

LONG BUCKBY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH

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The origin of Long Buckby Congregational Church is lost in obscurity as no records of its beginnings or early history have been preserved. The tradition that the church was formed in 1707 cannot be far wrong even though the truth of it cannot be verified. The first reliable information is a record of the presence of Mr. J. Jackson, minister at Long Buckby, at the ordination service of Mr. Tingey at Castle Hill Meeting, Northampton on 2nd February, 1709, and it is safe to conjecture that the church was in existence a year or two prior to this. If the past could be unravelled, we should find it of great interest to see if there were any connections between the foundation of the church and those few people who, in the time of Charles I, came from Althorp to Buckby for a prayer meeting, or those who made their way from Buckby to Norton to hear the Rev. Richard Allen before his ejection in 1662, or the one from Long Buckby who was received into the membership of the Rothwell Congregational Church during the ministry of the Rev. Richard Davies. No doubt, these are all fragments of a pre-history of the church.

The Rev. Thomas Cartwright was minister from 1720 to 1744. He had been licensed by the Cheshire Classis on 26th November, 1711, and must have ministered elsewhere before coming to Buckby. Information about him is scant and is mostly concerned with the ordinations he attended. In 1721 he "began with prayer and prayed well" at the ordination of Mr. Sanders at Kettering; in 1738 he was present at Mr. Hextal's ordination at Creton and in 1740 he was engaged in the ordination of Mr. J. Heywood at Potterspury. What is more precious is the inscription which was on his gravestone in the Buckby Parish Churchyard. The stone has long since worn away with age and weather and we are greatly indebted to the historian who made a copy of the inscription before it was too late. The inscription ran:—

In memory of the Rev. Mr. THOMAS CARTWRIGHT,

who died April 13th, 1744, aged 57;

having by a diligent, faithful, and humble discharge

of the various duties of the Christian and

ministerial life

obtained a good report of all men,

and of the truth itself;

being most highly esteemed of those

by whom he was most intimately known.

The next minister was the Rev. John Walker, who was one of Dr. Doddridge's students. He settled at Long Buckby in 1751 and remained until 1760 when he accepted a call to Framlingham in Suffolk. Later, he moved to Walpole where he died in 1805. It was said that "he was a man of good sense, of great simplicity of manners, and of eminent piety and devotion." Another writer describes him as being ". . . of moderate orthodoxy" but Priestly who became a Unitarian said joyously to him in 1794, "Ah, Walker, it was you that first led one astray from the paths of orthodoxy."

After Mr. Walker's departure, there was an interregnum until 1763. Although pastorless, the church managed to weather the storm, though it would appear that many members were admonished for non-attendance during this period. The following is a copy of one of the few records we have of the period :—

" At our Discipline Meeting held at Long buckby on Nov ye 27 1762. after prayer Agreed as followeth

" first as to our Bro and Sister Storton ¹ hath not come to our Meeting for sum time but have gon to another meeting we think it our duty to Admonish them to return and we do appoint our Bro Yomans and Bro Tho Mabatt to Admonish them to return to there Duty.

" 2d agreed to Admonish our Bro Brown that he keeps his place in hereing the Word of God and we do appoint our Bro Tho Mabatt and our Bro Saml Robinson to Admonish him

" 3d as to our Sister Farow hath not come to the Meeting of Late we think it our Duty to Admonish her to her duty to keep her place In the House of the Lord and we do Appoint our Bro Saml Robinson and Bro Tho Mabatt ye Elder to Admonish her

" 4d as our Bro Mcrill he Neglects coming to here the Word of God on the Lords day we as a church think it our duty to desire him to make Good his place In The House of the Lord and we do appoint our Bro Yeomans and Bro Tho Mabatt and Bro Robinson to Admonish him.

" 5d. Agreed to agurn this meeting to the Next opportunity.
JOHN YEOMANS Elder THOS MABBATT THOS MABBATT
SAML MARRIOTT SAML ROBINSON."

In 1763 the Rev. Richard Denny was called to the pastorate. He was born at Barby, a village about six miles from Buckby, and served an apprenticeship at Lutterworth. His work took him to London where he came under the influence of Whitfield and in due course, became a student at Doddridge's Academy. After ministeries at Keysoe (1751- 1761) and Little Badow (1761-1763), he settled at Buckby. Here was the scene of the largest portion of his ministerial life, his labour, and his success. At one particular time he was honoured with what was considered as remarkable success, for after repeatedly complaining of the want of a blessing on his work and feeling greatly discouraged, he " wrestled hard by fervent and constant prayer for a blessing to attend his efforts." The Master granted him the blessing he desired. There was an extraordinary revival in the congregation and in the course of two or three years about forty members were added to the church.

It was during Mr. Denny's ministry that the present Meeting House was built. Before this time, worship was conducted in a small building in the paddock which is opposite to the railings of the present Manse garden. When Whitfield preached at Buckby on his tour through Northamptonshire into Leicestershire the service was held in this field. The new Meeting House was built and opened for worship in 1771. There are no records to tell us of the intense joy that would be in the heart of the worshippers, or the exultant praise on their lips. We can only imagine their feelings and be thankful to Almighty God for His guidance and their enterprise.



