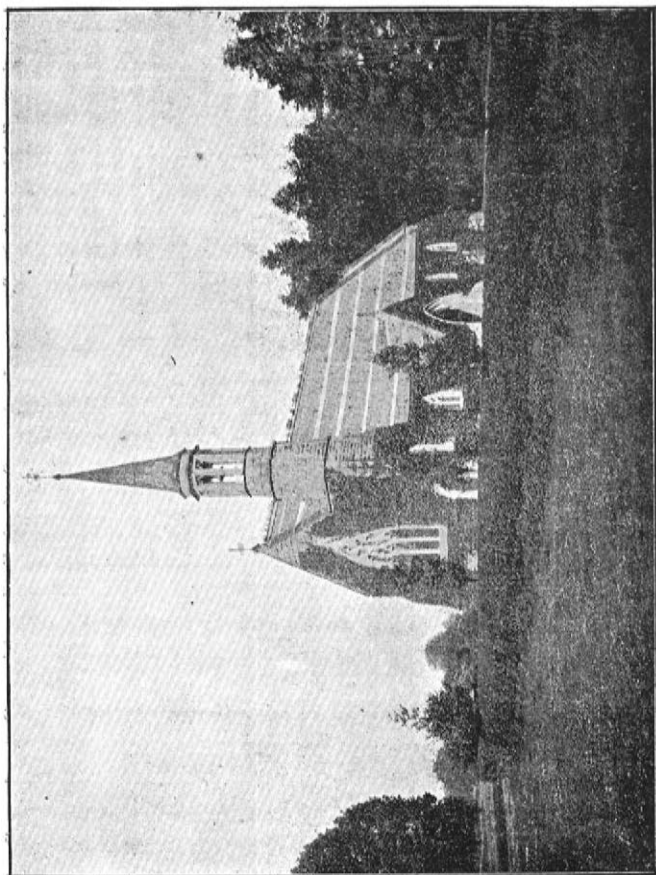
Shipley Church is a branch of Queen Street, Wolverhampton, with separate officers. Its history belongs, therefore, rather to the Staffordshire Congregational Union than to the Salop Association.



The Quinta.

THE Rev. T. Davison, who served the Quinta Church as pastor for twenty years, has said that "the residence of Mr. Barnes at the Quinta will be chiefly memorable for the erection of the Congregational Church, a beautiful Gothic structure, covered with ivy and roses, and internally decorated with great taste, constituting it one of the chief attractions of the district. Ever since its erection, Mr. Barnes has entirely supported the ministry, by providing a lovely manse and a liberal salary, also personally, in conjunction with his late excellent wife, co-operating in all the varied activities of church and Sunday School work. The relations between Mr. Barnes and the minister were the most cordial and hearty. There was not the remotest approach to authority and dictation on the part of Mr. Barnes towards the minister, who entirely depended upon him for pecuniary support, but invariably the greatest respect and affection. This was the experience of twenty years by one of the pastors."

As the name of Thomas Barnes, Esq., is so often met with in the history of Shropshire Congregationalism, a brief sketch of his career will be in place here. Mr. Barnes was born at Farnworth in 1812. Receiving parental training of an exemplary Christian character, he became in early youth a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, and was received as a member of the church at Farnworth, then under the pastoral care of the Rev. D. Dyson. He was soon elected a deacon and superintendent of the Sunday School, efficiently filling both offices for several years. In 1837, he established, in conjunction with his father and brother, a day school, still known in Farnworth as "The Seminary." For some time he was treasurer to the Blackburn Academy (now Lancashire College). In 1849, he was made a magistrate for Lancashire, and from 1852 to 1857, and again from



THE QUINTA CHAPEL.

1861 to 1868 represented Bolton in Parliament as a Liberal; He removed to the Quinta in 1858, and was appointed a magistrate for Denbighshire, filling also the office of High Sheriff. He was treasurer of the Salop Association from 1861 to 1885. This office, to quote Mr. Davison again, "so far from being merely a nominal one and limited to the subject of finance, included in his estimation and fulfilment of it a real and hearty interest in the true, welfare of the churches throughout the county. This was shown by the regularity of his attendance at all the meetings of the Association, and the wise counsels, and practical suggestions he was so willing and able to give. In conjunction with our late esteemed brethren, the Rev. D. D. Evans, of Bridgnorth, and Mr. Thomas Minshall, of Oswestry, he went on several occasions, tours amongst the churches, especially the weaker ones, in the county, to encourage and stimulate them in their good work.

"Those who were intimately associated with Mr. Barnes in the work of the Salop Association will always cherish the most pleasant and grateful recollections of his genuine devotion and real practical interest in all its departments of Christian work, and his old friends with whom he worked so happily, as well as his new friends who may only know him by name, will earnestly pray that now he is laid aside by great physical inability and entire incapacity for any active work, he may have a peaceful and happy waiting for his heavenly reward." Mr. Barnes passed to his rest April 24th, 1897.

The Quinta Church was opened for worship on October 14th, 1858, there being a large gathering of ministers and friends.

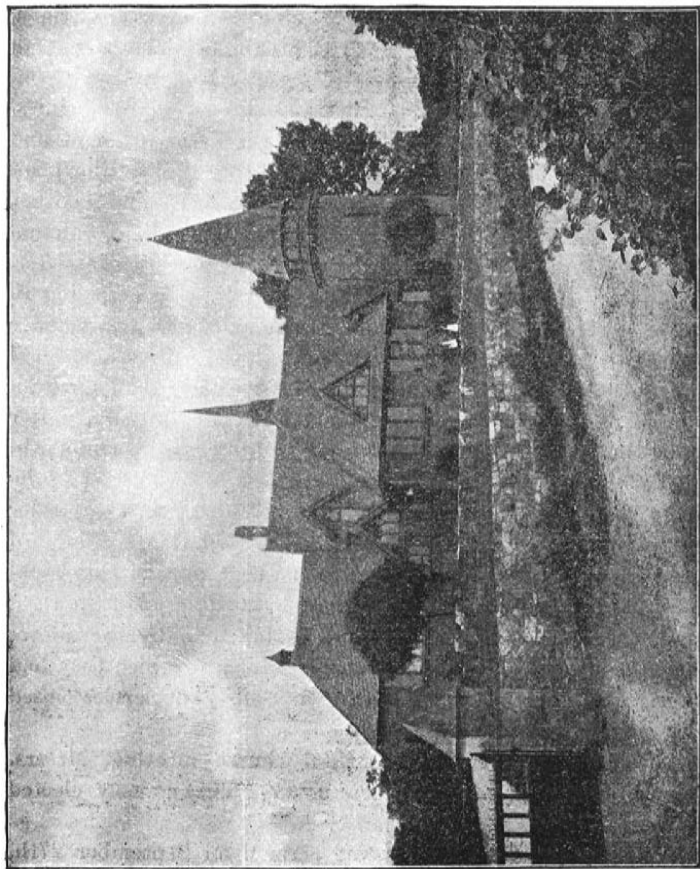
The following is a copy of the circular issued on the, occasion by Mr. Barnes:—

