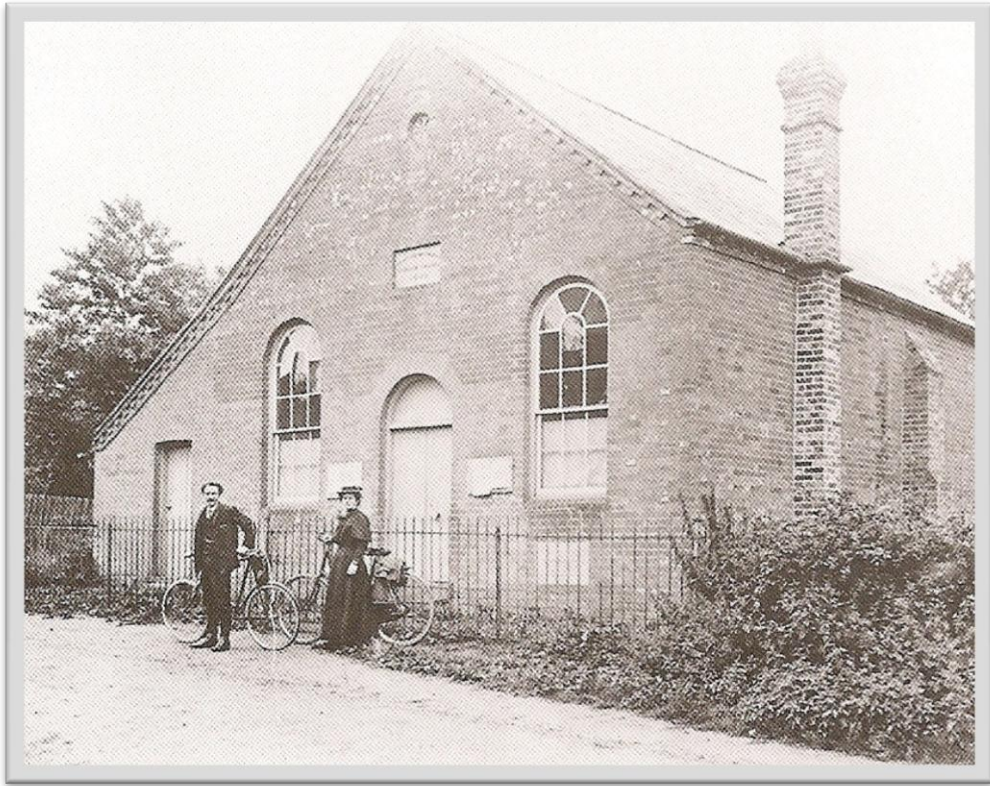


*Celebrating 150 Years*

*Methodism in Winchmore Hill*



*Primitive Methodist Chapel - The Hill, Winchmore Hill c. 1910*

*A brief History to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the  
Methodist Chapel in Winchmore Hill*

## **The Rev Preben Anderson, Minister Winchmore Hill Methodist Church, writes..**

*"It gives me great pleasure as the current minister in pastoral charge of Winchmore Hill Methodist Church to commend our very special celebrations to you in what is a remarkable year in the life of our church. Although relatively few in number, the members of this Church remain strong in faith and healthy in Spirit. We do thank everyone who in any way are helping us celebrate our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in true style, and particularly those among you who may want to support us in the future so that we can remain a presence in this locality. Do pop in and see us at any time, on a Sunday for our services, or when you hear the Amersham Band practising on weekdays. Come and see for yourselves that this Church is very much alive, but relies on your support to stay vibrant and hopeful for the future."*

## **JOHN WESLEY**

**J**ohn Wesley, born in 1703, frequently visited and preached in High Wycombe during his 40 years of ministry travelling the length and breadth of Britain. He first preached in High Wycombe in 1739, and his diaries record his regular visits to the town, for example...



*27 October 1766 "I rode to Wycombe. The room was much crowded, and yet could not contain the congregation"*

*22 October 1772 "I found another Society at High Wycombe. A large congregation was present at 5 in the morning, many of whom were athirst for full salvation"*