In consequence of advancing years, Mr. Denny resigned his charge in 1795 though he continued to reside in Buckby until his death in 1813. He was the last surviving student of Dr. Doddridge for whom he held a great respect and in his last hours, he said, " I shall soon see the blessed, blessed, Redeemer and the dear Doctor Doddridge." His remains were interred near to the pulpit in the Meeting House he had been instrumental in building.

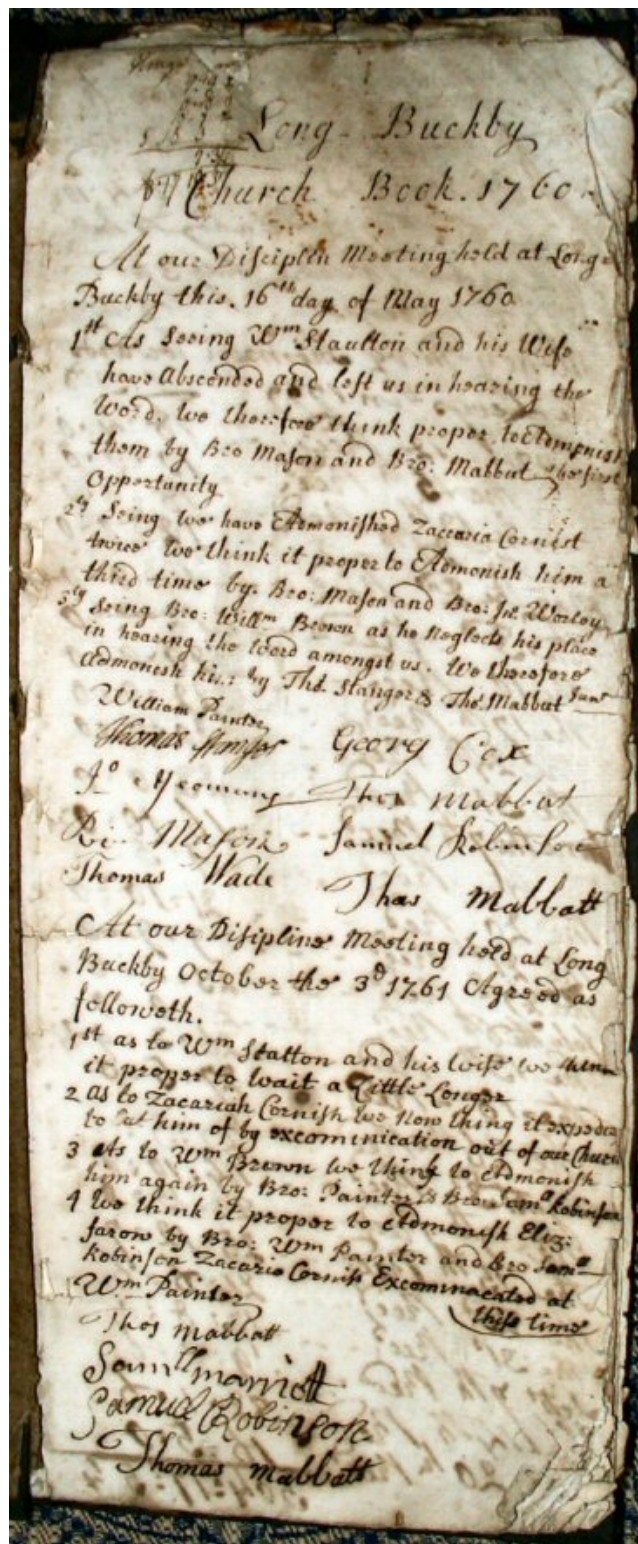
The Rev. William Mosely began his ministry in 1795, and in the same year, the Manse was either built or purchased as a dwelling house and reconstructed as a Manse. Mr. Mosely was trained for the ministry at Hoxton Academy and came to Buckby after two short ministries, one at Gold Hill (circ. 1792) and the other at Atherstone (1793-1795).

He was a cultured scholar and an enthusiast for Missions.

Whilst at Buckby he published a pamphlet entitled " A Memoir of the importance &c. of translating the Holy Scriptures into the Chinese language." The memoir was concerned with the state of religion in China, and urged the importance and practicability of a serious attempt to propagate Christianity through that vast but neglected empire. When the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed, one of its first enterprises was an attempt to publish some part of the Scriptures in Chinese and as most of the active Committee members were acquainted with Mr. Mosely's Memoir, official correspondence was sent to him and consequently he was invited to serve on the sub-committee of the Society dealing with the publication of the Chinese manuscript.

Unfortunately, this scheme failed, but in due time the task was accomplished under the more advantageous conditions in Serampore and Canton. See History of the British and Foreign Bible Society by W. Canton, vol. I, p. 24, and History of the British and Foreign Bible Society by John Owen, vol. I, pp. 89 and 97.