"The Quinta Congregational Church. Mr. Barnes presents his compliments to _____ and invites to the Public Services connected with the Dedication of the above Church which will be held as follows:—

"On Thursday, October 14th, the Rev. Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool, will preach in the morning, and the Rev. G. D. McGregor in the evening.

"Services to commence at 11 o'clock a.m. and at half-past 6 p.m.

"On the following Sunday, the Rev. Samuel Martin, of West-



THE QUINTA CONGREGATIONAL SCHOOL.

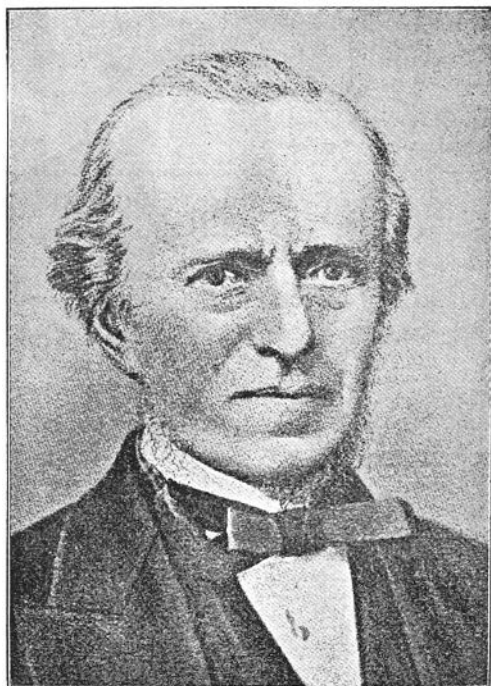
minster, will preach, morning and evening; and the Rev. Robert Thomas, of Bangor (in Welsh), in the afternoon.

"Services to commence at 11 o'clock, at 3, and at half-past 6." The first minister was the, Rev. J. D. Riley, of Lancashire College, who began his ministry in 1861, and resigned in September, 1863. During his pastorate, the church was formed as the following extract from the Church Book will show:—

"February 27th, 1862. On Thursday evening, February 27th, 1862, at 7 o'clock, nine persons, professing themselves Christians, met in the Quinta Congregational Church and joined in solemn covenant and Christian fellowship, thereby constituting themselves into an independent church, on Congregational principles. The names of those thus entering into a mutual covenant and fellowship are: John Dobson Riley, minister, Judith Riley, his wife; Thomas Barnes, Anne Barnes, his wife; John Thomas, John Williams, David Ellerker, John Broughall, Robert Salmon. The Rev. John D. Riley opened the service, as presiding minister, by reading the Scriptures from Ephesians ii., and engaging in prayer, after which the Rev. John Lockwood, of Oswestry, gave an address on "The principles and discipline of a Congregational Church." The Rev. F. B. Brown, of Wrexham, then gave an address on "The requirements for Church Membership," after which the Covenant as prefixed to the roll of Church members in this book, was read by Rev. J. D. Riley, as also the "twenty principles of religion," and thirteen "principles of Church order and discipline," as declared by the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and prefixed to the beginning of this book. Assent having been signified to these by hording up of the right hand, the Lord's Supper was then partaken of by the above-named persons, as a pledge of the covenant into which they had entered with each other and with their God. The service closed with singing and prayer."

On May 3rd, 1863, at a special church meeting, Messrs. Thomas Barnes and David Ellerker were unanimously elected deacons,

Mr. Riley preached his farewell sermon on September 27th, and at a meeting on the 30th, "an expression of satisfaction at his service was proposed by William Porter, seconded by Thomas



T. BARNES, Esq.

Barnes, which was to be signed by the Deacons on behalf of the church and handed to him.”

On September 25th, 1864, it was resolved to invite to the pastorate the Rev. Thomas Davison, of Crewe. He accepted the invitation, and commenced his labours on Sunday, November 6th, preaching in the morning from Psalm lxxi., 16, and in the evening from 2 Thess. iii., 1. For twenty years he faithfully served the church, and is now deeply beloved by all who remain of the congregation to which he ministered. On his retirement he went to live at Whittington, and later to Brierley Hill, where he still resides. His late wife was indefatigable in her labours for the church and all good works in the neighbourhood.

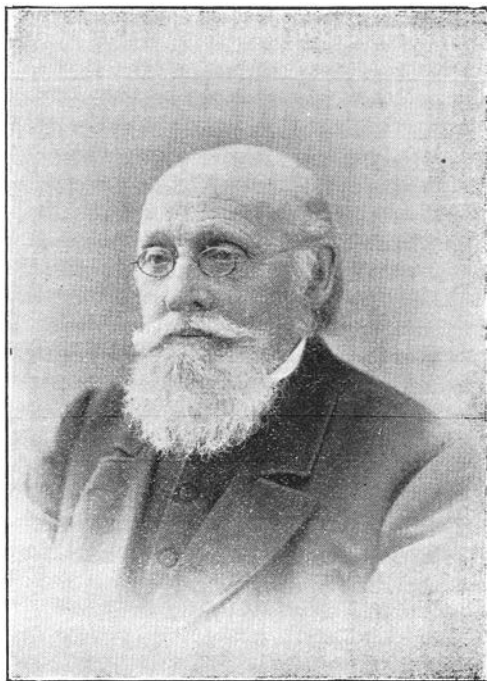
Mr. Davison's successor was the Rev. E. W. Place, B.A., of Lancashire College, who began his ministry in April, 1887. After much good work had been done he resigned in November, 1889.

