

NONCONFORMIST CHAPELS OF WOKING

Iain Wakeford 2014

Last week I mentioned the Baptist Chapel and school in the Wheatsheaf area of Horsell, founded in the 1820's and run by James Furner and his family until the 1850's (with an average attendance apparently of about 180 worshippers in the morning and 100 in the evening).

Horsell was obviously quite a religious area because as well as that chapel there were at one time two other Baptist churches in the village – one at Cheapside (known as the Horsell Common Chapel) and one on Horsell Common at Anthony's, as well as eventually the tin Evangelical Chapel in Manor Road and the two chapels of ease to St Mary's Church – St Thomas' at Littlewick and St Andrew's at Viggory Lane.

The Horsell Common Chapel was the earliest of the three Baptist chapels, starting out in about 1810 in a small cottage (owned by a lady called Damaris Roake) that later was to form the vestry with the chapel built onto the front. That was in 1815 when George Carman, a builder from Old Woking, put in a bill for £205.14s.3½d. - £195 of which was 'to building the chapel' with the balance for fencing, a gate post, a 'mone' box and painting.

About the same time Damaris and her son John conveyed the property 'with an erection or building thereon to be used as a chapel or meeting house for Protestant Dissenters', to trustees, with John later adding more land to the front of the chapel onto what became Horsell Rise.

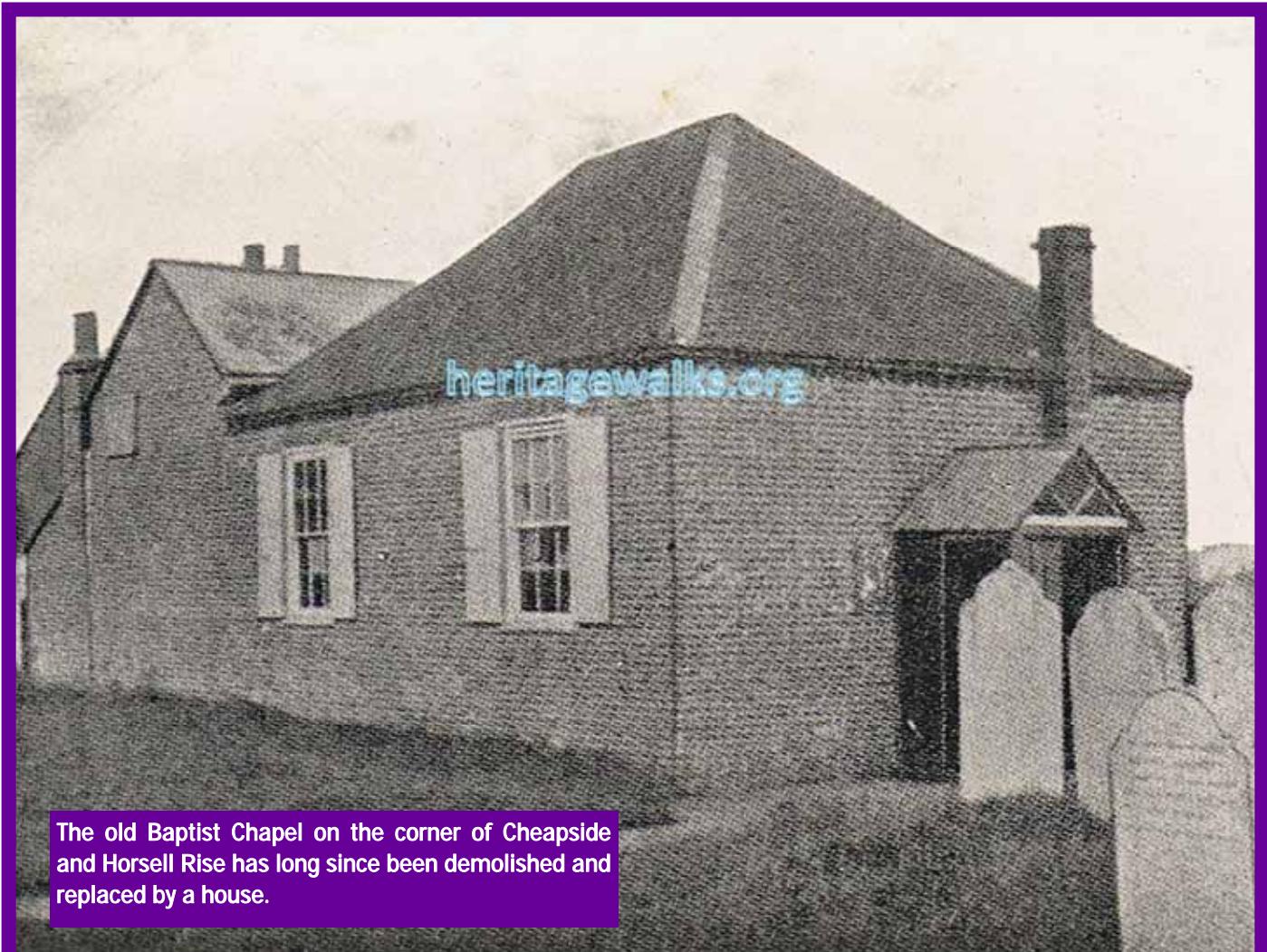
The first minister (preaching presumably in the cottage, or possibly in the open air on the common) was a man called David Denham who apparently moved on to Reading after 1813 before preaching in Bath and then Plymouth where 'his labours were greatly blessed and he frequently had 2,500 people to hear him'.