Mr. Mosely stayed at Buckby until 1803 when he accepted a call to Hartley Tabernacle. The story is told in A. (J. Matthews' " The Congregational Churches of Staffordshire " of a certain William Salt who attended Hanley Tabernacle on one occasion and was so impressed by Mr. Mosely's sermon that he not only became " an earnest inquirer," but also returned to his master from whom he had run away and served out the remaining years of his apprenticeship. Shortly



afterwards he went to Hoxton Academy to train for the ministry and later was the minister of Lichfield Congregational Church.

Mr. Mosely was succeeded by the Rev. Daniel Griffiths who commenced his stated Ministry at Buckby on 27th March, 1803. Mr. Griffiths was trained at Homerton College and had spent a four years' ministry at Alton before accepting the call to Long Buckby. He was ordained at Buckby on 17th November, 1803 when Mr. Anthony of Bedford began the service by prayer and reading the scriptures; Mr. Horsey of Northampton delivered the introductory discourse, asked the questions and received the confession of faith; Mr. Denny, the former pastor offered the ordination prayer; Mr. Toller of Kettering gave the charge from I Tim. iv 13-16; Mr. Gill of Harborough addressed the people from Deut. I 38; Mr. Knight and Mr. Morrell were engaged in the devotional parts of the service; and Mr. Cox of Clipston preached in the evening from Matt, vi 33.



The ministry of Mr. Griffiths continued at Buckby for 39 years. In 1819, the congregation having much increased " the chapel was enlarged and a fourth gallery was erected behind the pulpit. In the September of that year, the chapel was re-opened and special sermons on the occasion were preached by the Revs. Toller of Kettering and Robertson of Stretton. In 1825, a new schoolroom was erected by a legacy of Mr. David Ashby supplemented by other members of the family. During the ministry of Mr. Griffiths, the village chapels at East Haddon and Whilton were erected. Mr. Griffiths used to " lecture " once a month in a private house in East Haddon and so many people desired to hear him that ² the accommodation was soon insufficient and a chapel was built. This did not please (the squire of that time and he gave notice to the farmers on his estate that if they continued to deal with or employ shopkeepers who attended dissenting services, they would be removed from their farms. Although legal help was sought, nothing effective could be done and the tradespeople concerned lost the custom of nearly all the farmers in the parish. In spite of these difficulties, the chapel was completed in 1811.

Mr. Griffiths resigned the Buckby pastorate on 19th December, 1841 and lived in retirement with his son, the Rev. Daniel Griffiths, of Cannock. He died in 1862 at the age of 82.

After the resignation of Mr. Griffiths, the congregation was supplied for sometime chiefly by the students of Spring Hill College; but in due course an invitation was sent to Mr. James Apperley, a student of Blackburn Academy who entered on his pastoral duties on 2nd October, 1842. A volume of Mr. Apperley's sermons was published under the title " Revealed Truth Vindicated " and such subjects as " A Divine Revelation Necessary," " The Credibility of the Scriptures " and " The Rapid Spread of Christianity " are dealt with in a scholarly manner.

Unhappily, a difference arose between him and the congregation, and a deputation requested him to resign, a step he was not prepared to take. Hence, a large and influential part of the congregation left and joined the Baptist Church. This withdrawal considerably weakened the church and congregation. In 1852, Mr. Apperley resigned and emigrated to Australia. The faithful few who remained presented him with a purse of thirty guineas as a token of respect. His subsequent pastorates were Ashby Street, Geelong (1856-1868) and Jan Jac, Victoria (1868-1879) from whence he retired to Bombay, New Zealand, where he died in 1885.

Mr. Apperley's successor was the Rev. Francis Evans. He was born near Aberystwyth in 1812 and was intended to follow his father's calling of a farmer. His parents belonged to the Church of England and he himself was confirmed by Bishop Burgess of Salisbury. Later, his views on church government underwent a change and he entered the Independent-Academy at Blackburn as a candidate for the ministry. After a short ministry in the Manchester area, he removed to Ulverston where he ministered for seventeen years. This ministry ended because of some tension in the Diaconate. We can gather some indication of the nature of his farewell sermon from the hymn " appropriate to the discourse " which was sung on that occasion. It was Watts' version of Psalm 12.

" Help, Lord ! for men of virtue fail, Religion loses ground, The sons of violence prevail, And treacheries abound ! "

Mr. Evans commenced his ministry at Long Buckby on 31st October, 1852. Although the Church Book records, " Nothing of any importance seems to have occurred during his stay," it appears that the church was more settled than it had been for some time. The summary of membership in 1858 is as follows:—

41 Already members

8 Re-admitted

7 Transferred from other churches

15 New Converts

72

=====

7 Died

=====

65

During his residence at Long Buckby, he married a daughter of the Rev. Thomas Coleman of Kettering.

It was in 1858, during a visit to an old friend in Ulverston that Mr. Evans preached to his former congregation. " At the sight of the old place—and the familiar faces—there was a gush on both sides; differences were forgotten, and he returned to Ulverston and laboured with much success for upwards of ten years."

Mr. Evans preached his farewell sermons at Long Buckby on the last Sunday in August, 1858. Little did the folk realise that he was the master of seven languages and had a taste for scientific pursuits, for " he was a man of a very retiring disposition " and " had many accomplishments of which none but his most intimate friends had any knowledge." Mr. Evans died very suddenly when crossing in a boat from Barrow to Wulney on 16th August, 1869.