The present minister, the Rev. W. E. Hughes, who had been for some years pastor of the neighbouring church at Preeshenlle, received an invitation from the church soon after the resignation of Mr. Place. He commenced his ministry in March, 1890, and can add his testimony to that of his predecessors, that the relations between him and the church have been the happiest possible.”

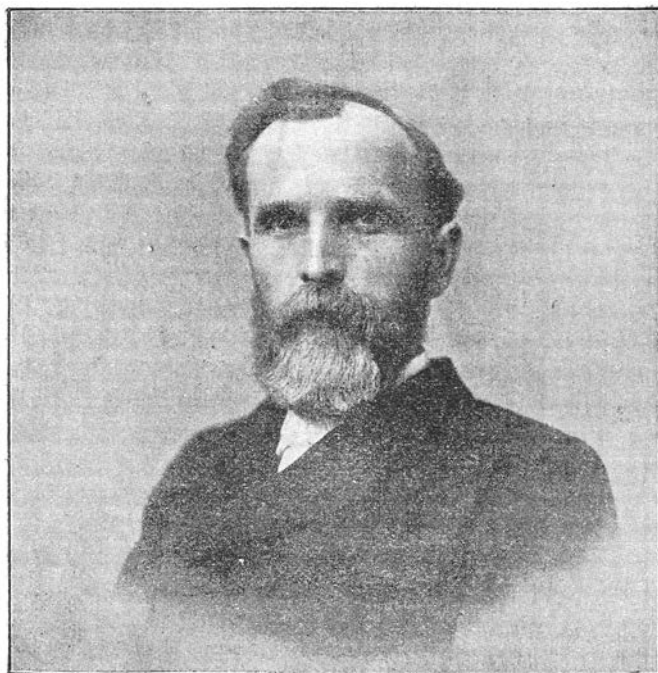
Contiguous to the church stand the handsome school buildings, erected in memory of the late Mrs. Barnes, who had long wished for new schools. They were designed by Mr. T. Raffles Davison, and built by Messrs. Hughes and Stirling, of Liverpool, at the cost of about £4,000. They are handsome and convenient, and in every way adapted for the Sunday School and public meetings held in them.

No history of the church at the Quinta could be at all complete without special reference to the zeal and generosity of Mr. Barnes and of Colonel and Mrs. Barnes. Mr. Barnes built the church and has continued to maintain the ministry at his own expense. He was the first deacon. Since his health failed, Mr. Thomas Frith, and later Mr. James Richardson have been elected deacons.

Colonel Barnes has for thirty years led the choir and in every way helped in the work. Mrs. Barnes is known throughout



REV. T. DAVISON.



REV. W. E. HUGHES

all our churches for her zeal and earnest activity. Missions, education, temperance, and an other movements for good have found in her a true friend and efficient helper.

The membership of the church has continued to grow in spite of the fact that young people leave the district for the towns and industrial centres in search of employment and better pay. The roll now contains fifty-four names.

The missionary zeal of the Quinta Church, inspired and led by the teaching and example of Mr. Barnes and his family, deserves especial notice. The congregation not being called upon to contribute to the minister's stipend or the building fund, is free to help other causes, as other churches are not. In 1891, Mr. W. E. McFarlane, who was going out to Mongolia, became the missionary of the Quinta Church in a special sense, all the funds needed for his maintenance being raised here. His health failing, he was compelled to return to England. Since then the Rev. T. Cochrane, M.B., C.M., who has sailed for the same part of the mission field, has entered into the same relation with the church.

The Colleges of the denomination, the Pastors' Retiring Fund, Caterham School, the London Congregational Union, Dr. Barnardo's Homes, and other benevolent institutions have been liberally helped year by year from the church's funds.





Church Stretton.

IN the summer of 1858, some friends connected with the Congregational Churches in Shrewsbury, Ludlow, and Donington, who were interested in the spiritual welfare of the town of Church Stretton, became anxious to hold services there.

Failing to obtain a room for the purpose, they commenced out-door services under the Town Hall. The first was conducted by the Rev. Mr. McCowan (at that time officiating at Swan Hill, Shrewsbury, during the absence, through ill-health, of Mr. Thorp); the second by the Rev. E. Hill, of Castle Gate, Shrewsbury; the third by the Rev. Lewis Roberts, of Dorrington. Under their supervision, assisted by several lay friends—Messrs. J. W. Woodall, G. Mitton, John and George Drayton, and Marks, of Shrewsbury, and Mr. James Evans, of Ludlow,—the out-door services were continued until the season advanced, and they became impracticable. Efforts were then made to secure a room; the only one to be procured was once a carpenter's shop, the approach to which was by a narrow step ladder. This room which would hold seventy or eighty people, was generally inconveniently ????? and not more than two-thirds of the congregation could stand upright in it. Nevertheless, the cause prospered, a Sunday School was established, and a service was com-???? All Stretton.

On February 14th, 1860, a church of seven members was founded under the auspices of Castle Gate Church, the Rev. E. Hill being minister. Worship was continued in the unfavourable circumstances mentioned above for more than six years.

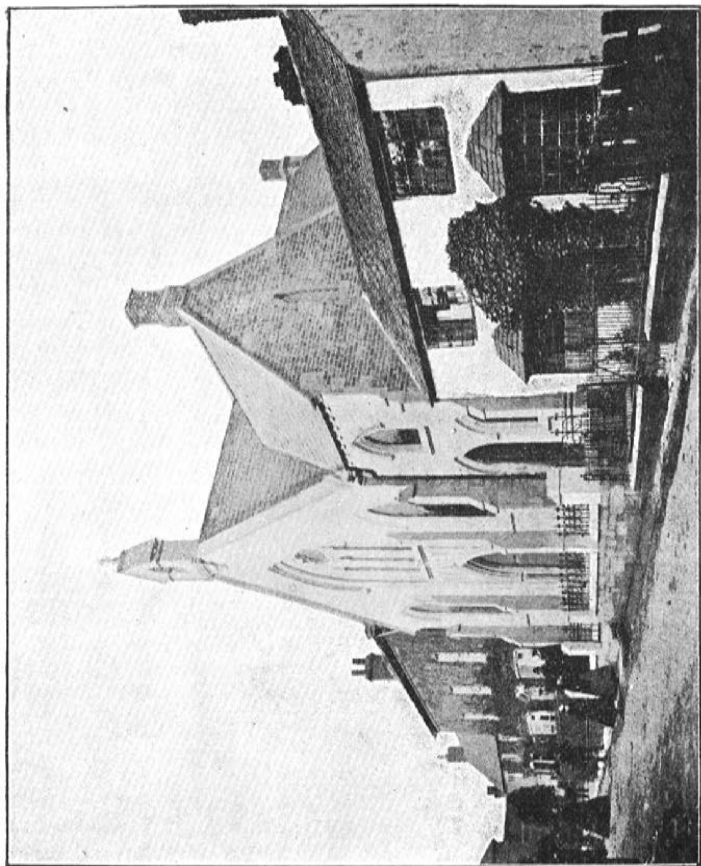
After several efforts, a site for a chapel was obtained for £295, the money for the purchase being kindly given by Thomas Barnes, Esq., M.P. The plans were gratuitously prepared by Joseph Bratton, Esq., of Birkenhead.

