

1851 – 1875



Joseph Preece (Pastor from 1839 to 1875)

Recorded events from July 1853 to December 1875

1853

July

Members decided to build a Schoolroom and Library costing £140.

Three people were baptised at Bethesda, Trowbridge.

1854

March 12th

The new Schoolroom and Library were opened with Sermons given by visiting preachers.

1855

Four people were baptised in a stream near the Gas Works.

1857

A new organ was put in the gallery to aid the singing, at a cost of £30, this organ being built by Halletts of Trowbridge.

Up to 1859 baptisms were undertaken in the stream near the Gas Works

August

A stone porch and portico were erected at the front of the Chapel at a cost of £12.

1859

A baptistery was built, the woodwork being made by Reeves of Bratton and the Stone Masons being Keats & Son, this being used for seven baptisms during 1859, 1860 & 1861.

A lamp was placed at the front of the Chapel at a cost of two pounds fourteen shillings.
(£2-14s-0d)

1861

The Chapel was painted and improved during the summer of the year at a cost of £50.

August 13th

Special re-opening services were held, the preacher for both services being the Right Hon. Lord Keynsham.

1862

Baptisms took place every year including Elizabeth Davies, Rev Preece's granddaughter, during 1862.

1863

September 5th

John Wilkins, a founding Deacon, died.

1865

Close of Year

William Keates chosen as a Deacon, the choice was unanimous.

1867

It was decided to build a new Church on the site of the old Chapel.

June 24th

The last service was held in the old Chapel. Mr Taylor, who led the first prayers when the Church was formed, led the last prayers in the old Chapel.

NB. The first Chapel would only hold 170 persons and was inadequate for the increasing congregation.

A building committee was formed, including the Pastor, Deacons and about a dozen members. The Architects were Messrs Hardwick & Son of Warminster and the builder, William Keates of Westbury, one of the Deacons of the Church.

August 27th

A memorial stone for the new Chapel was laid by Rev Preece. A bottle containing a copy of 'The Freeman', a few then current coins and a statement of the origin and need of the new Church was placed in the Church. (In foundations near to the memorial stone, exact location unknown.)

The new Church was to hold 400 persons plus classrooms and schoolroom to hold 200 scholars.

During the building work in 1867 and 1868 services were held in the old Drill Hall. This building being connected to the premises of Mr Hill, Draper of Edward Street, it was originally a brush factory owned by John Wilkins (see 1863), but was used by Westbury Rifle Corps. The Hall was filled with forms and benches to seat 200 persons. The attendance was very good with every seat occupied, although the Hall was very hot in summer and very cold in winter. The cost for the use of the Hall was £10 per year.

1868

June 22nd Monday

The last service in the Drill Hall was taken by the Rev. R Morrison from the Congregational Church at Bradford on Avon. Rev Morrison was then living in Westbury and had previously preached on Sunday evenings.

June 24th

The opening of the new (present) Church:

7.00am A Prayer Meeting.

2.30pm The Official Opening Service:

- The prayer of dedication was offered by the Rev Pugh of Devizes.

- The scripture reading from John 4 was read by the Rev John Moss of Silver Street Chapel, Trowbridge.
- The sermon based on Genesis ch. 45 v 25 – 28 was preached by the Rev Charles Clarke of Broadmead, Bristol.

5.00pm Tea with 300 people seated in the Schoolroom.

6.00pm Evening Service. The Church was crowded. Those taking part:

- Rev. D Wassel of Bath
- Rev. J Allenson of Market Lavington
- Rev. Clarke preached on Galatians ch. 6 v 14.

The Church had been decorated by ferns and hot house plants lent by A Laverton Esq. Admiration of the Building gave credit to the Architects and Builders. N.B. There is a stone plaque in the gable end wall of roof in the loft that reads: W Keates Mason 1868.

The Entire Cost of the Church was £1,400.

The collection and proceeds from the tea raised £50.

Sunday following

Services were conducted by Rev. T. G. Rooke B. A. of Frome, there were 19 Ministers present.

October 1st

10 persons were baptised.

1869

West End joined 'The Wilts and East Somerset Association of Baptist Churches'.

December 2nd

5 persons were baptised.

1870

October 11th

The Wilts and East Somerset Association of Baptist Churches Meetings were held at West End, where 50 Ministers and delegates attended. Dinners and Teas were served. Several Ministers gave addresses in the afternoon. It was reported that 165 children attended the Sunday School at West End.

1871

June 4th

The Right Hon. Lord Keynsham preached at the Sunday service.

1872

May 21st & 22nd

West End Baptist Church reported to the Wilts & East Somerset Association the following:

- Members: 80
- Sunday School Teachers: 10
- Scholars: 165

A sovereign was sent for expenses.

Baptisms took place every year to 1875.

1875

December 1st

The Pastor, Rev Preece died aged 83, he had been Pastor for 36 years. (See tablet above pulpit in Church). He was always spoken of with great respect.

NB. A note taken from William Doel's 'Twenty Golden Candlesticks!':

For several years, owing to age and infirmity, Mr Preece had the assistance of a Mr Morrison, a retired Congregational Minister, who usually preached for him once on the Lord's day.

West End Baptist Church
West End, Westbury, Wiltshire, BA13 3JG