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**ABBAY HILL CHURCH,
KENILWORTH.**

The Story of Two Centuries

1720 - 1920.

By H. C. BROOKES.

1920 :
PARBURY BROS., GROVE STREET, COVENTRY.

*The whole Proceeds of the Sale of
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_____ Church, Kenilworth _____*

HISTORY

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FOREWORDS.

The Warwickshire Congregational Year Book gives the year 1720 as that in which Abbey Hill Church was formed, but we do not find that any Church designated " Congregational " or " Independent " existed in Kenilworth at that date. There were Independents here at that time, but that name *was not* attached until long after the Church had established itself on Abbey Hill. Yet the present Church can rightly claim to be the successor of the faithful few who met in a Nonconformist Meeting House early in the eighteenth century. " Independents," now usually known as " Congregationalists," was the term employed " to designate a class of Christians whose distinguishing tenet consisted in maintaining the independency of their Church government and discipline; or that each congregation meeting in one place is a complete Church in itself, having sufficient power to perform everything relating to its own concerns, without being subject. or accountable to any other ecclesiastical assembly " (Jones' " Dictionary of Religious Opinions"). John Robinson, the founder of the Independents in 1616, and his friends always contended " that every separate congregation of Christians, with its pastor and deacons, is a Church independent of all legislation but that of Christ," and all their Churches claimed the right of choosing their own pastors and deacons. The present Abbey Hill Congregational Church is the successor of the body which throughout two hundred years has upheld those Congregational ...

principles. The following was boldly printed in the Abbey Hill Congregational Chapel Handbook for 1884: " Congregationalists regard the Church as a brotherhood of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, uniting for the purposes of Christian worship and Christian work, and they hold the right of every individual Church to administer its own affairs, subject only to the authority of Christ." Admittedly the original Nonconformist Church at Kenilworth was termed Presbyterian, and we need not here discuss the question of whether that term described the Scotch or English section—the latter being in all but name the same as Independents. The claim to the continuity of this Church is strengthened by the fact that Abbey Hill has succeeded to the legacy of Abraham Arlidge, who on the 24th July, 1716, made his will, specifying "that £8 per year be paid to the minister of the Presbyterian Meeting at Kenilworth; £1 per year be given to the poor of that chapel; and the boys and girls so relieved were to be taught to read and write and to be catechised in the Assembly's Catechism." This is some evidence that the Church was in existence in Kenilworth before 1720. The Church was founded in troublous times, its early history was chequered, there were many disputations in the old Meeting House, which is said to have been situate on Rosemary Hill, and there were divisions, but, throughout, there was a sturdy body of Nonconformists who adhered to their belief in the Trinity, and after many changes and vicissitudes it was that body which eventually assembled in the Old Barn on Abbey Hill in 1787, from which date the story is well authenticated.

CHAPTER I. -
IN THE OLD MEETING HOUSE.

ARLIDGE'S CHARITY—EARLY PASTORS—A NOTABLE
ORDINATION—THE FIRST REMOVAL.

Throughout this history that of the Church and Arlidge's Charity are interwoven—both Church and Charity commencing in 1720. Abraham Arlidge was a carpenter, born in Kenilworth, who went to London and was successful there in making money. The money he left for education comes from the rentals of a farm at Thorpe-le-Vale, Ludford, near Market Rasen, Lincolnshire, of about 400 acres. At one time the day schools_ provided for by the charity had 120 children, half boys and-half girls, who had a special uniform. The first minister of the Meeting House of which we have mention- was Mr. Turton, the son of Mr. W. Turton, one of the ejected clergy, Mr. Turton was at Kenilworth when the first pastor Of V'car Lane Church, Coventry, was ordained here in 1725, the record being " Thursday, July 8th. This day Mr Patrick Simson was solemnly set apart to the work of the ministry and the pastoral office at Kenilworth." Mr. Simson continued to be a faithful minister and pastor at Coventry for the lengthy period of 48 years. It is also worthy of note that Mr. Simson's first assistant was a Kenilworth man (the Rev. Richard Alliot), who died at the early age of 30, after labouring with diligence, fidelity and success at Coventry for nine years. Three of this Mr. Alliot's sons were also in the ministry. One of these, the Rev. Richard Alliot, was pastor at Stratford-on-Avon. Another Kenilworth native (the Rev. David W. Aston) had his first pastorate at Stratford, and subsequently was at Buckingham for 47 years. In " Independency in Warwickshire," a Mr. Phillips is mentioned as engaged as minister to Kenilworth for a year from Midsummer, 1735, and respecting him a Warwick minister wrote : " I wish he may do as much good as his predecessor has done hurt, who is now working out his own ruin as fast as he can." Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Rev. Josiah Corrie was the minister. Then three neighbouring ministers—Mr. Moody, of Warwick, Mr. Burder and Mr. Evans, of Coventry—resolved to make some effort to supply the place with the ministrations of the Word of Life. It was through their efforts that an old barn situate at Abbey Hill was obtained and fitted up as a place for public worship.