The Foundation Stone was laid by Thomas Barnes, Esq., in August, 1865, and the chapel was opened for Divine service on Tuesday, May 29th, 1866, the sermon being preached by the Rev. R. W. Dale, M.A. (afterwards LL.D.), of Birmingham. This service was held in the morning, Mr. Dale preaching from Luke xxiv., 5, 6, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen." In the afternoon, a bazaar was held, followed by a tea and a public meeting. The Rev. Newman Hall, LL.B. (afterwards D.D.), also took part in the opening services. The sum of £135 was taken during the day. The cost of the chapel was a little over £1,000.

The pulpit was supplied by various ministers and laymen until the first Sunday in September in the same year, when the Rev. J. McKiddie, late of Harmer Hill, was invited to the pastorate, which he continued to hold until October, 1870, when he resigned on account of ill-health. The pulpit was again supplied until March, 1872, when the Rev. John Hamer, who had laboured for some months at Bishop's Castle, commenced his ministry on the 31st, on the unanimous choice of the members of the church and with the consent of the District Committee at Shrewsbury to whom the affairs of the church had been submitted for advice and guidance.

At the time of Mr. Hamer's coming, the church consisted of only eight members. During his ministry, fifteen persons were received into fellowship. Mr. Harrier found the cause in the lowest condition, but, after a time, the attendances, especially at the evening services, increased, and they have since continued to be good in spite of changes and removals. The new pastor at once resumed the Sunday afternoon service at All Stretton, which has been, and is still, much valued by the people in that locality.

Mr. Hamer found the chapel burdened with a heavy debt; there was a mortgage for £400 at five per cent., and there was also owing to the London Chapel Building Society £55. The pastor made an effort to remedy this state of things, and solicited aid from various friends. As a result, the £55 was paid off, and a sum of £30 was deposited in the Bank. During his ministry, the following articles were provided: Harmonium,



CHURCH STRETTON CHAPEL.

music stool, heating apparatus. Communion table, two tea urns, tea tables, etc.

The Rev. John Hamer resigned his pastorate on the last Sunday of 1877 (December 30th), feeling it to be his duty on account of advancing years to retire in favour of a, younger man. He went in the next month to reside at Heywood (Lancs.) He died at Southport in 1889, in his eightieth year.

After the resignation of Mr. Hamer, the services at Church Stretton were again conducted by supplies, until the end of March, 1878, when the Rev. W. H. Picken, of Hambledon, entered upon the pastorate of Church Stretton and Bishop's Castle, which he continued to hold until October, 1881, when, in consequence of the constant illness of his wife, he was compelled to return to the South of England. During the last eighteen months of Mr. Picken's ministry, the church had been labouring under great difficulties, many of its supporters being removed by death and other causes, and the place still burdened with the heavy debt. By the exertions of the members, assisted by Shrewsbury friends, the services were again conducted by supplies until Midsummer, 1882, when, by the advice and under the guidance of the Salop Association, the church was added to the pastorate of the Rev. J. H. Lewis, of Dorrington.

In 1886, the friends in Shrewsbury determined to make another effort to wipe out the debt which amounted to about £,500. Consequently, a, large Bazaar was held in the Working Men's Hall, Shrewsbury, commencing on Thursday, April 8th, opened by R. Maddox, Esq., J.P. In addition. Mr. Maddox and Mr. T. Barnes gave donations of £30 each. Other smaller sums amounting to £150 were given, and the remainder was raised by the bazaar, which was in every way successful. In fact, enough money was realised to completely wipe out the debt and clear the church from all its difficulties.

A further Sale of Work was held in the Town Hall, Church Stretton, on August Bank Holiday. The proceeds were sufficient to defray the expense of thoroughly renovating the chapel; no, work of the kind having been done since the building was erected.

The re-opening service was held on the first Sunday in

October, the preacher being the Rev. G. N. Williams, of Claremont Chapel, Shrewsbury, now of Stretford, Manchester.

In 1882, as the harmonium had become old and inefficient, a committee was formed and collectors were appointed to obtain the, needful funds for the purchase of a new one. Sufficient money was subscribed to justify the purchase of a very fine Bell Organ, which contributes much to the brightness of the services.

The cottage meeting, commenced at All Stretton in 1872 by the Rev. John Harrier, has been uninterruptedly carried on since, two services being held on each Lord's Day, and one during the week. During 1895, the congregations having become too large for the cottage, a room near was secured, which is now used as a mission room, and a much-needed Sunday School was commenced.





Abbey Foregate Shrewsbury.

