

Our History continued – on through the 19th century

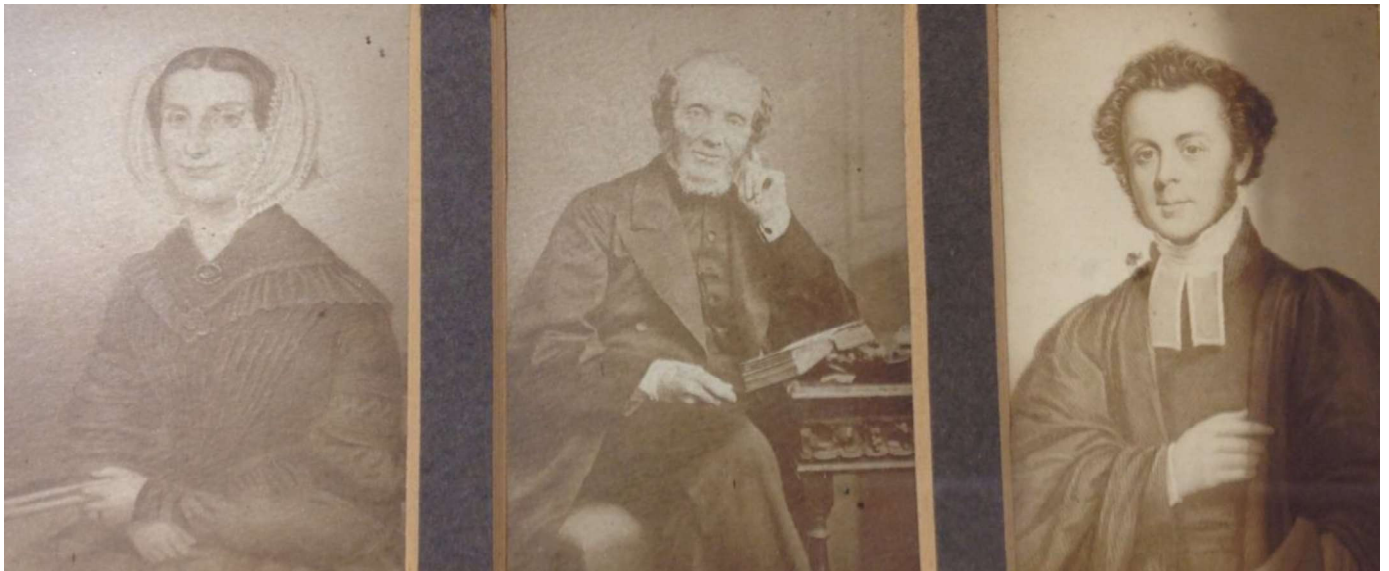
Acquiring the site

Though pictures of the interior and exterior view other than the front elevation and an oblique view of the south side of the old chapel are still hopefully to come to light, the names of those involved in the build have. In May 1724, Revd William King, Messrs W Tanner, Thos Puttenham Senior, W Puttenham, Joseph Carter, Thos Carter, R Sheppard, John Maysey, Thos Fryer, Benj Lake and Henry Parrat met and resolved to attempt the building of a new meeting house “for themselves and such as should join with them in the public worship of Almighty God at Chesham in the County of Bucks.”. A subscription was raised and Friends at London and in the neighbourhood were applied to with such success that the land was purchased. There appeared to have been two adjacent parcels of land, both 4 poles and 3 feet long (69 feet), the wider one 3 poles and 8 feet (58 feet wide) owned by James Puttenham of Chartridge, Yeoman, and the narrower one (10 feet wide) by John Maysey of Chesham, Woodman?. Thomas Biby of Wicomb, bricklayer, and Francis Alnut of Amersham, carpenter, were articted to undertake the build.

The Burial Ground

Fifty-six individuals, including 12 infants and children, were memorialised on our gravestones when they were recorded by the Buckinghamshire Family History Society in 1986. The earliest burial of these was Mrs Elizabeth Undey (1796) and the latest Thomas Andrews (1872). Amongst them were five families – Payne, Woodhams, Staples, Andrews and five Bennett children. Four of our Pastors were buried here – Revd Joseph Surman (1819), Revd William Miller (1830), Revd John Hall (1839) and Revd H.B. Lees (1850). In addition, there is a Revd Bethla Brown (~1840?). The Staples family memorial is the only gravestone accessible now and only partially exposed, laid flat on top of the wall that retains “Frank’s Bank”.

