The Baptist Church
Payton Street
Stratford-upon-Avon

The "Sutton" History

1832-1932

This story must begin with a word of thanks to our good friend Mr WH Baum, who has helped me in many ways in collecting items of interest about the Church, and who has been good enough to put at my disposal all the manuscripts which he himself has written and collected through the years. I may be giving the story but I look upon Mr Baum as the Church historian.

The history of British Baptists covers more than 300 years (since the foundation of the first Baptist Church in 1609) tracing their movement through failure and success; through fidelity to principle, and its reverse, and therefore not shrinking at times from the criticism of other members of the Universal Church.

Our own history began about 106 to 107 years ago. We might be considered young when compared with some of the churches in this area. The Baptist Church at Warwick was formed in 1640, that at Alcester in the same year, that at Worcester eleven years later in

1651, that at Henley-in-Arden in 1688, and that at Shipston-on-Stour in 1781[1].

The Church which has been worshipping at Payton Street since 15th June 1836, originated with Mr James Cox, Snr., Mr Charles Cox, Sarah Sly, Theodosia Shuffery and Miss Holland, in November 1826. But the Church was not regularly constituted until 26th February, 1832, when it started with 10 members. The ten members who signed the Covenant were James Cox, Thomas Lane, Ann Lane, Thomas Edgington[2], Auther[3] White, Theodosia Shuffery, Caroline Cooper, Sophie Cooper, Anne Allen, and Sarah Sly.

Previous to the erection of the Church they had been meeting at a friend's house. As far as I can make out the meeting place was a room behind what is now Hepworths' shop in the High Street[4].

It is interesting to know that in those early days the Baptist friends had a peculiar connection with Bristol College. A Mr Abraham Smith, chiefly officiated at the various meetings until he became a student at the Bristol College, or Bristol Academy as it was then called. He spent every vacation with the friends at Stratford, and it is probable that he would have become the first Minister of the new Church, but for his early death.

The Articles of Faith adopted at the formation of the Church are worth meditation. It is impossible to include them in this story (though I add them at the end for future generations) but the Articles

[1] The Shipston on Stour Church was finally closed in the 1960's but a new Church planted by the members of Chipping Campden Baptist Church in the autumn of 2000.

[2] The manuscript has Eginton. Reference to the original minute book from 1832 shows that this should be Edgington. See also Appendix 1

[3] The manuscript has Arthur. Again reference to the original minute book shows Auther. In both of these cases it is probable that Sutton referred to other notes which had already established some errors

[4] The name has changed a number of times since this was written. The shop is on the east side of the High Street at numbers 8-9.

do suggest greatness of vision and purpose, a sincere, earnest and prayerful spirit.

Listen to this one sentence:-

> "We will seek the good of the body with which we are connected and if the welfare of the Church calls us to sacrifice our own case and interest we will cheerfully do it; esteeming the honour of Christ far preferable to that of our own."

On 18th August 1835, the corner stone, of the new Church was laid by Mr Lane, and on 15th June of the following year the new building in Payton Street was opened for Public Worship. In November of that year Samuel Cope Cox and Richard Wooton were Baptised by the Rev James Cubitt, being the first Baptisms in the new place of worship.

Mr Cox of Shottery, the founder of the Cause called to see Mr Baum on two occasions but the latter being away from Town, they never met; but knowing that Mr Baum was Treasurer of the Church, Mr Cox left him this message:-

> "Tell him not to advance money, let them feel their responsibility."

Mr Cox was thought much of by those old members. He was the one Deacon and when changes were made he was averse to them. He was a happy and agreeable gentleman and worshipped with us on Sunday mornings.

The first Minister of the new Church was the Rev James Cubitt of Ilford, who served the Church from January 1837 until August 1840, a period of three years and seven months. It was during his Ministry that the first marriage to take place in a Nonconformist place of worship was solemnised at Payton Street, on 27th September 1838, between William Pettifer and Mary Griffiths. In June 1840 the Rev

Cubitt intimated that he intended to resign his Office owing to ill health, and his Ministry closed in August of that year.

The next Minister was the Rev J Edwards, who came to the Church in January 1841 and stayed until May 1844, a period of three years and 4 months. It was during his time that some of the members thought it would be a good addition to worship if an organ was secured. But some objected to the use of instrumental music and the matter was held over. It was not until the May of the following year that an organ was secured. Early in 1842 the Chapel was enlarged and other alterations made. The Re-Opening Services were held on 17th May 1842.

It was during the Ministry of Mr Edwards that a special Mission was conducted by a Mr Pulsford, the Mission being held from 18th November until 25th December in 1842. Services were held at 5 am and 7 pm. One interesting item in the proceedings was that an enthusiastic member who was a flutist used to go round early in the mornings to call people from their beds. Another point worth recording is that

> "… the strong Church party prejudices of the inhabitants of Stratford prevented any but the lower classes from attending."

This record suggests something of the difficulties which faced the Nonconformists of the Town; it also reminds us of the great change which has taken place in the passing of the years, and no doubt many of those of us who are younger have lost something that these of earlier days possessed because our witness does not demand the same courage and daring.

It was sometime in the 40's that the friends bought the Moravian Chapel at Grafton[1], and carried on a good work there.

[1] Temple Grafton

Of the ten members who signed the Articles of Faith none was more respected than Miss Sly. She was in comparatively poor circumstances, being a domestic servant, but her love for the Cause was great and she was much esteemed. It is thought that she lent a sum of money when the Church was erected. She married, late in life, a Mr Harriss of Welford, but her interest never ceased, and whenever possible she Communed with the friends here. She left a sum of £50 to the Deacons which they wisely devoted towards the building of the Sunday School. This is recorded on the tablet in the School.

Another outstanding personality was Mr J Southam. He loved the place and when in later days the prayer meetings were held at his house he used to pray:-

> "He likes the tents of Jacob's well
> But still in Zion loves to dwell;
> But makes a more delightful stay
> Where sinners meet and praise and pray."

When he passed away he left the church £150 which helped us to buy Hensington Villa.

