

## Early beginnings

The religious history of the Baptists of Winslow goes back to the days, if not beyond those of Benjamin Keach, the celebrated writer and preacher of the 17th century. His teachings on Infant Baptism aroused the anger of the Anglicans of the town, and whose displeasure pilloried the preacher in the stocks of persecution both at Winslow and Aylesbury. It is pleasing to note however, that over the last few years, both Baptists and Anglicans have experienced closer fellowship together in worshipping the Christ. May the prayer of Christ for unity amongst believers on earth be answered.

Keach's quaint little Meeting House adjoining the Cattle Market still stands little altered, a reminder of the simple faith exercised in the worshipping of God in the unadorned building.



Inside only the bare essentials of church furniture were provided.



One cannot tell what impact the influence and teaching of these early Christians had upon their families, friends and neighbours. We have every reason to believe their example of holy, righteous; Christian living must often have been the topic of conversation. Passed down from father and mother to son and daughter in succeeding generations, who can assess the legacy of this faith to the following generations?

In the very early years at the outset of a venture of faith, no red-bricked building silhouetted the blue skyline in Winslow and the green grass had scarce been disturbed on the Tabernacles site. Charles Haddon Spurgeon of world pulpit fame however was present and preached, wielding the Sword of the Spirit with good effect. Henry Kelsall Esq. handled the trowel at the laying of the foundation stone and blessed the work and fellowship with his gift of fifty guineas. The 3rd day of the month of May 1864 certainly glistened with the glory of love's own giving of heart generosity. Support was spontaneous. Workers were willing and liberal.

Host to the special excursionists from London's smoke and grime to the pleasant green fielded grounds of Winslow, was Mr. John Neale of Edgware Road, London. A one time local inhabitant, who was doubly blessed of God materially and spiritually, forgot not to return and give thanks, by actively identifying himself with the work of clearing off the debt of the Tabernacle. The gallery Clock face still bears the name of this early benefactor.

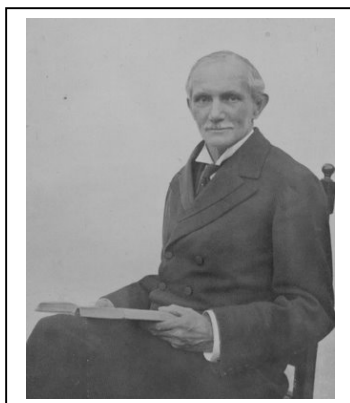
On the 15th September of that memorable year of 1864 the Tabernacle was completed. The cost of building the Tabernacle at the time of its construction was £744. Holding forth on the occasion, after the fashion of his more widely known brother, was the Reverend J.A. Spurgeon, whilst from the Pastor's College in London, so dear to the heart of its Principal, G.E. Spurgeon, came the Tabernacle's first minister in the person of the Rev. Robert Sole.



There followed other servants of the Lord.

**Dr. Feltham** was a man of outstanding preaching ability. He financed not only the Centenary Hall at the rear of the Tabernacle, but also the Mursley Baptist Chapel a few miles distant from Winslow. The Centenary Hall was built in 1880 and required the modest sum of £475. (Why it is called the "Centenary Hall" is not known)

**Rev. J Sylvester Poulton** was appointed to his first pastorate next.



He served the Lord at the Chapel from 1885-1889. He moved on to his second pastorate (1889-1894) at the Baptist church in Cote, near Aston in Oxfordshire. He died March 30th, 1942.

**Rev. Kirby Byard** who followed him was well talented in the use of the paintbrush. There were three texts on the wall behind the pulpit, bearing witness to his artistic genius. Sadly these were lost during recent repairs to the fabric of the front walls. These texts can still be seen in earlier photographs of the Church interior. He was succeeded by

**Rev. L. Thompson** little is recorded of Rev Thompson.

### 1920's

**Rev. Haswell** had twin daughters who taught the older girls in the afternoon school at 2.30pm along with Miss Winnie Gibson who taught the younger girls. Mr Royce used to get to Chapel early and light the tortoise stoves, one in the schoolroom and two in the Chapel. Mr Carter took over the boys to relieve Mr Royce. Miss Rowe played the organ and Dorothy began to teach.



