

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH AND CHAPELS

The Church

All Saints' Church Wetheringsett is over 800 years old, and the story of its building and later desecration by Dowsing is described in the earlier booklet. Its 19th century history is one of repairs, and it is to be hoped that the 20th century, with little time left, will be equally generous in preserving its heritage.

An 1828 (Davy M S) description of the interior of the church mentions many things which have since disappeared. There was a brass chandelier hanging in the centre of the church, which was probably the one described in a terrier (list of church property) of 1770. At the west end there was a small gallery and over it the arms of George II, and below it a list of benefactors. Over the porch was a sundial with the date 1710. The pulpit had a sound board, on the back of which was inscribed the date 1618 and the initials W B and N C. There was an altar tomb on the south side of the church towards the west end to Thomas Chinery gent, who died December 16th 1729 aged 85, and Susanna his wife who died April 7th aged 80. (They lived at what is now Station House, and farmed the land around.)

It seems from the Davy description that the top of the font is earlier than has been thought, since there was the date 1592 on it. A full description was:

"The basin is octagon, the faces having shields bearing as follows:

West, south and north.	A blank shield.	
South east.	A square saying Ano Doimi (sic)	1592
East.	Quarterly. 1 and 4. A knot.	
	2 and 3. Blank.	
North east.	A square. The name John Pretiman)	(residents at
North west.	A lozenge. The name John Colbie)	the time and
		almost certainly
		the churchwardens that year)
South west.	A blank lozenge. "	

The knots remain, but are now on the north face. It seems as though the font has been 'cleaned up' since 1828, erasing the inscriptions, and has been reset on its base in not quite the original position.

The soundboard of the pulpit has disappeared, and so has the gallery (that 'Singing Gallery' repaired by earlier churchwardens, where one of the village men played his bass viol), but the benefactors' board has been renewed and replaced on the north wall. The sundial on the porch has gone too, but there are the remains of tiles set at an angle - could these be remains of it?

During the 19th century the church was re-roofed, and there is an entry in the churchwardens' accounts for 1828: "Paid to Sargent for new roofing the church ... £200. Extras ... £22 1s 5d." The money was raised by a parish rate of 2/- in the pound, which produced £237 18s 6d.

In 1851, according to White's Directory, the chancel was restored. The maintenance of the chancel was in those days the responsibility of the Rector, who in 1851 was the Rev Robert Moore, and he left us a fine example of workmanship in the roof. He was also probably responsible for repairs to the porch. Over the arch of this today is a small and crumbling coat of arms. The College of Heralds said that these arms were granted to the Trowte family of Norfolk, but they were also borne by various branches of the Moore family, and it seems much more likely that they were placed there by our early Victorian Rector.

In 1908 the East window was erected - or rather, filled with stained glass - by parishioners and friends. Money and other gifts have been made to the church at many times, as memorials, in wills, and by people in their lifetime, but because no complete lists are available we thought it better not to mention any of these individual instances of generosity and of faith.

There is a list of Rectors in the church, but as some new names have been discovered since that list was written a revised version has been included here. It is very doubtful that any Rectors were resident here before the time of Queen Mary. They received the financial rewards of the benefice (and often of many benefices) but the work was done in pre-Reformation times by chaplains, and one Rector was remiss even in this respect. In a will dated 30 October 1443 and proved 6 November 1443, John Shirborne, Rector of Wetheringsett, wrote:

"because by right I was and am bound to serve my church with two priests, at least, as all my predecessor rectors have done for time out of mind as of custom, now I confess my omission in that for a year and three-quarters I have denied the church in part by only one priest serving it and this was my fault (acting) against my parishioners who justly complained of me (etc) and give my parishioners in recompense of my deficiency in this way, 14 marks to the reparation of the said church, that they will pardon me." (This very unusual record was found and translated from its mediaeval Latin by Mr Peter Northeast.)

Later Rectors were assisted by curates, and when our Rectors were also Vicar of Mendlesham the curates seem to have lived in the Rectory.

The Rev Rayner Bellman, to whom there is a memorial tablet in the church, was curate here for 44 years. He became Rector of Feltwell before his death in 1816 at the age of 76, and while he was here he lived at the Rectory, where one of his family scratched his name on the glass of a window in the Tudor part. He was curate from 1 October 1767 to 7 February 1811, and had seven children baptised here. His eldest son lived for a time at Hill House, Brockford.