There is one other interesting individual about whom a word or two may be recorded. This is Mr Edwin Hancox " ...friend and Chapel-keeper." As a boy he worshipped with the friends in High Street, and became a member of the Church during the ministry of Mr Edwards.

Mr Baum records:

> "After Edwin Hancox became Chapel-keeper he ruled us with severity - told us if we were late and was very exacting over his work - and if you had occasion to visit the Church between services you might find him with his screwdriver and oil-can seeking to make a refractory lock or door work easier. he had his genial side and when he came to the Prayer Meeting he remembered the young and used to quote:

> "Twill save them from a thousand snares
> To mind religion young."

> He had his faults but we all respected him and a suitable record of his long service was inserted in the Church Book. When he passed away we all felt that we had lost an old friend and a man of sterling character."

The Ministry of the Rev J Edwards closed in May 1844 and he was followed by the Rev JW Todd who came in March 1845 but remained only two years, but he had told the Church that he was very keen on missionary work and would only come for a limited period.

Mr Sugden of Bradford College followed, but remained for one year. His ministry began in April 1849 and ended in March 1850.

Between 1837 and 1850 the young Church had had four pastors; three of those years had been filled by supplies which meant that in a little less than 10 years the Church had had the upsetting business of welcomes and farewells. The Church minutes seem to suggest that the Church at this time was a little discouraged and depressed. Eventually it was decided to invite the Rev T Bumpas to the Pastorate. The Rev T Bumpas came in September 1850, being invited for one year in the hope of leading to a more permanent settlement. When the twelve months had expired he was invited to stay without time limit. The invitation was accepted and he eventually stayed until September 1859, a period of 9 years. It was a period of quiet work, and I find nothing which is outstanding in these years. In fact, the Church came to feel that no progress was being made at all, and they were faced with the difficult and trying situation of having to suggest to the Pastor that perhaps a change would be the best way out of the situation. The letter addressed to the Minister is written in most kindly terms, and those who read it must appreciate the feelings of the members and the Minister.

It was a year later that the Rev R Hall came, beginning his Ministry in September 1860 and remaining until February 1867, a period of 6 years and 5 months. During his time there were two or three important happenings.

In May 1861 the foundation stone of the new Schoolroom was laid, the ceremony being performed by Mr James Cox. The Town Hall was used on this occasion for the tea-meeting, when 250 people attended, and it was announced that of the £400 required for the building, £226 had been raised.

It was in 1864 that a committee was formed to go into the question of the enlargement of the place of worship at Grafton. On 10th August of that same year a tea meeting was held at Grafton, after which the foundation stone of the new Chapel was laid by Mr Stephenson. The new Chapel was opened in the June of the following year when the sermons were preached by a former minister, the Rev JW Todd. The collections amounted to £9.13.4.[1]

It was on 7th June 1864 that the Rev CH Spurgeon visited the Town. The friends had hoped to hire The Shakespeare Pavilion, but some good man, a legal representative of the authority concerned, prevented it. The sermons by Spurgeon were preached on the Red Horse Bowling Green. About 2,000 people were present and the collections amounted to £51.12.2[2].

We now pass to the Ministry of the Rev E Morley who served the church from August 1867 until December 1873, a period of 6 years and 4 months.

During this time friends joined the Church whose names are still on our books, such as Mrs Perkins who joined the Church in December 1868, and Mr Baum who became a member in 1870. Others who became members and who did good work in the Church were Mr JC

[1] £9.67p approx
[2] £51.61p approx

Smith who came to us from the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Mr TT Allen who served as Deacon and Treasurer for some years and was President of the Worcestershire Association in 1896, Mr T Bonehill, Mr Henry Hopcroft who died quite recently, and a Mr John Walker of Grafton. A Memorial tablet in the Chapel at Grafton refers to his 35 years of loyal service.

In coming to Mr Morley's Ministry we reach a period of great activity in the life of the Church. He preached in the streets and in the villages and his efforts were crowned with great success. He found some of the older people much too severe for his liking, and some of them found him a little too much the other way. Some of them were, in fact, offended (possibly because of his youth) and these resigned their membership. But we note that many joined the Church at this time and it is recorded that "the Gospel Message was like a new story and many believed and turned unto the Lord."

Some of the friends who lived at Preston came to hear Mr Morley and among them was a Miss Mansell (afterwards Mrs JC Smith). She was much impressed, and being anxious about the spiritual life of the villages she invited Mr Morley to visit Preston. This he did, preaching under a big tree by the roadside, a tree opposite the Schoolroom. Meeting followed meeting and it was at last decided to have a service each Sunday.

Mr George, who lived in what was then called "Silvester's Cottage", offered the use of his home for the meetings. These were carried on for some time until the property was sold, but through the kindness of Mrs JC Smith, the Georges were able to remain, and the meetings continued. Mr Baum remembers conducting one of these cottage meetings at Preston, when 80 people were present, adding that it was a tight fit and rather trying for both preacher and people. After a time the present place of worship at Preston was erected, the land and building being the gift of Mr and Mrs JC Smith, but this happened in Mr Pugh's time, so I must return to it later.

It is interesting to note concerning Grafton, that for some time it had been on the Congregational Church's Home Mission Plan, but Mr Morley was not satisfied with the arrangements made concerning supplies, and at a Church Meeting in April 1868, it was agreed that Grafton should be removed from the Congregational Home Mission Plan, and that in future the supplies be entirely under the direction of Mr Morley.

It was in October 1869 that the Pastor and Deacons had cause to send a letter to the friends at Grafton, in which they referred to a lack of interest and support. They appeal to the Grafton friends to feel their responsibility to raise some money, if only a little. However, what grieved the Deacons more was that there were no conversions, seemingly no real spiritual life.

We are pleased to read that at a meeting held in January 1870, the friends at Payton Street were more than pleased with the apparent progress in the work at Grafton and they agreed to wipe off all outstanding debts, but told them that in future the Deacons at Payton Street would not be responsible for expenses connected with the work at Grafton.

It was during Mr Morley's Ministry that the Women's Bible Class was formed. Commenced by Mrs Morley and very successfully carried on by her until the Ministry ended in 1873.

