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History Society from the website
compiled by the late Brian Joyce.

Wheathampstead United Church

(April 2012)







Wheathampstead United Church

Brewhouse Hill

(earlier pictures)



(c1994)

Christmas Tree Festival (21st Dec. 2008)



Historical notes contributed by Ruth Jeavons
(April 2012)

Nonconformity in Wheathampstead

Bishop Compton's return of **1676** listed 10 non conformists in Harpenden and 26 in Wheathampstead.

1675. Hugh Smith of Wheathampstead drew up a list of Baptists who attended the church at Kensworth. 13 from Wheathampstead, 8 from Harpenden. Included the following Wheathampstead families: Tidd (Tide); Cason; Rawlins; Smith; Penny; Harden and Osman.

1678 Brother Osman, (an inhabitant of Wheathampstead and servant in a brother's house) was recorded as spending a day of excess, drinking and cheating his Baptist employer who could do no less but declare it to the church" " he yet lieth under admonition".

Feb 1679/80 Brother Rawlins (also of Wheathampstead) "did very often drink and kept bad company to the impoverishment of his wife and children." Was withdrawn from the church and only restored after 10 years in 1691 after he repented.

Toleration Act 1689

The Toleration Act of May 1689 granted a limited toleration to Presbyterians, Independents Baptists, and Quakers; - they could worship freely but were excluded from public office. (Catholics and Unitarians were still liable to prosecution).



WILLIAM III. GIVING HIS ROYAL ASSENT TO THE TOLERATION ACT, 1689.



THE FIRST MEETING FOR THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD AT SALENDINE NOOK, OCTOBER, 1689.

1690 Dissenting houses in Wheathampstead licensed in names of Richard Sibley and James Harding (Harden as listed in 1675?)

1694 Anabaptists had a house certified in Wheathampstead.

1700 another house certified in names of Hugh Smith (both senior and junior) and the reformed John Rawlins, at William Osman's house "at the east side of Gustard Wood".

"our dear brother Harding being only left alone in the office of Eldershead he wanted someone to assist him. He was father-in-law to James Marshall, founder of the charity. Harding obviously held in high esteem and a leader of the group.

1706 and 1721, Bishop of Lincoln's visitation records 14-18 dissenting families in Wheathampstead, as opposed to only 2 – 3 in Harpenden .

June 1723 dissenting house at Custed Wood (William Young) also at Marshall's Heath (Richard Coddall)

March 1728 house of John Grannell at Wheathampstead

1749 Andrew Tristram

1828 Protestant dissenters had a house licensed to meet at Mrs Susannah Nash (possibly Methodists)

1839 a new Wesleyan chapel built on the Hill at a property owned by Jacob Harrison (now an Insurance office) There were 6 members, Grays and Deverills, but they doubled their nos in 3 years.

1808 The Independents had a house licensed at Wheathampst in the names of Anne Fillbey and Thomas Parrett

1810 Thos Neale had a house licensed for worship.

8 Sept, 1812, George Sutton of Water Mill was licensed. (known as the Water Mill) Did they worship at the mill as I have heard they did?

1815 Sutton collaborated with other Protestant independents to build a special premises (a chapel) on Brewhouse Hill. Certified on 26 May, and opened on 5 July 1815. The first sermon was preached by Mr Cox, a pastor of St Albans Congregational Church . (It belonged to Rogers, Sutton and Bacon)

1856 29 new members admitted in one year.

1872 Membership was 22

1887 The Folly Methodist church was built (to some opposition from those on the Hill as it was thought to be a challenge to their membership).

1895. Membership down at the Brewhouse Hill. "The Cause was in a very feeble state". But under the leadership of Thomas Wren, village wheelwright, membership trebled from 7 – 21.

By 1897 membership was down again and it closed in 1939. "Today it is a factory "(source 1975 WEA booklet 3). The Folly Methodist closed in 2004.)

The Independent's Chapel joined the Congregational Union, and in 1876 a new chapel was built.

22 May 1877 it was opened

Easter Monday 23 April 1877 A bazaar was held in the school room to raise funds to pay off the building debt (£70 was the target). This was reported in the *Herts Advertiser* in some detail. Mr Wiles the Mayor opened it on Monday afternoon at 2.00 pm. He recollected his first association with the original chapel 55 years earlier. He had laid the foundation stone of the new church the year before and referred to George Sutton as a relative of his, praising him for "carrying on the good work". He gave £5 5s as a gift towards funds, praising Rev. Hoppus for being "exceedingly zealous in giving encouragement to the young and to persons of larger (*sic!*) growth". A Mr Williams of Finchley (Hon. Sec. to the Herts Congregational Union) said "the structure of the Wheathampstead church was a model to the Congregational churches of the county".

In June 1889 they celebrated the 75th anniversary of the establishment of their church in Wheathampstead.

Mr Morgan, the minister at the start of the 20th century, publicly burnt a copy of the 1902 Education Act at Church Green, Harpenden, which he opposed.

Always strong rivalry between Anglicans and Congregationalists up to World War I. Competition over church "dos" fetes, etc.

1939 Chapel closed. “Today it is a factory “(source 1975 WEA booklet 3). The Folly Methodist closed in 2004.