The Rev. Henry William Butcher who succeeded Mr. Evans in the Buckby pastorate was born in London in 1833. His parents were Wesleyans and to their simple teaching he owed much, but when he left home, he met situations which seemed to attract him from the Christian way of life. A spiritual experience, however, led him to become a member of Claremont Chapel, Pentonville in 1851. Sometime later he felt impelled to enter the ministry and with the help of his revered pastor, the Rev. John Blackburn, he prepared himself for the work and was admitted to Cheshunt College for training. After acting as an assistant minister at Guildford for a time, he accepted the call to Long Buckby and commenced his ministry in March, 1859.

At that time, the chapel was in urgent need of repair, " nothing having been done to it for many years." This was mentioned at a Church Meeting held three days after Mr. Butcher had commenced his ministry. Within five months, the repairs were completed, the whole of the pews modernised, the gas laid on and the back gallery removed. The young people collected for a new pulpit and individual gifts included a Bible, Hymn Book and velvet cushion for the pulpit and a pair of handsome iron gates for the yard. The " New Congregational Hymn Book " was introduced and as it was " well adapted for public worship," it would be used at all meetings of the church and congregation for worship. The expenses of the alterations were £270 13s. 8d., and when the chapel was re-opened on 2nd August, this had been raised and a surplus of £2 3s. 0d. was handed to the Treasurer of the General Fund. The Rev. Henry Allon of Islington was the guest preacher on this occasion.

The Ordination and Induction services took place on 28th October that year. A dinner was provided at the Horseshoe Inn for friends. Amongst those taking part in the services were the Revs. M. A. Henderson and H. Allon of London, W. Allott of Bedford, Dr. R. Allott the Principal of Cheshunt College and Isaac Evans of Weedon. Dr. Allott's Charge to the Minister was on " A good servant of Jesus Christ " and Henry Allon's address to the Church was based on II Corinthians viii 22-24.

Of the rest of his ministry we have but few records though it seems that the normal work of the church was maintained with enthusiasm.

Mr. Butcher moved to Margate in 1863 and under his inspiration great things were achieved there. He died at the early age of 45, His biographer writes, " As a preacher he was earnest and preached Christ in all simplicity; and many are the testimonies to the spiritual benefit derived from his ministrations. He was broad and independent in his religious views, delighting greatly in the Fatherhood of God. Prayer was the strength and joy of his heart and frequently did he exhort his people in regard to it, being convinced that no church could prosper without it." A volume of his sermons was published posthumously.

The Rev. James Ault commenced his labours at Long Buckby on 1st May, 1864. He had been trained at Hackney College and had spent two years as minister at Southminster, Essex before coming to Buckby. Little of note appears to have happened during his short ministry which closed on 23rd December, 1866, Mr. Ault having accepted a " cordial and unanimous invitation " to become minister at Yardley Hastings.

On New Year's Day, 1868, the Rev. Thomas Chapman settled at Buckby. He was trained at Rotherham College and was ordained in 1862 at Riddings Congregational Church, Derbyshire where he remained until coming to Buckby.

One interesting entry in the Church Book during the ministry of Mr. Chapman is that dated 3rd December, 1868 which states:—

" that this church having by the lapse of time and other circumstances no regularly appointed deacons, it is determined that four of the most eligible of the male members be appointed to that office every twelve months, that the members be informed of this at the close of the ordinance service next Lord's Day and that they be requested to furnish the minister with a slip of paper on which they shall write the names of the four members they wish to be appointed for the next twelve months. A special Church Meeting shall be held next Thursday to make known the result, on or before which time the names shall be placed in the hands of the minister."

In this election, Fifty members voted and the four duly elected were David Birch, George Robinson, Peter Kilsby and John England Russell. It is interesting to note that almost immediately, the deacons set about their work of pastoral visitation and the organisation of meetings for prayer and scripture reading in various parts of the village. A prayer meeting was held in the body of the chapel after the evening service every Sunday. It is reported that " Mr. Blincow undertook to attend to the starting of the tunes " at this meeting, and it is the tradition that he fulfilled this task by playing his bass viol.

Mr. Chapman resigned the pastorate in July, 1871 and does not appear to have had any further pastoral charges. On the 4th February, 1872, Mr. Thomas Grear, a student from Rotherham College, commenced his ministry here. Immediately prior to coming he had been engaged on some pastoral work at the English Reformed Church in Hamburg. The ordination took place on November 6th, 1873. The Rev. T. Arnold of Northampton expounded principles, Dr. Fielding of Rotherham preached the Charge to the Minister, whilst that to the Church was given by the Rev. J. P. Gledstone of London. The Revs. C. C. Tyte of Rotherham, T. E. Noyes of Creton and Samuel Yates of Runcorn also took part.

Mr. Gear's special interest was that of young people's work, and a children's service, a Band of Hope and a Temperance Society were inaugurated by him. He was a man of indomitable faith and untiring industry and his preaching was simple and evangelical.