The Rev Henry Hetherington was curate here from 1865 - 1882, and also lived at the Rectory. He seems to be the last recorded curate.

The churchwardens are both People's Wardens. In earlier times they served two years, the first as junior, the second as senior churchwarden, and were selected from a rota of land-holders, one year from Brockford and the next from Wetheringsett.

The Mission Room (about which more is written under the history of the school) was used for Church of England services, and there is a note about these in the November parish magazine of 1895. (Rev C F Blyth)

"The Service at Wetherup on the afternoon of November 24 will be for men only. It is the Rector's present intention to continue this special service once a month, if the attendance of men is such as to make it seem desirable to do so. All men and lads (not children) are earnestly invited to attend and will be heartily welcome. There are many in the parish who do not regularly attend any place of worship, and some who are never seen there. No doubt many of these are leading honest and respectable lives, and perhaps the characters of some of them are as good as the characters of some who make more show or more talk of religion. Nevertheless, it is a very serious thing to treat the Lord's Day with so little respect ..."

Extracts from the parish magazine:

1895 January. In a short time the men of the choir will sit in the Chancel, and we shall provide additional seating there for 12 boys.

May. Men and boys of the choir wore cassocks and surplices at the Easter Day service.

May. "We were glad to notice that the whole congregation stood up while the choir and clergyman proceeded from the vestry to the chancel, and also that they stood and remained in their places while the choir returned to the vestry at the end of the service. We hope that this practice will always be observed ... It is also a very useful and right habit for the congregation to kneel in silent prayer at the beginning of the service, with the choir and clergy, to ask for God's blessing on our worship. We should be glad to see this habit become general in our own church, as it is in many others."

June. Memorial Brass to Henry Brooke (son-in-law of Rev Robert Moore) placed on the south wall of the chancel.

1896 March. Gordon Smith and Allen Chapman have been admitted as members of the choir, in place of Horace Rose, who lately died, and Henry Abbott, who has been obliged to leave through no fault, but in consequence of his voice breaking.

November. During the last month the organ, which has now been in the church 40 years, has been in the hands of Messrs Norman & Beard of Norwich, who have cleaned, repaired and improved it, and moved it to a more convenient position. The cost of the whole work will be £35, and as the congregation will not be asked to pay it, it is hoped that they will the more heartily appreciate this much needed improvement.

1897 September. Burial on August 22 of Sarah Everson, aged 89. T Clarke dug the last grave in the Churchyard.

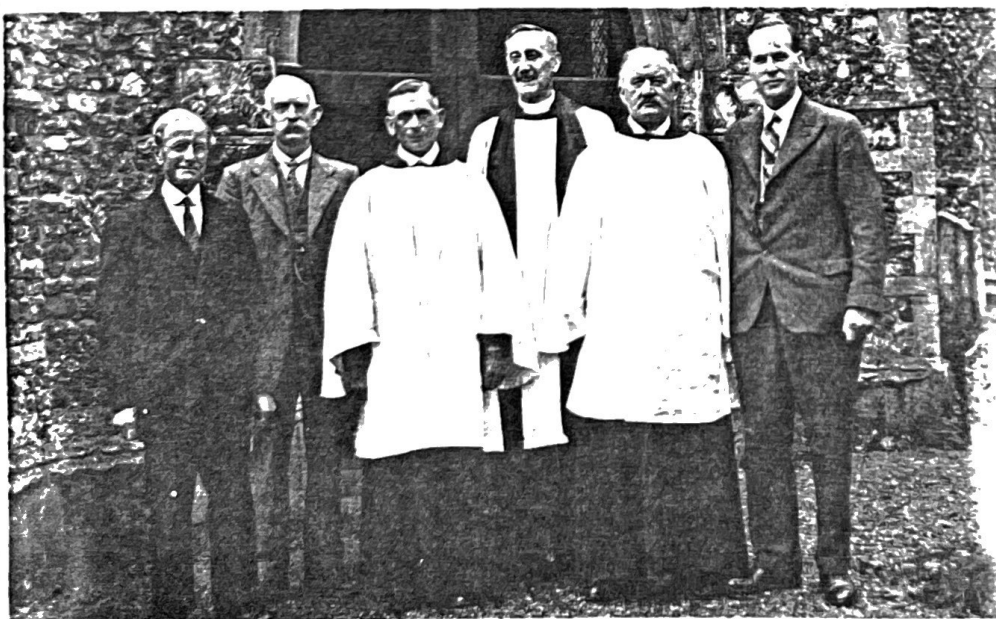
1898 November. A new stove (Tortoise Stove) has been erected at the North door at a cost of about £10 altogether.

