



## Lower Stratton Primitive Methodist Church

Meetings were held from 04-11-1825 in Mr Habgood's Carpenters/Wheelwrights shop at Stratton Cross Roads, (now Wemyss Lodge site) until the first Chapel was built in Swindon Road in 1830, enlarged in 1842, the building still stands but converted to two cottages. The opening of what is called Stratton chapel in the Brinkworth circuit is described by John Ride in the 1830 Primitive Methodist magazine. The foundation stone was laid by Mr W Pinegar on May 31st, when the preachers were Mr and Mrs J Ride, and the chapel was opened on 27th June - only a month to build it! Preachers at the opening were Brother R. Juke and Sister Margaret Cutler. There was 40 members in the society and the numbers were rapidly rising. The new chapel measured 20'(w) x 26'(l) x 15'(h). 1851 Religious Census shows 109 attended along with 39 scholars. G Wallis in the Primitive Methodist magazine of 1856 described the enlargement which cost £170 and done by Mr. Barrett of Swindon. There were services, including one in the Baptist chapel, and a tea meeting. Preachers were B. Breeze (Baptist), Mr J. Humphries, C. Morse, J. Hunt, J. Mapson and J. Tuck. Named donors were R. White, Mr C. Morse, W. Collett, S. Davies, D. Trotman, R. Wilkins, and the Misses White, Collett and Morse, Graves from the adjoining burial ground were transferred to Upper Stratton Graveyard. Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> August saw 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations, Rev. E Alford did the morning & evening sermons & Rev. T Cummings of Reading the afternoon one. On Monday there was a tea with Mr. C Morse in the chair, it being his 35<sup>th</sup> that he had attended. Tuesday was the high-day for teachers and children of the Sabbath-school, where they had entertainment in fields owned by Mr R Kemble at Nythe. *Swindon Advertiser 04-09-1865*. 1866 Anniversary sermons were preached by Rev. L. Norris of New Swindon, Rev. T Cummings of Newbury, and Rev. J. Neville. On the Monday there was a tea, for the now 72 members, and it was announced that all previous building debts had been paid. *Swindon Advertiser 24-09-1866*. In December 1867, the church was registered for solemnising marriages. *The Standard 28-12-1867*. – Thomas HYDE, 16, labourer of Stratton was summoned for disturbing a minister of the Primitive Methodist Church at Stratton, and assaulting members of congregation. Fined 20s and 18s costs, or in default 21 days imprisonment. *The Western Daily Press 12-12-1879*.