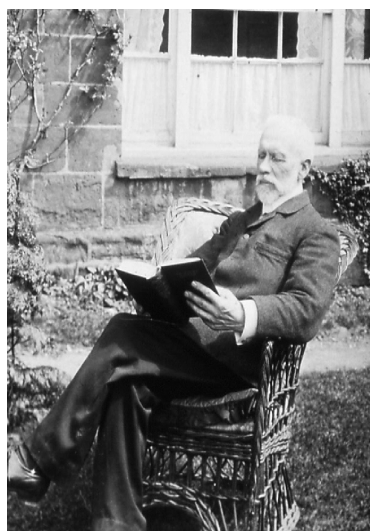
Mr. Gear left Buckby in 1877 to become the assistant minister at Wellingborough and so ended "five happy and pleasant years of loving labour for Christ amongst those for whom he will ever cherish feelings of warmest affections." After a successful ministry at Wellingborough, Mr. Gear moved to Bishopsgate Chapel, London, which at that time was a most difficult and almost derelict sphere. However, his influence soon became a potent factor in the spiritual life of the business men of the city. He laboured there until his death in 1922.



Mr. Gear was succeeded at Long Buckby by the Rev- Thomas Ruston. A Yorkshireman by birth, Mr. Ruston was trained at Rotherham and from 1865-1877 was the beloved minister at Barton-on-Humber. He commenced his ministry at Long Buckby on Sunday, 6th May, 1877 and the Recognition Service was held on 3rd October of that year. Those taking part in this service were the Revs. 'I'. Adams of Daventry, C. Nicholson of Northampton, T. Gear of Wellingborough, J. Cult of Paulerspury and T. Henson of the local Baptist Church.

In 1879, Mr. S. S. Clarke who had been Secretary and Superintendent of the Sunday School died and bequeathed the sum of £500 for the erection of a new school. The new school was built on ground given by Mr. T. Haynes and was opened in December, 1880 after a sermon preached by the Rev. W. Ervine of Hull. The total cost was £742 14s. 1d., the extra amount being raised by the congregation.

In 1899, Mrs. A. E. Ruston offered to present an organ to the church on condition that it was placed downstairs. Hitherto, the organ had been in the gallery and the choir had sat in the " Singers' Pew " near to it. It is obvious that there had been some discontent about this arrangement, no doubt due to the fact that it was becoming old fashioned to have the choir in the gallery and also that " the singers' seats were uncomfortable." The gift of the organ settled the affair. It had to be downstairs and so the singers would also have to be downstairs. Thus it has been ever since.



For almost thirty-nine years, Mr. Ruston worked with untiring energy and faithful devotion. He belonged to the same generation as Dr. R. W. Dale and believed that Christianity was relevant to " every department of human energy." His life was an example of generosity and Christian service. He was a beloved pastor and always had a friendly concern for anyone in need. Vagrants would never be turned away without some gift. In the days when the railway was brought through the district, he ministered to the needs of the navvies. When the new shoe factory was opened in 1903 and there was an influx of folk from Northampton and London, he, with others, conducted services in the new factory and was among those who helped to form the P.S.A. which was held every Sunday afternoon in the Assembly Room. His interest in people also led him to give lifelong service to the Temperance movement and for about thirty years he was the Secretary of the Northamptonshire Temperance and Band of Hope Union, a task that demanded much moral strength and Christian grace. The organisations at the church were mostly connected with the Temperance Movement, There was a Band of Hope for the children and a Temperance Meeting for the adolescents, Growing out of these meetings was the Long Buckby Temperance Band which, in its hey-day, won many coveted awards. Another interesting piece of service was the Children's Library. The books were kept in the Boys' School and could be borrowed by the children of the Sunday School. This was in the days prior to the present library system and when very

few people could afford to purchase books.

Mr. Ruston had the privilege of seeing one member of the Church enter the Congregational ministry. He was Mr. George Packer and was trained at Nottingham Institute and New College, London, his churches being at Hatfield and Royston.

The thirtieth anniversary of Mr. Ruston's ministry co-incided with the two hundredth anniversary of the church in 1907. The double anniversary was celebrated on 9th May when about sixty sat down to lunch. Mr. John Clarke, a deacon, presided and gave a welcome to the visitors. Mr. Ruston gave a brief account of the two hundred years and then congratulations to church and minister were given by the Rev. W. L. Lee, President of the Northamptonshire Association of Congregational Churches and several other speakers. At this meeting, Mr. J. T. Lewin of Wellingborough and Mr. T. C. Thompson of Northampton representing the Northamptonshire Temperance and Band of Hope Union presented Mr. Ruston with an illuminated address and a purse of £25 as an appreciation of his services over 27 years as secretary. The visiting preacher for the occasion was the Rev. John Oates of North Finchley. At the evening meeting, a purse containing £37 10s 0d. was presented to Mr. Ruston in the name of the congregation and some outside friends by Mr. G. E. Fell, j.p., a churchwarden at the Parish Church. On 18th May, an old scholars' tea and social was held and about a hundred and fifty were present. Old scholars also took part in the Sunday services. The Church Book records, " Many were the expressions of gratitude for old teachers and contrasts drawn between the hard times of the past and the easier of today."