Sunday school anniversary was always the third Sunday in June. Special hymns were practised beginning early in May under the guidance of Miss North. Various preachers known or connected to the Church arrived for this. The ladies and men came to augment the singing. Children sat on the platform the smallest children on a form at the front much to their disgust. The men sat right at the back.



Church Sunday School 1921

Monday afternoon would be an arranged holiday from School, and what Mr Royce called "romps and games" in the field adjoining the Chapel. Some time during the next year or so another old gentleman came to help called Mr Payne. He arrived to supervise games wearing a cricket cap. Carol's father immediately called him Jack Hobbs.

A form of cricket was played with a bat, a single stump one end, and the requisite three at the other. At 5.00 there was a tea treat and at 6.00pm the final service. Sometimes there was a little weep among the children during the last hymn; it was all over for another year.

At the Annual Christmas Treat usually in January, there were prizes. There were Ham and Coffee suppers. Always on New Year's Eve followed the Watch Night Service. But the Ham and Coffee suppers occurred at regular intervals.

Once a year there was a Service of Song. There were more hymns to learn. In the service the hymns would be punctuated by a story read by someone with a good voice. Mr Tweedale a friend of the Church often obliged in this. The inevitable ham and coffee supper followed the service.

Harvest Festival was a landmark with three services and a Monday night service. Then followed the auction sale of the fruit, vegetables and flowers. Mr Carter got quite good at being the Auctioneer.

On the Thursday following there would be the Harvest Sale. A grand affair with lots of stalls opened by Mrs Davis, the schoolmaster's wife from Little Horwood. Lots of things were collected for this. Commercial travellers were a great help with little sample pots of jam and other items. Jellies were made in empty paste pots and sold for 1 d each.

At that time there were open-air meetings. There was a little folding organ in the church schoolroom. A tall man with this organ folded on his shoulder took it to the open space opposite the Swan for the open-air singing.

Around 1923 Dorothy and Miss Nellie Brazier (an aunt of Dorothy Brazier) were baptised. Mr Carter became a Deacon.

At this time it was decided to remodel the church. To facilitate the carrying of coffins into the church a wide central aisle was created and the seats moved across against the walls. This entailed the raising of money. Everyone had a collection card. Miss Carter rose about 30/- (in old money) which bought, she was told, a piece of coconut matting to cover the platform. It lasted a long time and she was proud of her effort. The coconut matting was only replaced in the early 1980's with carpet tiles demonstrating it's durability!

#### Winslow Baptist Tabernacle



Miss M. North, Wm G. French, Robert Royce, Lewis Paine, Rev H.A. Haswell, Daniel Forster, Herbert Carter, Sidney Rowe

In 1924 when the Rev E G Reeve and his young wife came to hold a mission in the town, the little folding organ came into its own. The tent was pitched in the field off Avenue Road. Mr Reeve took over the Mursley Group. His ministry was a time of great blessing to them and also to us. From that time a firm friendship was established which only death interrupted.

Miss Benbow also gave up her cake shop and two cottages were built on the site. There were no more cakes for the winter treat with the date on, and no more sweets for the children to scramble for.



**The Benbow Shop**

Early in 1923 the aged minister the Rev Alfred Haswell died, the Misses Haswell then retired to Folkestone where they lived. Miss Pat died soon after, but the last bomb, which fell on the town late in the War, killed Miss Flora, she was buried in the linen room of the hospital where she was working at the time.

For just over a year visits of brethren from the church at High Wycombe supported the Winslow Church with the ministry of the Word. Mr Hull's Young Men's Association gave a series of musical evenings during the week. Mrs Davis from Little Horwood had Bible studies after Sunday school once a month. About this time the church was wired for electricity. Mr Reeve preached at the opening service afterwards. The first hymn was "Light up this house with Glory Lord" no. 1244 in Psalms & Hymns. A songbook still used on occasion in the Church.

Soon after this Mr Reeve moved to the church at Great Missenden but still came to special services at the church.

