

EWYAS HAROLD METHODIST CHAPEL



A lifetime of memories

REMEMBERED PEOPLE



Phil & May Powell



Reg & Minnie Michael

REMEMBERED OCCASIONS



Welcome Corner



Harvest Supper

David Smith

First memories of Ewyas Harold Chapel were going to Sunday School with my brother Ivan. I would be 4 or 5.. Sunday School was held in the back of the chapel. We met from 10 a.m. until 10.30. Pupils then sat through the service. Miss Muriel Thomas (later she became Mrs Lynk, then Mrs Davies) and Miss Ann Michael were the teachers at that time. The one thing I hated was the Anniversary .A girl I knew was shy about performing. "Never mind," said the minister, "you will look very pretty. That's what matters." There were oil lamps for lighting and a coke stove for heating. The Schoolroom was built when I was 10 or 11.

Pat Smith

After our wedding in August 1960, David and I stayed with his father at 2 Elmdale for a year. Next door lived Mabel Brown with her family. She introduced me to the Methodist chapel. Rev Fred Wilcox was the first minister I met. Sadly ,his wife Jenny died while they were here. After that we had Rev S.A. Barrass, Pastor Willis (for one year), Colin Harbach with his wife Pamela, Donald Rogers with his wife Brenda, Eric Locke with his wife Pat, Michael Newman with his wife Elizabeth, Gordon Tonge (who married Lynne in 2004), ,and then finally Jon Chesworth who shared responsibility with his wife Frances. We were glad to see all the ministers' families. In particular ,because their children were of similar ages to ours, we developed a lifelong friendship with the Harbachs.

During Colin Harbach's ministry I was asked to help with the Sunday school. Pamela Harbach & Ann Pitt also helped. After sixteen years I passed it on to the younger members of the chapel. We had a thriving Sunday School for many years, averaging twenty pupils .Children came from Walterstone, Lower Maescoed, Garway Hill and of course Pontrilas & Ewyas Harold. We formed a very talented guitar group & choir. They were always happy to take part in the morning service and the annual Anniversary & Christmas service. When I first started coming to the chapel we had morning & evening services – I cannot remember when the evening service was dropped. The married ministers were supported by their wives in the work of the church in ministry & fellowship, many bringing their talents & supporting & encouraging us inside& outside the church. To name some: Welcome Corner (for the home baking there was always a queue outside the church on a Friday morning!), Cwm Crafts, Ladies Fellowship, Flower Festivals, Pop-In and Christmas Bazaar (at the Memorial Hall) when we joined with other chapels of the Cwm & Kingstone Circuit). Also, there was a pre-school held in the chapel organised by Pop-In. There were garden parties at our house and at Station House, Pontrilas. Recently we have had a local choir for five years in succession giving us wonderful concerts at no expense, with all proceeds going to Action for Children. Another popular event has been Travellers' Tales in the winter, when we have heard of speakers' holidays abroad. Over the years Ewyas Harold Chapel has always been welcoming to new members and visitors – a happy place to be on a Sunday morning for worship & friendship & praising God. We shall miss it.

Janet Meyrick

When Janet & Tony got married in 1966 they made their home in Ewyas Harold. Janet had always attended Garway Hill Chapel and straightaway linked up with the Methodist Chapel in her new home. She remembers helping Pamela Harbach with Sunday School and Preschool. The minister helped them with craft work to suit their Sunday School lessons. Later, her children and grandchildren were all attenders when young. She misses the fellowship, the singing and being part of the cake-makers team. They were always called upon for functions like Welcome Corner and the Christmas bazaar. "It doesn't seem like Sunday when there is no service to go to." She hopes to find her way to one of the other churches in the village.

June Meyrick

Mostly, June remembers the music. She sang in the circuit choir and helped organise musical evenings with children. Christmas and George Thomas's visit stay specially in her memory. Sad and happy family occasions were marked at the chapel – Jackie's funeral (with "What a friend we have in Jesus"), Annette's and Caroline's weddings (with Reg escorting the bride across the road), also providing the baby for a live Nativity scene. She remembers that her three needed help in staying quiet in chapel while the Harbach children were models of behaviour. She could remember all sorts of preachers – from the hellfire sermons of Percy Powell to the gentle persuasiveness of Bill Christopher. Good people both. Not just the singing and preaching – times of quiet were special too. Those days are over now, but it will be much harder to feel the seasons of the year without the pattern of chapel life. But she will go on singing "Count your blessings" at home.