RECTORS



Rev. Fredrick Robert
Smith
1903-31

Rev. Fredrick William
Lambert
1941-49



Rev. William Herring
Lillie 1931-39

Left to right:
Tom Clarke
Jim Betts
Fred Lacey
Rev. W.H. Lillie
Sidney Rose
Edgar Hurrell

1899 June. A handsome new carpet has been laid down from the altar rail eastward, which the slippery marble slabs have long made desirable. It was paid for partly through the working party and partly by private gift.

Sunday School prizes. Feb 1898

The children who have gained most marks in the Sunday School for regular attendance, good conduct and lessons well said, and will receive prizes, are as follows:- Girls:- May Baker, Beatrice Randall, Jessie Randall, Lily Goddard, Anna Hearn, Annie Flint, Agnes Taylor, Caroline Hunt, Bertha Chapman, Lily Baker, Florence Brown, Annie Woodward, Edith Smith, Annie Rookyard, Rhona Collins, Emily Webb, Bertha Goddard, Ellen Keeble. Boys:- Fred Norman, George Abbott, W Catchpole, Thos Abbott, John Woodward, Gordon Smith, Alan Chapman, Walter Stannard, Mark Abbott, H Brown, H Norman, A Hunt, W Hearn, E Buckle, Bertie Rose.

In 1828 (Davy MS) Wetheringsett was the second wealthiest living in the Deanery at £604 per annum. Redgrave was the richest at £777, and Mendlesham was worth £400. Until some time after the 1939 war there was no pension scheme for older retired clergy. If an incumbent had served at least seven years in a parish he could, on retirement, take a proportion (thought to have been a third) of the income for his pension. The last Wetheringsett Rector known to have availed himself of this was the Rev W H Lillie. Nowadays the whole financial scheme is different.

Rectors

(It should be noted that until 1554 the patronage, or right to present to the living, was in the hands of the See of Ely. When a Rector, during this time, was presented by the King it was due to the voidance of the See of Ely, which usually meant that the Bishop had incurred the severe displeasure of the King, for diplomatic and not clerical reasons, and had been removed from office and/or imprisoned.)

1229 Philip de Eye	The King (Henry III)
1294 (probably not the date of induction).....	Ralph de Hengham..Patron?
1304 Peter de Haverhill	Bishop of Ely
1308 Galfridus de St Edmunds ..	" "
1310 Roger de Wyngefelde	The King
1314 John de Sandal	Bishop of Ely
1318 Thomas de Fransham	" "
1322 Thomas de Stowe (probably not date of induction) ...	The King
1340 Richard de Byfield	Bishop of Ely
1342 John de Thorp	" "
1346 John Aleyn de Stansted ...	" "
1356 John de Swineshead	" "
1369 John de Marcheford	" "