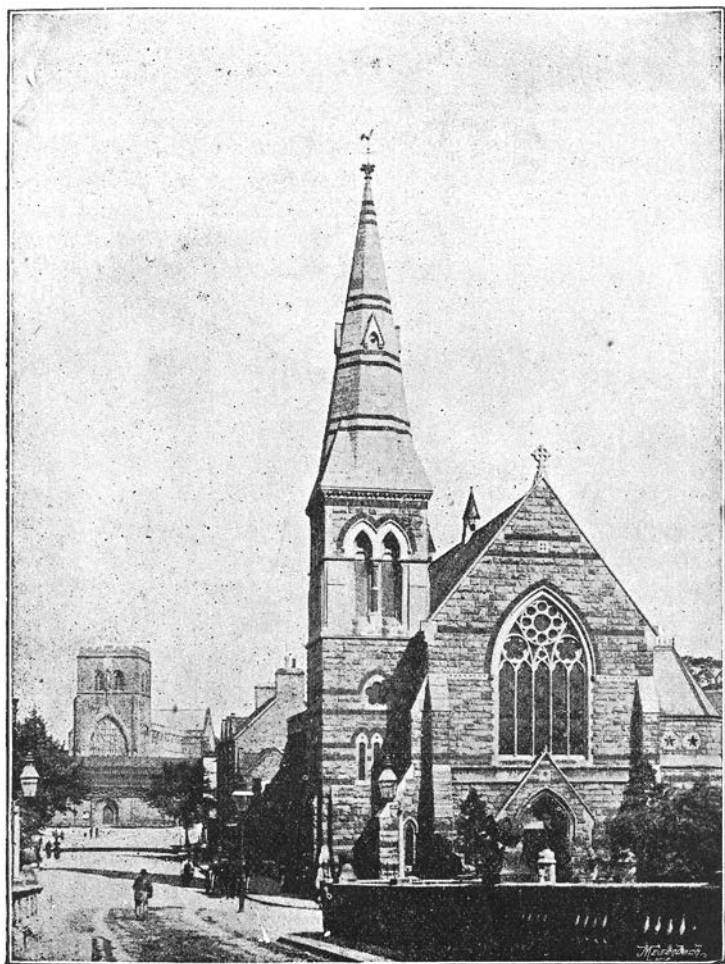
IN the year 1862, an effort was made by the Congregationalists of this country to celebrate in some worthy manner the, ejection of the two thousand faithful clergymen from. the Established Church in 1662; and it was decided amongst other schemes to erect in places where there was manifest need for them Memorial Churches.

At a Bi-centenary Celebration Meeting held in Shrewsbury, a resolution was adopted that a new church should be formed and a building erected.

As early, however, as 1853, it was thought by some that the time had arrived for a new Congregational Church to be formed in the Abbey Foregate district. In 1862, the appropriate occasion seemed to have come to give practical effect to what, until that time, had been merely thought and spoken about. Accordingly, in that year, the site on which the church now stands was purchased for £750. Several old buildings, consisting of a painter and carpenter's shop and a public house, were altered and adapted to the purposes of worship, and for some months Sunday School and public worship were held in the temporary buildings. Mr. Bidlake, of Wolverhampton, was instructed to prepare plans and specifications for church, school, infant class rooms, etc., and Mr. Trow's tender was accepted.

On April 12th, 1863, Thomas Barnes, Esq., of the Quinta, who had given £500, laid the foundation stone.

A year afterwards, on April 10th, 1864, the schoolroom was opened for use, and in a few weeks, time, viz. on Tuesday, May 31st, the church itself was completed.



ABBAY FOREGATE CHAPEL.

Many friends gathered at the various opening services, which extended over two or three weeks, and were conducted by Revs. Dr. Vaughan, Dr. Mellor, G. W. Conder (Manchester), W. H. Dyer (Bath), John Sibree (Coventry), Dr. Falding, Alex. Wilson, B.A., W. Thorp, and others. Henry Vincent, Esq., of London, also preached and lectured.

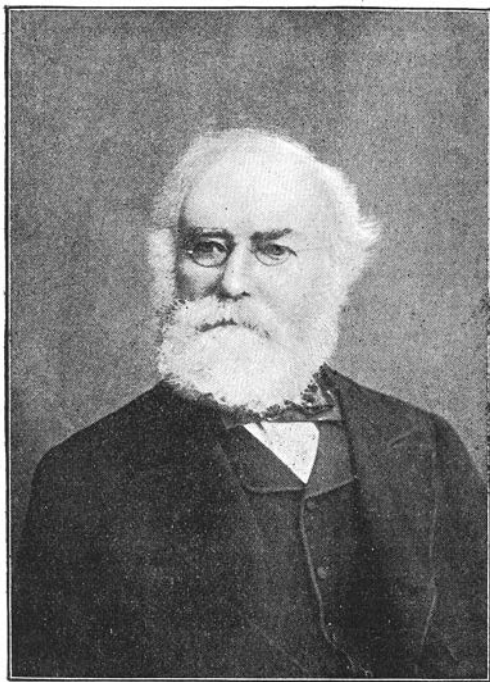
In June, 1865, Mr. Charles Croft, of Cheshunt College, accepted a cordial invitation to the pastorate. To Mr. Croft's ability, character, and work during his seven years' ministry, is due a great deal of the subsequent success and prosperity of the church.

On his removal to a church at Plymouth, the congregation at Abbey Foregate was without a pastor for nearly a year, at the end of which time a cordial invitation was given to the Rev. W. R. Noble, of Tiverton. The call was accepted, and Mr. Noble began his ministry in November, 1872. The Recognition Services were held on Thursday, March 6th, 1873, when the Rev. A. Morton Brown, D.D., of Cheltenham, gave the charge to the pastor, the Rev. T. G. Horton, of Wolverhampton, gave the charge to the church, and the Rev. D. D. Evans, of Bridgnorth, offered the Recognition Prayer.

Mr. Noble laboured here with great earnestness and success. Many additions to the church were made, the remaining debt of £1,000 was removed, and all the organisations of the church were placed on a solid basis. In March, 1876, after little more than three years' labour in Shrewsbury, the pastor was almost suddenly called to his reward. Mr. Noble's death was a sincere grief, not only to his church and congregation, but to many people in the town generally.

In May of the following year, 1877, Mr. Thomas Townsend, then at Spring Hill College, was invited to the pastorate. He accepted the call, and entered upon his labours in August of the same year.

