

Penknapp Providence Church



1810-2010

Dilton Marsh, Westbury
www.providence-ebenezer.org.uk

Penknapp Providence Church – 200th Anniversary

Introduction

This booklet has been produced to mark the 200th anniversary of the founding of Penknapp Providence Church in 1810. This occasion could easily be an excuse for nostalgia, looking back to the good old days when Church going was part of everyday life for most people rather than the minority interest it is now. Recalling the past history of this Church could even be profoundly discouraging when past blessings are compared with the leaner times we face today. As you will see below, at the 50th anniversary of the Church it was recorded that almost 600 members had been added to the fellowship since the work first began. I haven't worked out the numbers for the last 50 years, but the figure would be nowhere near that staggering total.

Over the last 200 years there have been huge changes in the religious and social life of our country. But the living God has not changed and the Church remains committed to the faith of Penknapp's founding fathers. May the record of God's blessing upon this Church in former days stir us up to seek our God for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Times may change and the voices of the mighty preachers of old lie silent, but "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8). We look to him as we face the challenge of bringing the gospel of sovereign grace to the people of our day.

Information for the earlier period of the Church's story was gleaned from *Twenty Golden Candlesticks: A History of Baptist Nonconformity in West Wiltshire* by William Doel, reprinted in 2005 by Wiltshire Council Libraries and Heritage and Wiltshire Family History Society. I am grateful to Mrs Elizabeth Brooks for researching and compiling the history of the Church from 1890 to the present day. Thanks is also due to Andrew Jones of Trowbridge, author of *Twenty Golden Candlesticks Revisited!* (2008), for allowing me to draw upon his research.

Guy Davies (editor and current Pastor)

The Story of Penknapp Providence Church

Beginnings

The Church was founded under the preaching of George Phillips. Mr Phillips, the son of a Devonshire farmer was converted under the preaching of Charles Wesley. Originally he was called to be the Pastor of Westbury Leigh Baptist Church, but resigned from his charge as some members of the congregation were suspicious of his Methodist background.

Phillips held a series of open air preaching meetings, beginning in April 1810 that led to the formation of the Church. By the October of that year, the Chapel had been built.

The Church was called 'Providence' because the open air services that led to the gathering of the Church were not once hindered by rain. 'Penknapp' is the name of the field on which the Chapel was built.

The Penknapp Providence Church was constituted as a Particular Baptist Church, holding to the Doctrines of Grace as set out in the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689.

Mr George Phillips: 1810-1833

The Lord greatly blessed the ministry of the founding Pastor of the Church. The work began with only 30 members, but during the 23 years of Phillips' ministry it is recorded that 232 people were baptised and added to the Church. The preacher died on March 12th 1833, aged 82. A plaque was placed over the pulpit in his memory, paying tribute to his zealous and fruitful ministry.

Mr Shem Evans: 1833-1854

Evans hailed from Milford Haven, South Wales. He was the first of several Welshmen to pastor the Church.

It was during Evans' time that the Schoolroom was added to the back of the Chapel in 1835 at a cost of £494.

In 1853 the Chapel and Schoolroom were further renovated. To mark the occasion the Hon. and Rev. Baptist Noel, who caused something of a stir by leaving the Church of England ministry to become a Baptist Pastor, preached two sermons at Penknapp.

Much to the sorrow of the congregation Shem Evans stood down as Pastor after 21 years of successful ministry and moved to Arnsby, Leicestershire.

Mr Joseph Hurlstone 1855-1864

Next, a local man, Joseph Hurlstone of Corton near Warminster was unanimously called to the pastorate. The Church's hymn book was changed from the "Watts and Rippon Selection" to "Psalms and Hymns". Hurlstone was accused of preaching Arminian doctrine, occasioning the withdrawal of a number of Church members, who gathered for worship in a house on Slob Lane named "Gideon Chapel".

Special Jubilee services were held in 1860 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Church. It was recorded that 589 members had joined the fellowship since its inception. Despite the misgivings of some regarding Hurlstone's ministry, he preached to large congregations and 71 people were baptised during his pastorate.