**Mr. Elliott** In 1929 we were offered a student pastor. Mr Leslie Elliott came to us in late April and



began ministering the Word. After being "on our own" for the period it was good to have a leader. He had spent over a year at Cliff College. At that time he was a Methodist with some time in the Wiltshire circuit under a superintendent minister. He had felt the call to join the Baptists and Winslow was his first Full charge. In September 1930 he was accepted for training at Spurgeon's College so left in late July. There was a time of waiting again for the next student to be appointed after his going to College.

During Mr Elliott's ministry the brethren from Wycombe Union Church who had supported the Winslow church came to hold the Bucks Baptist Association Autumn Meetings at the Tabernacle.

Joints of beef were cooked in the Carter's bake house oven along with eight large apple pies. Other ladies made trifles, custard and various contributions. The lunch was served on trestle tables in the Centenary Hall. There were morning, afternoon and evening meetings. The gallery was used, and many notable speakers gave addresses.

Dr W Y Fullerton helped Miss North to get Londonderry Air quite perfect for the evening service. The hymn "I cannot tell why He whom angels worship, should set His love upon the sons of men" was sung from leaflets. It was a privilege to have him at the church towards the end of his life, as he died shortly afterwards in 1932.

Dr James Mountain who lead the evening service had a long, white beard, which prompted Jesse Rawlings to remark "Christmas is early this year, Father Christmas has come in October". He taught a song about a visit Queen Mary had made to an East End mission. It told of how she gave most of her bouquet of carnations to a crippled child in a wheelchair. A child whose prayer and longing had been just to see the Queen. It was a time of great blessing and again a friendship was forged which lasted until it was interrupted by his death in 1983.

### 1930's



**Rev. A. Gawler** After Mr Elliott left Mr Gawler arrived from Manchester in September. He had worked with the Caravan Mission to village children and did more work with young people. He started a Young peoples Fellowship.

In the spring he got the Tent Mission led by Tom Moore to start the season of village engagements in Winslow. The tent and caravan was pitched in what is now the recreation field. After Stanley was born, Mr & Mrs Moore took a house in Buckingham for the winter and worked the area from there until he took over the Norfolk & Suffolk area. He still came to Winslow, Mursley and other churches for Sunday School Anniversaries

In December 1932 Mr Gawler married Miss North. They lived in rooms with Miss Benbow until they took a house in Station Road.

In 1935 the Young People's Fellowship was still active. There were evening chorals and dramatics to the villages. "Ruth of Moab" was one of the themes. The Annual Bazaar, social evenings, ham and coffee suppers and the field days still continued. There were Sunday school treats with trips to Bedford, Wickstead Park and Oxford and the Winter Treat was allied to the New Year activities.



**Sunday School at Claydon House**

Soon after the Coronation celebrations in 1937 Mr Gawler began to be very ill, and was admitted to Peppard Common Sanatorium. He was able to come back to Winslow for a time after a period of treatment but it was a losing battle. He served the Church faithfully until his death in 1941.



His widow Mrs. Gawler was held in high esteem as she continued to help over the years in the capacity of secretary and assistant Organist to Mrs. F. Hutchings.

#### **Mrs Gawler**

Miss Carter took over Sunday School contacting old pupils. Children were collected, some from Verney Road. There was quite a healthy group. Other children coming into the town from time to time joined while their families lived in the town. There were evening concerts after the Christmas Party Teas. Mr Charlie Carter made a jolly Father Christmas in the costume Miss Carter borrowed from London. There were visits to Wickstead Park and Bedford in the summer, and of course with Mrs Gawler's help as always Sunday School Anniversary was a great day.

With no full time minister visiting Lay Preachers were relied on for the Sunday Services. They came from High Wycombe and other areas. There were many who became firm friends that lead on special occasions, Mr W Bax from London, Mr Coates from Chesham, Rev Robinson from Southcourt and later Weston Turville, Mr Ron Richardson from Loughton were among those who came to help and encourage. It seemed there was always someone available when we had a Special Service for Church, Sunday School Anniversaries, or Good Friday meetings.

#### **1940's**

**Rev. John Barker** During the war the Centenary Hall was "taken over" by the Home Guard. Because of black out restrictions it was only possible to hold morning and afternoon services in the winter. With the help of friends such as Mr & Mrs Luckett and others who came to take services, the church carried on. Mr John Barker came to serve the church in the pastorate of the Tabernacle. He continued the work commenced by his predecessor Rev. A. Gawler in the training of local preachers before he too went to Spurgeon's College.