During the nineteen years the Rev. T. Townsend has been minister, the church's history, in spite of many great changes, has been one of entire peace and comparative prosperity. In 1888, the school premises, which had grown too small, were considerably enlarged. A new infant room, several class rooms,



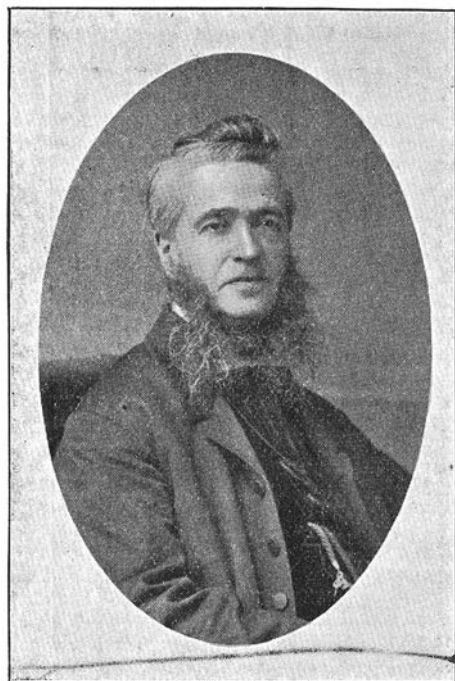
MR. P. MADDOX, J.P.
Chairman of the Association, 1885.

and a, caretaker's house were erected at a, cost of £1,311. Five years later, in 1893, the church was decorated, and a new system of ventilation was introduced, and a better method of lighting was adopted. These changes, together with other smaller matters, involved an outlay of £350.

A biographical sketch of Mr. Townsend, accompanied by a portrait of him and an engraving of the Abbey Foregate building appeared in the "Evangelical Magazine" for April, 1897. From this account the following extract may be given:—

"Much of the phenomenal success which has attended the church is due to Mr. Townsend's wisdom, fidelity, and devotion, amply and loyally assisted as he has been throughout by a diaconate in full sympathy with his aspirations and methods of work, so that in addition to the various branches of Christian ministry as understood by the wider spirit of service of the present day, including a Literary Society which publishes its own magazine, and a flourishing Christian Endeavour Society (one of the very first formed in this country), the church is honourably distinguished for its liberal support of the London Missionary Society and the Church-Aid Society, and stands, easily first, as the leading Congregational Church in the county of Salop.

Few ministers of our own, or any other, denomination can be more heartily beloved by all sections of his people, old and young, than Mr. Townsend, whose bright and vigorous Christian manhood, in all its sympathy and thoroughness, with his Evangelical preaching and great business capacity, are a strength, an inspiration, and an example to those to whose service, in the Master whom he has helped to make to so many a more living and present reality as well as a Divine Saviour, he has given the varied fulness of his powers. It. needs only to walk with him through the streets of the delightful historic town he has for twenty years made his home to discover the high place Mr. Townsend holds also in the esteem of his neighbours in every rank and department of life. This is further shown by the fact that in February, 1896, on their invitation, he read a paper to the members of the Shropshire Clerical Union on 'Faith without Dogma,' in connection with another by the



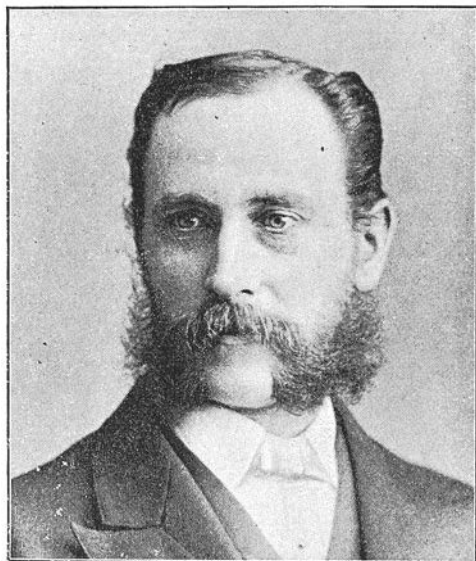
REV. W. R. NOBLE.

Rev. T. B. Strong, of Christ Church, Oxford, on 'Dogma as an expression of Faith.'

Mr. Townsend is a trustee of the borough charities and of Allatt's School, has been an active member of the Shrewsbury School Board for several years, and also takes his share of other public duties in connection with the welfare of the town. But outside the circle of his own people he is probably best known and most beloved by the ministers and congregations of our own churches throughout the county, especially those most in need of counsel and assistance, to whom he has ever been a ready adviser and friend. He was a delegate to the recent Free Church Council in London, represents the Shrewsbury auxiliary on the London Missionary Society's Board, being a member of its Southern Committee; has pleaded the cause of Church-Aid Society in various parts of the country, and rendered important service to the Salop Association of Independent Ministers and Churches, of which he was elected chairman in the year 1884, and is now the Hon. Secretary. He has resisted all temptations to leave the church he has served so well for so many years, and those most nearly associated with him in town and county work hope fervently that he may long continue to do so."

This is not the place for mentioning the names of present supporters and workers, nor for enumerating the friends who have been called home. There are, however, three names which ought, in common justice, to be mentioned in ever so brief a history of Abbey Foregate Church, on account of the inestimable value of their various services. From the beginning of the movement, Mr. R. Maddox, J.P., Besford House; Mr. John Woodall, Ravenscroft; Mr. Heath, Pride Hill, did not spare time, work, or substance, which they gave, each according to his several ability, in their devoted efforts on behalf of the church. It is not too much to say that the church's life and progress would have been much less smooth and rapid, had it not been for their indefatigable labours on its behalf.

There is sitting accommodation in the church for 950. The general school and infant rooms provide for 550 scholars. In addition, there are thirteen class rooms, two vestries, and a



REV. T. TOWNSEND.

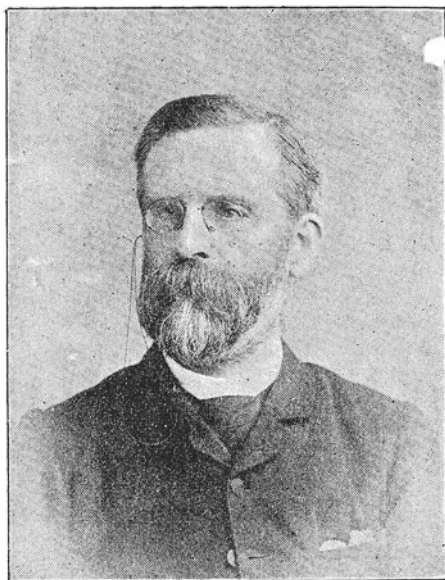
caretaker's house. The entire buildings have cost about £8,500 and are quite free of debt.

At the end of 1896, when the Rev. W. E. Jenkins left Swan Hill for High Barnet, the executive committee of the Salop Association cordially invited the Rev. T. Townsend to accept the secretaryship of that body, which he consented to do.





