

## The United Reformed Church, Chesham

A brief history of the buildings

In 1972 the then congregation joined the United Reformed Church (URC). The URC is a union of the Congregational Church of England & Wales; the Presbyterian Church of England; the Re-formed Association of the Churches of Christ and the Congregational Church of Scotland.

The denomination is also a member church of the Council for World Mission (CWM) and shares in:

The Council of Churches for Britain & Ireland (CCBI);

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches ;

The World Council of Churches.

The URC recognises and practices the baptism of both infants and believers.

*(Info from various type written notes)*

SW 2006 revised 2019

The Congregational Year Book states that Chesham Congregational Church was formed in the year 1724, but there are references to 4 or 5 places of worship in Chesham in 1700, including the Independent Meeting House (Congregational). This Society of Independents "assembled for worship in some inferior building, not erected for the purpose and located in some obscure part of the town..."

Chesham had a population of about 1700 in 1700.

There are Records identifying individual Pastors. Isaac Robinson was one such being in Chesham in 1712 until his death in 1723 aged 50.

Following Mr Robinson's demise, William King was called to be pastor. Soon after in about May 1724, he and the officers of the church decided to build a new meeting house. The money was raised and the land bought and the building finished by December [1724]. The whole cost being under £3000. It was known as the Congregational Church of Christ in Chesham. (NB St Paul's Cathedral was completed about the same time!)



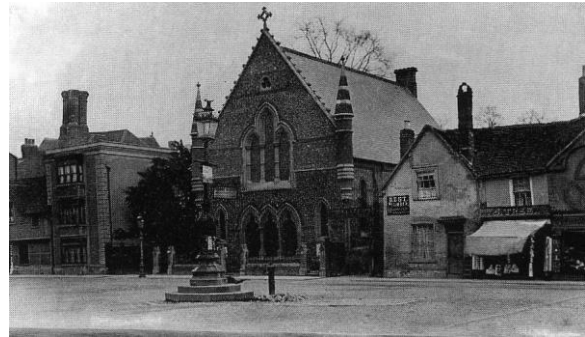
The church August 2006



The Meeting House before 1886

Mr King lived at High House, and ran a boarding school there. High House later became the Chesham Post Office before that institution moved to its present position. As a preacher Mr King was not popular but the Meeting House prospered under his ministry because before 1738, records indicate a gallery was added to the original building.

Thomas Spooner was the Pastor in 1748 and it was during his ministry that John Wesley was given the use of the Meeting House, first in 1769 and then on subsequent visits, 1771;1772;1774 & 1775.



**The "new" church circa 1897**

The present building dates from 1886 and replaced the meeting house of 1724. The chapel is built of flint lined with crimson brick inside, faced with knapped flint outside. External dressings are of Box stone.

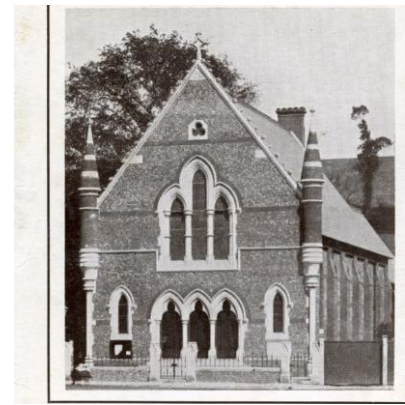
The interior wood is pitch pine with a hammer beam roof. The windows are glazed with 3 tint cathedral glass.

The "new" church of 1886 cost £2,900, including the organ.

The size is 57' x 33'. The height to the flat portion of boarded roof is 32'. The lobby is 20' x 7'

The church could seat 270 downstairs with a further 90 in the gallery.

The pews were removed in 2012/13 when the church underwent a re-development. It now has seating for about 120.



**The church circa 1940**

The church remains today, very much as it was when new, only the railings and the trees are missing now.

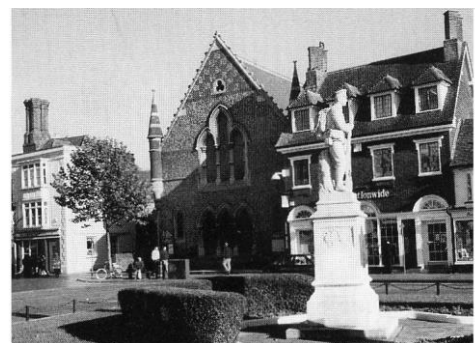
The passage along the southern side of the church ran to Wallis' shoeing forge, established in 1875. This building is known today as "The Greenhouse" and is part of the church. The building now occupied by the Nationwide Building Society was built in 1928. Before this there had been a 2 storey building owned by Messrs Rust and Tree.

The building to the north side of the church is High House, mentioned above.

The attached Schoolroom was 39'x23' and there were plans for 2 classrooms plus an infant classroom, vestry and a kitchen, "fitted up for teas".

The builders were Stevens & Sons of Tring and the architect was W G Habershon & Fawkner, London, Newport & Cardiff.

In 2012/13 the church underwent a considerable re-development, which included a new kitchen and meeting room. The Greenhouse demolished and the land on which it had been, sold to developers. This funding went towards the aforementioned re-development



**The church circa 1997**