Mr W Jeffery 1864-1876

Jeffery was a Devonian. During the twelve years of his ministry many were baptised. Mrs. Jeffery was by all accounts an excellent Pastor's wife, holding Bible classes for young people at the Manse. By this means many were added to the Church. Owing to ill health Jeffrey resigned his ministry in 1876. He was editor of the *Pot of Manna* magazine and author of "The Life of Anne Elling, the Wiltshire Centenarian".

Mr T. C. Finch 1877-1884

The fellowship faced difficult times under their next Pastor. The cloth factories closed, causing many Church members to leave the area seeking new employment.

William Doel, author of *Twenty Golden Candlesticks* noted that, “Nothing of great importance happened during Mr. Finch’s Pastorate.” But it seems that he was highly esteemed by the congregation. After a painful illness Finch died in 1885 and was laid to rest in the Pastors’ vault.

Mr A E Johnson: 1887-1895

Deacons Mr T. Parsons, Mr C. Deacon, Mr F. Tucker and Mr F. Loxley served alongside Mr A E Johnson.

In 1892 the Sunday School Superintendent Mr Albert Ingram and others met to discuss the need to repair the Chapel and build their own Baptistry; this would cost over £100 pounds. The tiles for the Baptistry cost £10 per 100. Before this baptisms were conducted in the water at Stormore. New pews and a new heating system were also installed.

During this time Mr Walter Henry Applegate made an Oak Table at his own expense, and presented it solely for the purpose of Communion.

Mr Johnson left in 1895.

Mr Shellard: 1897-1900

Penknapp at this time was in the Wiltshire and East Somerset Baptist Association, known simply as WESBA. In 1898 the Annual Meetings of WESBA were held at Penknapp. Mr Shellard left in 1900, to go to Swindon.

Mr William Povey: 1901-1906

Mr William Povey was on Executive Committee of WESBA. Mr Povey spoke at the 1907 Annual Meetings, which were held at Calne. Mr Povey left in 1907 the Church was served with supply preachers until 1909.

During the time of interregnum the Chapel hosted the half yearly WESBA meetings, when Mr Shellard prayed and Mr Day gave the address.

Mr Huntley: 1909 -1910 (*18 months approximately*)

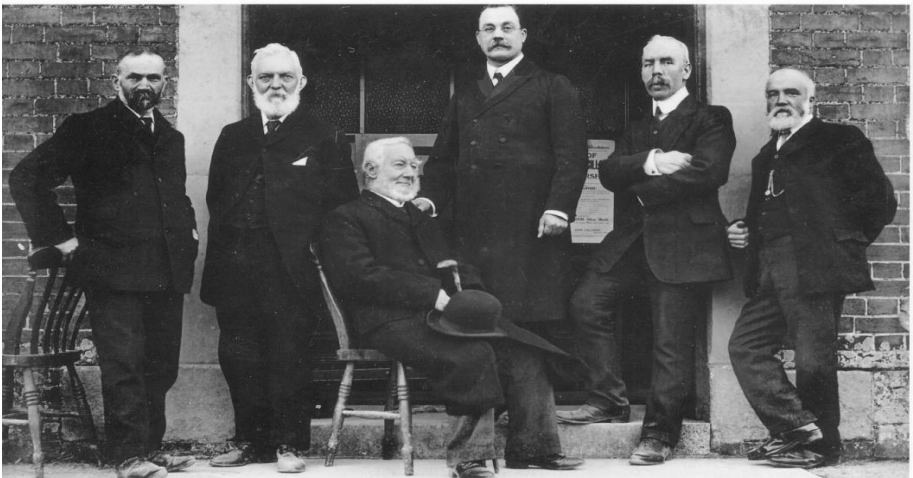
Mr Huntley was on the Executive Committee of WESBA.

1910 also saw the 100th anniversary, with much joy and praise.

In April that year there was a Centenary Bazaar to raise funds for the refurbishment, which also included repairs to the School room, which was to cost over £150.00.

Mrs John Fuller opened the Bazaar, Mrs Fuller being the wife of Mr Fuller, the then MP for Westbury.