MR. T. WARREN THOMPSON.



MR. S. JACKSON.
Treasurer of the Association, 1888-1892.



MR. H. E. ROGERS, J.P.,
Treasurer of the Association.

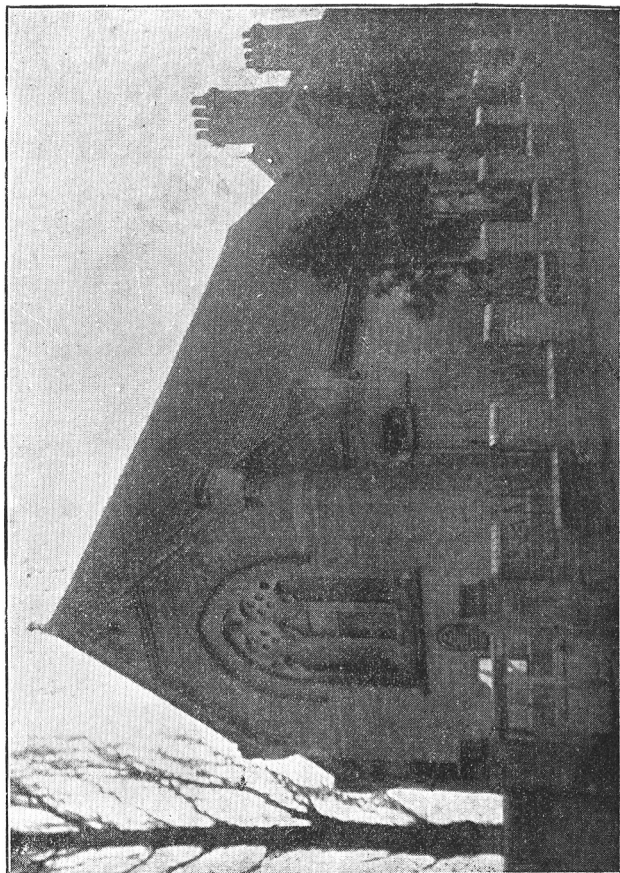


Madeley.

THE name Madeley is said to be derived from meadowly or mead, a term once descriptive of the part on which the town now stands, the forest intervening between it and the Severn being known as Madeley Wood, a name still retained although the wood has long since disappeared.

Madeley is best known to history as the scene of the labours of the sainted Fletcher—Jean Guillaume de la Flechere,—who was born at Nyon, in Switzerland, on September 12th, 1729, and who died on August 14th, 1784, after being Vicar of Madeley for the space of twenty-five years. Owing to the co-operation of Fletcher with John and Charles, Wesley, Madeley early became a stronghold of Methodism, which position it has failed to keep.

In this most interesting town, there was no Congregational Church until 1872. The first regular services in connection with that body were commenced in the town at the house of Mr. Thomas Ward, on Thursday evening, February 22nd, in that year, when the Rev. L. Roberts, of Dawley, read the Scriptures, and the Rev. D. D. Evans, of Bridgnorth, preached from the words, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The hymns were given out by Mr. J. Farmer, of Bridgnorth. These services were continued on Sunday mornings and evenings at the houses of Mr. Ward and Mr. James Riggs, until November, 1872, when a room in Park Lane was kindly lent for the purpose. In the same month, the worshippers having expressed a desire to be formed into a church, invited the Revs. D. D. Evans, L. Roberts, and John Stevenson (Oakengates), to attend for that purpose. These ministers and the worshippers met at the house of Mr. James Riggs on Thursday afternoon, November 28th, at 5 o'clock. Rev. L. Roberts opened the meeting by reading the Scriptures and by prayer. Rev. John Stevenson delivered a discourse on church fellowship,



MADELEY CHAPEL

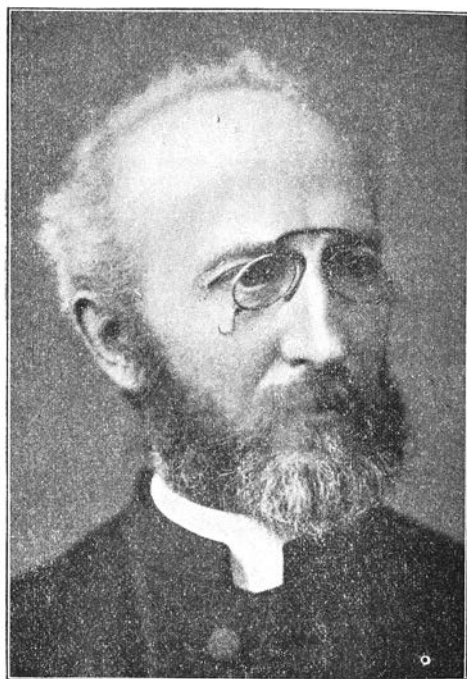
based on Ephesians i., 23. Rev. D. D. Evans called upon those present to signify by lifting up their hands their wish and consent to work and act together as members of a visible Church of Christ in Madeley, and then administered the Lord's Supper to the newly-formed church. Afterwards they all signed their names in a book:—

James Riggs, Mary Riggs, Mary Blower, Sarah Ward, Sarah Ablott, Eliza Ablott, Thomas Turner, Sarah Turner. Witnesses, D. D. Evans, Lewis Roberts, John Stevenson.

Church meetings were afterwards held at intervals, but no minutes appear to have been kept, and the history of the church, up to 1892, can only be given in outline.

In April, 1874, an eligible site for a church building was secured at a cost of £125, at the junction of the Ironbridge Road with a road leading to the parish church of Madeley. Plans were prepared by Messrs. Bidlake and Fleeming, of Wolverhampton, and when they had been approved by the Building Committee, the erection of the building was entrusted to Mr. Cross, of Shrewsbury; and on June 20th, 1874, the foundation stone was laid by John Maddocks, Esq., of Admaston, in the unavoidable absence of Thomas Barnes, Esq., J.P. Many neighbouring ministers were present and took part in the proceedings. Afterwards about 300 people sat down to tea, in a tent erected in a field belonging to Mr. Ward. In September, the new schoolroom was opened for Divine service, the Rev. D. W. Purdon preaching at the morning and evening services.

