

# **FROM ZION CHAPEL**

NOTES

2023

Author: P J Bendall

Date: 14-Jun-2023

Status: Draft 1a

## Contents

Introduction .....1



## Introduction



Zion Chapel

The chapel dates from 1773 from a small group of Wesleyans who worshipped at Rook Lane Chapel who had decided to form their own congregation. While initially using the Wesleyan chapel at Rook Lane, then the Zion Chapel used by a Moravian congregation, in 1805 it started building its own chapel in Whittox Lane.

From *The Story of Zion Congregational Church*, Frome by W J Harvey (1918):

The Church connected with this place of worship dates from the year 1773. It originated with a few Wesleyan Methodists, who, having been influenced by the writings of Mr., Toplady and Mr. Hervey, had gained for themselves among their brethren the title of "The Calvinistic Class". The most prominent of these were Messrs. John Chapman, John Sinkins and Richard Brittain.

In the separation which took place there appears to have been no heated debate, bitter feeling or unseemly strife; for the Wesleyans allowed these brethren, with other devout men and godly women, the use of their room for worship at certain hours of the Sabbath on condition that their services should not interfere with those of the Established Church; the Wesleyans at that time jealously guarding themselves against the reproach of "Dissent."

Until this arrangement was made, the new Society met in a little room in Paul Street, for the use of which, including fire, they paid 6d. per week.

...  
About the time referred to a Mr. George Mantle, one of the Trevecca students, was invited to become the pastor of the new Church, and accepted a unanimous call. His ministry extended over only three years, but his zeal and devotion greatly multiplied the members of the Society, and the Chapel had to be considerably enlarged to accommodate the congregation.

Agreeably to the usage at all places of worship in Lady Huntingdon's Connexion, the Liturgy of the Church of England was used, and Mr. Mantle's proposal to discontinue it was the cause of his removal.

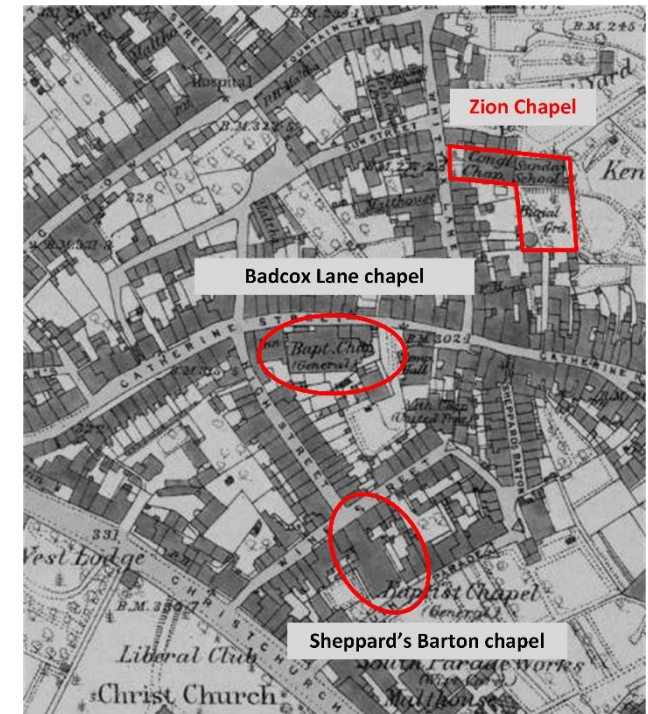
...  
Great prosperity followed: the congregation became too numerous for the capacity of the Chapel, and it was decided to "arise and build," so the present Chapel was built, with approaches from Whittox Lane and Chapel Barton, Catherine Hill. It was opened for Divine Service in July,

1810, the famous William Jay<sup>1</sup> being one of the preachers on that occasion.

...

In 1862 burials upon our premises ceased, a dissenting Burial-ground having been provided for the town, adjoining Vallis Road.

19th century maps show a burial ground south of the chapel.



<sup>1</sup> Rev William Jay (1769-1853) minister of Argyll Chapel, Bath  
Issue 1

From the *Frome Times* of Tue 14 Dec 1859 p4:

RE-OPENING OF ZION CHAPEL.—This chapel, which has been under the process of repair for some time past, was opened on Sunday last, after undergoing extensive alterations. Such as knew Zion Chapel eight months since, would hardly recognise in the present interior, the Zion Chapel of old, so artistic are the improvements that have been effected. Additional accommodation has been gained by the construction of an extra gallery which has been erected behind the pulpit. In this gallery the organ has been placed in an arched recess, and this leads us to note the only defect, perhaps, which is observable in the renovated building,—the arch being somewhat too low so that the upper part of the instrument is in some degree hidden from the view of the auditors occupying the centre of the edifice. The windows ought not to be passed over without a word of special commendation, being eighteen or nineteen in number, and the handsome contribution of P. Le Gros, Esq. The mullions of the windows are of cast-iron, which, as well as front of the light and pretty gallery, are from the foundry of Mr. Haley. The lighting was entrusted to Mr. J. W. Singer, whose ability in respect is well known; the side gas brackets are very beautiful, and the centre gaselier well adapted for its purpose. The Revd. D. Anthony, M.A., conducted the morning and evening services. On Monday evening, the Rev. J. Stoughton, of London, preached to a crowded audience.

From the *Frome Times* of Wed 5 Aug 1863 p4:

Catherine-hill House, with its garden and pleasure-grounds, only realized £550, at which price it was purchased for the trustees of Zion Chapel.



From the *Somerset Standard* of Sat 8 Oct 1887 p4:

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS AT ZION CHAPEL On Monday evening members of the congregation of Zion chapel, Frome, assembled in the schoolroom to consider the advisability of carrying out certain improvements to the front of that place of worship. Some internal improvements have already been commenced, and for a few Sundays the congregation will worship in the school-room. There is a debt on the building, and we understand that £1000 will be required. Over half this amount has been promised.