Pastors from 1839 to 1889



Mrs John Hall)
(no photo of Revd Hall)

Revd William Slater

Revd David Thomas

1839 – 1840 Revd William Slater

Was born in Bath in 1808 and died 1875. He was originally a chemist. He followed Revd John Hall in 1839 but his ministry was a brief 4 months, resigning in 1840 when he refused to conduct three services on the Sabbath that the members were insisting upon. Many members were greatly attached to him. His son, Thomas Ebenezer, who became a missionary for the London Missionary Society in India, was born while his father was minister in Chesham.

1841 – 1844 Revd David Thomas

Was a young man from near Tenby, Pembrokeshire. He was famous for his preaching powers and his services attracted crowded congregations. The church prospered and membership grew by 26. But a very few years later in 1844, he was invited to "preach with a view" by the chapel at Stockwell, a much larger sphere, which he accepted. When he left us, he paid a very generous tribute to the "self-sacrificing support given to him by the Chesham church". His subsequent career was very important. He was one of the founders of University College, Aberystwyth and he was awarded a DD by Waynesbury?, USA. He became well-known as "Dr Thomas of Stockwell", and published a series of books of sermons under the title "The Homilist". He died in 1894.

1844 Mr John Eyre Ashby BA

Was born in 1820, grandson of Revd John Eyre, one of the founders of the London Missionary Society. He answered a universal call to our pastorate on 3 months probation but resigned before the probation period had expired. After two other pastorates, for ten years he was the Principal of Gothic Hall School Enfield, from 1854 to 1864, but died in 1864.

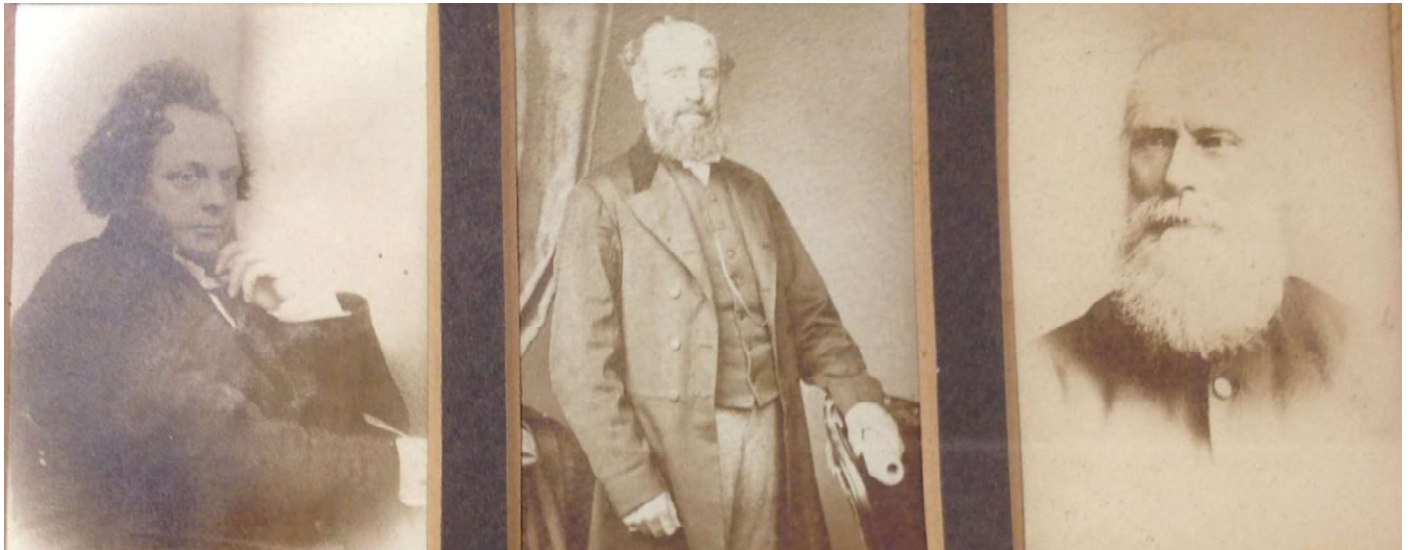
1845 – 1848 Revd Thomas Edward Stallybrass BA

Became the minister in 1845. He was born in 1818 in Irkutsk, Siberia where his father had been a missionary to the Mongols. A sensitive spirit, he left Chesham in 1848, some of the congregation disaffected with his preaching style. He had several brothers in Congregational ministry. He died in 1883.