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD BARN.

DISTURBANCES-PERSECUTION OF NONCONFORMISTS-CHANGES
—THE CHURCH OF 1792—THE REV. JOSIAH CORRIE-MRS. LUNT.

The opening of the Old Barn in June, 1787, was one of the great events in the Church's history. The "seraphic Pearce," a Baptist minister from Birmingham, preached to a great crowd from Acts viii., 5... Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them"; and on the following Sunday Mr. Burder, of Coventry, preached from the connected words, "And there was great joy in that city." It was a beautiful site on the hill, with fields all round, but these early Nonconformists had no easy time. The whole village is said to have been greatly excited and filled with hatred against them. Mr. Burder states that at Kenilworth, though the place was registered according to law, tumults frequently took place, and among many methods taken to disturb the worship and annoy the people, a wasps' nest was procured and laid in the passage leading to the meeting. "Often were the ministers insulted while they were preaching. Some of the disturbers were taken before the magistrates and imprisoned. Frequently was the door fastened outside to prevent the congregation from separating, tradesmen lost their customers, servants their employment, and other petty acts of annoyance and persecution were adopted to hinder the progress of the Word of God. In a few years, however, this passed away." ("Independency in Warwickshire"). Mr. Moody had founded a small Church here in 1792, supplied by neighbouring ministers.

Little is now known of the Rev. Josiah Corrie, who must have been the central figure in Kenilworth Nonconformity in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and was probably the pastor up to the time of the small Church founded by Mr. Moody. An obituary notice in the "Monthly Magazine;" for 1800 reads: "June 1st, at Kenilworth, aged 75, the Rev. Josiah Corrie, who had been 45 years pastor of the congregation of Protestant Dissenters there." This period of service, the longest in the record of Abbey Hill Church, covers the time when the congregation assembled in the old Meeting House and their removal to the Old Barn. The probabilities are that Mr. Cowrie came to Kenilworth as a young man about ...

the year 1747. It is uncertain whether he followed the fortunes of those who went to the Old Barn, or whether he remained at the old Meeting House. He may have been the first minister in the Old Barn, because the congregation of Protestant Dissenters at that time included Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists and Unitarians. All found a sanctuary in the Old Barn until, as a local minister has recorded, " a dispersion came early in the nineteenth century, and each section of the old community banded together for the purpose of propagating their own particular tenets and enjoying the fellowship and concord which is so essential to peace and happiness."

The Rev. Joel Maurice came from Stretton-under-Fosse, where he had been pastor for 27 years, in 1797, but he did not stay in Kenilworth long, removing to West Bromwich, where he died. With no settled pastor there was a partial return of the congregation to the Old Meeting. In 1804 the Rev. Thomas Burkitt came from Bedford, resigning in 1816. Mr. Burkitt appears to have been an excellent man, and frequently took part in meetings and services in Coventry and Warwick, but it is said his preaching was " too evangelical " for some of his hearers. The relapse at the Old Meeting, or at least of the ministry, first into Arianism and then into Unitarianism, occasioned the return of some to the place of worship on Abbey Hill, which for a short season they occupied in conjunction with a few members of the Baptist denomination. This connection did not long continue, and in a few years, during which the Independents passed through various changes, and at one time assembled for worship in a room at the lower part of the town, encouraged by an excellent lady—Mrs. Lunt—and by the neighbouring ministers, a site of ground near to the old barn was procured, on which to erect a chapel.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST CHAPEL.

A GREAT STEP - REV. JOHN BUTTON'S PASTORATE -
A TIME OF PEACE AND PROGRESS.