He was later succeeded by George Comb, who apparently lived in Guildford but walked every Sunday to Horsell 'praying, reading his Bible, and studying as he walked' and 'frequently preaching at Guildford in the evening after his return'.

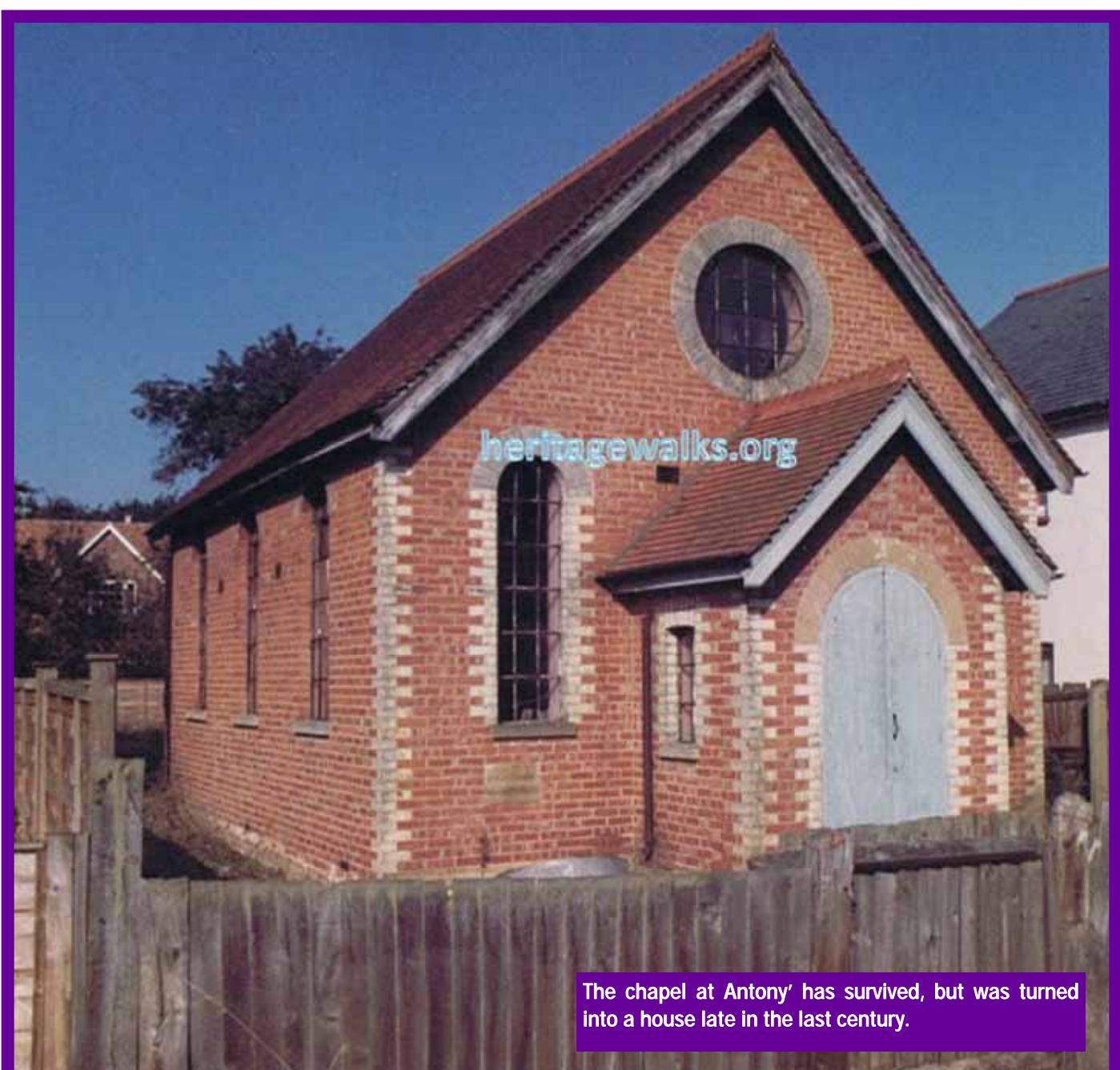
He was one of the original trustees of the chapel along with Joseph Graham (of Longcroft Farm in Knaphill), James Walker (whose nursery adjoined the chapel), John Skeet (a labourer from Mimbridge) and William Millidge, who apparently 'was a schoolmaster at Woking Village' and 'deacon of the Huntingtonian chapel' there.

