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The Avenue
Fivehead*

**A SHORT HISTORY
of the
BAPTIST CHURCHES
at
ISLE ABBOTS AND FIVEHEAD
1808-1968 1868-1968**



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(Published for the Centenary of Fivehead Baptist Church)

FOREWORD

BY

THE REVEREND H. E. NUTKINS

MINISTER OF THE CHURCHES.

It falls to my happy lot to be Minister in charge of Fivehead Baptist Church during the Church's Centennial Year. I am humbly thankful to God for this honour, especially as I remember the good men of God, who have preceded me, for to read this history certainly caused one to feel thankful to God for such men, who laboured well and faithfully for the cause of Christ in these Somerset villages. The faith and vision of these men and their church-members present a mighty challenge to me and to you. Let us take to heart the words of an ancient prayer:

"O Lord God, the Maker and Builder of every house not made with hands, we give Thee thanks for this church in which we have our share. Enable us so to use this our inheritance, that, as we have entered into other men's labours others may in turn enter into ours....."

May our reading of these other men's labours encourage us and stimulate our faith.

I would like to say how grateful I am to Mr. Donald Wigfield for compiling this history, and to mention the unique relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Wigfield, in that both are descended from former ministers of these churches, Mr. Wigfield being the grandson of the Rev. John Compston, and Mrs. Wigfield being the daughter of the Rev. James T. Schofield.

CHAPTER 1INTRODUCTORY

Most places in England had Puritan ministers in the time of Oliver Cromwell, and when nearly two thousand of these were ejected after the Restoration of King Charles II most towns and villages had small congregations of Non-conformists. Both Fivehead and Isle Abbots got new vicars in 1661-2, but in 1669 non-conformists were meeting in the house of Nathaniel Barnard in Fivehead, and their "teachers" were John Baker, George Pierce and John Bush, the ejected ministers from Curry Mallet, North Curry and Langport, and Thomas Marshall, the minister of the Ilminster non-conformists. In the Return to the Bishop the Vicar estimated the number of those attending the "conventicle" as 200, so clearly folk came in from neighbouring villages. Non-conformists then usually described themselves as Presbyterians, but they might be Independents (Congregationalists) or Anabaptists, and often the congregations included all three.

We cannot tell just how this "cause" declined, but no place of worship for Protestants dissenting from the Church of England was registered in either Fivehead or Isle Abbots in 1689, when the Toleration Act was passed. In 1698, however, the house of Robert Smith in Fivehead was certified as a Dissenters' Place of Worship, and in 1715 the house of Robert Smith in Swell. The list of certificates does not make it clear, whether Robert Smith had moved to Swell, or was registering a house in Swell where he preached. If there were any non-conformists in Isle Abbots at this time, they probably worshipped with those of Curry Mallet, who in 1690 registered the house of Jerome Day. In 1703 they registered that of Arthur Bawler, in 1709 that of John Collins, in 1713 the house of John Baker, and in 1762 Peter Bicknell's dwelling, all in Curry Mallet. Some from Isle Abbots may have worshipped in the house of Martha Chick at Isle Brewers, certified in 1753, first as a meeting-place of Anabaptists and later in the same year as a place for Methodists. In 1760 Samuel Burford's house in Ilton was licensed for worship by Presbyterians and Baptists.

We lose sight of Fivehead non-conformists in 1715, unless they walked to North Curry, until John Wesley came riding up from Taunton on Thursday, September 3rd 1778 and stopped to preach in the great hall at Cathanger "to a very serious congregation", before he rode on to South Petherton. He came again on Friday, September 2nd, 1785 on his way from Wellington to Ditchheat, and stopped at noon to preach "in an ancient, venerable building...oddly called Cathanger", where, he says, "I spoke exceeding plain; and I think many of them, even Somersetshire farmers, felt as well as heard". It is just possible that Robert Sweet was in that congregation, and with him the story of Fivehead Baptists will start again in 1820.

CHAPTER 2

THE BEGINNING AT ISLE ABBOTS

About 1798, wrote William Humphry, few in Isle Abbots cared about their souls or knew anything of the gospel. He had attended the Independent Chapel at South Petherton under the Rev. Richard Herdsman for about four years and was a member there for two years. He felt the urge to preach to his friends and neighbours in Isle Abbots. His nervousness gave way as repeatedly the words came to him "If thou hold thy peace, the stones will cry out against thee". He began by reading a chapter of the Bible, praying, and singing a hymn. His little congregation grew, and he began to add preaching to his services. He speaks of some persecution, and of Prayer Meetings; of the young children of his own and his friends' families, and of the impending problem of baptism. Gradually his thoughts turned to Believers' Baptism. William Humphry therefore approached the Rev. T. Tombs of Chard, who on November 25th, 1806 baptised William in the river at Welinge bridge.

The following spring William Baker and his wife Elizabeth (nee Humphry) were convinced of their duty, and William Humphry baptised them at the same place. "It was supposed", he wrote, "a thousand people was present". Soon after this Susanna

Crocker, Sarah Vile and Prudence How were also baptised. They had been Wesleyan Methodists.

Desiring to receive the Lord's Supper, the baptised six approached Mr. Tombs, who advised them that the sacrament could be administered only to an organized church, and advised them to apply to the Baptist Church at Hatch under Mr. Braker. This they did. After two or three Church Meetings the Hatch Baptists "agreed to object to our proposals". Though much discouraged, the Isle Abbots folk persevered, and on June 23rd 1808, were formed into a church at a meeting in Walrond's house. Mr. Tombs prayed. Mr. Braker stated the nature of a church, and invited the six to signify their willingness to be formed into such a church. Mr. Price of Yeovil preached in the afternoon from the text; "There is little Benjamin with their ruler" (Psalm 68;27.) In the evening Mr. Tombs preached on the more promising saying "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them". William Humphry was acknowledged as their Teacher. His account of the origin of this church is written in The Isle Abbots Baptist Church-Book and is dated July 1810. Walrond's house was a cottage which stood between the Council School house and Mr. Barrington's barton.

The Toleration Act of 1689 allowed freedom of worship to Protestants dissenting from the Church of England, on condition that they registered their place of worship either at Quarter Sessions or with the Bishop; that they did not worship behind locked doors; and that their minister could sign 36 of the 39 Articles. In the County Record Office at Taunton there is the application to the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells dated June 20, 1809.

"We those names are underwritten Request that the house of William Crocker (or hegers house) in the parish of Isle Abbots, in the County of Somerset, and the Diocess of Bath and wells may be Registred for the worship of Almighty God according to the custom of protestant Dissenters, agreeable to the Act of the 1st of Wm. and Mary c.18."

The application is signed by William Crocker, Philip Coat Brome, William Baker, Thomas Baker, Henry Humphry, James Humphry, and William Humphry, Teacher; and noted below "Certificate granted hereon 3rd July 1809".

In 1817 another certificate was issued for a Meeting House, (the present chapel) for the use of Protestants, on the application of William Humphry, Minister, and others, but only this summary of the application survives.

By that time the membership had grown to thirteen, but during that year and the next William Humphry lost his mother, Hannah, whose membership had been transferred from Hatch Beauchamp Baptist Church, and his dearly loved first wife, Mary nee Brome, who in twenty-one years had borne him twelve children. Three years later he married Betsy, the widow of William Crocker, and in 1833 they were "dismissed" to the church at Croscombe, which had called William to be their Pastor. He died on May 14th 1835 and was buried in the chapel at Isle Abbots. The funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. Robert Humphry of Taunton, who appears to have been his second son. A man of courage and an earnest evangelist, William Humphry kept the church records assiduously in a good hand, though his spelling was uncertain.