The new church was opened on Monday, January 18th, 1875. It is a red-brick building, to accommodate nearly 300 persons. Together with the school, vestry, fittings, etc., it cost about £1,500, upwards of £1,200 of which has been raised by strenuous and persistent efforts continued for over twenty years. In the report of the Salop Association for the year ending March 31st, 1875, these words occur: "Through the indefatigable efforts of Mr. James Riggs, the greater part of the Building Fund of £1,300 has been collected, and soon the property will be free." The hope expressed in the last clause of this sentence has unhappily not been realised even yet,



REV. W. F. DAWSON.

for at the present time there is still a debt on the buildings amounting to over £200.

The opening services commenced with prayer by the Rev. Samuel Evans, of Broseley, who, after the singing of a hymn, also read the first lesson. Then came the Dedication Anthem:—

Our earthly temple now complete,
We come to worship at Thy feet:
O Lord of hosts, Thou God of love,
Behold us from Thy throne above.

The Lord is in His holy Temple,
Unto Him, unto Him, shall our vows be paid;
He will visit His children in mercy,
And show us the light of His countenance.

My feet shall tread thy courts, O Zion:
Hallelujah to the Lord!
Here will I go into the house of the Lord:
My feet shall tread thy courts, O Zion:
Hallelujah to the Lord!

The Rev. P. D. Evans read the second lesson, and offered prayer. The preacher was the Rev. J. A. Macfadyen, M.A., of Manchester, who took as his text, John iii., 12, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?" The benediction was pronounced by the Rev. G. F. Driver, Wesleyan Superintendent of the Madeley Circuit.

Mr. H. J. Jordan, of Wolverhampton, was elected lay pastor. He took the services on Sundays, continuing his business in Wolverhampton during the week. He commenced his services on February 7th, 1875, and resigned in May, 1876.

The Sunday School was opened in the spring of 1875, and in the same year Messrs. James Riggs and John Williams were elected the first deacons of the church.

On October 29th, 1876, Rev. J. J. Northam, of Nottingham Institute, commenced his ministry. He was ordained in June, 1877, and remained at Madeley until December, 1878, preaching his farewell sermon on the 29th of that month.



REV. MATTHEW CHARLES.

In April, 1879, the Rev. William Chapman, of Stroud, became pastor, and he remained until September, 1887.

The church was then without pastoral oversight for three years, during which time the services were conducted by lay preachers and students sent by the Secretary of the Church Aid and Home Missionary Society (Rev. Andrew Mearns).

At the end of 1889, the church appealed to the Salop Association for assistance, and Mr. Charles Musk was appointed. He remained until early in 1892, when he accepted a call to the pastorate of Whitchurch.

The next pastor was the Rev. W. F. Dawson, who received a unanimous call on April 10th, 1892, and commenced work on Sunday, June 26th. He was ordained on Wednesday, April 12th, 1893; Rev. F. Tinkler, of Shrewsbury, presided during the earlier part of the service, Rev. G. S. Walker, of Sidcup, during the later. Rev. W. Gee, of Oakengates, offered prayer; Rev. W. Prothero, of Broseley, asked the usual questions and gave the charge to the minister; Rev. W. E. Jenkins, of Shrewsbury, offered the Ordination Prayer.

Soon after Mr. Dawson's ordination, the Sunday School was reorganised, and additional deacons were appointed. In May, 1896, Mr. Dawson received and accepted a call to the pastorate of the church at Lichfield.

On the first Sunday in January, 1897, Mr. Matthew Charles, of Bangor College, opened his ministry at Madeley.

The Ordination Service was held on Wednesday, February 3rd, in the afternoon, when the Rev. T. Townsend, of Shrewsbury, presided. Rev. E. Elliot, of Bridgnorth, read a portion of Scripture and offered prayer; Rev. W. Prothero, of Broseley, asked the usual questions; Rev. J. J. Poynter, of Oswestry, gave an exposition of Congregational Principles; Rev. Silas Charles, of Ferndale, offered the Ordination Prayer; and Rev. Professor Davies, M.A., of Brecon College, gave the charge to the pastor.

Afterwards a tea, meeting was held, followed by a public meeting presided over by H. E. Rogers, Esq., J.P., of Shrewsbury.

On the following Sunday, the pulpit was occupied by the Rev. W. H. Jones, of Newport.



Weirbrook.

THE "Tabernacle" at Weirbrook is an unpretentious iron structure, and is about a mile from West Felton, on the road side leading to Sandford. It owes its origin to efforts first made in 1874 by the Rev. Lewis Weaver, then pastor of the church at Ruyton-xi-Towns, and for some time it was a branch of that church. Mr. Weaver was closely identified with the formation of the "Gospel Tent Mission" for Shropshire, which did good work in country places during the great religious activity caused by the first visit to England of Messrs. Moody and Sankey, the American evangelists. Tent services were held at Weirbrook in 1878, with encouraging results, and these were followed by a house-to-house visitation and cottage meetings. Shortly afterwards, however, local influences closed every door against the workers, and preaching had to be continued in the open air. Ultimately a small plot of land was generously given, at a nominal rent, by a neighbouring Roman Catholic landowner, Sir. H. T. Tyrwhitt, and the present building, capable of seating fifty persons, was put up at a cost of £60. By the liberal help of Mr. John Dovaston, of West Felton, a harmonium was purchased, and crowded opening services were conducted by Mr. Weaver on Sunday, December 16th, 1883. The amount required for the building was gradually raised by special efforts and voluntary contributions. In 1887, Mr. Weaver removed to Liverpool, when the trust of the property passed to the Rev. John J. Poynter, Honorary Secretary of the North-Western District of the, Salop Association, and in the following year it was vested in trustees for the use of the Weirbrook congregation.

In the year 1890, by mutual consent, Weirbrook was united with Grimpo as a joint pastorate under the care of the Rev.

John Charles, now of Cefn, and this arrangement is continued under the present pastor, the Rev. Henry Crane. In spite of adverse local conditions the place is fairly prosperous. The Sunday services keep their hold on the people, and these are supplemented by a week-day Bible Class for Women, which is conducted by the minister's wife, a weekly devotional service, home visitation, the occasional use of the lantern, and other similar agencies. From the hearty response to these efforts' it is evident that the chapel supplies a real need, and that the little band of workers have not spent their strength in vain.