Mrs Ennals, later known as Mrs Mansell took on the Work, assisted by Mrs Baum and others. It has been carried on all through the years and is still very much alive and doing good work ably administered by our friends Mrs Fincher and Mrs Gibbs. This feature of our the Work led to the Congregationalists and the Wesleyans starting classes of a similar nature.

In January 1868 Mr WH Baum was elected Sunday School Superintendent and he remained in Office until 1916, a period of 48 years. He was awarded both the Quiver Medal and the Diploma of the

Sunday School Union. He was also a Deacon, being elected as far back as 1882. He served the Church as Treasurer for 27 years and as Secretary for 8 years.

There is one thing worth recording concerning the meetings in connection with Mr Morley's Recognition. The evening meeting was held in the Town Hall, and the *Herald* on that date records:

> "the audience was so deeply interested in the proceedings that they exhibited no sign of restlessness although the meeting did not conclude until after 10 pm".

Mr Morley concluded his ministry in December 1873 and at the Farewell Meeting he was presented with a cheque for £25 with the good wishes of the Church.

The Rev S Burn followed Mr Morley and he served the Church as Pastor from August 1874 to October 1877, a period of three years and two months.

It is interesting to note that in 1874 the Church recommended one of its number – Mr Alfred Johnson – for admission into Bristol Baptist College. After his College course he became Minister of the Baptist Church, Warminster.

Another interesting minute is that

> "It was agreed to receive into the fellowship of the Church, Miss Wakefield".

That was in October 1875. She afterwards became the Church Organist serving in that capacity for about 30 years. The minutes record that a Testimonial was raised expressive of the Church's appreciation of her service and devotion.

On 24th January 1876 the Church must have been in jubilant mood when it recorded –

> "that there has never been so much money raised in 12 months by the congregation at any former time and there had never been so many members."

When they wrote this they added,

> "In all respects a good meeting."

It might be interesting to record here the growth of the membership of the Church:

> When the Church was formed it began with 10 members.
> By the year 1845 the number of members was 100
> By the year 1865 the number of members was 71
> By the year 1869 the number of members was 91
> By the year 1877 the number of members was 156

The Church had much reason therefore to be glad. Their efforts had been crowned with success, but the Church was soon to know difficulty. The Rev S Burn through ill health was unable to fulfill his duties for three months. This was in 1876 and in October of the following year he resigned and the record says:

> "a purse containing £30 was presented to him as an expression of sympathy towards him in his affliction."

The Church then called to its service the Rev HA James who commenced his Ministry in March 1878. Mr James came from Minchinhampton where he had laboured for 13 years.

A Special Church Meeting was called on Wednesday 24th September of the following year (1879), Mr TT Allen presiding. No business was transacted owing to the serious illness of the Pastor. On Monday 29th September, he passed away at the early age of 36 years. You will

agree that the Church had had to meet with many difficulties and sorrows in her 42 years of life.

It was about this time that the minutes record that Mr and Mrs ET Kennard be received into the fellowship of the Church, a letter of transfer being received from the Church at Leamington in May 1879. It was in 1882 that Mr ET Kennard was elected a Deacon, so that he has served the Church through 50 years of its life as an Officer, and has been a member for 53 years. He also served the Church as teacher and local preacher and was President of the Worcestershire Association in 1906.

The next minister was the Rev J Pugh who came in June 1880 and stayed for 15 years and 7 months until closing his Ministry in January 1896.

Four new classrooms in connection with the Sunday School were opened by Mr Stephenson on 26th October 1880.

In that same year the Church recommended another of its members for admission into Bristol Baptist College and in December of that year the sum of £3 was sent to the Treasurer of that Institution. George Eaves was the name of that student, who in after days became Dr Eaves the missionary, and who I believe, passed away quite recently.

In March 1881 the Pastor intimated that it would be necessary to contemplate getting a better classroom to accommodate the Women's Bible Class. A friend had given Mrs Ennals the sum of £5 to start the Fund. A few days later another friend had given £80, and Mrs Ennals stated it was her wish to have the classroom erected within three months. She did not get her wish fulfilled; nevertheless the classroom was opened on 10th October, the next year, 1882.

A letter was received from the friends at Preston[1] asking the Church at Stratford to help them in securing a better and more adequate place of worship.

The Church, in replying, gratefully acknowledged the kindness of Mrs JC Smith who was meeting all the expenses, and hoped they would be able to help in this matter. They hoped they would be able to assist in securing a small chapel; meanwhile the friends at Preston were asked to begin collecting with that end in view.

It was four years later in 1885 that the new Chapel at Preston was opened for Public Worship, the land and building being gifts from Mr and Mrs JC Smith. Since then regular services have been held and Mr and Mrs Smith in many ways helped the cause and fostered the good work. But the work at Preston will ever be linked with the names of Mr and Mrs H Ashby and family. Through all the years, they have been the mainstay of the active life of the Church, and have ever sought to uphold its witness in the cause of Christ.

We come now to one whose name was known and whose life was respected and honoured throughout the Denomination – Mr John Smallwood. He came to the Town in 1886, and according to records and reports, things began to move. He was soon elected on the Corporation and became Mayor of this Borough for two years – 1894 and 1895.

The transfer of Mr and Mrs Smallwood from the Church at Henley-in-Arden was applied for in December 1886.

During the greater part of 1888 a great deal of discussion took place at the Church Meetings respecting alterations and improvements to the Church premises. £500 was needed for this work and Mr Smallwood promised to give £100. The work was carried out and on 29th November 1888 the Re-opening Services took place. The work

[1] Preston on Stour

cost about £500 and there had been over £295 previously subscribed, and the collections on the Opening Day amounted to nearly £34. The work was carried out by Messrs Smallwood and Co, under the superintendence of Mr TT Allen and Mr ET Kennard.

In May 1890 Mr Smallwood sought the sanction of the Church concerning the building of additional classrooms, so that an infant room might be provided. The rooms cost about £300 and were presented to the Church by Mr Smallwood.

Between 1882 and 1891 over £1,200 had been spent on renovations and improvements.