From meeting in an old barn to meeting in a properly constructed chapel was a great step. The foundation stone of this chapel (now used as the schoolroom) was laid by the Rev. John Sibree, of Coventry, on the 25th of November, 1828. On the 14th July, 1829, the chapel was publicly opened, sermons being preached by Messrs. Binks and Thongar, of Birmingham, and Dr. Ross, of Kidderminster. The devotional exercises were conducted by Messrs. Bowton, Percy, Coles, Franklin, Dix, Jerard, and Sibree. This chapel had a gallery at the back, and provided sitting accommodation for about 300 persons.

Mr. Henry Edwards, from Highbury College, commenced his pastorate here on the Sunday following the opening of the new place of worship, but removed to Thetford, Norfolk, in the ensuing year, 1830. Mr. David Blow, of Matlock, and late student at Highbury College, accepted the pastorate, and was ordained on the 6th of April, 1831, but three years later he removed to Brecon. The Rev. J. O. West, from Sutton Valence, Kent, succeeded in 1833, and after four years in Kenilworth he removed to London.

A more settled pastorate ensued, for in 1838 came the Rev. John Button, who had previously been ordained at Whitchurch in Shropshire. "A History of Congregationalism in Shropshire" says that Mr. Button went there in 1834, and "in those days suspension and excommunication were frequent." No man lived to be connected with Nonconformity in Kenilworth more than Mr. Button, who was at one period the Secretary of the County Union. Peace and progress were enjoyed during his pastorate, much improvement was effected in the arrangements of the endowed school, and it was greatly owing to the exertions of Mr. Button and his friends that funds were raised for the erection of the new chapel. He took the fullest interest in everything connected with the town, gaining the respect of all. Among other meetings it is said that for thirty years he was never absent from the annual parish dinner. He was ever willing to promote any good undertaking by ready help, and by useful counsel or advice, and his fund of witty anecdotes, his ...

lively conversation and extensive knowledge made him a welcome guest at the board of some of the best families. It was a great misfortune for Mr. Button to lose his wife ten years after coming to Kenilworth, but he continued the pastorate until 1876. Though he then "retired," he retained deep interest in Abbey Hill Church and Sunday Schools up to the last. Some of his leisure he devoted to music, of which he was very fond.

Mr. Button passed away, somewhat suddenly, on Sunday afternoon, February 22nd, 1885, his son (Mr. J. C. Button, solicitor, of London) arriving in time to cheer his last hours. It was, by request, a quiet funeral when the old pastor was laid to rest in the same grave as his wife, in the Parish Churchyard, the Vicar of Kenilworth (the Rev. A. J. Binnie) officiating. A tablet on the walls of Abbey Hill Church records : " In loving memory of the Rev. John Button, for 38 years Pastor of the Independent Church in Kenilworth, and Head Master of the Arlidge Charity School. He was a faithful minister, an accomplished teacher, a good citizen, a firm and genial friend. Born at Ely, October 19th, 1809. Died at Kenilworth, February 22nd, 1885. This tablet is erected by members of the congregation and other friends and admirers." This tablet was the work of Mr. Thomas Cotterill, of Park Road, and was fixed in position in 1887. The cost (£14 7s 0d.) was raised by subscription.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL----" ROD " MONEY-BEER AT TEACHERS' SOCIALS-MR. JOHN WEBB.

It does not appear that any interest was taken in Sunday School work previous to Mr. Button's time, but, though early Church books are missing, it is fortunate that there is a good record of the Sunday School at Abbey Hill from October 25th, 1843. On that date rules were drawn up, and it was laid down "that the teachers be especially careful to instruct the children by example as well as by precept." At the start no children were admitted under the age of five. Mr. John Webb was the Superintendent, and amongst the first teachers were Joseph Hancox, Richard Boddington, Edmund Potter, David Sharp, Joseph Clarke, Charles Cotton, George Pettipher, Edward Everton, George Harris, Elizabeth Russell, Mary Rice, Elizabeth Weston, Mary Baker, M. Overton, Harriet Mercy, Christiana Eaglestone, Elizabeth Fellows, and Elizabeth Draper. Mr. Webb resigned in March, 1870, when he was presented with an easy chair and ...

book, but he occasionally went back again, and he held office in the Church for many years, resigning the Treasurership on December 23rd, 1844, "on account of age." That gives a worthy record of over forty years' service.