The Rules of the church were written into the Church-Book in July 1827.

1. We acknowledge Jesus Christ as the only Head of his Church, and the sacred scriptures of the old and new Testaments as the only rule of our faith and practice.
2. Repentance, faith and baptism (i.e. dipping the whole body in water) are the absolute requisite for church membership and receiving the Lord's supper. The sprinkling of infant children is no baptism and is taught in no part of the word of God.
3. Our doctrine is that of Calvinistic Baptists, summed up in these words: three persons in one Godhead, Election, Original Sin, Particular Redemption, Justification, Efficacious grace in redemption, Final perseverance of the saints, Resurrection of the boddy. Future judgment, Eternal happyness of the righteous, Endless misery of the impenitent.
4. Brotherly love (as far as possible), including praying for the Pastor and supporting him by contributions.
5. Maintain your works, denigh all ungodliness, asking "How ought I to act as a child of God?"

6. The exclusion of the disorderly, according to Matthew xviii.15,16,17.
7. To attend our own place of worship as oftenly as we can.
8. A church meeting is to hear a candidate's experience before his or her baptism. All church meetings to be begun and ended with prayer.
9. The Lord's Supper to be administered, if possible, the first Sabbath in every second month, or oftener if convenient.
10. Repentant excluded members to be forgiven.
11. All members to conform strictly to these rules.

The wording has been abbreviated but some of the original spelling has been retained.

In the Church-Book there is a note dated December 26th, 1833. "Memmorandum it was agreed at a Church Meeting to invite Mrsrs Glanvil Gibson and Brewer to suppli in turn in case of Disapointment Wm Baker Bee Requested to supli." At the other end of the book an unknown scribe has continued the history of the church in copperplate handwriting. "For upwards of three years...the pulpit was supplied by different ministers as they could be best obtained. On some occasions considerable difficulty was realised in procur- ing the necessary supplies and more than once public worship was suspended and the doors of the chapel closed for want of a minister. Yet notwithstanding these unfavourable circumstances the congreg- ation was rather good and the preaching though attended with but few instances of apparent good was listened to with some degree of regularity and attention. During the time the church was without a Pastor, between twenty and thirty ministers were engaged in supplying our lack of a regular Teacher. These were from differ- ent parts of the country around us and we availed ourselves of their kind assistance as circumstances would allow them to minister to us. One of these was Mr. Foot of Wincanton who was recommended as a suitable person to become Pastor of the Church. After preaching to us at intervals for nearly two years he was prevailed upon to become our settled Minister Mar 25 1837". The same hand continues in different ink. "After labouring with acceptance and some degree of sucess amongst us for five years and a quarter he resigned his charge at Isle Abbotts June 22nd 1842". Under the Rev. Uriah Foot the church doubled its membership, which was 13 in 1835, 26 in 1840, and reached 40 in 1845.

The copperplate hand continues, again in different ink, "When we were again destitute of a Pastor, but supplied by diff- erent Ministers, amongst whom was Mr. Joseph Clift of Westbury

leigh, who after supplying us for some time, accepted an invitation of the church and became our Settled Pastor March 25th 1844. He continued to labour amongst us till June 24th 1845 and then resigned his Charge on account of ill health. We were supplied in the same way as before for twelve months, when Mr. Robert White of Hillsley became our Pastor and settled with us June 24th 1846. He continued with us one year and resigned his Charge June 24th 1847".

The handwriting then changes to that of the Rev. John Chappell, and the narrative continues: "The next Pastor was Mr. Thomas Young from Bristol College, who after labouring successfully for more than two years left for Bridport March 1850. The next was Mr. John Chappell, late of Long Parish, Hants, who entered on his stated labours April 21st 1850."

By 1850 the membership had risen to 53, and during the following five years rose to 63, and was 61 in both 1860 and 1861. The intervening ministers left no recognisable note in the Church-Book, though the roll of members was kept up-to-date mostly in the copperplate hand, but Mr. Chappell in his twenty-two years' ministry added ten pages to the record. Half of these continue the membership roll, and another records the purchase and use of a pall. The certificate of the registration of the chapel for the solemnization of marriage, dated 20.iii.1847, is pasted into the book.

The only record of the connexion of Curry Mallet Baptists with Isle Abbots is to be found in the second extant Church-Book of Hatch Beauchamp. In 1847 the Rev. H. W. Stembridge found that his health necessitated his relinquishing the evening service at Curry Mallet. Isle Abbots Baptists accepted the responsibility, until in 1866 "The station at Curry Mallet having been given up by Mr. Chappell of Isle Abbots, we (Hatch Beauchamp Baptists) have resolved to take it under our care and to continue the usual Sabbath evening preaching service".

The ten-yearly census was due in 1851 and appears to have been taken on March 30th. Mr. Chappell noted this in the book, together with the following figures:

Isle Abbots - Present morning	Children	43	Adults	80	123.
	afternoon	"	43	"	127 170.
	evening				53.
Curry Mallet evening		101.	Fivehead evening		69.

He also noted some figures which seem beyond interpretation: At Church that day 2-971-258. At Meeting 3-384-964.

Mr. Chappell also jotted down: "1856 No. Members 59 Children 140 and 24 Teachers." As an afterthought he added in pencil "C M 90 I A 50. Dec^r 7th 1857 Bought this day of the Langport Building Society the Ministers house for £100. Expense £0-8-5". For 1860 he recorded the baptism of two Fivehead ladies, Mrs. L. Mead, and Mrs. E. Hillard; two ladies from Ilton, Elizabeth Mead and her daughter Elizabeth; and Jane Crocker (wife of Joseph) of Isle Abbots. He also noted that six ladies of the church, who gave their work, had made three black gowns for Females and one for the Pastor for Baptizing. The material cost £1-14-0 and he paid 10/- for his. He recorded the election of Mr. James Humphry as deacon at a Members' Tea Meeting on May 27 1861 and his resignation on March 15 1866. This James was the eldest son of Henry Humphry of Woodlands, the next younger brother of the Rev. William. He was born in 1801 and baptised in 1841. Another item for 1861 was the repair of the chapel windows, the cleaning and painting of the chapel at a cost of £4. 11. 3d.

Mr. Chappell's last note reads: "The Jubilee of the opening of the Baptist Chapel was held on Tuesday May 8th, 1866, when 220 sat down to Tea. The Provisions was given by the Ladies of the Church and Congregation and the Proceed given to the Pastor. "The note finishes with his autograph. He annotated the membership roll until the end of 1871.

CHAPTER 3

THE BEGINNING AT FIVEHEAD

In 1820 Robert Sweet was working as a ploughman for Mr. Corpe, the Parish Clerk of Fivehead, whose youngest son, Joshua, then twenty-one, tried to take a rise out of the old man. Joshua told the story in a long poem, which was printed after his death, and which differs in some particulars from the account given by the Rev. John Burnham in his book "Chips from my Log". The conversation seems to have opened something like this:

"Didn't see thee in church on Sunday, Robert."

"No, Maister Joshua. I be Methodist."

"But surely your parish church is the place to worship God".

"The place to worship God," old Robert said,
 "Is where His people meet to seek His aid;
 'Twas here He met with me, and many more.
 'Tis grace alone brings sinners to His door."

Then Robert told what state he once was in,
 How many years he had been dead in sin;
 So bad was he, in sin did so excel,
 He found himself upon the brink of hell.

At length, when his poor heart was led to pray,
 He cried "Be merciful, O God, this day".
 Then Jesus spoke: "Sinner, come unto me.
 I bore thy sins upon Mount Calvary".

Joshua continued

I left the field that day convinced of sin.