Joyce Lacey

She & Don came to the village in 1993, first in their caravan, then in their newly built bungalow. Through a contact from their old church in Shirley, Michael Newman welcomed them – he visited all the newcomers in Gilbert's Wood - and they soon joined the friendly congregation at the bottom of the hill. Joyce remembers Elizabeth recruiting her for meals-on-wheels, Sylvia Horton helping her to arrange flowers (especially for the Flower Festival), having a chat with Marion Michael ("not thanked enough") after she finished playing the organ. Life was busy midweek – Joyce being in the catering team that welcomed visitors from the Midlands, Don enjoying singing in the united choir. She will miss the Sunday sermons. Though sad at the closing of the chapel, Joyce feels strongly that denominational differences do not matter. She will probably go to the Baptists some Sundays and the Parish Church on others.

Vicky Green

When she and George came to live in the village they decided to try both church & chapel. When they came to the Methodists it was May Powell who greeted them in the porch. "You are settling here? Then you must come round for coffee after service. May & Phil really looked after them, taking them rides around the countryside. Though May did most of the talking, Vicky remembers Phil warmly as the one who recited beautifully, got George to join him in the choir and when the chapel was painted got on a ladder to paint the ceiling. These were such busy days – lots of chapel social events when all the women baked furiously and fundraisers for charity too. In fact she agreed that the little chapel "punched above its weight" by contributing to so many good causes & community gatherings – the Hospice, Dore Transport, Probus, W.I., the Walkers Group and much more. Maybe contacts such as the Knit & Natter Group and Pop-In will keep going. Such happy memories.

Jo Russell & John Pring

We arrived in Pontrilas in April 1990 and soon after began to look round the churches in Ewyas Harold. An elderly cousin living with us couldn't be left on her own so John did the scouting. When he came back late from visiting the Methodist chapel I knew he had found the church we wanted. On walking in he was greeted at the door, shown a seat and after the service had talked to everyone and been invited back for coffee by Phil and May Powell. He was overwhelmed by the friendliness We have been regular attenders ever since.

Not long after, Eric Locke was followed as minister by Michael Newman. His wife Elizabeth invited me to join the Cwm Craft Sewing Group as a way for me to meet people as I couldn't often get to chapel. At the time the church was one of nine in the Cwm & Kingstone Circuit and we had monthly joint services with the other churches. I specially remember the open-air services at Greig Chapel with its gorgeous mountain views and at John and Bridget Biggs's home. Many of our members did baking for Welcome Corner. Every December there was the Circuit Christmas Bazaar at the Memorial Hall where every church had a different stall. I think of Gordon Tonge and his books, my puzzles, Madley's bathroom assortment and lots more, not forgetting the lovely refreshments. Michael and Elizabeth started POP-IN once a month and Pat Smith carried on with this after they left. This was extended to an occasional POP-In-Extra before Christmas and a summer Garden Party here at Station House. Busy and very enjoyable occasions. Another fund-raising programme was providing afternoon tea for visiting coach parties from city churches. Marion Smith, Dilys Bond and I and many other helpers made anything from afternoon tea to salad plates and sweets.

Many names of past members come to mind. Godfrey Pitt who kept the church pews, etc in tip-top condition. Sylvia Horton who organised the wonderful Flower Festival. Marion Michael who loved to decorate the church at Christmas and managed the church finances after taking over from her uncle, Reg Michael. His funeral I shall never forget.

Sylvia Addis

Sylvia wasn't always a Methodist. In her younger years on the farm their church was Dulas, where half-sister Mary played the organ. Later she lived at Trappe House with mother and then, in 1995, on her own in one of the new houses in Gilbert's Wood. Michael Newman visited all the residents there and as a result she made her way down the hill to the Methodist Chapel. These were in the days when Reg Michael was running things and Muriel Davis played the organ. She enjoyed the friendliness of "Pop-in" and was glad when flower arrangers came and asked for flowers from her garden. Looking after her plants and doing embroidery pictures were her great pleasures. In former days she had been a helper behind the scenes at Church weddings. When Frances Price, an old Abbey Dore school mate, married local Methodist minister Fred Wilcox in 1966, she went as a guest. So there were a few chapel connections. Out of all the preachers, she thought Michael was "the pick of the bunch" because she could hear him clearly – "He knew how to throw his voice." Going down the hill was always harder than coming back, but latterly she appreciated Vicky Green & Pat Smith fetching her in their cars. She hopes she will keep some contact.

Jill Bayliss

Jill has only lived in the village for three years. Having a long attachment to Garway Hill chapel, it was natural to her to join the Methodists in Ewyas Harold. It made a lot of difference to her in settling in. Without coming to the chapel she reckons she would have had very few friends. Not being able to see the words in the hymnbook, she still enjoyed the preaching and the singing. Sunday without a service seems very strange to her and she is sad to see the building closed. But she will do her best through the Knit & Natter Group to keep in contact. Fellowship is so important.

A PLACE TO MAKE IMPORTANT VOWS



Tim & Annabel / Philip & Catherine



WILL YOU.....?I WILL.