A great amount of enthusiasm was thrown into this school work. Teachers were fined for absence or being late, the scholars were rewarded for attending, and at one special meeting in 1844 five pence was expended for "rods," etc. Generally the fines were put into the missionary box, but not always given to missions. The "rod money" referred to came out of the fines; in 1848 3s. 11d. of it was given towards the Repairs Fund. The majority of the early minutes record the fixing of next meeting and arranging teas and socials, to which friends were invited. In 1847 there were 142 children present at a school treat, and before dispersing each child was presented with a piece of plum cake wrapped up in a new pocket handkerchief. There were no "new lights" at these socials, for most of the accounts included payments for "candles"; also, so exact was the keeping of accounts, that one bill included "Saunders, for carrying water, 1d.," and on that occasion (October 6th, 1861), we find mention of "one aerated loaf, 3½d." There were careful auditors in 1867. Against the item of 2s. for "beverages" someone had pencilled "What?" The writer must have been a suspicious soul, or one who had looked up the old minutes, for there it is clearly shown that all the teachers' meetings were not teetotal affairs. We find "Beer, etc., 1s. 11d.; wine, 2s. 4d. (1853); "porter, etc., is 1s. 7½d. (1855); and here are the items of expenditure at a teachers' tea meeting in December, 1858:—"Cheese and beer, 2s. 3d.; pudding and cake, 5s. 10d.; beef and ham, 7s. 6d.; bread and butter, 2s. 11d.; tea, sugar and cream, 3s. 2d."

CHAPTER V.

A PEACE CELEBRATION --CANVASSING FOR SCHOLARS--INTERESTING ITEMS--MR. *BUTTON* AND THE BLACKTHORN.

Abbey Hill children had a Peace celebration on May 29th, 1856, to celebrate the conclusion of the Crimean War. "Teachers and scholars assembled at 2 o'clock, joined the Church of England Schools, and walked in procession through the village, after which they separated to take tea. After tea they were again assembled in a field kindly permitted by Mr. Congreve, the occupier, and amused themselves at games and play until 8 o'clock; after, they were again supplied with a piece of plum cake, an orange, a book, and some teetotal ...

drink called crystal, presented by Miss Ounsel; then they sang the Doxology and were dismissed." Each child and teacher had a book with a label affixed: "In commemoration of peace, by Abbey Hill, Kenilworth." The cost of the celebration was £4 3s. 5d., raised by subscription.

On a number of occasions the village was canvassed for children for the school. As a result of one of these canvasses it was reported on June 9th, 1856, that "the people living in Albion Row and Washbrook have but little self-respect, and disregard the observance of the Sabbath." In the district of Albion Row, Mill End, Washbrook, and Gravel Pits, there were then 120 inhabitants. Amongst other items we find that on August 2nd, 1860, the teachers gave the profit of their treat (4s. 7d.) " towards gas fitting in the chapel." On Easter Monday (April 6th), 1863, the school celebrated the marriage of the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII.). In August, 1866, the teachers had their annual excursion to Aston, going by the 11 o'clock train. On the 26th September, 1867, 118 children of the day and Sunday schools were taken to the Midland Counties' Exhibition at Coventry.

The two oldest surviving scholars of the Day and Sunday Schools are Mr. J. Butcher (who has always been a useful worker for the Church) and Mrs. Makepeace. Both were in the party of children taken to see the exhibition at Coventry.

There are still people in Kenilworth who remember Mr. Button. In his latter days he sometimes took duty at the Arlidge School when there was no resident master. One of his old scholars says Mr. Button was a nice man, well respected and beloved but strict. There were fields behind the boys' and girls' schools then, and our informant recalls one occasion when 'sixteen of the boys followed the hounds to the station instead of staying in school. It was 3 o'clock when they returned, and Mr. Button was awaiting them—with a blackthorn, " Where have you been?" he asked. "' With the hounds, sir," was the reply. " I will give you hounds," he answered. And he did. Each of the sixteen felt the blackthorn, the thrashing being regulated according-to the *age* of the boy.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRESENT CHAPEL.

PASTOR AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS—HOUSE SHORTAGE—THE REV.
J. HARDWICK SMITH—THE REV. JOHN NAYLOR—TEMPORARY
SUPPLIES.

The foundation stone of the present chapel was laid by, Mr. Alfred Keep, of Edgbaston, on the 6th August, 1872, and on Monday, June 9th, 1873, the opening services were held, when the sermon was preached by the Rev. A. Raleigh, D.D., of London. The seating accommodation in the new chapel is for nearly 500.