I never, never shall forget the day
 When first my softened heart began to pray;
 That was the time when I was brought to see
 That Jesus died for sinful, worthless me.

Thereafter Joshua Corpe accompanied old Robert to Methodist meetings in a hayloft at North Curry. Continuing his Bible-study after Robert Sweet's death, Joshua Corpe became convinced that it was a Christian's duty to be baptised, not as an infant but as a believer, and not by sprinkling but by immersion. In 1828 he applied for baptism and membership at the newly constituted Baptist Church at North Curry. His parents objected, and resolving that "Joshua should not be dipped", they hid his clothes on the Sunday when he had planned to witness a good confession. The set-back was short-lived, and some weeks later Joshua hid his clothes on the Saturday night, so that he was able to set off early the next morning to his Baptismal service.

Joshua Corpe found himself a wife among the Baptists of North Curry, and settled at Stoke St. Gregory. After twenty-five years he returned to Fivehead to take over the old family home. Cottage meetings followed, and a staunch friendship developed with William Stodgell, who had also married a wife from North Curry Baptist Church.

Every Sunday these four met for prayer and Bible-study in the farmhouse kitchen, walking afterwards to North Curry to attend two services.

One Sunday Joshua spoke to William of his deep concern to reach their neighbours with the message of the gospel, lest they should perish in darkness. "Let us", said Joshua in a favourite phrase, "consult the dear Lord". Rising from his knees, he said "I be going to Taunton to fetch a preacher. Thee go round and invite folk to service in my kitchen this evening". He returned with his preacher to find the kitchen crowded. Sunday by Sunday Joshua drove into Taunton and returned with a preacher and the congregation grew until the preacher had to stand beside the open window, half his audience being outside on the lawn. As the winter approached, they moved across to the barn.

About that time Joshua Corpe's eldest son, who had prospered in business, purchased a plot of land adjoining his father's farm, and offered it to the congregation as a building site. A Building Fund was started and was well supported. Some who could not afford to give money, gave help in carting stone. Joshua Corpe printed and sold for twopence a four-page folder of verse appealing for gifts. In 1866 the building was ready, and the local paper reported the opening. "The new Baptist Chapel was opened on Thursday and a large number of persons assembled to celebrate the event. Service was held in the chapel in the morning, when the Rev. S. Newman of Salisbury preached a sermon. A capital dinner was provided in a large marquee, which had been erected in a field behind the chapel. The marquee was nicely decorated with floral devices, and from the centre of the tent was a curious device composed of teazles and flowers. Fivehead is known for its teazles, and a large basket had been formed of teazle heads and filled with flowers, the whole forming a graceful as well as novel feature. The local name of this collection is "The harvest handful" or "The king of all teazles". After dinner a public meeting was held".

The new chapel relied on supply-preachers for nearly two years. By the spring of 1868 the folk were ready to be constituted as an independent Baptist Church. In the North Curry Baptist Church-Book is a list of their members and against the names of Joshua and Anne Corpe, William and Caroline Stodgell is written

"Dismissed March 8th 1868 to form part of a new Baptist Church at Fivehead". The Fivehead roll begins with these names, and the first entry in the book proper is "Baptist Church form'd March 8th 1868. Mr. B. W. Osler Pastor". The first Church Meeting was held on April 2nd and three deacons were elected: Joshua Corpe, William Stodgell, and Richard Hallett of Swell, who had been baptised on March 1st. Foundation members included three of the Marsh family, Susan Corpe, Christopher Hallett and William Bicknell. Isle Abbots transferred four, all married women, and nine other transfers were received, some from Hatch Beauchamp. There were four more baptisms, including those of Mrs. Ellen Miller and Benjamin Bicknell. By the end of the year the membership had risen to 35. Somehow Benjamin Osler managed to be Pastor of North Curry, Isle Abbots and Fivehead, though Isle Abbots cannot have come into his care until 1872, for Mr. Chappell noted in the Isle Abbots book the death of George Harvey or Harverd on Dec^r 26 1871.

Early church meetings were concerned mainly with applications for baptism and church membership, and the appointment of visitors to report at the next meeting. Collections were taken occasionally for incidental expenses. Joshua Corpe was treasurer of the Building Fund, while William Bicknell received subscriptions towards the minister's stipend. There is a gap in Fivehead Minutes from March 1871 to August 1874, when it is recorded that to help Fivehead finances Mr. Osler bought the orchard adjoining the Manse for £100 "until such time as friends can re-buy it".

All three Church-Books are silent about the changes made in the early 'seventies. At first the membership figures of North Curry and Fivehead are shown as one total in the statistics of the Western Baptist Association, but from 1874 North Curry is shown alone, while Fivehead is linked with Isle Abbots. In that year Mr. Osler accepted a call to the Pastorate of Barnsley Baptist Church.

CHAPTER 4THE UNITED CHURCH, 1872-1888

Mr. John Burnham of Pastors' (Spurgeon's) College was preaching in the villages around Wellington in the summer of 1874, so he was invited to preach also at Fivehead, and in October he was offered the pastorate of Isle Abbots and Fivehead, at £64 and a house "in hopes of better remuneration soon". Mr. Spurgeon wrote to Abraham Tapp, saying that the offer just would not do, and suggested £100. The Church decided that by making a special effort they could offer £75, and this Mr. Burnham accepted, commencing his ministry on November 8th. "As there was a pretty little manse", he wrote subsequently, "I furnished at once, and took my sister with me as housekeeper.... Thanks to the faithful ministry that preceded mine at Fivehead, we began reaping at once; and for many months had a delightful season of ingathering". Among those he baptised were his sister and a young lady from Bristol, who was visiting at Swell Court. Six months later he married that young lady, and two children were born to them, while they lived at Fivehead.

Having two churches in his care, Mr. Burnham drew up a Preaching Plan for the next quarter, which was to be printed and sold for a penny. No copy seems to have survived. At the same time the Church approved the provision of Weekly Offering Envelopes, and "Resolved that we have a Tea Meeting on New Year's Eve, to be followed by an Experience Meeting, and extended to a Watch-Night service".

In January 1875 four deacons were elected, instead of the previous three at each church. Those chosen were Brethren Corpe and L. Mead for Fivehead, Brethren Tapp and H. Adams for Isle Abbots. The membership grew steadily, and the collection at "The Ordinance" went up from $3/4\frac{1}{2}$ to $5/6$, and then to $8/6$. One has to remember that in Somerset at that time farm labourers' wages were 14/- a week, falling to 13/- by 1882 and 11/- in 1892. To meet the next demand of the London Baptist Loan Fund for £10 on March 25th collecting cards were issued, and to such good purpose that, having repaid the £10 the Church had £4-5-8 in hand

towards the subsequent demand. Shortly afterwards the Church recorded its thanks to Mrs. Hillard "for the spirited manner in which she had gathered £10 to secure aid from the Pastors' Income Augmentation Fund". Meanwhile the Pastor asked for distributors "to deluge Isle Abbots, Isle Brewers, Swell and Fivehead" with tracts. Four ladies volunteered.