Within a few years the storm broke over troubled Europe and even those accustomed to the peace and quiet of village life had to adjust themselves to war conditions. Many young men, including several from the Manse, went forth and in all,

nine of those associated with the church gave their lives.

On 16th and 17th May, 1915, Mr. Ruston celebrated the Jubilee of his ordination. On the Monday afternoon, the Rev. Dr. J. D. Jones of Bournemouth preached to a large congregation. There was another splendid congregation in the evening when the Mayor of Daventry (Councillor J. Gardner) presided and Dr. J. D. Jones was the chief speaker. In the course of his address, Dr. Jones said, "I do not think that the best preaching comes with short ministries. The man with three or five year ministries tends to make his preaching impressionistic and superficial.... Never was the need for the pulpit so great as today in this great crisis. The war is sheer, unmitigated tragedy and if that tragedy is not to be repeated, we must have more than scientific culture. We must get back to the power of the pulpit." Mr. Ruston responded to the many gracious speeches of greeting by a brief speech in which he said that in his ministry he had sought to unfold the meaning of the Bible. He had never found it difficult to find a text to suit his subject and had never preached the same sermon twice. Everyone was delighted that Mr. Ruston's health allowed him to take such an active part in the day's proceedings, but soon his illness returned and he intimated his intention to retire from the pastorate. Before his resignation took effect, he passed on into the nearer presence of God. The funeral service was conducted by the Rev. C. S. Larkman of Northampton assisted by the Rev. S. W. Bowser of the Baptist Church. Prayer at the grave was offered by the Rev. G. Crossley, Vicar of Long Buckby.

In the chapel is a memorial tablet which reads:—

SACRED
TO THE MEMORY OF
REV. THOS. RUSTON,
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE
MARCH 4TH, 1916
AGED 78 YEARS

HE WAS THE FAITHFUL AND BELOVED MINISTER OF THIS CHURCH FOR 39 YEARS.... 1877 TILL 1916.
"BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD,
THEY REST FROM THEIR LABOURS AND THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM."

Almost immediately after the announcement of Mr. Ruston's intention to retire, the pulpit was supplied on two occasions by the Rev. Harry John Coxon of Rhymney, South Wales. After the second visit, a Church Meeting was held and a unanimous call to the pastorate was sent to him. Mr. Coxon accepted the call and commenced his ministry on 3rd May, 1916.

It was whilst he was a member of Tabernacle Congregational Church, Newport, that the deacons of that church urged Mr. Coxon to prepare himself for the ministry. The death of his father prevented his leaving for college and for a time he worked at a trade in the mornings and studied in the afternoon and evenings at Maindee College. In 1909 he was called to the pastorate of Mount Carmel Congregational Church Rhymney and subsequently passed the Congregational Union Examinations with Honours. During his ministry the Rhymney Church doubled its membership and Mr. Coxon saw the erection of a new church building.



The Long Buckby church flourished during Mr. Coxon's ministry. The Sunday School was strong and companies of the Boys' Brigade and Girls' Life Brigade were formed to assist in the work amongst children and young people. A Christian Endeavour Society, the Band of Hope and a Recreation Club all helped to make the chapel a centre of spiritual, cultural and social life in the village.

An Improvements Fund was opened and the Chapel was redecorated. Other improvements were made to the premises including the building of a Minister's Vestry on the site of the old Boys' School. As an appreciation of restored health, Mr. J. Clarke gave £120, this being the cost of the vestry.

One of the leading officials of the church during the ministries of Mr. Gear and Mr. Ruston was Mr. George Robinson of the Grotto. He was Church Secretary, Treasurer and odd job man. He was still in office at the commencement of Mr. Coxon's ministry but passed away before the completion of it. He bequeathed £200 to the General Fund and £50 to the Sunday School. In 1922, Mr. Coxon accepted a unanimous call to Normanton Road Congregational Church, Derby, and closed his ministry at Buckby on the last Sunday of August. He later ministered at Newcastle-under-Lyme (1932-1947) and Dover (1947-1953). He now lives in retirement at Newport, Mon., and his son, the Rev. Owen F. Coxon, B.A., B.D., is the minister of Leytonstone Congregational Church, London.

On 6th November, 1922, a Special Church Meeting sent a call to the Rev. Arthur Joseph Underwood of Waunlwyn, Monmouthshire. He accepted the pastorate and commenced his ministry on the first Sunday in 1923. The Induction took place on 8th February, those taking part including the Revs. H. H. Carlisle (Moderator), Waldron Skinner of Newport, Mon., and H.J. Coxon.

Mr. Underwood had previously ministered at Blackwood, Mon. (1894-1897), Waunlyd (1897-1901 and 1915-1922), Harrold (1901-1909), Kingsbridge (1909-1911) and Princes Street, Devonport (1911 -1915).

During the ministry of Mr. Underwood new windows were put in the chapel. The windows are of cathedral glass and have a simple dignity. They replaced ones that were plain glass and the frames of which were rotten.