Soon afterwards the Sunday School fell on bad days. The Rev. Frederick Stephens (Secretary of the County Union), of Birmingham, in 1877, accepted the pastorate, to commence on April 8th, " and after that, as soon as I conveniently can, I shall come to reside in your neighbourhood," he wrote. But on May 14th of the same year Mr. Stephens resigned. Unfortunately during this period the Church and the Sunday School had a grievous dispute upon the question of the pastor's position over the school. Neither would give way, the result being that all the teachers resigned and the school was closed. Mr. Stephens declined to withdraw his resignation, though a memorial was presented to him signed by one hundred members of the Church and congregation. Mr. Stephens stated that the school question was not the only one which caused him to resign ; there were difficulties in connection with the governorship of the Arlidge Charities, and also " he had not been able to secure a house either in Kenilworth or Milverton to which he could bring his family, and he did not see any prospect of obtaining a house unless he had one built, and that would involve a delay of many months." House shortage in Kenilworth is no new trouble. In September two deacons resigned, and a Committee of Management was appointed to hold office until such time as a pastor could be settled over the congregation. This Committee comprised Messrs. Bailee, Chadwick, Evans, Gregory (Treasurer), Page, and Skutt (Secretary).

After the resignation of Mr. Stephens there were serious consultations with respect to filling the vacant pastorate, and at the request of the Church and congregation the Rev. E. H. Delf, of Coventry, came and presided over the meetings. They were fortunately led to invite the Rev. J. Hardwick Smith, B.A. The call was accepted, and Mr. Smith commenced what proved a happy ministry on Sunday, November 25th, 1877. The new pastor found the Church with a debt ...

of £400 still standing on the Building Fund, but with vigour he set to work to remove this, and was so successful that the debt soon disappeared. Amongst the business done during this period was the following : "June 23rd, 1880. The office of Chapel Keeper and Sexton being vacant, it was resolved that Mr. Checkley have the office subject to agreement." This is the only instance where mention is made of .a "sexton," and one wonders what were his duties in connection with a Church which has not, and apparently never had, a burial ground attached to it. [It has been suggested that the present chapel is erected over what was a burial ground, but there is no evidence to support this theory.] The pastorate was again vacant in the latter end of 1880, when a special effort was made to get back into fellowship those members who had left during the unpleasant period some three years previously.

The Rev. John Naylor, of Manchester, a returned missionary from China, succeeded Mr. Smith, commencing his pastorate on December 5th, 1880. At that time there were 69 Church members and 53 subscribers for 107 sittings. The recognition services of the new minister were held, under the presidency of Mr. Delf, on January 25th, 1881, other neighbouring ministers also being present. Mr. Naylor proved an able man, of true Christian principles, and drew a good congregation. A two days' sale of work in September, 1888, which was opened by the Mayor of Leamington, realised £37 19s. 2d. Mr. Naylor announced on September 5th, 1889, that he had received and accepted a cordial invitation to the pastorate of the Congregational Church at St. Austell, and his ministry would close at the end of that month. In accepting the resignation the Church Committee recorded "their deep sense of the obligation conferred on the Church and congregation by Mr. Naylor's ministry and pastoral care during the last nine years, and their sincere hope that the blessing of God may crown his efforts here, and be with him in his new sphere of labour."

There was another period of supplies, never a healthy time for a Church, and at length it was felt some definite steps should be taken to fill the vacant pastorate. Accordingly the advice of Dr. Fairbairn, of Oxford, was sought, and the Rev. D. Basil Martin, M.A., and other students from Mansfield, took temporary charge until the end of 1890. Mr. Basil Martin had recently, resigned Hawley Road Church, Kentish Town, London, to take a two years' course of reading at Mansfield College. For three months Mr. Basil Martin took charge of Abbey Hill Church, commencing June 29th, 1890. Other supplies followed, but there was no choice ...

made during that year. The statement of accounts for the year ending 31st December, 1890, shows that the weekly offerings totalled £53 13s. 5d., and quarterly subscriptions £6 10s. 0d.; but the finances were satisfactory, for the balance in hand had increased from £4 9s. 0d. to £22 10s. 10d.

CHAPTER VII.

ORDINATION OF THE REV. GEORGE FIELD_ MEETINGS AT BURTON GREEN—ERECTION OF THE CHOIR GALLERY.