In the first year of Mr Smallwood's Mayoralty he came with some of the Corporation to his own Church; this was on Sunday 11th November 1894. This is what the *Birmingham Daily Post* said about it:

> "Never since the first Charter of Incorporation was granted to the Borough in 1553 by King Edward VI, until yesterday has the Mayor of Stratford-upon-Avon for the time being paid a State visit with his colleagues to a Nonconformist Chapel on Mayoral Sunday.
>
> It has been usual for rifle volunteers and band to accompany the Civic Procession, but yesterday neither the volunteers nor the Town Band were available. The reply of the former was that they were not allowed to take part in processions of that kind, and the Band forwarded an excuse to the effect that all the instruments are unobtainable. However, the Mayor's friends were determined that music should be provided, and they engaged a brass band from Snitterfield. Some 8 or 10 of the 24 members of the Council put in an appearance. The Chapel was crowded, and the service was conducted by the Rev J Pugh who preached an excellent sermon from the text “I am citizen of no mean city”."

Among other things the *Herald* said:

> "Such a thing had not been done within the recollection of any living person – perhaps, if the records were searched, not within the present or previous century. But it is a very common thing in other and larger towns, and now that the barrier has been broken down it may become a custom in small boroughs like our own, where of course, strong religious prejudices exist, and people generally are very strait-laced."

It was in June 1895 that Mr Pugh intimated the desire for a change. The resignation was formally handed in November 1895, but to take effect in January 1986. On 30th December 1895 a Farewell Meeting was held at which a large number of ministers and friends gathered. Mr TT Allen presided and many tributes were paid to the service and work of Mr Pugh. The record reads:

> "Mr Baum presented an Album of Church and Local Views, also containing names of subscribers. This was a sincere and true appreciation of a good and worthy Pastor. There was presented also a purse of £32.2.0[1]. being a token of the affection of the Church after 15½ years ministry. The Album was signed by the Deacons: Messrs J Smallwood, WH Baum, TT Allen, T Cranmer and ET Kennard."

The membership of the Church when Mr Pugh left stood at 133. At the beginning of his last year the record gives it as 154, but loss by death and transfer brought it down to the very same number as that when Mr Pugh came, namely 133. So those of us who look back and attempt to judge the worth of a ministry by the statistics are likely to fail. In many ways Mr Pugh's had been a great Ministry, and one thing which is worth recording is that when he left, the Vicar of the Parish

[1] £32.10p

Church presented him with a couple of books as a token of his personal regard and affection.

The Church then had to think about securing another Pastor. An invitation was eventually sent to the Rev FC Watts of Moulton. The invitation was accepted and he began his ministry in December 1896 and stayed for 33 years[1].

A wise move was taken by the Deacons in October of that year in the purchase of Hensington Villa for £540. It was thought to be a very suitable site for a new Church in the future, and a possible residence for the Minister.

It was in that same month that one of our oldest members passed away – Mrs Caroline Reynolds. She was one of the original ten members who founded the church in 1832 – Miss Caroline Cooper. She had joined the Baptist Church at Henley-in-Arden in the year 1829 and was one of four members dismissed from Henley a few years later to form a new Christian Society at Stratford-upon-Avon. Both herself and her first husband, the late Mr Samuel Cope Cox, were warm supporters of the work at Payton Street Church, and the house in Payton Street in which they lived became the property of the Baptist Church Trustees.[2] There was much correspondence regarding the 21 Payton Street property, and particulars are to be found in the Church Minute Book.[3]

At a Church Meeting on 20th September 1899 a resolution of deepest sympathy was passed respecting the bereavement of the Church Secretary – Mr John Smallwood – in the tragic loss of his wife. Mrs Smallwood died as the result of a boating accident on Oulton Broad,

[1] This is still the longest Ministry in the Church's history to date (2008)

[2] The original text, subsequently crossed through indicates at this point that "Mr Cox died in 1861 and his widow was subsequently married to Mr John Reynolds of Blockley."

[3] This property opposite the Church was eventually sold in the early 1970s, part of the garden being retained to create car parking space for the Church.

near Lowestoft. Votes of condolence and expressions of sympathy were sent from various societies and organizations, but none more sincere than that forwarded by our own Church which is recorded in the Church Book.

In March 1900 reference was made to the passing of Mrs George of Preston. The original services at that place had been held in her Cottage; commenced some 34 years before and had continued for some 18 years until the present Mission Chapel was erected. The minute says:

> "She had been an excellent friend to the cause and her strong Christian life and character will be sorely missed both in the neighbourhood and in the family."

The work at Tiddington goes back some years, it also having its beginnings in cottage meetings. These were held for quite a long time in the house of Mr Dunn, a Primitive Methodist, and afterwards in the house of Mr Aubrey, who is still a member with us.

It was in August 1902 that the question arose at Payton Street regarding the erection of some suitable place of worship at Tiddington. Much discussion took place, and the erection of an iron building was suggested. But the cost of an iron building seemed prohibitive at about £100.

The matter came up again in October when it was announced that an iron building had been purchased through the kindness of Mr Robert Smith and other members of the family.

Mr Smallwood owned the land and was prepared to hand it over to the Payton Street Trustees if the Mission proved to be a success. The following minute is probably characteristic of the man. Mr Smallwood it is recorded said:

> "It must be understood that in case of failure of the Mission the iron building does not belong to him and

may be removed, the foundation brickwork to remain,
for he had found the bricks and sand."

The building was erected by Mr Kennard, and at the end of 1902 a very satisfactory report concerning gifts and services at the Mission Church was presented.

It was in January 1907 that plans were introduced and discussed concerning a proposed Chapel and Schoolroom at Tiddington. A Tender submitted by Mr E T Kennard was accepted and the total cost was £501.15.0[1]. The newly erected building was opened in that same year.

Mr RM Smith who had been serving as treasurer of the Tiddington Mission resigned in February 1909 and Mr ET Kennard was appointed. Mr Kennard continues to serve us in that capacity.

My notes about Tiddington Mission would be incomplete without some reference to Mr and Mrs H Simmonds. For many years they have laboured in the Cause and seem to be as keen as ever. I may speak of their affection and interest, their sacrifice and service, but even then may fail to estimate the value of their work, what it has meant in the past and what it is meaning today.