The early thirties was a time of industrial depression and in 1933 the factory closed down. Many families were forced to leave the village and find work in other districts and those who remained faced somewhat straightened circumstances. This inevitably reduced the numbers of those attending church and Sunday School. It must be said, however, that the finances of the chapel remained fairly solid for "the people had a mind to work."

One of the young men of the church in Mr. Underwood's time is now in the ministry. He is the Rev. Ronald W. Tomalin. After training at Lancashire Independent College, he was minister at Congleton (1942-47), Whitchurch (Salop) (1947-1954) and is now at March.



At the Annual Church Meeting held on 24th February, 1937, Mr. Underwood announced that it was his intention to retire from the active ministry at the end of the forthcoming September. Expressions of gratitude for the fine work and faithful service of Mr. and Mrs. Underwood and Dorothy were made by several members, and all present were unanimous in the hope that Mr. and Mrs. Underwood would have a happy retirement. Mr. Underwood did not reach Inn retirement. A fortnight after he had announced his resignation, 10th March, he was called home. The Rev. K. M. Drew (Moderator) conducted the funeral service on the following Saturday and an old friend, the Rev. W.J. Palmer gave the address. Mr. Palmer said, "He was generous to a fault, if generosity ever could be a fault. He was a good Christian in these days when there are so many weak-kneed Christians. He was meant for the ministry. He had the equipment necessary—a well stored mind, a good voice and an impressive delivery. He always had the welfare of his people at heart." Mr. Underwood's daughter Dorothy is the wife of the Rev. Levi Criddle of Tunbridge Wells.

The Rev. Morgan Rees Griffiths was minister at Blaina in Monmouthshire when he was called to the Long Buckby pastorate. He had been trained at Western College, Bristol. Blaina was in a distressed area and much good work was done by Mr. Griffiths during his three years' ministry there.

Before he and his family settled in the Long Buckby Manse, repairs costing well over £200, were effected. Mr. Griffiths was a very keen supporter of amateur dramatics and a society was formed in connection with the church. Considerable sums of money were raised for the church and kindred charities by this society.

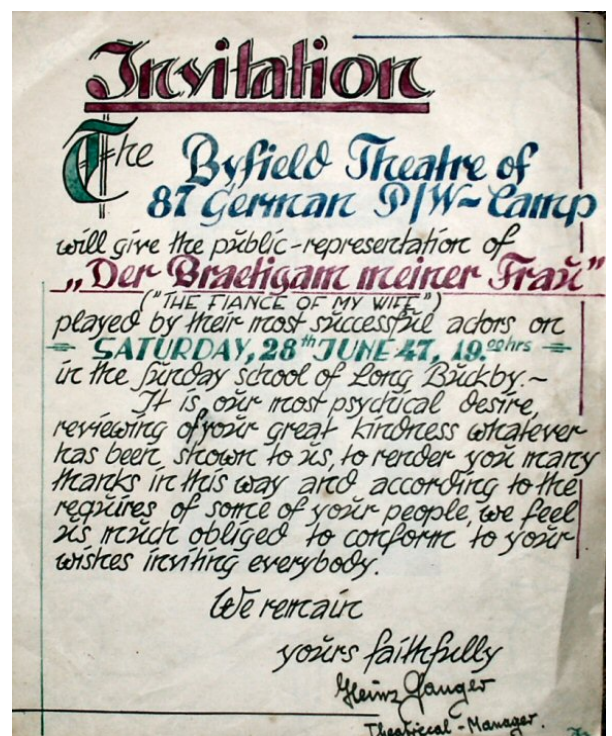
In 1939, England again became involved in a major war and whilst Mr. Griffiths took the pacifist stand, he worked splendidly for the men who were in the army units stationed in the district. In spite of many difficulties, not least being the matter of catering, a canteen was provided for the soldiers. One feature of its work was the Community Hymn Singing on Sunday evenings. The church also remembered its own sons away from home by sending them gifts as tokens of esteem.

For many years the heating apparatus of the chapel had caused some anxiety. It soon became obvious that the period of its usefulness was over and that new installations would have to be made. In 1945, a licence was granted by the Minister of Works and electric heating was installed at a cost of approximately £ 150.

When the war was over, regulations concerning Prisoners of War were relaxed somewhat and the church was able to show a caring spirit for the German prisoners who were stationed locally. On several occasions, Pastor Lucke, himself a prisoner, gave an address in German from the pulpit for the prisoners in the congregation. Permanent friendships were made and much good was done towards the building up of mutual understanding.

Mr. Griffiths closed his ministry at Buckby on 4th May, 1947, having accepted the call to Stafford Congregational Church. At a farewell and presentation evening, the school room was filled to capacity. Many friends not associated with the church asked to be associated with the testimonial and were present on this occasion. Many compliments were paid to Mr. and Mrs. Griffiths, the speakers including the Vicar (the Rev. John Rowell), the Baptist minister (the Rev. J. S. Swain) and the Prisoner of War Camp Leader. Mr. Griffiths moved from Stafford to Weston-super-Mare in 1949.

The "interregnum" lasted over a year. Although the church was interested in several outgoing men from the colleges, no settlement could be effected. During this time, Mr. F. W. P. Harris, a student of Mansfield College, spent his vacations as "student pastor" at Buckby and gave much valued assistance.