At the beginning of 1891 the Church approached Dr. Paton, of Nottingham Congregational Institute, with the view to securing a student whom they might eventually invite to the pastorate. Professor Bumby, then Acting Principal, supplied the pulpit for a Sunday or two, and on February 22nd, Mr. George Field, a senior student, supplied the Church as a candidate for the pastorate, repeating his visit on March 15th and April 5th. It was with some trepidation and shaking of heads that a special Church meeting, held on April 23rd, gave the call to Mr. Field. He had always preached with acceptance to them, but—he was young, and there "were some doubts regarding his age and experience." Yet there must have been something charming in the young student, for he was given a unanimous call. He commenced his work at Abbey Hill on the 20th of July, 1891, and there was never any reason for the Church to question the wisdom of the choice they then made. " I have deep interest in Kenilworth, and specially in Abbey Hill, it was the Church of my ' first love,' " writes Mr. Field from Throop. A most cordial and enthusiastic welcome was accorded Mr. Field, and on December 2nd his ordination to the Christian ministry was publicly held. Three solemn and impressive services were well attended by a large number of the townspeople, the ministers taking part in the devotional exercises including the Revs. J. Sillicks (Leamington), Frederick Stephens (Birmingham), H. E. Bottomley (Coventry), T. B. Sainbury, B.A. (Duxford, Cambridge), Mr. Field's old pastor, and the Rev. J. A. Mitchell, B.A. (Lecturer on Church History at Nottingham, and afterwards Secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales), also Mr. Richard Skutt, the able and esteemed Church Secretary.

In the October of 1893 Mr. Field married Miss Miriam Custerson, of Whittlesford, Cambridge, and both were heartily welcomed to a tea on the 14th November, when they ...

were presented with a purse of ⁶³⁰ as a wedding gift. The following year the Church considered the question of erecting a minister's house, but the project did not materialise, other structural alterations being considered at the same time. It was stated that a minister's house would require probably not less than £350. We wonder what the estimate would be in 1920!

During the years that followed Mr. Field's ordination a quiet, steady work was accomplished. Fortnightly meetings were commenced at Burton Green, and were continued until he resigned the pastorate. In May of 1894 it was resolved to erect the present beautiful choir gallery at the southern end of the chapel, at an estimated cost of £200, in addition £50 for removal and reconstruction of the organ, but not to commence the work until half the estimated cost was in hand. Plans were accordingly prepared by Messrs. Steane, of Coventry (the original architects of the chapel), and in September of 1894 a successful bazaar was opened by Lord Leigh, of Stoneleigh Abbey, and soon the requisite amount was in hand. The work of building was entrusted to Messrs. Smith and Sons, of Kenilworth. The re-opening services were held on August 8th, 1895, conducted by the Rev. W. J. Woods, B.A. of London. A service of praise was carried out by the choir of Spencer Street Chapel, Leamington, under the presidency of the pastor. At the tea 140 sat down. The proceeds amounted to £20.

CHAPTER VIII.

A HANDSOME CONTRIBUTION-MR. FIELD'S PUBLIC WORK- NEW SCHEME FOR THE CHARITY-A DOUBLE FAREWELL.

The 1896 balance sheet showed on the General Fund that during the year weekly offerings totalled £105 4s. 3d.; quarterly subscriptions, £3 19s. 0d.; the collections for the Sunday School realized £5 15s. 1d., and for the London Missionary Society £13 0s. 1d. A debit balance of £1 16s. 4½ d. was transformed into a balance in hand of £7 1s. 1d. There was a welcome contribution of £100 to the Chapel Improvement Fund from the Trustees of the Holly Walk Congregational Church, Leamington, that cause having been given up. The architect and builders were then paid off in full. There was also a balance of over £40 from a sale of work held in aid of the Chapel Renovation Fund.

Mr. Field's outside work was varied. He was one of the first members of the Urban District Council, of which he was Vice-Chairman; a member of the Board of Guardians ...

for six years ; the representative of the Joint Hospital Board ; and member of the School Attendance Committee. For some years he was the Honorary Secretary to the Science and Arts Classes, numerously attended, and held in the Abbey Hill School buildings. . After the devastating flood that deluged Mill End on the last day of the old century Mr. Field was also appointed Secretary to the local Relief Committee. In the farmhouse at Burton Green, where the fortnightly services were conducted, a gathering of earnest worshippers met with Mr. Field from time to time, and they usually found their way to Abbey Hill for the Sunday services.