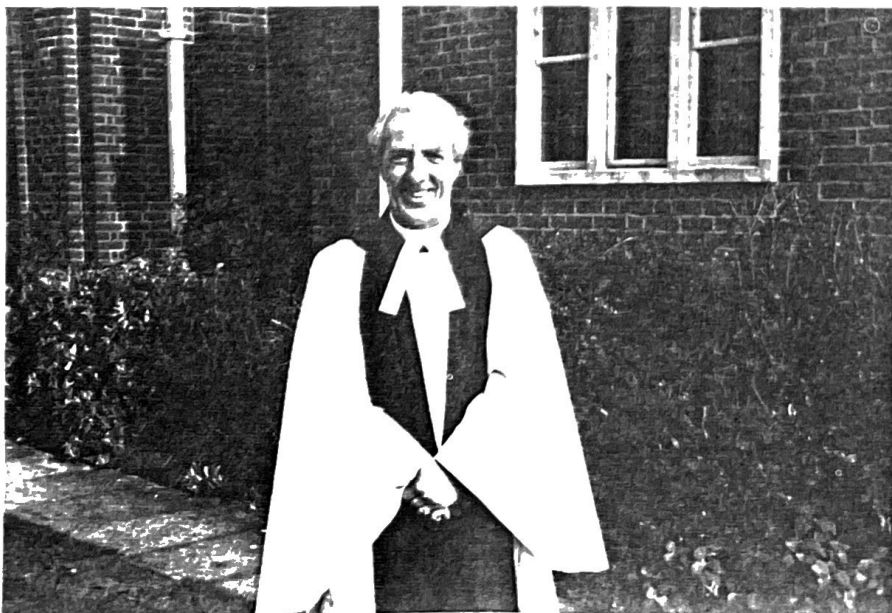
1373	Edward Forrest	The King
1420	John Wade de Topham ,.....	The Bishop of Ely
1431	John Shirborne	" " (buried in the Chancel)
	- this Rector died in 1443.	No name known for 1443-1460 -
1460	William Hysham	The Bishop of Ely
1490	William Robinson	" "
1502	Michael Madoke	" "
1535	Thomas More (removed by Queen Mary)	
1554	William Medow	Queen Mary
1557	John Dale	" "
1559	Thomas More	Queen Elizabeth
1575	Richard Huggard	" "
1590	Richard Hakluyt	Dame Dorothy Stafford (His wife and son are buried in the churchyard.)
1616	William Withers	William Soame
1645	Abraham Chaplin	" " (Buried in the church)
1679	Richard Jaques	Dame Alice Reeve (Buried in the church)
1715	Edgar Gibson	Mary Gibson and Robert Britiffe (Buried in the church)
1745	Jacob Chilton	Edgar Jenney
1748	Henry Close	Simon Bloomfield and Deborah Jenney
1758	Robert Adkin	James Jackson
1774	John Margerum Close	" "
1791	Thomas Methold	Lucy Close
1836	Ambrose Steward	A H Steward
1842	Robert Moore Junior	Robert Moore Senior
1858	John Parkinson Sill	Execs of Robert Moore
1883 - 1888	Vacant (G F W Ellis - not ordained)	
1888	Cecil Fredk Blyth	The Crown, by lapse.
1903	Fredk Robert Smith	Mrs Charlotte Moore
1931	Wm Herring Lillie	Air Marshall Sir Robert Brooke-Popham
1939	Norman Hewlett Cox	" " " " " "
1941	Fredk William Lambert	" " " " " "
1949	William Gerrard Peck	" " " " " "
1957	Fredk Atherton Addison	Commander Philip Brooke-Popham RN
1964	George Malcolm	The Church Society
1976	Vacant	
1977	Paul Plumley	" " "
1980	Vacant	
1981	Aubrey Ridge	" " "

Rectors.

Rev. Frederick Atherton
Addison.
1957 - 1964.



Rev. George
Malcolm.
1964 - 1976.



Rev. Aubrey
Ridge
1981 - .

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1842 Robert Moore Junior	Robert Moore Senior
1858 John Parkinson Sill	Execs of Robert Moore
1883 - 1888 Vacant (G F W Ellis - not ordained)	
1888 Cecil Fredk Blyth	The Crown, by lapse.
1903 Fredk Robert Smith	Mrs Charlotte Moore
1931 Wm Herring Lillie	Air Marshall Sir Robert Brooke-Popham
1939 Norman Hewlett Cox	" " " " " "
1941 Fredk William Lambert	" " " " " "
1949 William Gerrard Peck	" " " " " "
1957 Fredk Atherton Addison	Commander Philip Brooke-Popham RN
1964 George Malcolm	The Church Society
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1977 Paul Plumley	" " "
1980 Vacant	
1981 Aubrey Ridge	" " "

Two names should receive further mention, one for reasons given later which made the parish notorious, and the other because members of the family still have a connection with the village, and some confusion has arisen over both the name and the residence.