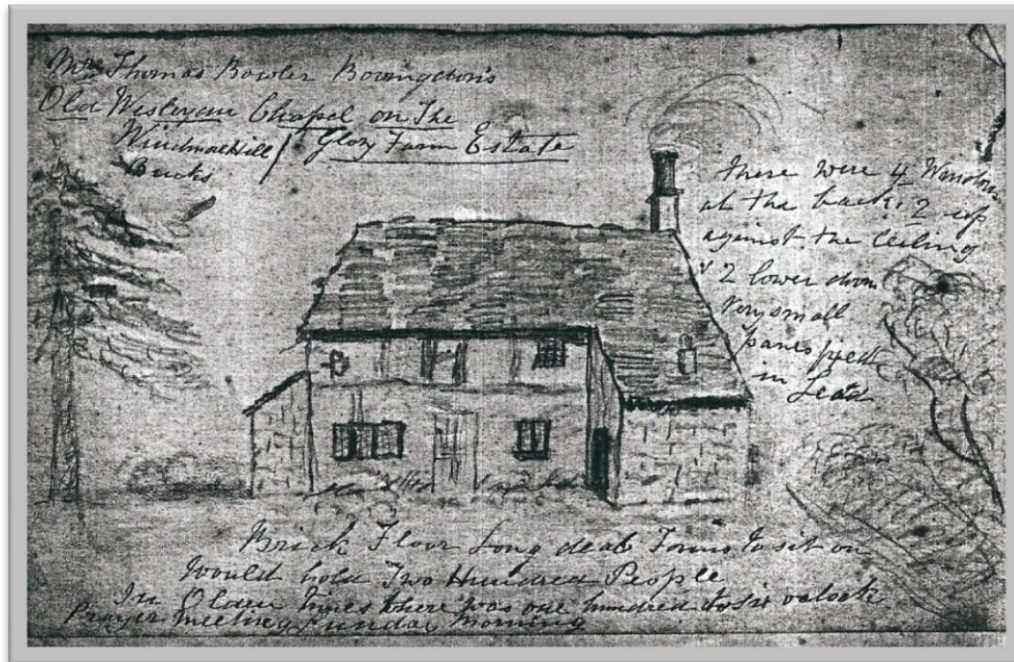
*18 October 1787 "At High Wycombe the work of God is so considerably increased, that although three galleries are added to the preaching-house it would scarce contain the people. Never before was there so fair a prospect of doing good in the place"*

John Wesley died in 1791, but already a permanent chapel had been established in High Wycombe. The Methodist movement rapidly grew in strength in the area, and in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a number of local churches were established in the surrounding villages, including a Chapel at Penn opened in 1808.



## THE WESLEYAN CHURCH IN WINCHMORE HILL

In 1818 a Wesleyan Church group was established in Winchmore Hill., meeting in a room provided by Thomas Bovingdon at Glory Farm., Fagnall Lane. Soon a permanent building had been established at Glory Farm , as illustrated in the picture below:-



The original Wesleyan Methodist meeting house at Glory Farm c.1830

Attendances grew. As well as visiting preachers and Ministers, by 1840 there were three local preachers. The strength of the Wesleyan church can be seen in the 1851 Religious Survey, signed by the Superintendent Thomas Bovingdon, which indicates a total attendance at Sunday services of over 100. and a Scholars group of 60.

## THE PRIMITIVE METHODISTS

In about 1810, a Methodist gathering was formed in Lancashire seeking a more simple form of worship, based around prayer and exhortation. This grouping became known as the 'Primitive Methodists'. There was strong rivalry – if not hostility- between the 'Wesleyans' and the 'Primitives'. During the 1830s and 1840s a number of Primitive chapels were established in the Chilterns, and regular meetings of 'The Primitives' in Winchmore Hill commenced in 1858.

## AUGUST 1860      A MEMORABLE TIME FOR METHODISTS IN WINCHMORE HILL

The establishment of two Methodist Chapels in Winchmore Hill was reported by the Bucks Free Press on 24 August 1860.

The Wesleyan Church was first ...

*“For nearly half a century, by the kindness of the late Mr Bovingdon and his son in allowing the use of the building for Divine service, the Wesleyan Society in Winchmore Hill has enjoyed the privileges and blessings of a preached gospel. But the time has come in which it is necessary for the convenience of the families and community in that neighbourhood to have another place for the enjoyment of their religious privileges. And the very liberal offer of Mr. Bovingdon of a suitable and eligible site has induced the friends in the place and the High Wycombe circuit to resolve on the erection of a new Wesleyan Chapel.*

*Last Monday, 20 August, was fixed upon for the first meeting to devise the means by which the above object should be accomplished. The weather was exceedingly propitious. The friends from nearly all parts of the circuit manifested their attachment and concern by their numerous and liberal contributions to the good cause.*

*About 400 partook of tea in Mrs Butcher’s two large barns at Fagnal Farm well fitted up for the occasion, after which the chapel committee repaired to the site to take the plan and dimensions of the ground. That being done, the public meeting was held in the largest barn, in which was erected a spacious platform for the speakers and where the listening crowd manifested their earnest attention to the appropriate address, all of which were in an animating and congratulatory character. It was manifest to all that “the people had a mind to work” as the donations and collections amounted to about £65, being the first effort to present a new sanctuary free of financial incumbrance*

In the same newspaper edition, The Bucks Free Press reported...