It is difficult to estimate the worth of the life of the Church during the period 1903-1910 merely from the Church Minutes. Records of countless meetings; records of transfers and recommendations for membership; minutes concerning missions and bazaars; yet all speak to us of activity and of progress.

I pass on to a time that all of us can remember – 1911, and the issue of our first Magazine.

[1] £501.75p

In February 1913 the Secretary reported that the membership of the Church was 183, an increase in 16 years of faithful Ministry on the part of Mr Watts, of 50 members.

In March 1913, Dr Ewing, the President of the Baptist Union visited the Church in the interest of the Sustentation Fund[1], when a sum of £506.7.6[2] was promised for that Object.

It was in the same month that one of our oldest members passed away – Mr TT Allen. For over 40 years he had been in membership and for many years filled the Office of Deacon, A man of sound Christian character, who carried his love of right and purity of motive into all departments of life.

Then came the years of war, a testing and sorrowful time for all. The Church Roll of Honour was growing, and she was continually losing those who felt constrained to obey their Country's call.

It was on 5th January 1913 that Mr Samuel Bartlett, the Colporteur[3] passed away, and the following minute has been placed on our Church Book:

> "The Church desires to place on record its sorrow at the death of Mr Samuel Bartlett, Colporteur, and its sincere appreciation of his earnest and strenuous labours in the district for 28 years. It would also express its high esteem for his Christian character and consistent life, and magnifies the Grace of God which sustained him in his work for so long a period."

[1] The Sustentation Fund was the previous form of what is now known as the Baptist Union Home Mission Fund.

[2] £506.37½p

[3] A Colporteur was responsible for travelling throughout the district, and particularly the outlying villages, selling or giving out religious books and other materials

There is another interesting minute which appears in the Church Book for January 1915. Mr RM Smith had resigned the Church Secretaryship on account of his leaving home in the service of his Country. He had been Secretary since 1907 and a Deacon since 1904. The minute concludes:

> "He will be missed in Town and Country and we hope that very soon the national circumstances will permit him to take his place once again in civil life. The Church would also take this opportunity of congratulating him on his elevation to the Magisterial Bench."

This record is included for a number of reasons. Certainly for this one: that it reminds us that many of the men in the Church were responding to the call of their Country. The Church was losing her young men; she gloried in their courage, their service and their devotion to duty. Some gave their lives, and others who returned never had the same love for the Church.

These were difficult days for the Minister of the Church, the comforter of the sorrowful, the spiritual guide, the messenger of peace, and trying to appreciate the life of the Church, merely from the Church Book (an impossible task perhaps), I would say that our minister – the Rev FC Watts – did a great, and in many ways, a fine work.

I think it worthwhile and even essential that the Church Roll of Honour should be appended, and this is found at the end of this story.

It was on the 12th May 1915 that a welcome was given to Mr John Ready who had come to take up the work of Colportage and Village Evangelisation. It was ten years later that it was thought to be a fitting opportunity to recognise the good work which Mr Ready had done and the willing service he had rendered in town and village. A presentation was made which consisted of a wallet containing 20 guineas and a framed address.

The Church mourned the loss of a good servant in the passing of Mr John Smallwood in 1915. A man who loved the truth and desired others to know it, that they might love it too.

At a meeting held in December of that year, extracts from Mr Smallwood's will were read in which he left £1,000 for a new Church to be built on the Hensington Villa site, £1,000 to the Trustees of the Church to support a Home Missioner for our village causes. Certain restrictions and particulars were given, and these are referred to in the Church minutes of December 1915.

At the end of 1917 a tablet in memory of Alderman Smallwood was placed in the Church, erected and unveiled by his widow.

The Church lost another good friend and servant in the passing of Mr TH Gillett on 18th September 1915. He had served as Deacon and as Church Secretary. One notice records:

> "His passing left a blank, for he was a brother beloved and a humble follower of Jesus Christ, conscientious in that to which he put his hands."

It would be impossible to place on record all that Mrs JC Smith has been, not only to the Church but to the wider circle of Christian Life, and the Church with deep regret was called upon to record her passing on 20 January 1918.

And a few months later to mourn also the loss of Mrs Mansell who passed away on 30th April. In fellowship with the Church for over 50 years, and her heart beat true for all the work at Payton Street. Her chief work had been the leadership of the Women's Bible Class for 45 years.

It was on 15th December 1919 that one of the Church's oldest and most loyal members passed away – Mr JC Smith.

Converted under the ministry of the Rev CH Spurgeon, he joined our Church in August 1870. A most generous supporter of our work, a man of simple faith, strong conviction, great humility and keenly zealous for the honour of Christ's Name.

He it was who commenced the Colportage work in this District nearly 40 years before (*ie* about 52 years ago) and he was one of the largest subscribers. Preston Chapel stands as a witness to the love and faith both of Mr and Mrs JC Smith.

These passed away, but they have been well represented in the lives of their children. Both Mr John and Mr Robert have served as Mayor of this Borough, and it is impossible to estimate their service to Church and to Town.

It was in July 1920 that Re-opening Services were held after renovation, and at the evening service the unveiling of a War Memorial:

> "In grateful memory of those associated with this congregation and school who gave their lives for King and Country in the Great War 1914-1918."

A Resolution was passed at a Church Meeting on 4th August 1920

> "That we send our best thanks to the Pastor, Officers and Members of the Congregational Church for the hearty welcome extended to us during the 6 weeks we joined with them in worship while our own Church was undergoing renovation. We shall look back to this period of fellowship with pleasant and grateful memories, and we pray that the Divine Blessing may richly abide upon all their endeavours for our common Lord."

Another outstanding event was the celebration of the Rev FC Watts' 25th Anniversary in December 1921. The preacher on Sunday 11th

December was the Rev W Cuff of Shoreditch Tabernacle. On the following day a tea meeting was held, followed by a public meeting presided over by the Mayor (Mr JM Smith).