In 1842 the Rev Robert Moore became Rector of Wetheringsett, and in 1843 he built himself a new rectory, which has been described in another chapter, and which is now the Wetheringsett Manor Hotel. In the 1851 Census his household was:

Robert Moore	aged 39.	Rector.	Born	Hunton, Kent.
Charlotte Moore	aged 37.	(Wife)	"	Cheddar, Somerset
Dulcibella Letitia	" 11.	(dtr)	"	Hunton, Kent
Francis John	" 7.	(son)	"	Wetheringsett
Elizabeth Nunn	" 22	Visitor, governess.	Born	Shalford St Mary
James Palmer	" 28	Head servant.	"	Millenhall, Norfolk
Charles Chapman	" 40	Stable servant	"	Bawdescock, Norfolk
Emma Hawkes	" 27	House	"	Egham, Surrey
Ann Kemp	" 25	"	"	Rickingham, Suffolk
Sarah Clark	" 21	"	"	Wetheringsett
Eliza Flint	" 17	"	"	Wetheringsett

From tales handed down in the parish the Moores would have been considered very strict by the standards of our day, although not by the standards of their own time. A coachman working for the family missed one of the Sunday services, and for this was suspended from work for a fortnight. Mrs Moore disapproved of frivolity in dress of 'the lower classes', and would cut off the bows on the bonnets of the women. Nevertheless both she and her daughter voluntarily attended the school, when it was built, and gave lessons in sewing to the pupils.

The Rector died in 1857, a year after his son Francis John, and left his large estate, consisting of more than half Wetheringsett and some of Brockford, to his widow Charlotte and his remaining children, Dulcibella Letitia and Robert Eden Moore. The son died in 1861, under age, and his land passed to his sister. Mrs Charlotte Moore died in 1891.

Dulcibella Letitia Moore married Henry Brooke in 1863. He died in 1892, I am told from a broken neck caused by a fall down steps at the Manor. (This had ceased being the Rectory after the death of the Rev Robert Moore, and the present Rectory once more reverted to its original use.) His widow died 1902, and appears to have left a daughter and a son, the latter adding Popham to his surname because, it is said, of the wishes of a godmother. The Brooke-Pophams have had illustrious names in the Services, and we are proud that they still have a link with the village in that the presentation of alternate Rectors is still in their hands.

1883 - 1888. The vacancy mentioned here was caused by our notorious 'Rector', G F W Ellis, who was the cause of our being probably the only village in England to have a special Act of Parliament passed solely on its behalf, and may have given J B Priestley the idea for his hilarious comedy "When We Are Married".

Matters were not so hilarious at the time, and several worried couples consulted Ellis's successor, Mr Blyth, who assured them that, although their marriages had not been valid at the time, they had been made so

by the Act of Parliament which he quoted in his parish letter. He said that copies could be bought, price ½d:

"Act of Parliament dated August 13th 1888."

"Whereas George Frederick William Ellis forged certain letters of Orders, and falsely pretended himself to be in Holy Orders, and solemnised divers marriages according to the rites of the Church of England, and has been convicted of felony accordingly: and whereas doubts have been entertained as to the validity of the marriages so solemnised, and it is expedient to remove these doubts: Be it therefore enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in the present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows; All marriages solemnised before the passing of this Act according to the rites of the Church of England, by the said George Frederick William Ellis, between persons believing him to have been truly ordained, shall be as valid as if the same had been solemnised by a duly ordained clergyman of the Church of England. This Act may be cited as the Marriages Validation Act 1888."

Mrs Margaret Pinder writes:

"My grandparents Alfred Flint and Elizabeth Thrower were married by him in Jan 1888. I remember my Mother and Aunt Hilda talking about an Act of Parliament brought in to make it legal."

The late Kate Baker was christened by Ellis, and always said she was afraid she had not been 'properly done'. He was, it is said, much liked, and visited the village after his release from prison, and was welcomed here by many people.

Bells and Bell Ringers

All Saints Church, Wetheringsett has a peal of five bells, and they are unique, as far as is known, in that the peal goes anticlockwise.

Inscriptions

- Treble. John Darbie made me 1660. (weighs 5 cwt)
2. John Draper made me 1636. (weighs about 8 cwt)
3. G Mears and Co Founders London 1864. (weighs about 12 cwt)
4. Wm Grimwade and John Cobbald Churchwardens.
Wm Dobson Founder 1824. (weighs about 15 cwt)
- Tenor. Jas Keene, Thos Edwards. 1765.
Lester and Pack of London fecit. (weighs about 19 cwt)

All the stocks and wheels were made by G Day of Eye in 1869. In 1824 the parish paid £30 18s 6d for a new cast bell (No 4), which is little more than the cost of a rope today.