The Horsell Common Chapel was enlarged in 1856 (a small brick building with a fire-place and boiler for making tea costing £14.7s), with stabling for horses added in 1867 for a further £31.19s.6d.

Even then the chapel only had room for 150 people, some of whom presumably had found their way there from the now closed chapel at the Wheatsheaf. It should be noted, however, that not everyone who applied to become members of the chapel were admitted. Some were refused apparently if the pastor was not satisfied with their testimony or the church



The old Baptist Chapel on the corner of Cheapside and Horsell Rise has long since been demolished and replaced by a house.



The chapel at Anthony's has survived, but was turned into a house late in the last century.

from which they came, with others being refused where 'no trace of a work of grace could be found in their souls'!

The chapel at Anthony's was established in the

mid 1880's in a house now called Chapel Cottage a few doors up the road from the Bleak House (now known as The Sands). In 1900 a new chapel holding 100 worshippers was built across the road – the building of which still



The Providence Chapel in Robin Hood Road does still survive, unlike the public house that was next door!

survives, being converted into a house some time in the 1980's.

Another former Baptist Chapel at Mayford has been converted into a house, but the oldest surviving building still functioning as a chapel in

the area is probably the Providence Chapel in Robin Hood Road at Knaphill, which was founded in the 1850's or 60's by Edward Joy (the father of Miss Mercy Joy, the Post Mistress at Knaphill), who was also connected to the Strict Baptist Chapel at Horsell Common.

Unfortunately Mr Joy died suddenly in his sleep on the 23rd August 1877, leaving instructions in his will for the building to be 'sold in the open market to the General Baptists' before a group of Strict Baptists were able to take over the building again in the early 20th century.