## **FOUNDATION STONE OF A NEW PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL.**

*“Last Tuesday was a joyous day for Primitive .Methodism in this much-neglected neighbourhood, it being the day selected for laying the first stone of a new chapel at the above place.. The ceremony commenced soon after two o'clock in the presence of a large assemblage. Appropriate hymns were sung and prayer offered, when the Rev. Murray Wilson with characteristic ability and fervour delivered a preliminary address. Having remarked that they were met to witness an interesting ceremony in connection with the tenth chapel in this circuit, nine chapels being already raised at a cost of £1437, he proceeded to show that the promise given to the ancient church was addressed to the present*

*The Rev Wilson then in terms of eulogy and respect introduced Thos. Wheeler, Esq., who proceeded at once to lay the stone, to the evident satisfaction of the gazing crowd. Mr. Wheeler spoke with more than usual pathos and power; and with his wonted catholicity of spirit congratulated the Primitives upon their success and prospects, assured them of his heartfelt sympathy, and expressed the sincere pleasure he felt in serving them at previous times as well as on this important occasion. The collection was then made, and was most encouraging and satisfactory.*

*Prayer and praise terminated the afternoon service when the people retired to a booth in Mr. Woodbridge's orchards in Horsemore Lane where upwards of 350 took tea. After tea the evening meeting, a most enthusiastic one, was held, the chair being taken by Mr. James. Smith. Earnest and appropriate addresses were delivered by the Revds. M. Wilson and G. H. Fowler, to which the people responded by a liberal collection. The sum of £36 was announced as already received, with promised donations that form a total of more than £50.*

*The Wycombe choir very creditably performed several select pieces, and the whole assembly dispersed after the usual dismissal, with .the manifest aim to esteem the 21st of August 1860 as a day long to be remembered”*

## The Chapel on The Hill

The Chapel on 'The Hill' was built on a plot of land bought for £8.0s 0d from Thomas Woodbridge by a group of thirteen local Trustees from Winchmore Hill and the surrounding neighbourhood. A Chapel or Meeting House was to be erected for use "in conformity with the Primitive Methodist Connexion". The Chapel cost £127 10s to build, largely financed by loans from Rev Fowler and Mr Wingrove, with interest at 5% pa.

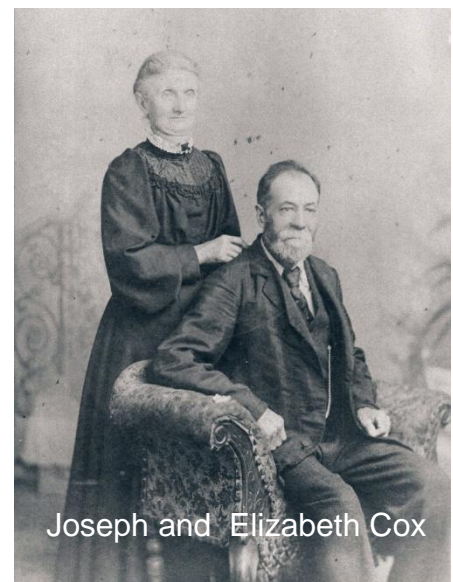
Annual accounts and records of Trustees meetings for the following 100 years. are in existence. Generally the income and expenditure was less than £10 per year, covering such items as candles, coal and lamps plus necessary minor repairs and improvements. The income came from occasional collections, donations, teas and seat rentals.

Throughout the period, the Trustees evidenced concern to keep the Chapel properly maintained and repaired. For example, in 1898 Mr Howard repainted the Chapel, at a cost of £12, with new lamps provided at a cost of £3 12s 8p; the money coming from thirty-one donors. A classroom and boiler-house was added in 1877, at a cost of £47.18s financed by a loan from Mr Wingrove, who was repaid between 1893 and 1902.

For many years, Ephraim Bovingdon was Secretary of the Chapel. In 1873 a Sunday school was established, with Joseph Cox as Superintendant, and he served the Chapel in a number of capacities for many years until his death in 1916.

On 11 November 1902, a special tea and public Meeting was held, to mark clearing the debt, with the names of 21 donors read-out at the event. The Trustees were able to decide to discontinue renting out the Hall for other than religious purposes .

A new roof was installed in 1905, and a graveyard established in 1918 on a piece of ground provided by Mr. Frank Nash. An extension to the graveyard was added in 1942. New seating was installed in 1922.