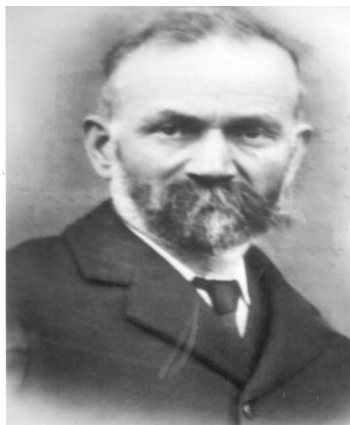
In May of that year, it being Whit Sunday, the Sunday school celebrated the centennial anniversary. At 7am that day many gathered for prayer in the schoolroom. The Pastor Conducted both Morning and Evening Services. The morning sermon was from Proverbs 22v6. The evening sermon was from Joshua 25v15. The evening service was packed with many seating in the schoolroom at the back. In addition there was a full afternoon service for the children conducted by the Pastor's wife, the text being Hebrews 13:8. Mr Huntley left at the end of 1910 to go to Canada.



100 Year Anniversary? **Laban Hunt, with other Church Officers.**

In 1910 Mr Albert Ingram gave up as Sunday School Superintendent after 33 years of service.

Mr Laban Hunt took over as Superintendant and served until his home call in 1921. During the early part of his service a younger man helped him, called Herbert Daniells. It was hoped Mr Daniells would take on this duty permanently. Sadly, Mr Daniells died in France in 1916 being 28 years old. It is said of him, he was ready to meet with his Lord whom he served faithfully.



Mr Laban Hunt

Sunday School
Superintendent
1910 to 1921



Mr F.H. Daniells

Deputy Sunday
School
Superintendent
Died age 28, 1916,

Mr William George Howe: 1911-1916

The First World War started during his pastorate. The Pastor was deeply concerned, approximately thirty young men of the congregation had applied to go to War; so he purchased 20-30 new testaments and Bibles. One soldier did return to confess faith in Christ and was baptised.

It is also recorded that in November of 1914 the Rev Mills took special services for a week among the young people. Six of these professed faith in Christ.

In 1916 Mr Howe was very ill and had to give up the pastorate. He loved the work and found it very hard to retire.

John Rees: 1918-1923

Ten of the young Men from the Chapel had died. The loss was deeply felt. It was decided that a War Memorial should be built. There was a special service and unveiling of the Memorial in October 1921. A sudden outburst of rain meant that the service had to continue in the Chapel. Mr John Rees gave the address. The hymns sung were, "O God our help in ages past" and "Rock of Ages."

THE NAMES ON THE MEMORIAL OF THE TEN WHO DIED

F. Herbert Daniells
F.H. Noakes
William Ingram
Edward Woodward
C. Denim Millard
William Noakes
Edmund Grant
A.V. Brown
Henry Mizen
A.J. Newman

(The last person on this list is buried in Penknapp's own graveyard.)

In 1921 the Annual WESBA Meetings were again held at the Chapel.

Mr Rees left in 1923 and lay preachers served the Chapel for a while.

In 1924 all the renovations had been completed, including the fitting of new windows. There were special services that were held on 15th October, conducted by Mr Probert from Swindon. Afternoon service 4.30pm and evening 7pm, tea was served between services.



Mr John Parsons.

Deacon:

Faithful Friend of Penknapp,

Builder of the new Manse.

(149 Westbury Leigh)

New Manse:

Mr John Parsons was at this time one of the deacons, and on the WESBA Committee. Mr Parsons was a builder by trade and after much prayer it was decided that a New Manse be built.

Mr Parsons helped to secure the land for this purpose; he also supplied bricks of the best quality and the Manse was built to the glory of God. Mr W Millard, a local Carpenter, who was also a member, selected the best wood for the manse.



Penknapp
Pre 1924

Mr Ernest Rudman: 1926 -1929

Mr Rudman was the first Pastor at the new manse, 149 Westbury Leigh. Mr John Parsons went to be with the Lord the same year, as did Deacon West. By 1928 the deacons were Mr Nelson Ingram and Mr Stillman who lived in Petticoat lane, Mr Fred Smith and Mr Rueben Collier.

Sabbath Schools were held morning and afternoon. The Morning Superintendent, Mr Collier, would get up early and light the coke stoves, return home for his breakfast and be back at Chapel before 10.30am to open up and get ready for the children. Mr Fred Smith was the Afternoon Superintendent. Teachers included: - Mrs Mizen, Eva Bartlett, Mrs Glad Gough, Lily Mizen (who played the organ for afternoon Sabbath school) Winnie Webb and Lucie Ingram to name but a few. Mr Frank Parsons took the Men's Bible Class and Mrs Adah Collier took the Ladies' Bible class.