#### **1950's**

**Rev. Burch** After many years of frustration and disappointment in 1952 the Carter family were granted a permit to build 37 Verney Road. This was completed in February 1953. They moved during a half term and with the emptying of 35 Verney Road, the dream of so many years came to fruit and there was a home to offer a Pastor. The first occupant was Mr W Burch, who with his wife took over the leadership of the church. They stayed eighteen months then found they needed more financial help than the rent and rate free accommodation the church was able to offer.

During this time Mrs Burch started the Women's Meetings. Once organised it was a relief for Mrs Gawler not to have to find a preacher for the Sunday. The gap it made it possible to entertain the "specials". They more than filled the cup and it was still good to welcome old friends.

Congregations began to pick up. The use of individual Communion cups was introduced. During this time the Bucks County Council took over Redfields. With various alterations and additions it was opened as an Old People's Home. Monthly meetings were started on the last Friday of the month. Several of the residents joined for worship when transport was available on Sunday evenings. Friendships were formed and it left a gap when the home was declared, "not fire proof" and had to close.

By this time Miss Carter was working in the town and although not Free on Sunday mornings, Sunday school was maintained in the afternoon.

**Mr A Cook** The next Pastor was a Mr A Cook who came from Suffolk; his wife took over the Women's Meeting. With heating being a problem in the winter, meetings were held in the back room. Sometimes it was uncomfortably full.

By 1956 Mr Cook's daughter found accommodation for her parents in London. "Full of years" they felt they would be better near her and left. It was discouraging to battle on again without a Pastor.

## G. Duffett



With the departure of Rev A Cook Mr Carter's faith and optimism dropped to a low ebb. It seemed as if Winslow Baptist Church would not carry on much longer. Meeting at Drayton Parslow with Mr Harry North discussions were held to link up with the Mursley Group when their new Minister started. Also the Rev John Barker and his wife were made aware of our trouble. As his wife came from Southcourt some thought perhaps help might come from there.

The cottage was still empty and added the task, having to turn away would be tenants when there seemed no prospect of its being used for the original purpose as a manse. Then a letter arrived from the Rev G H Duffett who had seen the change of Rev Cook's address in a Christian publication. His letter was an enquiry as to what were our plans.

Letters passed and telephone calls. Mr Duffett came down to visit and preached for a Sunday. There was only a cottage rent and rates as payment then. He was young and there was the possibility of paid employment, until the church was in the position to give more support. Gerald Duffett came and joined the activities, helping with the Sunday School. He was able to obtain employment as an un-certificated Teacher in Bletchley, prior to his being accepted for Teacher Training. There was a delay until May, and then Rev and Mrs Duffett moved with two more younger sons. Peter was transferred to the Royal Latin School and Paul to the Winslow Junior School. Mrs Duffett came later for a weekend and plans began to take shape. There was opposition from the Baptist Union area Superintendent Rev W Bottoms initially as Mr Duffett was an unaccredited minister. There was always a good relationship with the area Superintendent. After some assurance from the church members and in view of the need everything went ahead.

In March 1956 Mr Duffett commenced his pastorate at the Tabernacle. During his years 14 people passed through the waters of baptism.

The Women's Meeting was handed over to Mrs Duffett and began to settle down once more.



**Mrs Duffett**

The Women's group had a choir under the leadership of Mrs Hutchings who had come to live in the town with her husband. She took over the organ on Sunday evenings. This choir took Services of Song to other Women's Meetings in the district. This Women's Bright Hour, lead by Mrs. Duffett and helpers worked in the spreading of the Gospel in song and sermon in more than twenty two churches.

The Sunday School continued to flourish under the superintendence of Miss Miriam Carter. The Young People's Committee felt a sense of responsibility resting upon them to help the work of God venturing forth to win and hold the interest of the young people of Winslow.



**Officers of the Church**

Congregations picked up with a fair number of young people coming to an evening meeting in the week. A midweek service was maintained along with one at Redfield one once a month.