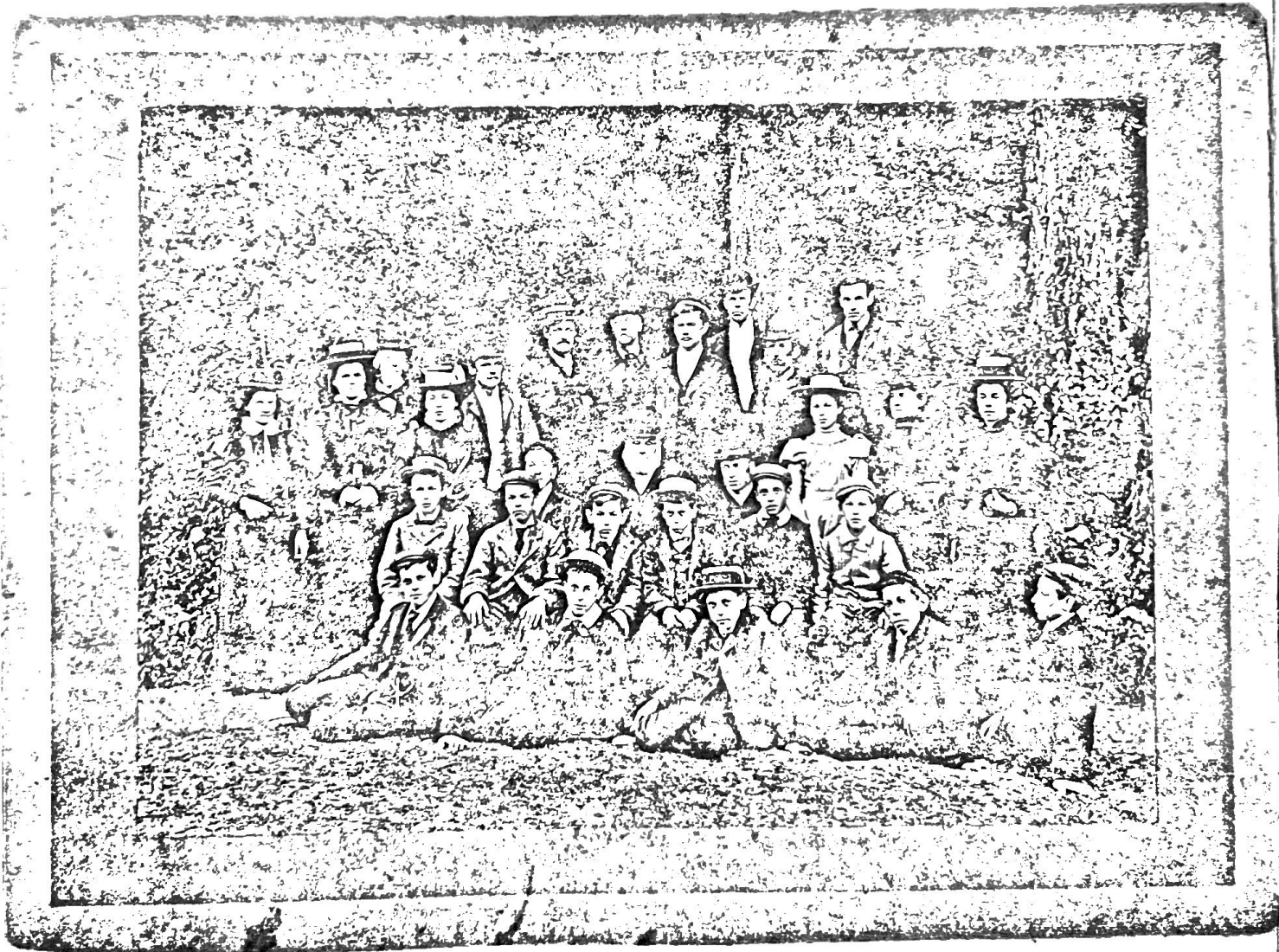
From the 18th century accounts it seems that the bells were then only rung regularly twice a year, on November 5th (by law), and in May, and also on days of national rejoicing. They continued to be rung throughout the years, but it has been difficult to find much about them. Two occasions are mentioned in the early parish magazines:

Choir



Sept 25th
1938

Choir ↓ - About 1900, Rev C.F. Blyth on right of bearded man.



- 1897 June 22 Tuesday. Observed as a holiday to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. "During the morning the bells rang merry peals."
- 1901 At the Memorial Service to Queen Victoria, held on the day of her funeral. "The ringing of the bells in 'dumb peal' had a very solemn and touching effect."

