

*'To the north east of Farnham is a hill rising to
five hundred and sixty two feet.*

*During the last century this was known as Hungry
Hill. One hundred and fifty years ago one of the
few buildings found on this hill was Bethel Baptist
Chapel'*

(From a Heath End School History Project.)

*'Nonconformity took root among the population of
Hale in the last century as with most places, and
the Bethel Baptist Chapel in Bethel Lane has a long-
standing and loyal following.'*

Farnham and District Museum Society Quarterly Newsletter Vol. 6 No. 4)

*'Hale, on the summit of the hill to the North East
of the town, looks across the valley clear to
Hindhead twelve miles away. It faces the sun, it is
high and healthy, has all the local services and an
undoubted future as a residential neighbourhood.'*

(Book of Farnham 1930's)

Now almost hidden away amongst the surrounding
houses which have covered the high and healthy
hill, and central in this widespread residential
neighbourhood, Bethel Chapel is celebrating
150 years of history in June 1984.

'To God be the glory, great things He hath done.'

FOREWORD

Almost four thousand years ago in ancient Israel, Jacob had an amazing experience. In a vision he saw heaven opened and angels descending and ascending on a ladder set up between earth and heaven! Undoubtedly God made Himself known to Jacob; communication was opened between God in heaven and Jacob on earth, so that, to Jacob, the barren rocky land became 'none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven'.

Around 1834 a small group of people to whom God had similarly made Himself known were inspired to build a Bethel on Hungry Hill. Here they would worship God, and learn of Him through the teaching of His word.

In 1984 we look back with joyful thanksgiving for all that God has done here. Through these one hundred and fifty years it has truly been the house of God for many people as He has established communication between heaven and earth for them. God has made Himself a living reality through His Son Jesus Christ who is 'The Way, The Truth and The Life'

*'Without the way, there is no going
Without the truth, there is no knowing
Without the Life, there is no living.'*

For the future, it is our sincere prayer that many more will have a Bethel experience here.

May heaven be opened and God become a living reality through faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul Tucker
Pastor, Bethel Chapel

THEN . . .

'He raiseth up the poor out of
the dust, and lifteth up the beggar
from the dunghill, to set them among
princes, and to make them inherit
the throne of glory.'

1 Sam. 2:8

Like the story of the early church the story of Bethel is full of surprises, hard work, many disappointments and the joy and excitement of knowing that 'God is in this place.' Bethel exists as a living proof of the meaning of its name 'The house of God.'

Its first appearance on the pages of history was as a dunghill; was there ever a stranger pulpit? Years later in Bethel Chapel, 'a building with the simple plain appearance of the dissenting meeting houses of the nineteenth century,' a very old lady told how she had gone, out of curiosity, to hear a Mr. William Huntington preach from the dunghill that was his pulpit, on the words 'the Master is come and calleth for thee.' She ends her account: 'The Lord was pleased to arrest me by these words and afterwards effectually brought me to know Him for myself.'

Before there was a chapel, or very much else in the area, God was building His church here. If this very old lady remembered being the first 'living stone' that Jesus talks about, she was soon followed by others, and on June 5th 1834 Bethel Baptist Chapel was opened. The opening was marked by the singing of two hymns composed for the occasion, one by John

Lovell who became the first Master of Hale Middle School founded in 1840 by Bishop Summer. 'Thus full of hope and joy the hungry souls at Hungry Hill, (the earlier name of Hale) gathered anticipating heavenly supplies. That they and succeeding generations have not been disappointed is certain, for the cause has continued to this day serving this remote corner of God's heritage'

(Ralph E. Chambers: The Strict Baptist
Chapels of England. Vol. 1)



Old Bethel Chapel

HISTORIC EVENTS

1834 — 1984



*Mr. and Mrs. Hewitt
Pastor of Bethel, 1899 – 1921*

1834 June 4th Bethel Baptist Chapel was opened. The first place of worship in the area.

1834 - 1852 Mr. William Smith – The first Pastor.

1837 Queen Victoria became Queen.

1841 September 12th. William Smith, Elizabeth Smith, Thomas Spreadborough and William Patrick were baptised at Hartley Row. There was, as yet, no baptistry at Bethel. Eleven 'Articles of Faith' were formulated and recorded in the Church Book.

1844 St. John's Church built by Bishop Sumner.

1852 Mr. Smith died, taken ill

while preaching at Aldershot. After his death the chapel was given by his widow 'to the friends at Bethel for as long as three members meet together for Divine worship'. Present day worshippers, thankfully many more than three, can see this fact recorded on a plaque on the right inside wall of the chapel.

1854 - 1856 The Crimean War.