There were still various friends who came to take special services, Harvest Festival Sunday School Anniversaries a Woman's Sunday' and to take over holiday periods.

## 1960's

In 1964 there were the Century Celebrations. All those who had helped over the years came to take services either Sundays or weeknights. Rev L C D Elliott, the first Student pastor was among them. He had maintained a friendship over the years and had sent some of his young people on occasion to take a Sunday Service.



A celebration book was produced for the occasion and it was a very happy year. It was saddened by Miss Carter's Mothers death in early July. Mr Elliott came to mourn and took the burial service. The last Special service was the Harvest Festival Service taken by the Rev H Watson, member of a Winslow family who was that year's president of the Baptist Union.

Over the years young people from neighbouring villages came to join. Joe and Jeanette McCall who took over Quainton Baptist Church for a time. Wilfred and Ann Burridge who supplied Christian Literature. During their stay in the district they were available for supply preaching and Mr Burridge as a gifted musician would often play the organ. These were a help as Mr. A. Garner a very able deacon, local preacher and church Treasurer, was taken to be with the Lord at the end of 1963. A sad loss sustained at this time by the Tabernacle congregation. Without the contribution of men of like gifts and graces, surely the work amongst the Baptists would have discontinued in Winslow. The Church is thankful to God for his memory.



**Friends and members**

Mr Carter was still active but his ulcer was the beginning of a terminal illness. It began to have a weakening effect. The elder sons of Rev Duffett had married and moved away. In 1972 Mr Duffett had a call back to Wales. Mr & Mrs Underwood who had helped after joining the congregation in the Sunday school also moved away. Mr D Rogers had begun to take services again, and helped with Sunday School Anniversaries and Carol Services.

Paul and Carol Duffett were rearing a young family and with Mr Carter often unable to take the service Paul and Miss Carter did alternate morning services. Mrs Gawler for years the church organist died, and Dorothy stepped in to take over with Mrs Taylor helping.

One Easter Sunday when Dorothy was only just out of hospital after an operation there was a visitor. There was no organist that evening with Dorothy unable to play. The visitor in the district for one day turned out to be a teacher of music. Never have the Easter hymns been lifted to the ceiling of the small room with such exultation. All went home with "Christ has risen" still ringing in their hearts.

### **1970's**

When Swanbourne Chapel closed Winslow was able to acquire their pipe organ. Jesse Rawlings with great skill put it back together and it worked.



Mr Carter died in 1974. He had been a senior deacon of the Church. With his tenacity and courageous faith the work was kept going over the years when the Tabernacle was without a minister. Many times he was brought nigh, through accidents of one kind and another, to death's door. But wiry and hardy physically, vehement and vociferous spiritually, his example of chapel attendance in all winds and weathers, past the age of eighty, continued to be a source of amazement to all who knew him. For sixty years he was a local preacher with the art of giving out in telling effect the Gospel story. Much is owed to him. For his funeral the Vicar stepped in and was a great comfort and friend. Once again there was a struggle to come to terms with taking up the strain of covering another breach in the wall.

At this time representation to join the Northampton Association was made. There followed help from several brethren from the Bletchley Churches. John Geary, Barry Chapman, his wife and family became known to us at this time.

There was still a feeling it might be in order to join with the Mursley Group. They were also without a minister. After a meeting at Drayton Parslow with brethren who came to discuss the situation Miss Durkin arrived. She was willing to shoulder the three churches. Mursley did not feel able to join at that time. Winslow Baptist agreed to assist with financial support. The association continued for ten years from 1977 until 1987. It was felt with growing numbers in the congregation and in membership, Winslow would attempt to stand on it's own again.

## **1980's**

At this time Mrs. J. Rawlings, a deaconess at the Tabernacle, talents extended to secretary of the Women's Bright Hour filling this important post.

David & Sue Popham came during Miss Durkin's ministry. They looked at the chapel and inspired others to join in with renovation and refurbishment. It was not quite finished before they were both baptised. Mike and Sue Hotard came shortly after. They joined the band of workers and the chapel decoration was completed. Mike had the motor for the pipe organ rewired and re-leathered the bellows. The pipe organ was repaired in time for their wedding in Feb 1983. It wasn't thought right to put back the original pews so chairs had to be hired for the occasion. Chairs were later bought and others acquired through a gift to fill the need.