The final major development was in 1953 when a new Youth Hall was built. It was opened by Mr Albert Hatch who with his brother Arthur had been stalwart supporters of the Chapel for many years and who had donated the additional land needed for the new Hall.



The Opening of the Methodist Youth Hall - 1953  
(Including Harry Wingrove, Albert and Arthur Hatch, Rev Heaten and Mr Nancarrow)

Electric lighting was installed in 1953, and a porch was added in 1960 as part of the 100th Anniversary celebrations

Gladys Stratfull writes...

*My husband, Leonard, formed a choir in the early 1950s to lead our singing. The Sunday school at that time had about 60 scholars. In 1966 the old platform and pulpit were removed, and a new pulpit and organ installed. The Communion rail was dedicated to the memory of Mrs Elizabeth Hatch, and the table and chairs were given in memory of other faithful workers. The bible given by Reginald Nancarrow is still in the Chapel*

The Wesleyan Chapel was opened in 1861 and extended in 1884.



The strength of Methodist support in the village, both Wesleyan and Primitive, can be judged by the response within Winchmore Hill in 1911 when Bucks County Council proposed to establish a school in the village 'in accordance with the precepts of the Church of England'. However the villagers wanted a Council school instead.. A Committee was formed, under the Chairmanship of Joseph Cox, and petitions were signed. Letters were sent to every County Councillor stating that the inhabitants of Winchmore Hill almost unanimously 'did not wish to have a School in which the predominant part of the management of the School would be in the hands of the church (of England)'. The Bucks County Council were urged to reconsider their decision., and the outcome was that no school was ever built in Winchmore Hill.

Doctrinal differences between the different Methodist churches in England were overcome in 1929 when a union was signed. In Winchmore Hill, services were held in the two Chapels on alternate Sundays, but this was not a success. The united Congregation decided to meet at the former Primitive Methodist Chapel, and in 1937 the Wesleyan Church was sold to the Church of England and re-named the St Andrews Mission church. After 1960, congregations dwindled, and in 1991 the building was sold, and rebuilt as a private house.



We will remember them....

The Methodist Church has played an important role in the life of Winchmore Hill for over 150 years. Perhaps that is never more manifest than at times of great peril and loss. The most poignant memory must be of the 18 from the village who died in the First World War. In the porch to the Methodist Chapel stand a proud memory-board, recording not only those who died, but all those who fought. Many of those who returned were either wounded or with haunting memories.

Hand-written, with names added at different times, the board records in a very personal way the challenges and sacrifices of warfare. The names of these village families resonate through the years, and are shown below as a tribute to those who fought and particularly those – marked with an asterisk- who never returned.

WINCHMORE HILL.			
X James Hazell	Oxford & Bucks L.I.	George Deakin	Worcester Regt
Arthur Slade	" "	Tom Bilby	R. E.
William Redding	" "	X Alfred Slade	R. W. K.
Bert Rogers	" "	X Horace Brackley	A. S. C.
X Fred Rogers	" "	William Gomm.	K. R. R.
Sidney Hazell	" "	Ernest Gomm	K. R. R.
Edwin Bilby	" "	X William Brackley	R. F. A.
Frederick Sears	" "	Frederick Rose	R. F. A.
Bertie Meeks	" "	William Walker	Middlesex Regt
X Bertie Hazell	" "	X Frank Wingrove	" "
X Sidney Wilkins	" "	Arthur Hext	" "
Albert Rogers	" "	Reginald Francis	" "
Frederick Stevens	" "	X Sidney Keen	" "
Frederick Francis	" "	Harry Redding	" "
X John Woodbridge	" "	Christopher Wright	The Buffs
Arthur Brooks	" "	Alfred Wilkins	Military Shoemaker
Leonard Meeks	Oxford & Bucks. T.F.	Christopher Meeks	R. M. L. I.
Ernest Wright	" "	X Ernest Wingrove	City of London R.O.R.
Thomas Smith	" "	Sidney Wingrove	R. Warwick.
Albert Miles	" "	Sidney Hext	Training Reserve.
George Pursey.	" "	X Bert Redding.	" "
Ralph Meeks.	" "	William Rose	Royal Navy.
Stanley Francis	" "	Frank Pursey.	" "
Albert Wingrove. R.G.A.	" "	Arthur Pursey.	R. N. A. S.
Alfred Francis	" "	Harry Payne.	Wiltshire Regt
Herbert Redding. R.F.A.	" "	Frederick Payne.	Hampshire "
Richard Larkin	" "	Alfred Turner	Gloucestershire
X George Cox	" "	X William Birch	" "
X William Wright	" "	JOHN BRACKLEY	" "
		PERCY BRACKLEY	" "
		X ALFRED WRIGHT	" "