1852 - 1860 Mr. Thomas Drake – the second Pastor. Before his conversion he was a 'pugilistic Middlesex publican'. Later a Thames waterman, he felt it a pleasure to walk twenty one miles to preach two sermons, and then get up at two o'clock on Monday morning to work for his daily bread.

1858 Mr. George Wells was baptised. The chapel was made more comfortable with his financial support.

1865 Mr. George Keen was baptised and later became a much loved, godly deacon who served faithfully until his death at the age of ninety.

1876 The chapel roof was raised three feet (this gave improved ventilation) and other alterations made; the total cost was £50!

1877 Two vestries were built at the front of the chapel (by free labour of the friends); each had a tall chimney outside giving it an 'unusual appearance unlike any other chapel in Surrey or elsewhere'. Some well known ministers came to preach at Bethel, including the great-grandfather of one of the current elders.

1879 The baptistry was built. Baptisms had earlier taken place in neighbouring chapels, or in the open air at Claycart Bottom – always an occasion for much local curiosity.

1880 The Methodist Chapel was built in Upper Hale.

1883 July 14th. St. Mark's Church opened.

1884 JUBILEE YEAR

To mark the anniversary new seats were donated; these are still in use today. The two 'opening' hymns were sung again.

1893 November 15th. A Sunday School was started, with thirty six children. It was held at the unusual time of 6 p.m. – 7.15 p.m. Three years later the school was suspended for three months during an outbreak of diphtheria.

1899 - 1921 Mr. Charles Hewitt began his pastorate at the age of 70!

1900 New Trustees were appointed.

Sunday services were at 11.00 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. for the convenience of those who travelled from other villages. Some from Crondall, bringing sandwiches, came by wagonette and stabled their horses at 'The Cricketer's Inn'.

1905 With over 120 scholars in Sunday School it was necessary to build a new hall.

1906 Constructed of brick, with a tiled roof the hall was completed in time for tea on Whit Monday June 14th, the 72nd Anniversary Services. The previous day it had been solemnly dedicated to the services of God.

1912 Two new deacons were appointed, Mr. Reed and Mr. Norris. Hillside Stores in Alma Lane was then run as a cake shop by Mr. and Mrs. Norris and their niece Miss Winnie Kirby.

Mr. and Mrs. Norris were known for always arranging their holidays to avoid being away on Sundays 'so that nothing would interrupt their worship'. They, with the loyal help of their niece were responsible for the upkeep of the chapel – a task which they lovingly fulfilled for many years.

1914 - 1918 The First World War.

1919 Mrs. Gwen Ogbourn has childhood memories of being brought by Mr. Norris on Sunday mornings to open the chapel and light the coal fire used for heating!

1921 Mr. Henry Popham arrived to preach from Eastbourne. He was late because his new fangled transport 'a motor carriage' broke down on the way. He decided that his horse had been more reliable!

1922 - 1929 Mr. Frederick Cooler was the Pastor.

1923 Mr. Joseph Young was baptised. At that time the pool was filled and emptied by hand with water buckets. The amount of water made a



*Sunday school outing in
Caesar's paddock around 1910*

- quagmire of the gravel road outside where the water was thrown, which did not please the residents of Bethel Lane!
- 1928 Bethel was registered for marriages, and the first couple married were Mr. Travis Jack Dawes and Miss Gertrude Macklin.
- 1930 The chapel had a face-lift. The outside walls were rendered in cement, thanks to the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Young.
- 1931 - Mr. Young served as
1974 Deacon.
- 1934 CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS
June 21st 'The day was fine and warm. Mr. Detheridge preached two sermons: Mr. Reed read a history of the chapel to a full congregation. The two hymns written for the opening were sung, also a new hymn written for the occasion by Mr. Reed'.
- 1939 - Mr. W.S. Detheridge, from Frederick Street Chapel, Birmingham, was
1954 Bethel's 'Pastor after God's own heart'. He was often called to preach five nights a week in various places during the war years. Blessings from his ministry still linger in the memory of many.
- 1939 - The Second World War.
1945 It brought many opportunities for offering hospitality to the young servicemen stationed at Aldershot, many of whom still recall this with gratitude. Wartime rations were miraculously stretched to meet all needs, and Mr. and Mrs. Young's 'barrel of meal' was constantly renewed.
- 1940 Mr. J.T. Risbridger (to become known affectionately as 'J.T.') was baptised by Mr. Detheridge.
- 1951 Electric light installed in the chapel and Sunday School hall replaced the 'popping and spluttering' gas lamps. The antique brass oil-lamps were also taken away.
- 1958 New Trustees appointed. Messrs. J.T. Risbridger, C.B. Tingley, J.C. Young, C. Ogbourn, H.W. Young, F.H. Wheble, C.B. Tyrell and Mrs. F.E. Lloyd.
- 1961 Sunday School which had dwindled during the war was re-started by Mrs. Audrey Risbridger.
- 1962 - The Pastorate of Mr. J.T. Risbridger.
1983 A gradual, but very real change brought the fellowship to a more outward looking evangelistic position. This was achieved with many heartaches, but many encouragements. Faithful, untiring ministry laid the foundation for many to experience the privilege of a personal faith in the Lord Jesus, a close warm fellowship within the church, and a growing concern for those living around the chapel. A time characterised by love, generosity and prayer.