At this meeting many fine tributes were paid to the work and faithful ministry of the Rev and Mrs FC Watts.

These tributes were spoken by Mr JM Smith, WH Baum, ET Kennard, H Ashby and the Revs TB Angold, LG Schofield, A Barber, A Hughes.

During the evening, Mr Watts was presented with a wallet containing £30 in notes, and Mrs Watts with an easy chair.

I must consider bringing my story to a conclusion so will merely mention the outstanding events of the remaining years: the visit of Dr FB Meyer in November 1926; the visit of the Rev HT Chilvers of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in March 1927; the 91st Anniversary of the opening of our place of worship, the special preacher being the Rev Thomas Phillips of Bloomsbury fame.

We now come to the departure of the Rev FC Watts who gave notice of his intention to resign in December 1927, but he remained with us until November 1929, having served the Church as Pastor for the long period of 33 years.

On 4th November 1929 a public Farewell Meeting was held in the Church when there was a large attendance of members and friends from the Town and villages. Mr RM Smith presided and was supported by representatives of the religious and civic life of the district. A number of addresses were delivered, each of which testified to the valuable services rendered to the Church and community by Mr Watts during his 33 years' ministry.

At the close, Mr ET Kennard asked the Pastor's acceptance of a wallet containing £100 together with an illuminated album in which was inscribed the names of some 300 subscribers, expressive of the love and esteem in which he was held.

On behalf of the ladies of the congregation Mrs Mullis presented Mrs Watts with a handsome handbag containing specimens of our erstwhile gold currency. Both Mr and Mrs Watts suitably responded. A memorable meeting closed with the Benediction pronounced by the retiring Minister.

The longest Pastorate in the history of the Church[1].

What can be said concerning such a ministry? Can we record more than what one believes Mr Watts himself might say:- in all the years God was gracious unto us. In his goodness he gave to the Church some great and sterling characters: Allen, Cranmer, Baum, Smith, Kennard, Gillett, Smallwood, Atkinson, and many others, not forgetting many great and worthy women.

We were without a minister for a year, and at a Church Meeting on 6th August 1930, it was resolved to send an invitation to the Rev Joseph Sutton of Leckhampton, Cheltenham, to become Minister of the Church for a period of five years.

The invitation was accepted and Mr Sutton began his Ministry in November 1930.

Recognition Services were held on 11th December, the Induction Service being conducted by Dr Arthur Dakin, Principal of the Bristol Baptist College. A public tea followed, when ministers and others took part. The Recognition Meeting was presided over by the Mayor (Mr RM Smith) and addresses were given by Dr Dakin, and the Rev AT Ward and the Pastor.

[1] The Sutton text here shows a manuscript line added to this sentence which reads "and one which is remembered by many of us with gratitude and affection." Whilst there is no example on the text of Sutton's known handwriting (the text is all typewritten with no significant marginal notes or corections) it is likely that this was added much later by another person who had experienced the Watts ministry. It has been excluded from the copy.

So ends our story: a chequered but happy record, faults and failings in abundance but God has been gracious unto us.

As we view these experiences that stand out like landmarks, let us remember that God is able to do as much and even more in the future. Let us realize that God is able to be more to us than the utmost He has already been – that He has more Grace in reserve than he has ever bestowed – that his gracious dealings with us have not reached finality.

Let the past bring to us a message of hope. Let it challenge our courage, our faith. Let the Church possess men and women of conviction, with love for the principles of Jesus Christ, and God will use them as he has used such in the past.

"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" and encouraged by the past we trust to the guidance of our Heavenly Father and with good courage and with great hopes of the future.

May God make these days and the days that are to be increasingly wealthy and fruitful, and may the time be not far distant when the Lord will add to His Church daily such as should be saved.

> "God of our fathers, be the God of their succeeding race."

Joseph Sutton

Pastor

Written for the Centenary Celebrations

February 15th – 28th 1932.

Appendix 1

Articles of Faith and Rules of Discipline (1832)

Editorial note: The Sutton text contains a reproduction of the original Articles of Faith and Rules of Discipline as adopted by the founding members on 26th February 1832 and written out in full at the beginning of the original minute book that year. However when checked against the original manuscript, a number of discrepancies can be identified. It is possible therefore that Sutton prepared his typescript from another copy.

A most significant difference occurs however in that the Sutton text reproduces clauses 1 to 9. In fact there is a tenth clause. I have seen a number of copies of the Articles over the years, and have in fact typed up a further copy of a copy some years ago but have never been aware of this tenth clause.

The following text therefore re-instates that clause and the final declaration which is not included in the Sutton and later copies, and corrects the other errors identified, so as to be a more faithful record of the original document Covenant. Chris Wiltshire

We the Church of Christ meeting at Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, being convinced of the importance of impartial discipline and pure doctrine, in order to our peace and prosperity in the ways of God, do, in the presence of God and of one another, solemnly covenant and agree in manner and form as followeth:

I. We receive the Bible as the Word of God, and the only rule of faith and practice, in which we find the following doctrines: viz

— that in the Deity are three equal persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who sustain different offices in the economy of human salvation;

— that all things were fully known to God from before the foundation of the world;

— that He from eternity chose his people in Christ to salvation through sanctification of the Holy Spirit and belief of the truth;

— that all rational creatures are under indispensable obligation to obey the law of God, which is holy, just, and good; but that all men have broken it, and are liable to and deserving of eternal punishment;

— that in the fullness of time God sent his Son to redeem his people, who by His blood has made a full atonement for sin, and who, by the imputation of His righteousness, justifies all who believe, so that they are accounted righteous in the sight of God, and accepted in the Redeemer); being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.[1]

— that all men are totally depraved the carnal mind being enmity against God, and sinners are convicted and converted only by the sovereign operations of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, being made willing in the day of His power;

— that the Life of grace is maintained by the same divine Agent, who is the finisher as well as the author of our faith; and finally

[1] Romans, verse 1

— that those who are thus renewed shall persevere in the way of holiness and at last obtain everlasting happiness through the mercy of God.