1849 - 1850 Mr H B Lees

Was called to our ministry in 1849, as a healthy vigorous young man of great promise, loved and admired in the town for his lively, social, public spirit. Tragically after only a year in Chesham, he caught cold travelling back from preaching in Great Missenden and died of inflammation on October 21st 1850 aged 30.

1850-51 was a period of unrest but the church continued its work.



Later photo of Revd David Thomas

Revd Thomas Edward Stallybrass

Revd William Johnson Bain

1851-1861 Revd William Johnson Bain

Was born in 1825 in Dundee.

He began his ministry in Chesham as a 12 month probation student but his fresh, successful, untiring zeal in promoting the spiritual interests of the people was gratefully acknowledged. He was a preacher of exceptional tact, power and appeal with pen, tongue and brain. Described as "a candid, fearless exponent of truth; master of literary style, choice phrases and telling illustration".

He took on full Pastoral care. During his pastorate, the fellowship thinned due to deaths and removals, hindering the work, but later, a new fellowship gathered with youthful energy and life, and the congregation grew larger than it had been for many years. 54 members were added.

One feature of his ministry was his initiative - the starting of the choir - and music "greatly benefited the praises in the sanctuary".

Outside his church work, he founded a branch of the YMCA in Chesham, and later superintended a branch in Birmingham. He wrote for The Mechanics Institute and for literary and social societies.

At his farewell meeting in 1861, gifts were given that had been contributed to by both churchmen and dissenters in appreciation of his public life. He died in 1893.



Revd Joseph Hony Snell

Revd David Harding

1861 - 1867 Reverend Joseph Hony Snell

Was born in Liskeard, Cornwall in 1828. He was in Methodist ministry, then served as Chaplain at Reedham Asylum, Surrey . Entered Congregational ministry at Chesham, ordained by our former Pastor Revd David Thomas.

Described as "a vigorous ministry, a quickening force". Congregation and schools increased greatly in his first 10 months. Many innovations were agreed by the church:- welcomers appointed; those not attending the Lord's Supper for 3 or more months were considered to have withdrawn; weekly offerings box; social tea meetings in the winter; congregation to stand during the singing; psalms as well as hymns to be sung; harmonium to be replaced by an organ; the pastor to vet the village preachers; church meeting to be restricted to 1 hour. Membership rose from 69 to 140 with 180 in the Sunday School at the close of his pastorate. Accepted the call from the Swindon church in 1866. Died 1899. His brother was Congregational minister in Berkhamsted 1863~1870. His two sons followed him into Congregational ministry

1867 - 1871 Revd David Harding,

Born Dursley Gloucestershire in 1831.

A happy and earnest spirit marked the meetings. After a year, a further 21 members had been added. During his time, the first Good Friday Concert was mentioned, which became a tradition, also "Sick Visitation". Despite his efforts, the church had not prospered or progressed as he had laboured for, and he was called by the church at Tonbridge and resigned. Died in 1878 of smallpox.

1871 – 1877 Revd George Bainton

Born London 1848. He had older brothers James and Joseph who also went into the ministry.

A bracing and vigorous ministry with 34 new members during his 6 years. The church enjoyed "gratifying spiritual prosperity". The following were introduced:- communion tickets; survey of attitudes to purpose/benefits of church; 7am Sunday morning prayer meetings in summer; mission to Ashridge began and made much progress in 3 years; controversy over supplement to Congregational Hymn and Tune Books; a young man of suitable piety and zeal was recommended to Nottingham Institute for Christian Ministry.

In 1875, he married and took a honeymoon. His son George Oswald was born at Chesham in 1877.

In the same year, he accepted an invitation to a ministry at The New London Tabernacle, Old Street. He was remembered for many years with gratitude, for mutual affection and esteem, leading a harmonious period in the church's history.

1877-1879 Pulpit Supply – no details found

In 1879 - 1989 Revd John Pither (no photo)

Born in 1854, the son of a Deacon from a prominent family in Henley-on-Thames. From 1881 to its completion in 1886, responsible, with the strong committee, for seeing through the arduous project that eventually demolished the old chapel and replaced it with our current building.

Left Chesham for Mere, Wiltsire. 56 new members had been received during his ministry. Eventually he retired from ministry due to blindness in 1916. Died at Henley in 1927.

The story of the new build - in the next magazine