Sunday school hall - 1912



Sunday school hall - 1984

- 1965 A new kitchen and toilets, as well as a relay system from the chapel, were added to the Sunday School.
- 1967 Major alterations to the chapel. The two front vestries were removed and the chapel extended; the purchase of a strip of land at the side made possible the construction of a new porch, the pastor's vestry, and a toilet.
- 1967 Community singing on the first Sunday evening each month was commenced, largely at the instigation of David and Hilda Sayers.
- 1970 More praise to God as Helen (Sayers) trained the young people. The singing group has continued under changing leadership. In the same year Roger and Pru Cottingham began a Handicraft Club for children, which in ten years was the means of donating £1,000 to the Leprosy Mission. Helen Saint, now engaged in Bible Translation in Pakistan, was one of the 'regulars'.
- 1971 The teenagers first had their own meetings, thanks largely to Brian and Jean Ventress.
- 1975 The Youth Group and Teen-age Bible Study developed over the years, under the leadership of David and Pat Ellenden.
- 1979 During summer school holidays the first Holiday Bible Club was held. The organ was donated to the chapel by David and Hilda Sayers, Hilda being appointed the first organist.
- 1981 Two young mothers expressed a desire to share their new faith. They met at Ray Risbridger's home to listen to a tape and have fellowship in discussion and prayer. Others have joined them and on most Tuesday mornings from 10.30 - 12.00 seven or eight mothers, (plus some babies!) really enjoy being together.
- 1981 - The Sunday School Hall was greatly enhanced by the addition of an
1982 upper floor, which can be used as one large or three smaller rooms. New front and side porches were also built.
- 1982 In November, sixteen senior citizens from Hale and around attended the first 'Friendship' Coffee Morning established by Gwen Ogbourn, with the assistance of Kitty Atkinson, and Stewart and Elizabeth Docherty. The Meetings are held fortnightly and about thirty ladies now regularly enjoy their time together, and are always given the opportunity of hearing God's word.
- 1982 The Children's Club commenced, meeting on alternate Tuesday evenings and usually supported by children from Bear Lane Baptist Chapel as well.
- 1983 The present Pastor, Paul Tucker welcomed to the chapel. At a time when Mr. J.T. Risbridger felt unable to continue the full responsibilities of pastoral work, God's guiding hand has been seen once again in bringing Paul and his family into our midst.

.... NOW

Jesus said 'I will build
My Church, and the gates
of hell shall not prevail
against it'.

Matthew 16: 18

A glimpse into the past gives
reason for renewed gratitude for all
that God has done. At the same time,
it makes us aware that we are here
NOW. This is God's hour for us to
experience His grace in our lives; this
is the day for us to serve Him.

There is a sense of expectancy
as we come together on Sundays; how
good it is to see God at work, bringing
new worshippers in to the chapel.

God's word has the ring of authority. We unashamedly believe
and proclaim that it provides the answer to our profoundest
needs, the comfort to sustain us in our sorrows, and the
inspiration and power to 'lift us up from the dust and set us
among princes'.

On the first Sunday evening of each month many voices
are raised in praise to God. Not only members of Bethel, but
regulars from the village introduced through the Friendship
Morning and Young Wive's Group, young people from Sunday
and Youth Group and on

special occasions some of their
parents, all unite. Summer
Holiday Bible Club is another
opportunity to meet the
children and parents of the
village. God has good news for
all ages, and all types of people.
Ours is the privilege to make it



Bethel Chapel

known. This gives us 'a bright hope for tomorrow', as we look
forward with confidence to what God will yet do.



*Pastors – present
and past*



*TOMORROW
1984*

'He who hath begun a good
work in you will perform it
until the day of Jesus Christ.'

Phil. 1: 6

Jesus is still building His Church – of course! We who
worship God at Bethel feel greatly privileged to be here now. In
the midst of international strife, and national unrest, with the
problems of unemployment dominating our nation, we are
assured that God is in control of the situation. He has ultimate
authority over men and nations.

We dedicate ourselves on this 150th Anniversary to
future service, anticipating with eagerness God's will for us.
Whatever your background you will be warmly welcome at
Bethel to share in the good things we believe that God has in
store.