OLD WOKING'S INDEPENDENT CHAPEL

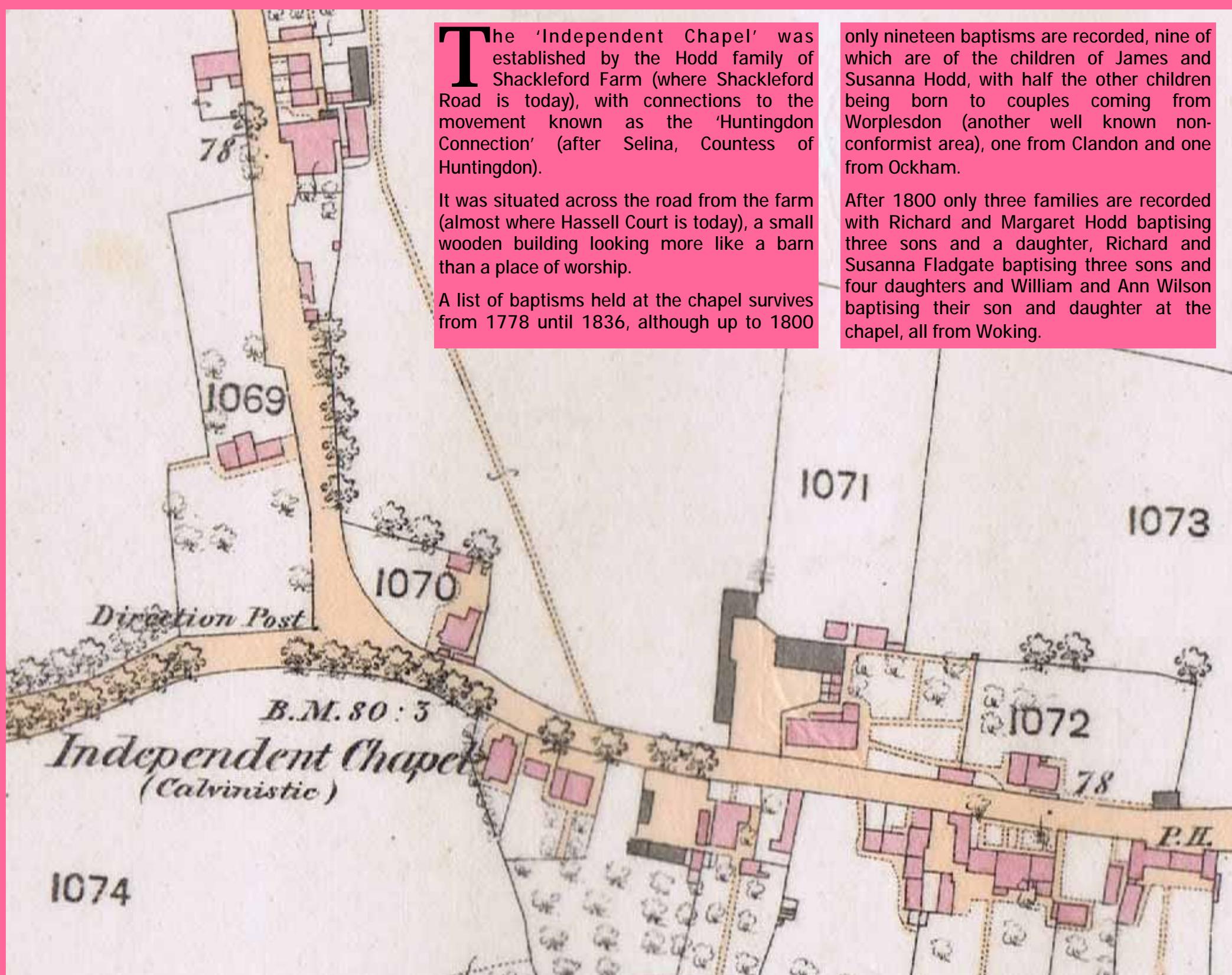
The 'Independent Chapel' was established by the Hodd family of Shackleford Farm (where Shackleford Road is today), with connections to the movement known as the 'Huntingdon Connection' (after Selina, Countess of Huntingdon).

It was situated across the road from the farm (almost where Hassell Court is today), a small wooden building looking more like a barn than a place of worship.

A list of baptisms held at the chapel survives from 1778 until 1836, although up to 1800

only nineteen baptisms are recorded, nine of which are of the children of James and Susanna Hodd, with half the other children being born to couples coming from Worplesdon (another well known non-conformist area), one from Clandon and one from Ockham.

After 1800 only three families are recorded with Richard and Margaret Hodd baptising three sons and a daughter, Richard and Susanna Fladgate baptising three sons and four daughters and William and Ann Wilson baptising their son and daughter at the chapel, all from Woking.



HOMEWOOD FARM, RIPLEY

Homewood Farm at Ripley also has a connection to the Huntingdon Chapel, through William Hone who was born there in March 1755, the eldest of ten children. When he was fifteen he was apprenticed to a Mr Freeland in London, a law stationer, who apparently looked after his apprentices so badly that one boy starved to death and poor William ended up physically disabled through lack of food. He returned home (and later took Freeland to court for his mistreatment), but when his father died in the mid 1770's William returned to London before moving to Bath where he joined a group of dissenters at the Lady Huntingdon Chapel there.

As a post-script his son, also called William, later went on to become a writer, bookseller and journalist, winning a court battle in 1817 against the Government that marked a turning point in the struggle for press freedom.



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BROOKWOOD NECROPOLIS & MAUSOLEUM LIMITED— A DEVELOPMENT COMPANY MASQUERADEING AS A CEMETERY COMPANY?

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Some other local chapels, and the cemetery that surrounds them, are very much in the news this week with the announcement that Brookwood Cemetery has been bought by 'Brookwood Necropolis and Mausoleum Ltd' a newly created subsidiary of the Thameswey Group.

The London Necropolis & National Mausoleum Company that set up Brookwood

Cemetery in the mid 19th century played an important part in Woking's history (and will feature in this column in the new year), so it is perhaps significant that the cemetery has been bought by the group of companies that in modern times are doing so much to shape Woking's future.

Thameswey was set up in 1999 by Woking

Borough Council to provide sustainable energy for the borough, but since then its tentacles have spread to get involved with housing and property development. Which is perhaps ironic as some people thought that the London Necropolis Company were sometimes a 'development company masquerading as a cemetery company'!