## Sydney Wingrove's Life In The Church



Writing in 1988, Sydney Wingrove, a life-long villager, gave a vivid memory of the importance of Methodism in Winchmore Hill before the First World War;-

*"I started Sunday school at the Wesleyan chapel at the age of 4, along with my two sisters and three brothers. The head of the church at that time was Mrs. Woodrow, and she used to run the Sunday school at 2.00pm and the afternoon service from 3 until 4.00pm. The preacher would most likely come from High Wycombe, and unless he was lucky enough to own a cycle he would walk both ways.*

*My mother then decided to move me to the Primitive Methodist Chapel because they had a Sunday school in the morning, which meant we were in Chapel at 10.30 am, as well as the afternoon service. The superintendent, Joseph Cox was a wonderful man. He always sat in his armchair in front of the pulpit. The lighting was by oil-lamps and the heating by a large stove, which Mr. Cox would stoke so it was nice and warm.*

*Another interesting person was Mr George Smith, who would always sit in the middle of the chapel and during the sermon would shout out 'Thanks be to God' or 'Praise the Lord'. Another memorable time was the Anniversary, held each year in May or June. We scholars used to practise for weeks. We sang on the Sunday morning and afternoon, home to tea and then back for the 6.00pm service. It was a great day for us children and we used to get a new suit for the Anniversary.*

*We always had a half day holiday from School on the following Monday. We had games on the Common, and then we went into chapel for a party and more games. At 6.00pm there would be a final service, followed by prize-giving, with every child having a book according to its age, and bibles presented to those who had passed the Scripture exam.*

*Another occasion we looked forward to was the Annual Outing to Burnham Beeches on the first Monday in August. What a wonderful sight to see four horses and vans being loaded up with the children and their mothers. At the bottom of Clay St, we had to get off and walk up the Hill, as the horses couldn't manage the loaded vans. We had a picnic lunch at Burnham Beeches and played games. At the end of a wonderful outing, the Leader said a short prayer, as thanksgiving for a wonderful day, and we sang the hymn "God be with you till we meet again"*

## Iris and Marian Hatch recall .....

Before 1960, there were stone steps outside, leading up to the door which lead straight into the chapel. The pulpit was directly in front, with the organ behind and high on the wall there was a handsome decorated scroll. The chapel was heated by a solid fuel stove and lit by oil lamps. Water was drawn from a well outside.

Sunday school was in the morning, followed by afternoon and evening services. Highlights included a Sunday School Anniversary when children performed on the platform, followed by prize-giving with a book for every child. There was an outing each year, usually to the seaside, and a concert at Christmas time. Services were taken by the Minister or local preacher. He would come in the afternoon, be given tea, and then took the evening service. The singing was accompanied by the organ, or sometimes a violin played by Arthur Hatch.

Particular days in the chapel-year were marked by extra services. For example, on Good Friday, there was a sacred concert given by a visiting choir. Harvest services included a short service on Monday, followed by an auction of the produce. A bazaar was held at Christmas time, and a Spring sale in April, when a Choir would usually perform. There was a Chapel Anniversary annually.

When the Rev Jean Quick was our Minister, she contacted the Methodist minister at Winchmore Hill, London and some exchange-visits were arranged. We took them to see Penn Church, the bluebells in the woods at Penn Bottom and to Jordans Meeting House. At the last visit, they had a new Minister who was an opera-singer – a huge man with a huge voice that all but lifted our roof!

## Maureen Seymour remembers .....

In the 1940s, 50s and 60s the Chapel had a thriving Sunday School. The Sunday School Anniversary was an important event in the church year, with recitations and songs and new "best dresses" for all the girls. There was also a shorter Concert and Prize-giving on the Monday evening. The Chapel was full for both these events, with chairs being imported to accommodate the extra numbers.

During these years the Chapel had a choir of nearly twenty singers. This gave the younger members a love of choral singing, taught them to read music and to appreciate the lovely harmonies in the old Methodist hymns.



## A FINAL RESTING PLACE.....

Since its establishment 90 years ago, over 110 from the village have been buried in the graveyard behind the Chapel... a peaceful oasis of memories. Families who have lived in the village for generations are remembered here- Slades, Purseys, Meeks, Sawyers, Woodbridges, Hatches, Wingroves, Rogers and many others... hard-working and loyal to their faith.



## Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to local members of the Methodist Church in Winchmore Hill for contributing memories and photos for this brochure. Barry Sutcliffe and David Church have kindly allowed information from their book "250 years of Chiltern Methodism" to be used.

Stephen C. Palmer Mav 2010