It was also during this period of the Church's history .that the Trustees or Governors of Arlidge's Charity, after much' thought and wise leadership by Dr. John Massie, of Mansfield College, Oxford, formulated its new scheme of administration. The School connected with the Charity had been closed since 1890, and the National School had been enlarged. The primary reason for closing was owing to the low rents received from the Lincolnshire farm, constant repairs to the farm building, and the erection of new cottages, but by the year 1901 the finances of the Charity had righted themselves. Although a quarterly dole of 10s. each was paid to several poor members of the Church, and £8 paid annually to the pastor, the Church could not be said to benefit to any considerable extent. Accordingly, in 1901, the new scheme was issued, assigning the available endowment to scholarships tenable at places 'of higher education. and open only to Congregational children belonging (in order of preference) to Kenilworth, the Warwick Union, and the County of Warwick. The first scholars were elected in July, 1902.

Towards the close of 1901 Mr. Field, feeling that a change of pastorate might be beneficial to himself and to the Church at Abbey Hill, he was invited to preach at Throop, near Bournemouth. Two visits, one in October and one in December, resulted in a call to the oversight of that Church. This he accepted in the month of February. Mr. Field preached his farewell sermons on Sunday, March 23rd, 1902, and on the following evening a farewell tea and meeting was arranged, when a public " Good-bye," was extended to Mr. Field and to Mr. Obed Woods. The latter, as one of the deacons of the Church, Superintendent of the Sunday Schools, and one of his faithful allies, had stood by the pastor as a true and kind friend for ten years and a half. Mr. Woods left Kenilworth for India, and Mr. Field left for the South of England, where he remains to this day?

CHAPTER I X.

RECENT PASTORS-THE REV. C. H. STATHAM- THE REV. LLEWELLYN ALLEN-THE REV. W. STUART SCOTT.

The Rev. Charles H. Statham was another pastor who found a happy residence in Kenilworth, and was beloved and respected by all. One still hears the story told of how even the gallery was crowded when his recognition services were held. A fellow student with Mr. George Field, he came to Abbey Hill after having held the pastorate of the Congregational Church at Kirkby Lonsdale, a beautiful Westmorland village. He came here in October, 1902. In 1904 Mr. Statham reported the year had been one of blessing and progress. The services had been well attended, Christian Endeavour and Band of Hope meetings well maintained, and the Men's Institute had been quietly accomplishing its object. The weekly offerings totalled £134 18s. 10d. Amongst the deaths recorded during that year were those of Mr. John Boddington, aged 90 years, *and* Miss Hutton, aged 82 years. Also, on May 30, 1908, there passed away Mr. Henry Hickman, who for 66 years was a member of the Choir, and for many years a member of the Church Committee.

The Church, we understand, knew no more prosperous period in the past than during Mr. Statham's ministry. He was exceptionally a "young people's minister," and was a keen and enthusiastic sportsman. A cricket club, a gymnasium (still existence), and a splendid Bible class were begun and flourished during his pastorate. Mr. Statham had this to his credit—that when he left Abbey Hill in December, 1908, for Petersham, Sydney, New South Wales, the Church affairs and organisations were in a more satisfactory state than they had been at the conclusion of any other ministry the Church until now has known. The present generation of worshippers, many of whom remember Mr. Statham, speak with love and affection of his work amongst them, and though he has now passed away he "lives in the hearts of those he left behind," and that "is not to die."

The Rev. Llewellyn Allen subsequently followed Mr. Statham as minister of Abbey Hill Church, having received a call from Congleton, Cheshire, and commencing his pastorate here in May, 1909. Mr. Allen had previously held the pastorate of Highbury Church, Birmingham, where he had succeeded the popular Dr. Charles Leach, M.P. A most acceptable preacher and man of varied gifts, one who both in personal appearance and preaching style was reminiscent ...

of the great Dr. Joseph Parker, Mr. Allen impressed his hearers in Abbey Hill Church by his learned addresses, and won for himself the respect and confidence of " the sermon-tasters." His ministry was marred—like many other ministries—by the terrible war, which depleted the congregation And made. Church progress well-nigh impossible. Nevertheless, he will be remembered by many who delighted in hearing a well-informed man in the pulpit as one of the most capable and most attractive preachers Abbey Hill Church has ever been privileged to have. Mr. Allen, in April, 1917, accepted a call to Hay Mills Church, Birmingham, where he now is.