On 2nd May, 1948, Mr. Leonard George Waters of Paton College preached at Long Buckby for the first time. He was asked to pay another visit with a definite view to the pastorate which he did on the following Whit Sunday. At the subsequent Church Meeting, a unanimous invitation was given to Mr. Waters who then accepted the call. Prior to his training at Paton College, Mr. Waters had given ministerial oversight at Whitehawk Congregational Church Hall Brighton. Mr. Waters was ordained to the Christian ministry and inducted to the Buckby pastorate on 26th June, 1948, those taking part including the Revs. J. F. S. Solomon (Moderator), J. G. McKenzie, R. R. Turner, (both of Paton College) and Morgan R. Griffiths (former minister).



Mr. Waters will be long remembered for the valiant work he did with the renovation of chapel premises, for he was indefatigable in this cause. On 17th March, 1951, the chapel was re-opened after the completion of repairs and renovations costing £350. The chapel was re-decorated; the old box pews (victims of woodworm) were removed and reconditioned ones from a disused chapel at Woburn were put in and the aisles widened. At the re-opening service, the speakers were the Revs. Douglas A. Smith of Howard Church, Bedford, and M. R. Griffiths of Weston-super-Mare. Later, the

large school was completely renovated and redecorated.

The valuable and helpful pastoral ministry of Mr. Waters will also be remembered. He was a very welcome visitor at many homes including a number who were not connected with the church. Mr. Waters moved to Wareham in September, 1953 and is now at Chard. The Rev. Leslie Smith Ivory commenced his ministry in February, 1954 and the Induction took place on 13th March. Those taking part in the Induction Service were the Revs. J. F. S. Solomon (Moderator), A. T. Swaffield (Baptist minister), M. Mostyn Robinson (Vicar), Leonard G. Waters (former minister), A. Lionel Willoughby (the minister at Mr. Ivory's home church at Wellingborough) and John W. Edmondson (Northampton).

The work of the church and its organisations has kept up a good pace. The Sunday School is in a fairly healthy condition though many developments could take place if more teachers were forthcoming. There is a Youth Club and Tennis Club and on Sunday evenings after worship the young people gather together for an informal hour. The Ladies' Working Party is a live group which works all the year round in preparation for the Annual Sale of Work and produces amazing financial results. Without any doubt, our worship is enhanced by the leadership in praise which is given by the choir. Regular practices and good training have produced excellent results and the use of " Congregational Praise " has helped the church to use the best of verse and music in its psalmody. A recent innovation in church life has been the Thursday morning service in which a book from the Bible is systematically studied.



The year 1957 is a jubilant one for it marks the 250th anniversary of the cause. On 10th March, special services were held when the preacher was the Rev. Dr. W. Gordon Robinson of Lancashire Independent College. The Parish Council under their chairman (Councillor A. G. Cox, j.p.) attended the evening service thereby giving civic recognition to the occasion. Letters of greeting from the Anglican and Baptist Churches were read. On Whit Monday a further celebration was held when about eighty members and friends from the Aylesbury (Congregational) Church came for a tea and service. The Aylesbury Church was also founded in 1707 and at their instigation, this united service was arranged. The special preacher was the Rev. Dr. N.J. McLellan of East Hill Congregational Church, Wandsworth. A return visit to Aylesbury was made on 13th July. The minister of Wethersfield Congregational Church, Essex which is celebrating the 250th anniversary of its present building, the Rev. Anthony Ray, visited the district and brought the greetings of his church when he attended morning worship on 28th July, 1957- Other celebrations there will be, some framed in the solemnity of worship and others in the gay spirit of a social occasion, but all in deep thankfulness to Almighty God for all that He has done through the Long Buckby Congregational Church.

The celebration of this anniversary affords a point of vantage from which we may see the panorama of the years and feel the privilege which is ours—to follow in the train of such a glorious company of the Master's disciples. In thanking God for the past, let us re-dedicate ourselves for the future.

" God of our fathers, be the God Of their succeeding race."

The years since then have seen five ministerial changes. Leslie Ivory retired in 1963 and was followed in 1964 by the Rev. Robert Emery, he left in 1967 to be replaced in 1968 by Rev. Kenneth Hilton.

In 1973 he left to be succeeded by Rev. Conrad Husk who continued until his retirement in 1995.

There was then a break of six years before a new Minister was appointed, the Rev. Yvonne Stone started her Ministry in 2001 and left to go to Coventry in 2008.

In 2010 another Minister was appointed Rev. Rosemary Solomon, she left in 2014 to go to Rose Hill in Chesterfield.

¹ It is not known if these are in any way connected with William and Ann Staughton who appear on the list of those forming the local Baptist Church in 1859. William and Ann were the grandparents of Dr. Staughton, an eminent Baptist minister in Washington in the early part of the 19th century.

² In a letter to the General Register Office complaining of the way in which a local Registrar had been appointed, Mr. Griffiths and Mi. Capern (Baptist minister) stated that nine-tenths of the population of the village were dissenters.