The Lord blessed the work and many were added to the Church. The Chapel had a good choir, Mr Billy Ingram being Conductor and Mr Nelson Ingram played the organ.

Mr Rudman left in 1929.



Mr Sydney Watson's Bible Class: (*Between 1930 & 1937*)

Top, left to right: Glad Bailey, Edna Bell, Connie Adlam, Lily Mizen & Rhena Alford.

Lower, left to right: Glad Gerrish, Flo Sadler, Dorothy Smith, Mr Watson, Cath' Millard, Olive Sadler and Edna Alford.

Mr Sidney Watson: 1930-1937

Mr Watson was from the Porth Tabernacle in the Rhondda Valley. He came recommended by his Pastor, R B Jones. Mr Jones, also Principal of South Wales Bible Training Institute had seen revival blessing in the 1904/05 Welsh Revival. Before his call to the ministry Mr Watson had been a cobbler. He would often repair the shoes of poor families in Porth for free."

Mr Watson was a young married man with a deep love of Christ. He was a great encourager to the younger men in the Bible Classes and Men's meetings.

Mrs Watson supported her husband and served faithfully the Ladies' Bible Class and other Ladies' Meetings. Sadly Mrs Watson became very ill and went to her eternal reward at an early age.

Mr Watson tried to do away with pew rents before he left 1937.

Mr Scothorn: 1939 - 1942

Mr Scothorn came with his wife and daughter. Not much is known about him except that he was Christian Book Agent and bought and sold Christian books.

One known baptism during his Pastorate was that of Joan Freeguard.

Mr Scothorn left in 1942.

Mr Maurice Smith: 1942 - 1944

After a short interim Mr Maurice Smith was appointed as Pastor. He was a young, very smart single man. As it was wartime Mr Smith spent a lot of his time on Pastoral visiting. There is a story of a dear lady in the congregation who had twins. Both were rather small and frail. Mr Smith visited this lady and thankfully both babies survived.

Mr Smith left in 1944 to serve the Lord elsewhere. Sadly, he died of cancer later in life.

Mr John Yuille: 1945 -1950

Mr John Yuille then came as Pastor. During his time at the Chapel he often spoke of his Aunt who had promised to leave him a clock. Mr Yuille left in 1950. In 1976 Mr Yuille returned to the Church for a special meeting. He recognised several in the congregation and said to Eva and Mr Ingram, "I have now inherited the clock!" to which he had referred in his pastorate. Then he promptly gave a message on, "It is time to seek the Lord."



**Penknapp Sunday School Outing in Mr Scothorn's time,
believed to be in 1938**

Mr H Grosvenor Cooper: 1950 - 1957

When most people would be retired or thinking of doing so Mr Cooper came. (He was in his sixties by then). Mr Cooper had a burden for young people, so once a month there was a Young People's rally at the Laverton Hall in Westbury. The meetings would be taken by either Uncle Tom or Mr North who were local evangelists.

These events are not recorded in the Chapel's books but remembered by those who attended. In Mr Cooper's time "The Keswick Hymnbook" was introduced for Sunday morning worship. In the evenings and other mid week meetings, the "Golden Hymnal" was used. During Mr Cooper's pastorate there was a visit by Gladys Aylward who was on furlough from China.

In the summer Children's Holiday Clubs were held. In the mornings and evenings Uncle Tom or Mr North would tell the children stories. In the afternoons games were played in a village field. A marquee was erected for wet weather use and for quizzes, stories and so on. They were very happy days.

Mrs Cooper was partially sighted but that did not stop her from serving her beloved Lord. She had a sister, Miss Pigot, who was a missionary.



**H. Grosvenor Cooper
Pastor 1950 -1957.**

When home on furlough she would come and stay at the Manse with her sister and brother in law. Late in 1957 Mr Cooper told the Church that he felt he should retire. Members were saddened by this news.

Mr F Smith: 1958 - 1962

Mr F Smith came from Hove. At this time Penknapp was affiliated to the Baptist Union. Mr Smith was deeply troubled by this because the Baptist Union had joined the ecumenical World Council of Churches. After much prayer and many debates the Church left the Baptist Union and joined the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC).