"Three very happy years", wrote Mr. Burnham, "were spent in Somerset, but the strain of constant service in two places with little help and less ministerial fellowship, (my nearest ministerial neighbour being three miles distant) thoroughly broke my health and obliged me to retire". The last minute in his handwriting was dated August 6 1876. The next minute, fifteen months later, was written by Christopher Hallett, the Church Secretary. The deacons were asked to continue in office with the addition of C. Hallett and F. Goodson. Mr. Burnham's resignation was to be accepted as from November 1st, but he was invited to stay on in the manse, until it should be needed for a new minister. The deeds of the two chapels, the cottage and the minister's house were to be sent to the Association Safe at Wellington. A preachers' plan was to be drawn up and supplies were to be paid 10/- for three services and their expenses. The fourth service was to be a morning Prayer Meeting, led by a deacon, and held alternately at Fivehead and Isle Abbots. Finally it was agreed to recommend Mr. Burnham, "aged about thirty", to the church at Stogumber, which had written an enquiry about him. Mr. Burnham did not, however, go to Stogumber, as Mr. Spurgeon invited him to become one of the Pastors' College Evangelists. He always thought kindly of this "small agricultural village in Somerset, among as devoted a people as any Pastor could wish to find."

Mr. Osler came to the help of the Church again, partly by writing from Barnsley, and also by coming to preside over a very important Church meeting. In his letter Mr. Osler recommended to the Church the Rev. John Compston, his predecessor at Barnsley and at that time minister at South Parade Baptist Church, Leeds. The son of a Lancashire Congregational minister, John Compston was the author of several books and a musician of some distinction. His History of the Rechabites won him election as a Fellow of the Royal

Historical Society. He had edited "Lancashire Sunday School Songs" and written "The Philosophy of the Co-operative Movement". While at Fivehead he wrote "Temperance as taught in the Revised Version" and edited "The National Temperance Hymnal", for which he composed eight tunes. In Yorkshire Mr. Compston had stood on the platform beside Samuel Plimsoll in his campaign against "coffin ships". It was, perhaps, the recent death of his eldest son, Hampden, that made Mr. Compston ready to leave Yorkshire for changed surroundings. On Mr. Osler's suggestion he preached at Fivehead "with a view", and in May 1878 Mr. Osler presided at a Church Meeting that "after considerable free expression of opinion...marked by very great unanimity and confidence...unanimously and warmly resolved" to invite Mr. Compston to the Pastorate, promising to accede to his wish that "unfermented wine should be used at the Lord's table", and offering him a stipend of £111, which might be increased to £120, of which £60 would come from personal subscriptions and the balance from various funds. The invitation was signed by C. Hallett, W. Stodgell, Benjⁿ Bicknell and A. Tapp.

John Compston moved to Fivehead at the end of July 1878 and commenced his ministry "on the first Lord's day in August". He followed the then usual practice of giving out a hymn two lines at a time, for in the 'seventies there were still many unable to read. He taught his congregations to sing by the Tonic Solfa method, and was known to interrupt the singing of a hymn with "My friends, we shall not derive the full benefit of singing this hymn unless we sing it properly. It should go like this", and with his tuneful and powerful bass voice, would set them right. He lectured in many villages on musical subjects, illustrating his theme with the singing of an unaccompanied quartet, his daughters and his son taking the other parts. In the north Mr. Compston had taken lessons in Hebrew from a Jewish rabbi, and he was delighted when the Revised Version was planned and published. He did not understand why any Christian should want to play games, and answered a teenage friend of his daughters "But do you not see, my dear Maud, that change of occupation is recreation". Playing cards were "the devil's pasteboards", theatres were taboo, and drink was the nation's curse (to an extent the present generation finds it hard to realise). The Band of Hope flourished at Fivehead and Isle Abbots long after John Compston's death.

The new ministry commenced with great activity. Mr. Compston preached the annual Missionary sermons in September, no collections being taken, so that there might be a good collection at the public meeting later in the week. Then came the Recognition Service and Tea; then another Tea Meeting to greet "our esteemed and beloved Brother, Mr. Osler"; and in November a week of Special Evangelistic Services in both villages and four neighbouring Churches.

In December 74 members of the Church and congregation signed a petition to Parliament against the war upon Afghanistan, and a fortnight later the Church sent to Queen Victoria a "brief address" of sympathy on the death of Princess Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse Darmstadt, which was duly acknowledged.

The year finished with a lengthy tea meeting and, after a break, the Watch Night service. The audited accounts were entered in the book. An attempt had been made to buy the orchard back from Mr. Osler, and a bazaar raised over £80, but a church meeting decided that the debt to the Baptist Loan Fund must be repaid first. Mr. Osler's £100 was not repaid until November 1887.

The New Year, 1879, opened with a lecture on Palestine "with Dioramic Views". The Manse was to be repaired, painted and papered at a cost not exceeding £15. New members were received, bringing the roll up to 78. A site for a preaching station in Isle Brewers was offered, but had to be declined through difficulty in obtaining a valid and permanent title. Cottage meetings were held there, however, and were well attended, and Mrs. Sansome of that village was baptised and received into membership. The Church called the attention of the Western Baptist Association to the openings for evangelistic effort at Curry Rivel and Ilminster, and offered help. A year later the Church's letter again pleaded for help in "that dark and wicked place", Isle Brewers.

The Church recorded "its conviction of the Scriptural character of the Weekly Contribution to the Lord", and asked the Pastor to announce this suitably. The members also

voted in favour of adopting the enlarged edition of "Psalms and Hymns" as soon as it should be ready. At the New Year's Eve gathering the congregation enjoyed hearing the Cantata "Esther".

Membership of the combined church grew steadily, in spite of rigorous pruning. Six months absence from the Lord's Table was cause for automatic erasure of the absent member's name. "Immoral conduct", which included pregnancy before marriage, caused exclusion, though in one case at least the young mother was welcomed back into membership when she was married and the baby had arrived safely. One young lady was "found guilty of persistent falsehoods, without any sign of contrition, or apparent sense of the sin of lying", and after due consideration the Church "withdrew its fellowship". Three senior members were admonished at members' meetings, one for intoxication, one for "angry and profane language", and one for "violent and unchristian conduct". Expression of their sincere regret led to the restoration of fellowship. Other causes reducing the membership were the moving away of young brides and of girls "in service"; and as the annual letter to the Western Baptist Association once recorded "Two of our members have changed worlds since our last epistle".

In June 1880 membership stood at 76, with 92 Sunday School scholars and 10 teachers at Fivehead, and 38 and 4 at Isle Abbots. Evangelistic services conducted by "our beloved brother Cruickshank" in November 1881 led about thirty to 'acknowledge Christ'. There were twenty baptisms before the Letter of June '82, when the total reached 88. Three of the candidates "were prevented from being baptised by the fierce opposition of their relatives". Whether the recommended "forbearance and gentleness" overcame the opposition must be left to conjecture. A year later the membership was 92. Early in 1884 the total reached 96, but 3 exclusions, 3 erasures, 2 deaths and 2 transfers brought the figures down to 86 by May 7. Before June 1st however ten new members had been baptised, one more "withdrawn from" and one received by transfer, so the record number of 96 was restored.

In October 1880 a collection was taken for "the distressed people of Jamaica" (£2.1.6). In January 1881 the Choral Society sang "Belshazzar's Feast". That year the Church agreed to sing "Amen" at the end of the last verse of each hymn, and the Gloria after the chant.

The Manse was burnt down in October '81, but was rebuilt and inhabited again before the next summer, and the total cost, about £400, cleared off by the spring of 1883. Seven new trustees for the Chapel Property at Isle Abbots were appointed in August 1882, including one Agricultural Implement Maker, five farmers and one farmer's son. Three well-known names among these were Baxter Baker of Beer Crocombe, Edward and John Humphry of Isle Abbots. The appointment had to be done again in December, because the list had not been written on Stamped Paper, nor signed at the meeting.