II. We will pay the strictest regard to our conduct in the world, acting with truth and integrity in all our worldly dealings. We will abstain from all unlawful amusements and diversions, by which time and money would be wasted, our minds carnalised and our brethren hurt, and religion dishonoured. We will likewise abstain from all worldly labour on the Lord's Day, and carefully set it apart to the worship and service of God. We will also pay the strictest regard to our promises and engagements, and by an universally holy conduct endeavour to honour the cause of God.

III. We will use our utmost endeavours to train up our families in the fear of the Lord, leading them to the public worship of God, and praying daily with and for them in connection with the reading of the word of God. Thus we will seek family mercies in the way of family religion. In our domestic capacity we will honour the Lord by showing our desire that our near relations may unite with us in the service of God; at the same time hoping that He will bless our labours and hear our prayers for their salvation; that He will plant them in His house, and make them useful in the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will instruct and govern our households according to Scripture considering them as little charges entrusted to us by the Lord.

IV. We will diligently attend the worship of God, the Lord's Supper, and Church Meetings as we have opportunity, being desirous to do all in our power to carry on the means of grace and Divine ordinances amongst us. If we are absent at any time we will be ready to give a reason why, if required. At a Church Meeting only one of the brethren shall speak at a time and if at any time a difference of opinion takes place, we will

endeavour to weigh the matter deliberately and fully and then put it to the vote to be decided by a majority, to which the minority shall peacefully submit. We will not watch for each other's faults, but will visit each other, mourning with the mourners, and joining in the joy of them that rejoice. We will warn, rebuke, exhort, and encourage with long-suffering, and do all we can to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. If called to act against those who have broken the laws of our Lord's house, we will do it in the spirit of the Gospel, admonishing, censuring or excluding, as the nature of the case may require, without respect to persons as to outward circumstances.

V. We will regard and highly esteem our Minister for his work's sake, constantly attending his ministry; seriously consulting him on the concerns of our souls, and freely contributing according to our ability, to his comfortable support: at the same time studiously avoiding in words and actions all that would weaken his hands or discourage his heart. In short, we will seek the good of the body with which we are connected, and if the welfare of the Church calls us to sacrifice our own case and interest, we will cheerfully do it, esteeming the honour of Christ far preferable to that of our own.

VI. We will seek out those of our congregation who appear under concern of soul, and after having good evidence of a work of grace upon their hearts will set before them the privileges of our Lord's house, which they have a right to enjoy, and His commandments which they ought to obey: attempting also to remove any stumbling block that may be in their way, that they may have the advantage of the communion of saints. In this we determine to be governed by the hope of their piety, without partiality and without hypocrisy, not preferring one before another on account of temporal property.

VII. We will receive such to our communion who have been baptised (*ie* immersed), on a profession of repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. All who are admitted into the Church shall have an equal right to all the privileges of our Lord's house. Each of our brethren (except under any censure), shall have the same right to speak and vote at our Church Meetings, and in the choice of Pastor and Deacons; yet sensible of our imperfections, we will cherish a humble spirit, being ready to prefer others above ourselves, and submitting ourselves to each other in the fear of the Lord.

VIII. We determine to watch over our own spirits against offences, desiring to live blameless and harmless as the children of God. On all personal misunderstandings, the person offended shall go to the offender, and in the spirit of love seek to be reconciled before the matter be divulged to any other. So also, if any ill report be heard of a member, such shall be privately visited to know the truth of the case, and the state of the person's mind concerning it, before it be brought before the Church; that if the report be false it may be checked; if true the person may be brought privately to repentance and reformation; and if it come under scriptural discipline, it may be brought before the Church with certainty; by these means, we will endeavour to preserve the Church in Holy peace and love without dissimulation[1].

IX. All the private affairs of the Church, such as discussions at Church Meeting, personal opinions upon disorderly members, or decisions upon their case, as whatever relates to Discipline, shall be kept with inviolable secrecy, not divulging them to any but members. This we consider necessary as well as prudent, seeing that we, as a Church, have no connection with the

[1] Hiding under a false appearance; a form of deception in which the truth is concealed.

world; nor are they either able or willing to judge aright concerning these things. And, as we wish to be helpers of our Pastor, the Deacons, and our active brethren, in the important duty of Church Discipline, we will not mention their names with their individual opinions to any persons who are censured or excluded, or to any connected with them, as the information can do no good, and will cause prejudice among the members.

X. This Covenant shall be read at the admission of members, to receive the consent of each, that all things may be done decently, and in order. By our individual adhesion to this Covenant in our whole behaviour we hope to glorify God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Saviour; be glorified by our united co-operation in His blessed cause, carried on among us by his Holy Spirit. Each one subscribing to this Covenant says as follows:

> These things, and whatsoever else we find contained in the word of God, we solemnly promise in his heart-searching presence, to observe and do the outmost of our ability: but deeply conscious of our utter inability to do anything without divine help, we look up to the strong for strength, and daily influence, both for ourselves and each other. Hold thou each of us up, O Lord, and we shall be safe. AMEN.

The above Covenant having been read at the formation of the Church was signed publickly by the following persons who then united in church fellowship, viz:-

James Cox

Thomas Willington Lane

Ann Lane

Thomas Edgington[1]

Auther[2] *White*

Theodosia Shuffery

Caroline Cooper

Sophie Cooper

Anne Allen

Sarah Sly

[1] The Sutton text has Eginton. The correct spelling in the original 1832 minute book is Edgington

[2] The Sutton text has Arthur; again this is incorrect: the original 1832 minute book has the unusual form of Auther and this name is referred to more than once indicating that it is the correct form.