From the scrap book of the late Miss Kate Baker. Date ?1909;

"On Wednesday last week at All Saints Church Wetheringsett, 720 changes of Grandsire were rung by the following: Treble, Garnham Blaxcell; 2nd, Thomas Clarke; 3rd, Walter Rose; 4th, Charles Tyler; tenor, James Betts (conductor). The peal was rung to commemorate an old Lady Day charity, which originally provided for a dinner to twenty aged inhabitants, to take place at the foot of the church tower, during which the ringers should ring various peals. At present gifts of money take the place of the dinner."

Mr William Norman (died in 1960) was one of the last of the bell ringers until they were rung again in the 1950s, when Mr Ernest Wallis began to train a team who still continue to ring for weddings and on festive occasions. The only village residents who are still regular members of the team are Mrs Olive Bunn, Mr Bill Smith, and Mr Wallis, who conducts and organises.

There is an account in the Hartismere Magazine for 1895 when Tom Clarke had a team of handbell ringers and rang at a concert. These bells are no longer in the village. Tom was also a church bell ringer.

The school also had a team of handbell ringers in the 1960s but the owner from another village claimed the bells, and the school no longer rings.

Chapels

By no means all the members of the parish are members of the Church of England. The independence of thought shown here has always extended to religious matters, and an expert tells me that Wetheringsett and Mendlesham were many years ahead of the rest of Suffolk in showing a desire for the Reformation. In the time of Queen Mary a Wetheringsett woman was hounded from the village (by the magistrates, not the inhabitants) for not going to Mass. In 1562 (Queen Elizabeth) there is a note in the Pipe Rolls that some Wetheringsett tenants were fined ten pence for not coming to church. Some of the congregation disagreed so violently with the preaching of the Rev William Withers, who was Rector here from 1616 to 1645, that "he was also violently pulled out of his pulpit by some of the rascally people of his parish who had been daily fed at his table ... He was a good divine, much a gentleman, and a person of great hospitality." (Davy M S)

In 1672 an Act was passed giving (temporary) religious toleration, and the Victoria County History says that licenses for chapels of unknown denomination were applied for by Brockford and Wetheringsett. This Act was rescinded in 1675.

By degrees religious toleration became extended and permanent, but all places of worship had to be licensed, and this was not always done in our village. A contemporary writer said that there was a chapel-of-ease at Brockford in 1835, but the site is not known. In 1841 there was a chapel at Pitman's Corner, next to the present last house in the lane leading from the road. It was owned by William Harber and occupied by John Harber, but it was demolished before this century. Later meetings took place at a house nearby, now occupied by Mr and Mrs Collins, and this was definitely unlicensed, for the congregation often had to scatter when it was feared that there might be a repetition of the incident told in the official history of Stoke Ash Baptist Chapel:

"Just before the Church came into existence (1805) Mr Charles Farmery, the Minister of the Mother Church of Diss, was fined £20 for preaching in a cottage in neighbouring Wetheringsett, as was also the cottage owner, whilst each hearer was fined 5 shillings."

In those days Wetheringsett farm labourers resident with their masters got £9 a year in wages. It is now known how much the married and non-resident labourers got, but the fines must have been as crippling as they were in Elizabeth's day.

From 1850 to 1896 Mr Charles Hill was Minister to Stoke Ash Chapel, and lived at Yew Tree Farm, Brockford, which was the Manse for the Chapel until a new Manse was built sometime after 1907.

Which year Mr Lingwood started his chapel in a barn at Shrublands Farm is not known, but he began to farm here in 1855, and his chapel was certainly licensed since it was recognised by the Rector, Mr Blyth, who said at the thanksgiving service for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee:

"It gives me great pleasure to be able to record that on the Sunday evening our worthy neighbour, Mr Thos Lingwood, closed his place of worship, and, with his congregation, attended the service in the Church, thus promoting as far as lay in his power the union of all parishioners in one act of worship and thanksgiving, which I greatly desired on this occasion."

The story of Mr Lingwood's efforts, culminating in the building of the present Gospel Hall at Brockford Green, was written for us by Mr H A Stannard just before his death.