When Joshua Corpe died in 1884, a Church Meeting ordered a special resolution "to be entered upon the records of the Church: That this Church desires to place upon record the feelings of love and esteem cherished for the memory of its oldest member and first deacon, brother Joshua Corpe....It cannot be forgotten that our departed brother was, under God, the founder of this Church; his love for souls, his zeal for truth, and his concern for the cause and Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ being honoured of God in the realisation of his strong desire for the establishment of a Baptist Church, and the erection of a Chapel and Sunday School in Fivehead..." The resolution goes on to mention "his remarkable knowledge of God's holy word... and his conspicuous courage".

Later that year Miss Humphry of Woodlands retired from the post of organist, and received a presentation. Miss Humphry gave the Church her harmonium and left the Church £100 in her will, with which in due course the trustees bought a piece of land "called Wood".

The Church was kept aware of world-affairs, and when the news came that Khartoum had fallen, the Church sent a memorial "To the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, First Lord of the Treasury."

"The members of the United Baptist Church of Fivehead and Isle Abbots in the County of Somerset, while deploring the unfortunate death of General Gordon, would earnestly deprecate the prolonging of hostilities in the Soudan for purposes of revenge or conquest, or military prestige, or for breaking

the power of the Mahdi; and they urgently implore Her Majesty's Government not to persist in the purpose of sending our troops to Khartoum, but to content themselves with safeguarding the national boundaries of Egypt proper; leaving the people to possess their own land, to cleave to the Mahdi if they choose, and to manage their own affairs."

In 1886 special collections were taken for the Christian Instruction Society and the Western Baptist Evangelisation Society. The minutes refer in 1887 to "difficult and sorrowful times". Mr. Compston had buried his eldest surviving son, Milton, a student Baptist minister, in Fivehead churchyard, a few years previously, and it is good to record that the vicar, the Rev. R. W. Lambert, had stood beside him at the funeral. In April 1887 Mrs. Compston was laid beside her son, four neighbouring Baptist ministers taking part in the service. It was a loss from which the Pastor never recovered. He informed the deacons that he would be resigning as from January 1888. In vain they begged him to reconsider his resolution. In November the Church "with deep regret" accepted the resignation of their "faithful and loving Pastor", to whom at a Farewell Tea they presented a cheque and a framed illuminated address of thanks. Mr. Compston died in London on Easter Sunday 1889.

CHAPTER 5.THE UNITED CHURCH - 1888-1915

The Rev. B. W. Osler again came to help the Church, this time with a month's ministry, and the recommendation that they should hear the Rev. Edward Francis of Bridport. At the end of March Mr. Francis was invited to become the minister of the joint church, and in June he commenced his ministry.

It comes as a surprise to discover that it was not until the end of 1888 that the congregation considered joining in the saying of the Lord's Prayer.

About that time Mr. Joseph Corpe gave the Church a piece of land adjoining Fivehead Chapel, and the deacons recommended the building of stables on it, and the raising of a special fund for the purpose. The acquisition of this new property was used as the occasion of appointing eight new trustees, including Christopher Hallett of Swell Court, Sydney Slade of Isle Brewers, and Mister Corpe's Son of Reading.

Church affairs continued without much change. The Annual Letter of 1889 reported "peace..and some measure of prosperity.. The Gospel has been faithfully and lovingly preached...Some have decided fully for Christ and have made confession as he appointed. Our Sunday Schools have been diligently carried on and Temperance work has not been forgotten..." Church membership, after omission of 7 absenters, stood at 80, with 127 Sunday scholars and 16 teachers. Reference to new members as "our young friends" explains a resolution that only members over the age of sixteen are to be allowed the privilege of voting at church meetings.

During Mr. Francis' ministry Edwin Slade and his family took an increasingly important part in church affairs at Isle Abbots: Edwin as deacon until his death in 1890, some-

time Chairman of the church meeting, Auditor and then Treasurer; his son Sydney succeeding him as Treasurer and deacon and becoming Secretary of the Isle Abbots congregation. His daughter, Clara, officiated as "harmoniumist" until her marriage, when his youngest daughter, Maud, took her place. At Fivehead Benjamin Bicknell, a deacon and Church Secretary, married the organist, Rosie Wilcox, but in 1892 they moved to Brooms Farm, Isle Abbots.

In 1891 two of the senior deacons asked to be relieved of their office. Mr. Francis therefore proposed that they should be elected Elders of the Church, and this honour was then conferred on Abraham Tapp, and in 1893 on Thomas Bicknell, who had in '91 preferred to remain a deacon.

The membership was increasing again, and in 1892 was 92. Church meetings were concerned mainly with the appointment and reports of visitors to candidates for baptism and membership; and with repairs and improvements. Dry rot in the floor of the schoolroom at Fivehead necessitated the draining of the site, as well as complete replacement of the floor.

In 1893 old William Stodgell, co-founder of the Church with Joshua Corpe, died, and his funeral showed the great respect in which he was held. Mr. Osler preached the funeral sermon. His wife survived him only as far as the New Year, and the Church's Resolution of appreciation was recorded in the Church Book.

The dedication of infants born to church members is so usual and natural a part of church life that it is not often realised that it was an innovation at the end of the last century. It was in March 1894 that the Church gave the Pastor permission to hold such services "if requested". Six months later Mr. Francis read to a united Church Meeting his letter resigning the pastorate. No word of explanation reached the Minute Book, in which there is a gap of almost five months, at the end of which the Church by a majority vote agreed to invite the Rev. Edward S. Hadler to the Pastorate for three years. Mr. Hadler began his ministry in the early summer of 1895, and in October the Church agreed to the formation of a Young People's Christian Endeavour Society. A year later a Junior C.E. Society was added to the Church's activities. There was some unhappy controversy about the rules of these societies, but before the end of Mr. Hadler's three years eight young men and two young women applied for baptism and church membership. Mr. Hadler's last letter to the Western Baptist Association (1898) reported

"The C.E. Societies at Fivehead and Isle Abbots have proved helpful to the young people, who have sought to assist the needy, visit the sick and aged; they have likewise taken part in Evangelistic work...Open Air Services on the hills and at other places have proved attractive and a power for good; whilst Pastoral Visitation has led to some remarkable conversions of persons who did not attend any place of worship. So we thank God and take courage".

When Mr. Hadler left to take up the Pastorate of Burton Stogursey, sixty members signed a letter of thanks and good wishes, and presented him with a purse. His preaching, his work with young people, and his visitation of the sick had been particularly appreciated.

The first Church Book of Fivehead (and of the United Church) concludes with the unanimous invitation to the Rev. G. A. James, B.A. lately of Baptist College, Cardiff, and his acceptance. The new book opens in February 1899 with his first Deacons' Meeting and the appointment of Jim Slade as Church Treasurer. Church meetings were held either on a Sunday after service, or on a week-night when there was a moon to light the walk home. Occasionally there is a reference to floods preventing one half of the church from reaching a united meeting. It was at this time customary to close church meetings with the singing of the Doxology. New members were baptised. No less than twelve joined the church in 1902, after the fifteen-day mission conducted by Mr. Ernest Bailey of London, and the membership rose to 100, of whom twelve were non-resident.

The 20th Century Fund had been launched but the Church, nobly trying to increase the minister's stipend to £100, did not see its way to devote its collections to the Fund, although individual members subscribed £15. 19s. Od.

Towards the end of 1903 Mr. James sent in his resignation, asking, because of his wife's serious illness, to be released at the end of December. More than a few ministers wrote, some offering to preach "with a view", others, to help by preaching during the vacancy. The Rev. James T. Schofield of Leeds was the Church's choice, preaching with a view in May, accepting

the call and settling in July.

