

Chapel History

As the church possesses very few written records, this history is necessarily brief!

The chapel deeds (now lodged with the Baptist Union Corporation at Didcot) tell us that 'the ground whereon the Farthingstone Baptist Chapel stands was bought on the 22nd day of July 1847 from George Watkins Esq of Leighton Buzzard for the sum of ten pounds'. As similar pieces of land in this area were selling for £110-£150 at the time, £10 was obviously only a token payment but we do not know why George Watkins was willing to sell the land so cheaply nor who encouraged him to do so, nor do we know why it was decided to build a Baptist chapel in Farthingstone at that date nor where the money came from. Several nearby Baptist chapels were built in the first half of the nineteenth century (eg Woodend 1811, Blisworth 1825, Nether Heyford 1826, Pattishall 1838, Eastcote 1840, Culworth, 1842, Sulgrave 1844) suggesting that there was something of a Baptist revival at this time and/or an effective policy of church planting. Thomas Chamberlain (1800-1869), the minister of Pattishall and Eastcote Baptist churches at the time, was also responsible for Farthingstone. He is described on a memorial plaque, now in Eastcote Chapel, as 'for 32 years the faithful pastor of this church and devoted evangelist of this district. Endowed with great natural ability and force of character joined with a large heart, he so preached the gospel of salvation with his lips and his life that many believed and turned to the Lord.....God so blessed his teaching and example that.....a region once a spiritual wilderness became a garden fruitful unto God.' It seems reasonable to suppose that his evangelistic efforts were largely responsible for the Baptist church in Farthingstone.

The deeds tell us the names of the original trustees. Thomas Poole was the only one who lived in Farthingstone. At the time of the 1851 census, he was 60 years old and is described as a farmer occupying 140 acres and employing 4 labourers. He had been born in Bugbrooke. Does this account in some way for the fact that seven of the original trustees lived in Bugbrooke? Of these, Joseph Larwill was a Baptist minister; James Daniel lived at the Crown Inn Wharf, was a coal merchant and innkeeper and employed 2 servants; Thomas Turland was a farmer; Samuel Bates was a plumber, glazier and painter employing 2 men; Joseph Levitt was a farmer of 150 acres and employed 3 labourers, a house servant and a farm servant; John Jeffery was a farmer; and Joseph Billingham was a carpenter. The other trustees were Thomas Chamberlain of Pattishall, Baptist minister; Nicholas Fisher of Milton, farmer of 366 acres, employing 7 boys and 2 men; John Lovell, farmer of Weston by Weedon; Hail Mawby of Long Buckby, schoolmaster; Joseph Mann of Lower Heyford, cordwainer; John Turland Brown of College Street Northampton, Baptist minister; and Thomas Phillips, painter. John Turland Brown may have been included because the church at College Street had a safe where the deeds of the Farthingstone chapel, and those of other small chapels in the area, were originally kept.

Though they were not rich and had to work hard for their living, the original trustees had a higher income and a higher social standing than the majority of the early church members. With very few exceptions, the early church members were farm labourers or the wives of farm labourers. This is hardly surprising as both the 1841 and the 1851 censuses show that more than 70% of the workers in the village were employed as agricultural labourers. The chapel continued to attract the poorer members of the community well into the twentieth century. For many years a collection was only taken once a quarter so that those who could not afford to give would not be discouraged from attending worship. The collecting box on the inside of the chapel door which is labelled 'For visitors' contributions' was originally made so that visitors could contribute towards the cost of an children's outing.

Originally, the Baptist church at Farthingstone appears to have been part of a group of Baptist churches consisting of Eastcote, Pattishall, Grimscote, Farthingstone and Litchborough (chapel built in 1862). Rev Thomas Chamberlain recorded visits to Farthingstone and the names of the church members in the 'Pattishall and Eastcote Church Book'. When he ceased to be minister, (sometime after 1856), the book

continued to be used as a church meeting minute book and a register of members. Farthingstone church members are recorded until 1878, apparently as part of the membership of Pattishall and Eastcote. The Pattishall and Eastcote church meeting seems to have been responsible for approving the earliest church members though later the church at Farthingstone exercised that responsibility for itself. The increasing autonomy of the church at Farthingstone is suggested by an entry in 1856:

'Aug 3rd Eliz Jordan Thos Rainbow were baptised and on Aug 24th received into the church at Farthingstone with Ann Rainbow which were not baptised. They all joined the same day. They came before the church at Farthingstone.'

Though there are no records of a continuing link between Farthingstone, Pattishall and Eastcote after 1878, some kind of official link must have been maintained because the Pattishall and Eastcote church book records that at a church meeting on January 24th 1914, it was proposed and seconded that 'Mr A J Johnson as overseer investigate as to whether Grimscote and Farthingstone would like to be separate from Pattishall'. At subsequent meetings the reaction of Grimscote to this suggestion is recorded but there is no mention of Farthingstone. During the early and middle twentieth century Samuel Walter Kirton, a member of the Baptist church at Eastcote had some oversight of the Farthingstone church but the exact nature of this relationship is nowhere recorded.