From the *Somerset Standard* of Sat 8 Oct 1887 p4:

IMPROVEMENTS AT ZION CHAPEL. Special services were held in Zion Chapel on Tuesday, in commemoration of the completion of the final portion of the improvements. the carrying out of which has extended over a year. The portion just completed consisted of a new front to the building, which has been executed in the Lornbardic style of architecture, which is the style of the windows. Mr. J. Chapman, Frome, who has been connected with the building nearly sixty years, was the architect, and he is to be congratulated on the work which he has carried out. The building contract was entrusted to Mr. Chislett, Frome. The front consists of a central vestibule with groined roof and two side porches, which will afford additional entrances and exits to the galleries. The front is of two kinds of Bath

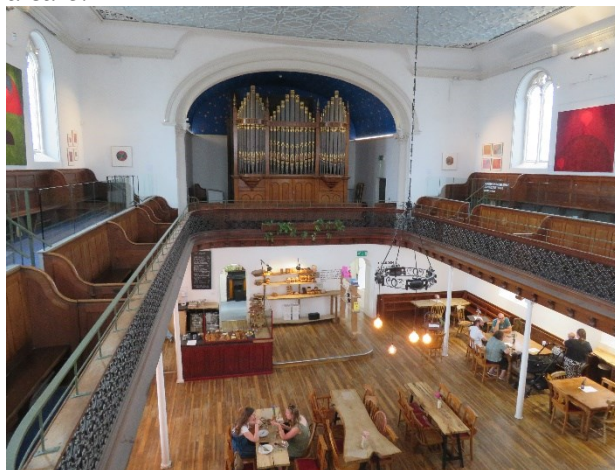
stone, one of the usual creamy colour, and the other of a grey tint. Supporting the archway of the central door are four handsome columns of polished Aberdeen granite, with foliated capitals in freestone. At the porch doors there are two similar columns. The vestibule and lobbies are paved with different varieties of marble, that of the vestibule being the gift of Mr. Chapman. The doors to the lobbies and galleries are new, and the vestibule is lighted by a handsome coloured lamp, with ornamental iron work, supplied by Mr. Penny, of the Market-place. The surrounding grounds of the chapel, where several old cottages recently stood, have been laid out with gravelled walks, shrubs, and turf, and it is separated from the street by handsome iron railings and entrance gates with massive stone pillars. The special services on Tuesday were very largely attended; the one in the afternoon being for prayer and praise. and was presided over by the Rev. F. W. Clarke (pastor). An address was given by the Rev. Thomas Mann, of Trowbridge. At 5.:30 there was a tea meeting in the school and class rooms, at which nearly 400 people sat down. A meeting was subsequently held in the chapel, at which Mr. J. Tanner, J.P., presided. The proceedings were opened with prayer by the Rev. W. Burton, Frome (Baptist). The Chairman, in his speech, gave some highly interesting reminiscences of the chapel and church during several pastorates. The Rev. F. W. Clarke read a statement containing full details as to the whole of the improvements, the total cost of which, with reduction of the mortgage, will be £1,500. Of this amount £1,250 has been given or promised. Addresses were delivered by the Rev. D. Anthony, B.A. (Brighton), and the Rev. Alfred Rowland, 8.A., L.L.8., of London, two of the former pastors of the chapel. An anthem and the Hallelujah Chorus were sung by the choir, and a collection was made on behalf of the restoration fund.



Entrance on St Catherine's Hill

A gateway to the church on St Catherine's Hill has carved on it '1810/1893/ZION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH'. The 'Screen, Gates and Railings to United Reform Church' have been Grade II listed by Historic England. The group was originally known as 'Congregational Independents'. In 1965 Zion Chapel and Rook Lane Chapel (originally Wesleyan) merged. In the 1970s the Congregationalists merged with the Presbyterians to form the United Reform Church. In 2015 the property - church, hall and grounds - was offered for sale with a guide price of £300K. The building was then converted into a community centre called 'Hubnub Centre' before being renamed to 'RISE' providing spaces for classes,

exhibitions and offices. The ground floor is used as a café.



The burial ground south of the large room behind the church that was the used for Sunday Schools is now the garden for the café. It has, by a wall, three illegible memorials, two headstones and a slab pitched 4 ways.

### Burial Registers

At Somerset Heritage Centre:

D/N/frm.z/3/3/15	Burials 1813-1853
D/N/frm.z/3/3/16	Burials 1846-1865

The centre has an extensive set of records for the chapel including 16 boxes with meeting minutes, accounts etc.

The two burial registers consist of:

- a statutory register from 1813 with 224 entries and
- an informal register with numbered entries up to 129 with 4 unnumbered entries for 1865.

The statutory register entries not have abodes whereas the informal one has some abodes and occupations. Where they overlap they are not wholly consistent with some entries occurring in one but not the other. The two sets of information have been combined the number in the informal register using the 'burial book number'.

### References

*The Story of Zion Congregational Church, Frome Part I.* Read at a Meeting of the Church and Congregation, February 1st, 1916.

*Part II.* Read at a Meeting of the Church and Congregation on March 27th, 1917

Written by the late W. J. Harvey, Deacon & Secretary of the Church. (Harvey & Woodland, Ltd., Printers, Frome. 1918).

*An Independent Parson: the Autobiography of Alfred Rowland DD, LLB, BA (1923)* 'The church in Zion Chapel, Frome, whose minister I was for ten years, originated with a few Wesleyans, who had been influenced in the direction of Calvinism by the writings of Mr. Hervey and Mr. Toplady . . .'