The minutes continue in the handwriting of Sydney Slade, and record the appointment of deacons and officers, with votes of thanks to the officers, auditors, collectors, organists, and local preachers; also the applications for church membership, visitations and acceptances. At the annual meetings the rules of the Church were read, and then the roll of members, though the numbers are not recorded. The minister preached at Isle Abbots and Fivehead alternate Sunday mornings, at Isle Abbots on Sunday afternoon, and at Fivehead in the evening, when the deacons arranged a Prayer Meeting at Isle Abbots. There were occasional sales of work and renovations to some part of the property. The new pastor's preaching and visiting were valued highly, and each year concluded with a small grant supplementary to his stipend coupled with an expression of appreciation. The first new member Mr. Schofield baptised was Albert Adams, the present senior deacon at Isle Abbots, and now a Life Deacon.

Late in 1907 plans were made to celebrate the Centenary of Isle Abbots Baptist Church in 1908, but the record is sparse. Land for stables was bought for £4. 10s. Od.; stables and trap-house, furnace house and offices, and a wall round the burial ground were all built for £87. The Chapel, School rooms and class rooms were renovated for £30. A brass plate was placed in the vestibule to mark the grave of the Rev. William Humphry. The total cost proved to be £150, and £120 had been promised when the great day arrived. On Sunday, the Rev. S. Vincent, ex-President of the Baptist Union, preached to a large congregation. The actual centenary was June 23rd, when the Rev. Principal W. J. Henderson B.A. of Bristol, preached at the afternoon service from the text "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son". He spoke to the children first, and the hymn sung was "Our fathers' Friend and God".

The congregation then moved to the Manor Farm for tea. The County Gazette, which gave a column and a half to its account, described the scene as "Quite the largest gathering seen in Isle Abbots for many years". There was an arch of evergreens and flowers. In the barn and the next building tea had been prepared by the Ladies' Committee with the help of Mrs. Schofield. Extra

tables had to be set outside. Nearly 250 folk sat down to tea at tables, where presided Mrs. John Humphry, Mrs. Hallett, Mrs. Hebditch, Mrs. Perrin, Mrs. Tapp, Mrs. S. Slade and Miss Perry (both of Curry Mallet), Mrs. Edward Humphry of Woodlands, Mrs. William Bicknell, Mrs. Crocker of Braden, Mrs. Dare and Miss Drake.

There were speeches after tea. Mr. Schofield spoke first, referring to the presence of two descendants of the Rev. W. Humphry, Mrs. C. Saunders and Miss Humphry of Taunton, and reading a letter from his American grandson, Judge Thomas Humphry. He then read letters from three former ministers, Mr. Osler (Exmouth), Mr. Francis (Yelverton) and Mr. James (Oadby, Leics.) Four local ministers and two laymen then spoke, expressing congratulations and good wishes.

Mr. T. S. Penny, J. P. of Taunton, presided at the evening meeting. Mr. Schofield read a short history of the Church. Principal Henderson congratulated the Church on having "such an earnest and straightforward man" as their minister. He spoke of Nonconformity, and of the training of children. "It was intense hatred of social injustices that led to Socialism...but they should remember that Socialism would not get rid of sin and that there would always be a function for the Christian Church". After the singing of a hymn three ministers spoke briefly: Rev. W. Gummer Butt (Yeovil), Rev. J. Burnham (Brentford) and Rev. E. S. Hadler (Burton Stogursey), the last two being former ministers. Mr. Hadler spoke of his three years at Isle Abbots as "among the happiest of my ministerial life", and went on to refer to the Rev. Silas Mead, an Isle Abbots lad who had become one of the most successful ministers in Australia. Mr. Schofield then announced that the collections amounted to £4. 9s. 2d., and spoke of the great assistance he had had from Mr. John Humphry, Hon. Treasurer of the Centenary Fund, the deacons, Mr. Ben Bicknell, Mr. Job Crocker, and Mr. Sydney Slade, and from the Ladies' Committee. The meeting concluded with the singing of the Doxology.

The minutes of the Annual Church Meeting in January 1910 record the re-election of Mrs. Jim Slade as Organist for Isle Abbots. Her original election is not recorded, but she

was already Organist at the Centenary, and for 60 years she played the organ faithfully and led the singing Sunday by Sunday, wet or fine, year in, year out.

In the December of that year a great gale blew down one of the Manse chimney-stacks, which fell through the roof, and necessitated urgent repairs at a cost of £68. A grant towards the expense was made from the fund called "The Chapel Case", but members subscribed nearly £40.

At the end of 1911 Mr. Schofield consulted the Church, asking if members thought a change of pastor would be in the best interest of the Church. Of 58 ballot-papers and envelopes sent out, 52 were returned, unanimously asking the Pastor to stay. There had been a slight storm, when a member, a local preacher, had been accused of attending horse races, betting, and attending a prize-fight. His offence proved to be a case of "only once", and he was exhorted to "Be not conformed to this world". Friction in Fivehead Sunday School in 1912 was followed in 1913 by a difference of opinion between the two congregations about the sharing of expenses. In 1914 an unfortunate incident nearly dissolved the partnership of Fivehead and Isle Abbots. A rather small but quite regular church meeting at Fivehead did not re-elect the senior deacon, who had actually been censured by the Church for his personal attacks on a previous minister. Another deacon took round the signatures a letter of sympathy, which appeared to invalidate the election. Mr. Schofield called another church meeting at Fivehead, which upheld the action of this deacon. So serious did this seem to the Pastor, that, fully supported by the Isle Abbots members and by two of the Fivehead deacons, he felt he could no longer continue his ministry at Fivehead, and must seek another pastorate. In the meantime he continued his ministry at Isle Abbots. An attempted reconciliation broke down, and the members at Fivehead began to seek a new minister. The members at Isle Abbots held that the members in the two chapels formed one church; those at Fivehead maintained that there were two churches which for convenience shared a pastor.

In the autumn of 1915 Mr. Schofield accepted the pastorate of the Baptist Church at Rye in Sussex. On December 1st the members from both villages met, under the chairmanship of the

Rev. A. W. Holden of Hatch Beauchamp, to agree about the financial obligations they were prepared to accept, and to invite a minister to preach "with a view to the pastorate" at both chapels. After a disappointment in January, the two congregations agreed in the spring to invite the Rev. Joseph Day of Devizes, and he accepted the pastorate of the two churches, on which he entered in the summer of 1916.

CHAPTER 6

TWO CHURCHES WITH ONE MINISTER

Mr. Day's ministry made possible a gradual healing of the wounds, though at first the relations of the two churches were rather distant and formal. Mr. Osler, the first pastor, was thanked for the help he gave. A Manse Renovation Fund was started and the Isle Abbots Church made a contribution. Jubilee services at Fivehead were proposed for 1917, but in the stress of the war no celebration was arranged. In 1918 Heman Salway, who had done yeoman-work for the Fivehead Church, asked to be relieved of his post as Secretary and Treasurer, and was succeeded by Howard Chedzoy, who was joined on the diaconate a year later by his brother, Herbert. The Fivehead minutes more than once record the members' appreciation of the work of Beatrice Derrick as Chapel-keeper, and of Elsie Chedzoy as organist.

If Isle Abbots kept a separate minute book from 1915 to 1930, it seems to have been mislaid, but some of the history of the church can be gathered from the Fivehead record.

Both churches suffered losses during the war of 1914-18. Fivehead lost George Chorley, sometime Superintendent of the Sunday School, while Isle Abbots lost John Bicknell. In 1916 the children at Isle Abbots Sunday School gave the money for their prizes to a Prisoner-of-War fund known as "Somersets in Germany".

The end of the war was followed by a united Church Meeting, preceded by tea and concluded with a united Communion Service at Isle Abbots. The united Communion Service became an annual event, held in each village alternately. In the autumn of 1919 the two churches agreed to invite the Western Baptist Association in the following year, when Mr. Day became President.