Appendix 2

Roll of Honour

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Barnacle, Thomas
Barnett, EG
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Barnett, JE
Bartholemew, J
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Baum, John E
Bearley, AJ
Bennett, SH
Bennett, W
Brookes, Arthur
Brookes, F
Burrows, David
Burrows, HC
Butler, Thomas
Coleman, H
Coleman, R
Collins, Albert
Collins, Alfred
Collins, George
Court, E
Court, J
Court, W
Cull, AE
Davis, AE
Days, John
Deacon, E
Deacon, T
Dee, G
Edmunds HJ
Edmunds, WG
Edwards, C
Elliott, W
Field, EJ
Franklin, G
Gardner, M
Gilbert, R
Gilbert, Thomas
Gillett, HF
Goldby, FW
Gould, Albert
Gould, Mark
Groves, F
Guise, George
Guise, HP
Handy, John
Hartwell, C
Hartwell, R
Harwood, G
Harwood, WF
Hiscock, WT
Hopcroft, C
Hopkins, GW
Horseman, H
Horseman, Horace
Johnson, TW
Keasly, WJ
Kemp, Richard
Kemp, WJ
Kennard, PE
Keyte, AG
Lidzy, R
Lidzy, Robert
Love, John
Love, WH
Neal, Thomas
Neale, James
O'Dell, J
O'dell, Thomas
Parker, John
Paxton, W
Pearce, Frank
Pearce, George
Pendrey, W
Priest, Wm A
Reading, F
Reading, R
Rimell, D
Rimell, E
Rimell, John
Salmon, George
Simmonds, D
Simmonds, David
Simmonds, Wilfred
Smith, RM
Smith, Walter
Smith, William
Snow, William
Spanswick, R
Stanley, F

Stockford, FC
Stoffels, WH
Taylor, GH
Taylor, Harold
Taylor, William
Timms, Albert
Townsend, Wilfred
Walton, BD
Ward, James
Ward, W
Waters, R
Webb, JT
Webb, W
Wheelton, L
White, Alfred
White, C
White, E
White, Thomas
White, Walter
Winter, W
Woods, JE
Woodward, AJ
Worrall, Alec
Worrall, H
Worrall, James
Worrall, James (Jnr)
Worrall, L
Worrall, Victor
Worrall, Walter

Appendix 3

Ministers of the Church 1837-1932

The following is not strictly part of the "Sutton" History but is included for historical record.

Minister	Dates	Length of Ministry
Rev James Cubitt	Jan 1837 – Aug 1840	3 yrs 7 mnths
Rev J Edwards	Jan 1841 – May 1844	3 yrs 4 mnths
Rev JW Todd	Mar 1845 – 1847	2 years
Rev Sugden	Apr 1849 – Mar 1850	1 year
Rev Thomas Bumpas	Sep 1850 – Sep 1859	9 years
Rev T Hall	Sep 1860 – Feb 1867	6 yrs 5 mnths
Rev E Morley	Aug 1867 – Dec 1873	6 yrs 4 mnths
Rev S Burn	Aug 1874 – Oct 1877	3 yrs 2 mnths
Rev HA James	Mar 1878 – Sep 1879	1 yr 6 mnths
Rev J Pugh	Jun 1880 – Jan 1896	15 yrs 7 mnths
Rev FC Watts	Dec 1896 – Nov 1929	33 years
Rev Joseph Sutton	Nov 1930 -	

Appendix 4

Notes relating to 8-9 High Street, the property where the Church began

These previously unpublished notes updated in March 1978 provide background information regarding the property in the High Street referred to in the previous notes where the original members first worshipped. The history of the property is of significance to the Payton Street history due to the eventual ownership by James Cox.

The history of these properties can best be considered together, for although numbers 8 and 9 High Street are now separately owned, this is a more recent development.

From about 1350 to 1385, this property was owned and occupied by Walter Brehull, and afterwards by his widow, Sybil. Brehull was a man of considerable wealth; he gave the site of numbers 6-7 to Stratford College. Little is known of the subsequent history of the site until the late 17th Century, except that a Mercer[1], William Miller, was in occupation between about 1469 and 1475.

In 1628 it was owned by William Walford and let to John Court, but by 1670, John Noble, a shoemaker, had taken up residence and he continued to live there until at least 1697.

In 1714 it belonged to and was lived in by John Hornby, and innkeeper, and it was known as *The Angels*. In that year he leased it to Thomas Lees. By 1748 Susannah Hornby of Upper Quinton was the owner; she settled it on her husband John Timbrill of Bretforton whom she married in that year. The property is described as an inn

[1] A merchant or trader

known as the *Kings Arms and Angel*, late in the occupation of Mary Mills and then of Mr Mallory.

By 1765 the proprietorship of the inn had been taken over by William Judd, who continued there until about 1780. At this point there is evidence to suggest that the property was divided into two parts, one occupied by Judd and the other by Ann Jarrett. In 1784, however, the property was reunited under a new tenant: William Tompkins, a mercer.

During this period, the property continued to be owned by the Timbrill family, but in 1796, Thomas, son of John, and Susannah Timbrill sold it to Tomkins, the lessee. Tomkins' business, however, failed to flourish and having mortgaged the property, he sold it after only six years to another mercer, Bernard MacHenry. MacHenry, however, was even less successful, being declared a bankrupt in 1804.

William Carter, a tailor, was the next to set up in business, but, following his death shortly afterwards, the property was sold to Thomas Adams, a grocer, who carried on his business there until his death in 1820. His widow married James Cox, a timber-merchant, and the property remained in his ownership until 1883, when, following his death, it was sold to John Hill. In 1842 the property was rebuilt and divided into two parts: No 8 being used as a draper's shop until 1885, and No 9 initially as a grocer's.

The present structure is that built by James Cox in 1842-4. The building, or rather buildings, it replaced are admirably shown in a drawing by James Saunders which was made in about 1810.

On the next page is a table showing the various occupiers up to and including James Cox.

Dates	Occupiers	Trade/usage
1349-85	Brehull, Walter	
1392	Brehull, Sybil	Widow
1469-75	Miller, William	Mercer
1618-28	Court, John	Apothecary
1662	Phillips, Samuel	
1667	Smith, Thomas	
1670-97	Noble, John	Shoemaker
1712	Hornby, John	Innkeeper
1748-50	Mallory	Victualler
1758-77	Judd, William	Innkeeper
1782	Hardwick John	
1784-1802	Tompkins, William	Mercer
1802-04	MacHenry, Bernard	Mercer
1806-07	Carter, William	Tailor
1810	Carter, Mrs E	Widow
1815-20	Adams, Thomas	Grocer
1824-45	Cox, James	Timber merchant

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