Mr & Mrs Rowe and their boys then came and joined the congregation. Mr Rowe undertook to decorate the small backroom, which had been recently plastered.

When Dennis & Iris Baker arrived, meetings were still in the small back room during the winter months. With their encouragement gas heating was installed in the main hall. Since then services have been held in comfort throughout the year. The membership began to grow with Liz Rowe, Kate Northam, Dennis and Iris, Winnie Taylor, Mike & Sue Hotard and later, after their baptism John & Christine Starmer joining. Liz, Dennis and John served as Deacons and Mike and Paul became joint Elders of the church.

The Sunday school was started again with Liz and Christine. Children took part in Seasonal Services and at Anniversary times when all joined in thanking God for the devotion and hard work of the teachers for another year given.

Dennis and Iris encouraged others with their decorating skills and visiting of sick and housebound members. Mike installed a useful and helpful kitchen at the back of the church. Refreshments could be served after services and other times and it does a sterling duty at fellowship meals.

The local carpenter constructed a partition to divide the back room. Wood from one of the old pews was used for the central cross that is backlit as a focus for services. Paul planned a wider lobby making a more welcoming entrance that adds to the beauty of the church.

In December 1987 the car park was gravelled. It may not hold all the cars that are used by those joining the services but it is clean and there is no danger of cars churning up mud. A tarmac path was laid out from the road to the church door.

Paul, Mike and John with the help of Keith Harrison, took on the leading of the Sunday services.

Phyllis Rawlings led the Women's Meeting. Paul led the Monday Bible Study. Carol led the fellowship meeting on Wednesday mornings held at Rachel's home.

1989 was a year of mixed blessing. A number of members moved on, among them the Starmer and Rowe families. There was encouragement when Linda Viccar's joined the membership at that time and shared the responsibility of Sunday School with Carol.

## The Present

The years of witness in Winslow have been a time of blessing and testing. Gone are the days when congregations gathered and eagerly listened to the Word of God. Many things have happened to dampen and dull the enthusiasm of the people. However, like Israel, the record tells there has always been a remnant left to carry on. Right down to the present time the faithful remain, mourning the absence of fellow saints gone to glory. Mourning the indifference of sinners for whom the Tabernacle was built. Many who so far refuse to come in and join. "When will Thou save the people, O God of Israel when?" And in answer to that singing, appealing, petition of prayerfulness, change continues for the buildings of Milton Keynes creeps nearer. Fields affording sheep their daily feed will soon be furnishing fodder for other sheep. Those destined to receive the loving care of their heavenly Shepherd. The One who leads to even greener pastures where besides the still waters of the calm of complete contentment one may forage for evermore.

Today the spirit within the Tabernacle, like in other places more populously positioned is warm and glowing. The services and the Gospel story, far from losing any of its meaning and power, is surely more thrillingly gripping those, who long have listened to its simple message, culminating in the desire to be with the singing saints above.

"Oh, that with yonder sacred throng we at His feet may fall,  
Join in the everlasting song, and crown Him Lord of all."

To the many friends and brethren, beloved through out the Buckinghamshire a most cordial invitation is given to join in celebrating God's mercy in the Winslow Tabernacle. Everyone who has a heart of love for Jesus, will discover that God is here and that to bless us.

Come empty and depart full, in things spiritual and worthwhile, and we will not have lived to see the opening of the Tabernacle in vain.

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." **Psalms 127: 1.**

"So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." **Isaiah 55: 11.**

In the 19th century God sent His evangelist to Winslow. Success attended his efforts and so a church was formed comprising of eight members, who turned an outhouse into a preaching room. The work of God has continued throughout the years, and with the blessing of God, the prayers of His people and the help of friends it must continue.

The Baptist Tabernacle continues to exist for the preaching of the Gospel, Christ centred, Holy Spirit led, Bible based ministry, teaching, worship and the encouragement of personal spiritual growth to the glory of God.

**Adapted from a personal history by Miss M Carter 1989 and the Centenary Souvenir by Rev G. Duffett 1964. Pictures provided by Mrs. Rawlings and Miss Carter.**