The deacons of the two churches were called together in July 1920 to consider the application of two Methodists for fellowship with Fivehead Baptist Church, although they had been baptised only as infants. The deacons took time to consider the question. At a second deacons' meeting Mr. Day moved a resolution "That, seeing there is only one Free Church in the Village, the Church is willing to accept into their fellowship members of other Churches on a letter of transfer from the Church of which the person is a member". The deacons approved unanimously and agreed that the resolution should be submitted to the two churches. Fivehead agreed unanimously on August 11th and Mr. and Mrs. Cornish were accepted from Muswell Hill Methodist Church, and Mary Dora Macdonald from the Congregational Church at Great Harwood, Lancs. of which the Rev. Albert Peel, the distinguished editor of "The Christian World", was minister.

A special Church Meeting was held at Fivehead on November 29th 1920, at which was moved a resolution of gratitude for the life and example of William Derrick, a member for 50 years and a deacon for 18. The members rose in silence to carry the resolution, which mentioned William's "simple faith, bright hope, devoted love and consecrated service" and "humbly prays that the Lord will raise up others, who, like him, shall worthily maintain His Church in this village". As if in answer to that prayer, the Pastor reported that Frank Miller had made an application for church fellowship. In January 1923 Frank Miller was added to the diaconate and in April he was made a trustee, becoming Church Secretary in 1940, an office he held for over a quarter of a century.

Mr. Day had been invited to be Pastor for five years, and was then re-invited unanimously for another five, and then "without fixing a time limit".

Money fell in value during the war and there was more money in circulation, as is shown by Fivehead's contribution of £47.10s.0d. to the Baptist Union Fund in 1920. In October 1921 members from

both churches gathered at Curry Mallet to hear the Rev. J. R. and Mrs. Stephens of India; and in the following month the Rev. Noel Ives of Lyme Regis conducted a mission in Fivehead, after which four young people were baptised and joined the Church. That year two former deacons, Christopher Hallett and Samuel Tucker, died, and in May 1922 Heman Salway also. He had been baptised in 1870 and had been a deacon since 1900. On the Sunday after Mr. Salway's death Mr. Day preached from Hebrews xiii.8, using Dr. Moffatt's translation "Remember your leaders.. and copy their faith".

New trustees were appointed in 1923, and among them Frank Miller, Hugh Male, Stanley Dare, Sidney Salway, Tom Bicknell, Jim Slade and his son Arthur, John Henry Humphry, Albert Adams and Tom Derrick.

In the summer of that year the World Baptist Conference was held in Sweden. Mr. Day attended it, and wrote in the Minute Book this paragraph. "The Pastor desires to put on record his grateful appreciation of the generosity of the members of the two Churches and the two congregations, who so thoughtfully and generously made it possible for him to attend the Baptist World Conference at Stockholm and visit the Norwegian Fiords on a cruise lasting from July 17 to Aug. 8. The experience was one he will never forget, and with it will ever remember the affection of his people, which was especially shewn in this marked way of gracious interest in his welfare. J. D. Oct.17.1923".

The Church followed the even tenor of its way through the middle years of the 'twenties. Fivehead dropped the singing of "Amen" at the end of hymns, and changed from "Psalms and Hymns" to the Baptist Church Hymnal. A new heating system was installed and paid for. An extra deacon was elected: Mr. John Starke, who came from East Finchley in 1924, and after giving great help to the Fivehead Church, was "dismissed" to become Baptist Minister at North Curry, and in 1938 President of the Western Baptist Association.

Every year at the Annual Meeting at Fivehead Howard Chedzoy, the Church Secretary, expressed the members' thanks to the Pastor for his ministry during the past twelve months. In March 1927 Mr. Day explained to the churches that as he was forbidden to

cycle, he was finding the distances too much for him to carry on his work among them, and he had therefore thought it right to accept the unanimous invitation he had received from the Baptist Church at Faringdon, Berks. It was with sincere regret that the two churches accepted their Pastor's resignation.

It took the churches nine months to find their next minister, but in January 1928, the Rev.S.R.Ward,M.A. came from Wythall, Birmingham. The minutes of the two churches show contributions to the Baptist Missionary Society, and to the Sustentation and Superannuation Funds; and the appointment of delegates to attend Taunton Free Church Council, the Baptist Union, and the Western Baptist Association. Late in 1934 a dozen young people at Fivehead applied for baptism and church membership, and Mrs. Perowne of Bristol asked to become a non-resident member, and subsequently contributed generously to church funds. Early in 1935 there were nine baptisms at Isle Abbots. In 1938 the membership stood at 46 in Fivehead and 41 in Isle Abbots.

Jim Slade, a member of Isle Abbots Chapel for 43 years and for many years deacon, secretary and treasurer, died at the end of 1936. The tribute to him in the Church Book speaks of him as "scrupulously fair, honoured for his integrity of character, kindly in nature and a true friend...One who wholly followed the Lord his God". He was succeeded in office by his son, Arthur. The Church invited Mrs. Jim Slade to become a deacon, and as she felt that she could not accept the honour, recorded their appreciation of her valued, faithful and devoted services. Willie Clarke and Tom Derrick were elected deacons.

Electric light was installed in Fivehead Chapel, Schoolroom and Manse in 1938, the lights being given by present families or in memory of past members. The old lamps were subsequently sold to the Women's Institute. The installation at Isle Abbots was made in 1942-3.

The approach of the second World War is indicated in the Minutes by a note of £5 collected for the Czech Relief Fund, recorded on January 30th, 1939. In February 1940 Fivehead Church sent greetings to the members serving in the army, and again at Christmas. In 1941 the Schoolroom at Fivehead was rented by the Somerset Education Committee as an Evacuation Day School, and in 1943 the Schoolroom at Isle Abbots also. The Air Ministry requisitioned land belonging to Isle Abbots Chapel for the Airfield they were constructing at Merryfield in 1942. The iron railings in front of the chapel were also taken for the war effort. Mention is made of the young men serving overseas, and then the Churches began to look forward to the making of peace, asking Mr. Ward to write to Mr.Eden (as he then was)"requesting every effort be made to secure Jewish freedom from oppression.

and agreeing in March 1945 to hold a united Thanksgiving Service at the termination of the European War. In May the trustees agreed to accept the Air Ministry's offer of £100 for the two acres they had requisitioned.

During the war Isle Abbots Chapel received from Miss Doris Slade, now Mrs. Leonard Mann, a gift of £587.14.2d. in 3½% War Stock in memory of her parents Sydney and Lucy Slade. Some years previously Mr. J. H. S. Humphry had bequeathed £100 to the trustees and some years later Miss Humphry left the church £200. Mrs. L. S. Crocker left £100 and Miss Passavant £10. Fivehead benefited by the legacy of £100 from Mrs. Luxton, sometime Church Organist, and £300 from Mr. F. Derham. Another gift to Fivehead had been two trays of individual communion cups from Mrs. England of Cardiff.

It was also during the war that Howard Chedzoy had to give up the secretaryship and treasurership of Fivehead, owing to the breakdown of his health. He had held the double position for twenty-two years. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Miller were asked to hold the two posts jointly. Mrs. Howard Chedzoy had been organist at Fivehead, certainly since 1930 and perhaps before that. In March 1946 she asked to relinquish the post, and her daughter, Mrs. Bert Yarde, was asked to share the duties with Norman Male.

That Church Meeting was the last at which Mr. Ward presided, though no one realised it at the time. He died in July, having been pastor to the two churches for eighteen and a half years. He had been President of the Western Baptist Association in 1937. The minutes refer to him as "a well loved and respected Pastor".