It was decided that the Chapel and Schoolroom needed repair, and this was done. Sadly many Church members left at this time and also several went to be with the Lord. Mr Smith retired early in 1962 to live in Trowbridge.



Taken before the coach set off on the 1977 outing.

Mr Cyril Ede: 1963 – 1986

There were few in the pews at this time, but Mr Ede brought a deep Calvinistic ministry with a strong love of the Lord. He came to serve and serve he did. Much door to door and evangelistic effort was carried out and slowly the Lord himself blessed and owned the work.

In addition to the regular Tuesday afternoon Ladies' Meeting, the Pastor's wife Mrs Amy Ede introduced a younger woman's fellowship meeting on Thursday evenings. The Sunday school began to build up during this pastorate and there were conversions leading to baptisms.

In 1984, the Trustees decided to sell the Manse at 149 Westbury Leigh, as by then Mr and Mrs Ede had bought their own home in Westbury ready for their retirement. Mr Ede retired in 1986.



Covenanter's Presentation 1980's:

Left to right: 1st, 2nd and 3rd – unknown; 4th Mr Stallwood, (*Men's Covenant Leader*) 5th unknown, 6th Mr Ede (*Pastor*), 7th, Miss Elizabeth Matthews, 8th Mrs Amy Ede, 9th Mrs Joan Wilkins, 10th Miss Evelyn Styles, 11th Mrs Rose Parker, 12th Mother of Mrs Joan Wilkins.

Mr Michael Leaves: 1987-1994

The new Pastor came from Bala, he was a young man with a wife and family. Mr Leaves trained at the London Theological Seminary and had a rich and deep Calvinistic ministry. The Trustees had bought 9 Oldfield Road for him and so Mr Leaves was the first Pastor in the new Manse. He led the Church into the Grace Baptist Movement.

There were times of Fellowship with Zion in Trowbridge, with Mr Leaves and Mr Wackett, Pastor at Zion exchanging pulpits. Mr. Wackett acted as Penknapp's Moderator when Mr Leaves went to Swansea in January 1994.



Penknapp Congregation in 2002

Mr T Jefferies, 1994 - 2002

He came as Pastor in October 1994. Having taken early retirement from being clerk of works in South Wales, he studied at the Evangelical Theological College of Wales (WEST as it is now).

At Penknapp, he diligently expounded the scriptures week by week. During the first 2 years, he did an overview of every book of the Bible in the Bible Study. He encouraged the church to fellowship more with other churches and was the driving force behind the refurbishment of the kitchen and schoolrooms.

In 1999, Mr Jeffries helped bring Penknapp into a joint-Pastorate with Ebenezer Baptist Church, West Lavington, an arrangement which continues to this day. The Churches remain independent, but co-operate closely and meet alternately at Penknapp and Ebenezer for prayer and Bible study.

Mr Guy Davies: 2003 –

Guy Davies, married to Sarah with two children, Jonathan and Rebecca was inducted as Pastor in November 2003. He also studied at the London Theological Seminary. Currently there are two deacons, Mr Andrew Stone and Mr William Stroud.



**Guy & Sarah
Davies with
Andrew Davies at
Guy's induction
in 2003**

A Mother and Toddler's Group was started in 2005. Also that year witnessed the first conversion for over twenty years and thus far five people have been baptised.

The Ladies' Meetings continue to be a blessing and encouragement to all who attend.

Holiday Bible Clubs are held during the Easter holidays. On Fridays the “Penknap Kids Club” meets for children aged 5-11.

Evangelistic literature is regularly distributed and the Church engages in door-to-door outreach in the community. Penknap works together with other Grace and FIEC Churches under the auspices of the Good News Partnership to share the gospel of Jesus with the people of West Wiltshire.

How good is the God we adore,
Our faithful unchangeable Friend!
His love is as great as His power,
And knows neither measure nor end!

’Tis Jesus the First and the Last,
Whose Spirit shall Guide us safe home,
We’ll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that’s to come.
(Joseph Hart, 1712-68)

(Most of the Chapel Books were destroyed by fire at Pinnegar and Finches offices in the 1930’s, information covering this period has been gleaned from a number of different sources.)

Mrs. Elizabeth Brooks wishes to express her gratitude to the late Connie Adlam and the late Olive Parsons for all their help. Thanks also to friends at the Trowbridge Record Office for their research assistance.