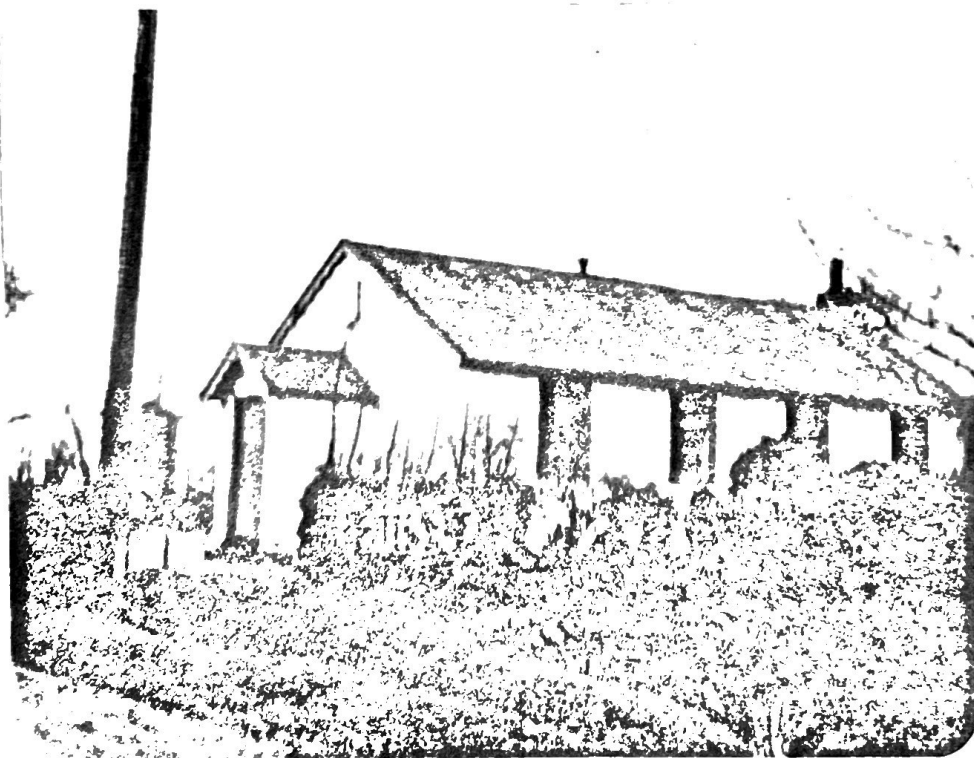
The Brockford Gospel Hall

H A Stannard.

At the turn of the century Mr Thomas Lingwood owned and farmed Shrubland Farm at Brockford Green and being an Evangelical Christian, he was a lover of God's Word and the Gospel message. In consequence he renovated and equipped one of the 'bays' in his barn and opened it on Sunday afternoons for an home Gospel service. Visiting speakers were often present and an interest was created and quite a number of local dwellers attended. The instigator was by now aged but anxious that the work for the Lord should continue after his decease. Therefore he envisaged and ultimately built on his own surrounding property the Hall that still bears witness to Saving Grace and keeping power of the One to whose Name and service it was and is committed. A Mendlesham builder did the erection about 1907/8 at a cost of £120. It was of



The interior of the Church, 1890.
The organist had his back to the window



The Gospel Hall
Brockford.

corrugated iron outside, but very nicely wood-lined inside. The seating and platform were transferred from the barn and are still in regular use. As a result of an intense Gospel Mission in 1910 some five of us young men were converted, and by reason of this the Work was strengthened. Mr Lingwood was called home about 1914/15. His resting place is in the Cemetery at Wetheringsett. It's true "God calls away his worker but carries on His work." So over seven decades the testimony has been maintained, i e the Lord's Table on Sunday morning at 11 o'clock and Sunday School at 1.30 p m, and Gospel Meeting at 2.00 p m and mid-week prayer meetings and Bible Readings and often special gatherings.

Having been associated with the believers there for over half a century, acting as Correspondent for most of the time and securing Speakers as the weeks went by, I entertain many precious memories. The Sunday Schools of the years perhaps 1920-60 were most encouraging, for a long period we had 50 children from Brockford, Mendlesham and Wetheringsett - walking one and two miles and more each week even through Harvest holidays.

As all individual Gospel Halls (many in East Anglia) we are self-supporting and self-propagating. "The silver and the gold are mine, saith the Lord, and the cattle upon a thousand hills".