The Rev. W. Stuart Scott commenced his ministry here on November 3rd, 1918. Mr. Scott had previously held the pastorates of Cliftonpark Congregational Church, Belfast (where the Rev. Thomas Yates, now of Allen Street, Kensington, once was pastor), and the United Free Church, Lisburn, Ireland, having formerly been a pioneer missionary of the Canadian Presbyterian Church, ministering for a time on the borders of the Alaskan pan-handle.

CHAPTER X.

POSITION IN 1920-REVIVAL OF THE CHURCH-SOME OLD MEMBERS-LIST OF PASTORS.

Coming to Kenilworth at a time when Abbey Hill Church had, owing to the long vacancy (during which Mr. A. C. Summers, Secretary, and Mr. L. Thornett, Treasurer, did splendid service) fallen into a delicate-state of financial and spiritual health, Mr. Scott so impressed the congregation by his preaching powers that after two Sundays' ministry he was given a unanimous call. To this he responded, and from the time of his taking up the charge he has put in some vigorous propaganda work, being active outside the pulpit as well as drawing full churches by his attractive personality. Mr. Scott found, right at the beginning of his ministry, that there were special difficulties to be Overcome, principally owing to the Great War having just come to an end, and the prospects of building up a congregation remote and questionable, but he was just the pastor to welcome young men back after demobilisation, and, as the months have passed he has had the satisfaction of seeing the Church grow in numbers and the finances greatly ...

improve, the collections springing from 25s. to £5 per Sunday in less than a year. There has been " a rousing of the dry bones," and a few innovations, Mr. Scott not only possessing literary talent and a clear fluent style in delivery, but his enthusiasm is contagious. A natural poet and a lover of music, he has the great merit of being able to strike the right chord at the right time. He is always in happy vein as preacher, pastor, lecturer, or soloist, and he has revived the Sunday School, re-organised the Choir, and attended well to his pastoral duties in the way of visiting.

The oldest living members of Abbey Hill Church at the time of writing are Mrs. Newey (whose grandmother, Mrs. Swan, was caretaker in the Old Barn during its latter days), Mrs. Skutt, widow of Mr. Richard Skutt, heretofore mentioned, and Mr. George Goode. There is also living in Linton, Cambridgeshire, Mr. A. Holttum, J.P., who was, a Sunday School teacher in Abbey Hill School in 1869. Mr. Holttum had the woeful experience the first time he entered Abbey Hill Church of going into a " select " pew and being ordered out ! The chapel-keeper's wife, described by Mr. Holttum as " a saintly woman," came to the rescue, and luckily an incident which might have antagonised the young man against all Churches was atoned for by another's kindness. Since then, Mr. Holttum has been the Chairman of the Cambridgeshire. Congregational Union.

The organisation of the Great Bazaar to raise funds for improving the Church buildings to mark the commencement of the third century of Nonconformity in Kenilworth, is in a great measure due to the initiative of the Rev. W. Stuart Scott, who is ably assisted in all his undertakings by his young wife, and it is with thankful hearts that the Church and congregation at Abbey Hill find their cause at the close of two hundred years of cloud and sunshine in such a position of well-grounded hopefulness.

The following is a list of the pastors during the last two hundred years, so far as can be established

1725	Mr Turton
1735	Mr Phillips
1747-1792	Rev. Josiah Corrie
1797	Rev. Joel Maurice
1804-1816	Rev. T. Burkitt
1829-1830	Rev. H. Edwards
1831-1833	Rev. D. Blow
1833-1837	Rev. J. F. West
1838-1876	Rev. J. Button
1877	Rev. F. Stephens
1877-1880	Rev. Rev J. H. Smith
1880-1889	Rev. J. Naylor
1890	Rev. D. B. Martin
1891-1902	Rev. G Field
1902-1908	Rev. C. H. Statham
1909-1917	Rev. Ll. Allen
1918-	Rev. W. S. Scott

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The Compiler of the preceding History of Abbey Hill Church wishes to express his thanks to the many kind friends who have generously assisted him with items of information so that this may be an authentic record. It would be invidious to select certain persons where all have so readily furnished assistance. Grateful thanks are given to all, and the hope expressed that a study of the work done at Abbey Hill in the past will act as an incentive for better and greater work for the Master in the future.