The present building was built in 1883 on the site of a blacksmiths at the cost of £1,600 by Thomas Colbourne, complete with gas lighting, a schoolroom was added in 25-11-1891 for £240. Gas lighting was installed in 1896. Harvest Thanksgiving held by Mr H Watkins of Swindon, there was a small musical section after, the collected fruit & vegetables were sold on the Tuesday. *Swindon Advertiser 27-09-1901*. Harvest Festival was held on 27<sup>th</sup> Sep, services conducted by Mr Wearer of Faringdon. *Swindon Advertiser 09-10-1903*. The anniversary services were held last weekend, Mr S Dutton of Gloucester addressed a children's temperance meeting, Mr S Dutton gave the Sunday service and there was a public meeting on the Monday. *Swindon Advertiser 11-10-1901*. 1902, the anniversary services were performed by Rev J Jones of Swindon, Gorse Hill Methodist Choir attended. A public tea was held on the Monday and a meeting in the evening chaired by Mayor L L Morse, £12 1s 11d was collected, over the year they had collected £131 4s 7d. *Swindon Advertiser 10-10-1902*. There was a Musical Evening to Raise monies for the church choir. The Rev. J. Jones presided over a large audience. Singers; Miss S Herring, Mrs Wentworth, Mrs E Cook, Messrs. Iles, Clarke, Osbourne, Willis. Piano Mrs Shute, Organ Mr J Cook. Other instruments; Messrs. H Pinnock, J Powell & Clarke. Conductor Mr A Wentworth. £2 7s 9½d was raised. *Swindon Advertiser 24-10-1902*. 1903 saw a roof fire in the schoolroom caused by stove pipe. Band of Hope meeting held in schoolroom with Magic Lantern show and talk on 'The Life & History of John Tregenowth' by Rev. Hall from Swindon, *Swindon Advertiser 23-10-1903*. On Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> the Annual Anniversary services were conducted by Rev J Jones of Swindon, and on Wednesday the 14<sup>th</sup> the annual tea took place, about 50 were present, arranged by the Christian Endeavour Society. Mr L L Morse presided over the annual meeting after. *Swindon Advertiser 23-10-1903*. Sunday School Anniversary took place on Easter Sunday, preacher was Mr E Smith. On Easter Monday there was a public tea. All collections were in aid of Sunday School fund. *08-04-1904*. Harvest Festival held on Sunday last, preacher Mr H B Hull of Swindon. Manchester Road Choir lead the singing. All collections to the Trust Fund. *Swindon Advertiser 30-09-1904*. In 1910 it had 315 sittings and school accommodation was for 250. A lecture on 'Palestine' was given by Mr. G W King, of Lechlade, in the schoolroom on Monday. *North Wilts Herald 14-11-1924*. Rev. Leslie S Peake, of Mansfield College, Oxford gave the morning sermon on 'To the Unknown God,' and the evening on 'The Cross'. *North Wilts Herald 21-11-1924. P10*. The anniversary was celebrated during the weekend, services were leads by Mr. Percy Viner, of Whitney, a concert being held in the evening. *North Wilts Herald 14-09-1928*. The annual Egg & Flower service were held on Sunday, Mr. Cecil S J Haskins, of Hartley College, Manchester, was the special preacher. The 15½ dozen and eggs were delivered to the Institution after the service. *North Wilts Herald 13-07-1928*. In 1920's and 30's the church had tennis and bowls clubs, the bowling green laid by volunteers, led by Messrs. J W Roberts & F G Ockwell, *North Wilts Herald 13-07-1928*; groundsman was a Mr Wells. The clock was added in the 1930's and in 1938 a new pipe organ was installed. The Annual Trustees meeting was presided over by Rev. W. H. Kent. Annual income was £94 1s 5d with balance of £44 8s 1½d. A carol; service. A carol service followed the ordinary service last Sunday, this included a programme given by the Pinehurst Methodist Concert Party. Mr. W. H. Hill conducted the Christmas service, he has been a Methodist Minister for 50 years and his family in the village for 150 plus years. *North Wilts Herald 03-01-1936*. There was £103 in the organ fund, to celebrate 100 years in Stratton and 50 years in current church. *North Wilts Herald 24-01-1936*. The annual Trust meeting was held on Sunday. Mr S G Tooth of Didcot was the preacher. At the afternoon school session Mr. A J Colborne gave a tribute to the late superintendent, Mr G Loveday, he urged all scholars to emulate such a good man. *North Wilts Herald 21-02-1936*. 1938, and a new pipe organ was installed at a cost of £458, in addition the gas lighting was replace with electric lighting for £40. *North Wilts Herald 03-06-1938*. The Anniversary was celebrated on Sunday, Mr. Frank Barnes of Purton presided. *North Wilts Herald 18-10-1940*. The weekly meeting of the Christian Endeavour and War0Time Guild was addressed on Tuesday by Rev. J. C. Ryan, D.D., of the Evangelical Missionary Society. A church has been built in Madras in his native country, and names 'St. Margaret's', after all the gifts received from the village. *North Wilts Herald 29-08-1941*. The Weekly meeting of the Young Peoples Fellowship on Thursday was addressed by Rev. Frank Hull, Superintendent minister of Swindon. *North Wilts Herald 19-09-1941*. The weekly meeting of the Young People's Fellowship was addressed by Mr. Hubert Peyton of Swindon. Music by Swindon Railway Mission lead by Mr. W G Miller. *North Wilts Herald 03-10-1941*. Mr. Edgar Allsopp conducted the Remembrance service on Sunday, of the Swindon Auxiliary Swindon Fire Service, supported by Rev. Percy Tillotson, circuit minister. *North Wilts Herald 14-11-1941*. War-Time Guild – At the weekly meeting of the Lower Stratton Methodist Christian Endeavour and War-time Guild, Private L Tillyer presided and Private R Hewitson was at the organ. an address on 'Pilgrim's Progress', was given by Rev. Frank Hull. And at the Thursday Young People's Fellowship, Mr. W G Miller gave a talk on his work with the troops. It was also noted that the Church Hall was being used as a Communal Kitchen, providing dinners for the local children. *North Wilts Herald 14-11-1941*. Carol Services last Sunday, conducted by Mr J C Greenwood in morning and Mr. G A Woodfield in the evening, Mrs. Miller was at the organ. *North Wilts Herald 26-12-1941*. On the bowling

green to the side of the church a Manse was built in 1959. 25-02-1963 church was filled with representatives from Methodist churches throughout Swindon area for the funeral of William Bramwell Hill, a lay preacher of some 48 years, the list of mourners ran for 6 paragraphs. During 1983 centenary celebrations the church had a float in the Stratton Carnival. 2000 Church Hall rebuilt.

Amongst its early members were Charles and Rebecca Morse, founders of a Primitive Methodist dynasty and a major Swindon department store. It boasted an orchard used for Camp meetings and outdoor activities, together with a tennis court.

The church was also home to Stratton Boys' & Girls' Brigade.

Ministers -

1915-1916 Henry Carden, 1957-1963 Clifford Evans, 1963-1973 Rev E Dudley Jenkins, 1973-1979 Eric Renouf, 1979-1986 Kath Share, 1986-1990 Rev. Janet Rowe 1990-1994 Rev. Reg. Willingham. 1994-1998 Rev David Hawkes, 1998-2007 Rev. Ruth Whittard, 2014-2018 Debbie Hodgson.

For further information about the [Lower Stratton Methodist Church](#) please visit their website.