Though baptism by immersion of those who were sufficiently mature to make their own profession of faith was the normal practice of the church, as it is of all Baptist churches, the membership of the church was never confined to those who had been baptised in this way. One of the earliest church members was Margaret Poole. The Pattishall and Eastcote church book tells us:

' 1848 Margaret Poole from Farthingstone joined the church. Not baptised from infirmities received a full member. She were 70 years old. It were full church meeting all one to receive.'

An entry later in the same year helps us to understand why it might not have been appropriate for a 70 year old with infirmities to be baptised. 'Oct 15 at a church meeting came before the church Thos Poole Joseph Fenemore of Farthingstone 22 the were baptised in the Pools Pond on Sabbath Afternoon November 12th the come to Eastcote and were received into the church this were the only time we attended to Baptism at Farthingstone'

We admire the courage and commitment of those early church members who were willing to be baptised outside in a farm pond in November! The pond on Thomas Poole's land was a little behind and to the left of the chapel, as you stand facing it.

In 1875 Mr Mace was appointed pastor at Pattishall. The church book tells us that, 'Mr Mace was well known to.....many of the people in the villages of his new sphere having visited Farthingstone systematically for nine years when resident at Woodford his central evangelistic station. Nothing more is recorded of the ministry of Mr Mace.

By 1881, Mr Jones is pastor at Pattishall and the Baptist church there is advised by the local Association committee ' to try to divide Mr Jones time more equally among the churches of the district.' By 1886, he has been replaced by Mr Thompson (or Thomson) and Baptist churches in the area seem to have been experiencing some difficulties. The minute book of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association records that on 13th April 1886 a note from Mr Thompson of Pattishall was read, ' over the low state of affairs and giving some account of his work. Grimscote only seems encouraging.' (Farthingstone is not specifically mentioned but one assumes that the work there was not encouraging). The meeting resolved, ' to send to Mr Thompson an expression of our confidence in him and asking him to continue in the hope of seeing improvement. However, there was no great improvement for at a meeting on

November 4th, ' a letter was read from Mr Thomson in which he gave a gloomy account of the work in that district. The work is however regularly attended to in the district and appears to give signs of prosperity in some parts.' The small signs of 'prosperity' were obviously not enough, for at a meeting on April 14th 1887, ' the action of the sub committee in agreeing to Mr Thompson's leaving at the end of April was confirmed.'

The last baptisms of Farthingstone residents recorded in the Pattishall and Eastcote church book are those of John White, Joseph Grey and David Newitt on April 7th 1878. The 1871 census tells us that Joseph Grey was 17years old, a 'farm servant indoors' living in the household of Thomas Poole who was by then 86 years old but still described as a farmer of 140 acres employing 3 men and 1 boy. Did Joseph Grey become a Baptist as a result of Thomas Poole's influence or did Poole offer him employment and encouragement because he was already worshipping with the Baptists in the village? However it was, Joseph Grey and his family became a key family in the history of the chapel. He became a shepherd at Weedon and on Sundays, he attended to his shepherding duties and then walked back to Farthingstone to teach the older boys in Sunday School for one hour in the morning and the younger boys for half an hour in the afternoon. As he had some difficulty with walking he often found it easier to walk backwards down hills. Sometimes he was responsible for conducting the service at Farthingstone chapel and sometimes at the Litchborough Baptist chapel. On those occasions he read the congregation one of Spurgeon's sermons. His oldest son, another Joseph, played in the village band and was the chapel organist for 70 years. When the younger Joseph Grey was only 2 weeks old, in 1871, his mother became responsible for cleaning the chapel. Her daughter and grand-daughter (Rachel Frost) succeeded her as cleaners so that the chapel building was lovingly cared for by members of the same family for over 100years.

Other Baptist churches in the area were supportive of Farthingstone. Thomas Chamberlain tells us that on December 24th 1848 he ' attended to the Lord's Supper at Farthingstone. Collected at the table five shillings and purchase a cup for the Table. We had then 9 members others from other places made up the numbers that day at Table 21'. We still have this pewter communion cup, the purchase of which was made possible by the generosity of visitors from other churches. Farthingstone in its turn supported other churches. From 1863 to 1867, Farthingstone Sunday School contributed 5 shillings each year 'for the mission cause' and again in 1868 it is recorded that five shillings was received from the 'Farthingstone box'. For most of the twentieth century preachers were provided by the Northampton ' Village Preachers' Society' and later by the local Baptist Association's lay preachers' fellowship. In the early days, preachers attended their own churches in Northampton in the morning and soon after lunch were taken by pony and trap to the villages where they were to preach. Farthingstone was the last village to be visited and so the pony was unharnessed and put out to graze. After conducting an afternoon and evening service and being entertained to tea between the two services, the preacher at Farthingstone had then to catch the pony, re-harness it and drive the trap to Litchborough where another preacher would be waiting. As the visiting preachers were mostly 'townees' they often found this difficult! They were helped by the young farm labourers in the congregation. In bad weather when the road between Farthingstone and Litchborough was likely to be dangerous, some of the young men would help to drive the pony to Litchborough and then walk back to Farthingstone. Later the pony and trap were replaced by a taxi, and later still by the preachers' own cars. Several of the laymen who began preaching at Farthingstone and similar villages later trained for the Baptist ministry and were ordained. Hearty singing was always a feature of the worship. Sankey's hymns were particularly enjoyed and the young men in the congregation would often insist on singing some extra 'Sankeys' before going home at the end of the evening service.