For two years Albert Adams and Frank Miller presided at their respective church meetings, and arranged for preachers throughout that time. In March 1948 the Rev. W. Jenkins of Pembroke preached at both churches, and without asking him to preach again, the members sent him a unanimous invitation to the pastorate, on which Mr. Jenkins entered in July. The Manse was then renovated inside and out, and Fivehead Chapel also in 1951. Financial help from Isle Abbots was greatly appreciated.

In 1950 Miss Lane, who for many years had been the tenant of Isle Abbots Manse, died, and the trustees recommended the church to sell this property. The Charity Commissioners gave their consent, and in '51 the house was sold at auction for £1,000, of

which the trustees were able to invest £929.5s.0d. in 4% Consols. The church received an unexpected gift of £10.10s.0d. in June '52 from Isle Abbots Cricket XI.

There is a gap in Fivehead minutes from January 1952 to September 1956, which is largely explained by the long illness and death of Mrs. Jenkins. When Mr. Jenkins accepted the call to the pastorate of Roch Chapel, Haverfordwest in '56, he wrote in the Isle Abbots book an appreciation of the members' loyalty, faithfulness, and assistance during the eight years of his ministry. "No minister can ever wish for better people to work with and for. I have been extremely happy, amid the trials and joys of life. The Secretary, Mr. A. J. C. Slade, has cheered me when I felt I had nothing left to live for. His letter to me, after the loss of my dear wife... gave me a new outlook on life. Since then I have realised afresh the goodness of God, and His fulfilment of the promises..."

During the two years' interregnum Miss Ethel Humphry occupied and took care of the Manse, became Acting Secretary and presided at some of the church meetings. On November 6th 1956 she recorded "It was with deep regret that we accepted the resignation through illness of our beloved Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. A. J. C. Slade", and on the 23rd "The Church suffered a great loss by the passing of Mr. A. Slade, who had served the Church for 20 years as Secretary and Treasurer. We desire to record our thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for a life of faithful service to the Church". His mother felt that she must after 60 years as organist resign that post, and a year later Mrs. Arthur Slade agreed to become organist. Albert Adams carried the double office of Secretary and Treasurer for seven years and continued as Secretary when, in October 1963, Mrs. A. Slade took over the treasurership.

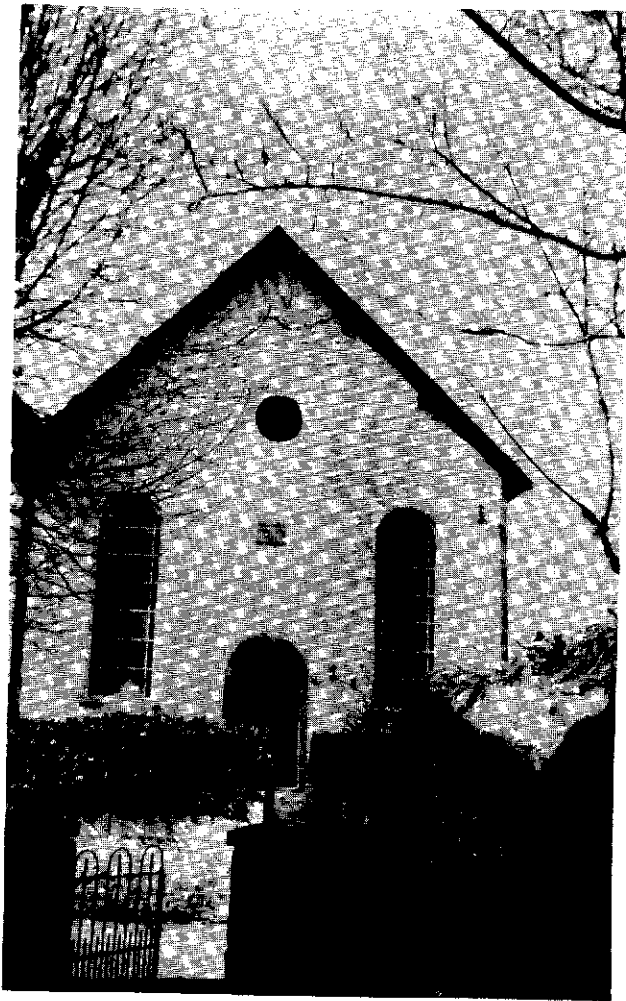
The Rev. E. Emlyn Thomas commenced his ministry in August 1958. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas were welcomed at a Garden Party at "Dermil", the home of Mr. and Mrs. Miller. Mr. Thomas' four years at Fivehead were punctuated with much illness, and in October 1962 he felt that he must resign. Mr. and Mrs. Miller had shared the offices of Secretary and Treasurer for twenty-one years and asked to retire in 1961, when Mr. Miller was made a Life Deacon, and the Church gave them a special edition of the Bible.

In the autumn of 1962 the Rev. C. L. B. Plumb, B.D. was teaching in Ilminster, and the Rev. H. H. Pewtress, the Area Superintendent, suggested that the two churches might consider asking him to combine his teaching with the pastorate. He preached in both chapels, was invited and accepted, and started his ministry in January 1963. The "landmark" of his time at the two chapels was the installation of electric heating in both buildings, and electric blowing of the organ at Isle Abbots. In the summer of 1965 Mr. Plumb accepted another teaching post in Cheshire and resigned the pastorate.

In July 1966 the Rev. H. E. Nutkins came from Hatch Beauchamp to be Pastor to the two churches. At once he began preparations for the Centenary of the formation of Fivehead Baptist Church, for which a most attractive renovation was completed, and the church was full for the re-opening service on December 17, 1967. The Centenary Celebration will be held on April 25th, when the afternoon service will be conducted by the Rev. Ralph Darvill, the Area Superintendent. The Rev. E. Emlyn Thomas, a former minister, will preside at the Tea; and in the evening Mr. W. H. Osborne, President of the Western Baptist Association, will be in the chair, and the preacher will be the Rev. J. Noel Schofield, M.A., B.D., the second son of the late Rev. James T. Schofield, and until recently Fellow of University College, Cambridge, and University Lecturer in Hebrew and Old Testament Studies.

The present Church Officers are:

ISLE ABBOTS	Secretary:	Mrs. Wild, The Manse, Isle Abbots.
"	Treasurer:	Mrs. Slade, Crosslands, Wiltown, Curry Rivel.
FIVEHEAD	Secretary:	Mrs. Cornall, Ridgway, Stowey Road, Fivehead.
"	Treasurer:	Mr. Reg Yarde, Higher Langford Farm, Fivehead.



BETHESDA, ISLE ABBOTS BAPTIST CHAPEL

BUILT 1817

NOTE ON SOURCES

The principal sources have been the Minute Books of the two Churches.

The Rev. J. Burnham included several Fivehead stories in his book "Chips from my Log", but some details differ from Joshua Corpe's own account of his conversion, of which I was given a copy by Mrs. Herbert Chedzoy.

Stories of the Rev. John Compston came from my Mother and from the late Mrs. Baxter Baker.

John Wesley's Journal tells of his two visits to Cathanger.

The return of Nonconformist meetings in 1669 is among the Tenison Manuscripts at Lambeth Palace, but was printed in G. Lyon Turner's "Original Records of Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence."

Nonconformist Meetings registered under the Toleration Act are listed in Quarter Sessions documents and the Bishops' and Archdeacons' archives. Those for Somerset are available in the County Record Office, Taunton.

A table of farm labourers' wages is given in Lord Ernle's "English Farming Past and Present".

W.M.W.

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