During the twentieth century village life became very different from what it had been in the early days of the chapel and by the year 2000, the population of the village was almost exactly half of what it had been in 1847 when the chapel was built. Very few of those living in the village were employed in

agriculture. Though the number of those attending regularly became smaller, the chapel remained an important part of village life and was well attended at harvest and Christmas times. In 2001 a lay pastor was appointed and the numbers attending worship are slowly increasing. We are thankful that, though many small chapels in this area have been forced to close, we are still able to meet regularly for worship and fellowship. We look forward to doing so for a long time to come.

Chapel Notes

Information has been obtained from:

- census returns 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881. (Northants Record Office)
- a copy of the chapel trust deeds
- the Pattishall and Eastcote Church Book. (Northants Record Office)
- the minute book of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association (Northants Record Office)
- the personal reminiscences of June and Rachel Frost (grand-daughters of Joseph Grey)

The original spelling and grammar of quotations has been retained.

Wendy Manley 2003

Appendix 1

Details of church members 1847-1878 (the gap between 1859 and 1878 is unexplained).

Date	Name	Age	Date of Baptism	Death
1847	John Norris			
	Elizabeth Timerson			1859
1848 (May 21st)	Thomas Newitt	40		
	Mary Timerson			
	Margaret Pool	70		
(Nov 12th)	Thomas Pool	57	Oct 22nd	
	Joseph Fennimore	53		April 5th 1857
1849 (March 25th)	Charlotte Newitt	39		
	William Facer			Nov 1862
1851	George Castle	26		
1852 (May 23rd)	Emma Castle	24		
1853	Daniel Masters	26		August 1853
	Thos Rainbow	64/34		Nov 29th 1855
1854 (May 21st)	Emma Masters	27		
	Mary Thompson			Sept 6th 1887
1856	Millicent Townsend	43		March 15th 1869

	Sarah Chambers	64		
	Sarah Fenemore	68		
(July 11th)	William Jordan	27		
(Aug 24th)	Elizabeth Jordan		Aug 3rd	
(Aug 24th)	Thomas Rainbow	67/37	Aug 3rd	Dec 30th 1865
	Ann Rainbow	65		July 6th 1863
1859	Mary Bird			
	Mary Top			Sept 15th 1864
1878 (April 7th)	John White	26	April 7th	
(April 7th)	Joseph Grey	24	April 7th	
(April 7th)	David Newitt	40	April 7th	

Appendix 2

Information about church members from the census returns:

1861

Name	Status	Age	Employment	Place of Birth
George Castle	Son	26	Boot Manufacturer	Farthingstone
Sarah Chambers	Wife	59	Husband, John, blacksmith and farmer of 15 acres situated in Litchborough	
Joseph Fennemore		56	Agricultural labourer	
Sarah Fennemore		63		
William Jordon	Head, Unmarried	22	Farm Labourer	Farthingstone
Daniel Masters	Head	24	Agricultural Labourer	Farthingstone
E. Masters	Wife	24		
Thomas Newitt	Son, unmarried	43	Agricultural labourer	Farthingstone
Charlotte Newitt	Wife (but not of Thomas)	41	Husband, agricultural labourer	Maidford

Thomas Poole	Head	60	Farmer occupying 140 acres employing 4 labourers	Bugbrooke
Thomas Rainbow	Head	32	Agricultural labourer	Farthingstone
Ann Rainbow	Wife	60		Everdon
Thomas Rainbow	Head	32	Agricultural labourer	
M Townsend	Wife	38	Husband, agricultural labourer	

1861

Name	Status	Age	Employment	Place of Birth
GeorgeCastle	Head	35	Shoemaker	
Emma Castle	Wife	33	Shoe Binder	Litchborough
Thomas Rainbow		72	Pauper	

1871

Name	Status	Age	Employment	Place of Birth
Joseph Grey	Servant, unmarried	27	Farm Servant Indoors	

1881

Name	Status	Age	Employment	Place of Birth
Emma Castle		54	Shopkeeper (grocery)	
George Castle		56	Shoemaker and postmaster	
Joseph Grey	Head	27	Agricultural labourer	
David Newitt	Head	43	Hedge cutter and thatcher	
John White	Head, Married	29	Agricultural labourer	Hockmore