Ian & Caroline / Gordon & Lynne



Colin Harbach

The schoolroom was used regularly for various meetings, crafts, fund raising events. Most work on the property of it was afforded and achieved by members and local crafts people. During my time the central pulpit was moved to one side leaving the wall to display a cross above the Communion Table, bringing it in line with changing Methodist worship and theology. The same enthusiasm contributed to the renewed schoolroom, kitchen and toilet (with its new plastic seat advising a weight limit of twenty stones!). On one occasion the chapel became a wages office. It was in the days before centralised stipends. The Circuit Steward 'phoned me to say he had not had time to get to the bank this quarter-end but had left my stipend - all in cash – on the Communion Table for me to collect. He apologised for it not all being there and promised the rest would come as soon as he got to the bank!!

There are a couple of incidents I will mention which show the important contribution of the chapel to the real work of the Gospel of Jesus and his Kingdom: The younger mother who had had a difficult past life and was often consumed by personal regrets, who from time to time said to me *One of the things I really love about chapel is our Communion Service and when, after the confession prayer, you say 'Jesus says, your sins are forgiven!' He says it to me.* And the elderly member who had attended her chapel all her life since childhood. She stayed behind after a Circuit Good Friday service at Ewyas Harold to tell me how she had attended that week's Wednesday Bible Study - *I cannot remember what was said, but during that meeting I had such a warm feeling and I felt I really did believe!* The Wesleys would have been proud of her! One Prayer for Unity Week representatives from all four village churches met in our schoolroom to talk about our difference and plans for togetherness. One elderly Roman Catholic lady said nothing until the end. Very simply and quietly she asked, *'I love Jesus. You love Jesus. What's the problem?'*

Brenda Rogers, wife of Rev Donald Rogers

It was the happiest appointment we ever had. Quite a job finding it on the map, but soon became home to us and our three children, Tim, Harry & Hilary. All of them went to Kingswood Methodist School at Bath (Tim became Head Boy), but this was their home – Harry even thought of becoming a farmer. Donald, of course, was both faithful pastor and well-respected scholar. His book on the sacramental hymns of Charles Wesley was written at Val d'Or. This house on the hill (difficult to climb for someone like me with a disability) had my loom in one room. When we came here I was an amateur weaver and embroiderer, but soon I became semi-professional. It was a joy to present the chapel with a Pulpit Fall and Communion Table cover, each made from local sheep's wool. After a while, I started a small craft group and we had one or two exhibitions of our work in the chapel. The members were mostly farmers' wives, glad to have something to do as a change from farming duties. We were impressed by the natural kindness and neighbourly concern, both of the chapel and the village. Donald spoke of "The Bank of Good Deeds", meaning that if you were the recipient of kindness, you were obliged to give something back. The hedge was cut by someone we didn't know, because someone at the chapel had helped him. I managed to get round the thirteen chapels of the circuit by car, to help with preaching. Gradually I realised that I had a call to be an ordained minister myself and that was what happened subsequently. All the years and all the seasons were memorable, but most of all was the winter of 1972. We were dependant on the kindness of David Smith and others to get to us in their 4 by 4's and to supply transport to outlying places. Since our time many of the folk we knew have died – that includes dear Donald. But those of us who can look back have some treasured memories. Thank you, Methodists of Ewyas Harold.

Eric Locke

"I'm going to a place you won't have heard of, called Ewyas Harold" I said to some schoolteachers in a Yorkshire school. "Norman castle" said the man who taught history. He knew about that, but he didn't know the village, least of all the modest little chapel on the corner of Abbey Dore Road. Now that this is closing down we look into our memory store and remember what we have valued in the years we have sung and prayed and laughed and cried within these walls. For me it includes a father's funeral and the weddings of two daughters. Most of all it has been about people, their uniqueness and kindness.

I think of Phil Powell, who risked injury (and May's sharp tongue) decorating the manse staircase, then digging the field that became our garden. I think of Reg Michael counting chapel finances out of shoe boxes and caring for his beloved Minnie. I think of the constant hospitality and know-how of David and Pat Smith. I think of Muriel Davies, then Marion Michael, doing their best on the organ. What pleasure to see which outfits June and Janet Meyrick were wearing and what hat this time had Sylvia Addis chosen. I recall the stories told in the gravelly voice of Gilbert Powell. Likewise I can bring to mind the accents of Godfrey and Anne Pitt, one pure Herefordshire, the other lovely Welsh sing-song. I treasure the shepherd's crook Peter Smith gave me, a memento of learning a bit about farming life from him and Marion. Tom Morgan, local Naval hero, and Phyllis, his love-of-a-lifetime, added colour to bible studies. Such trouble Sylvia Horton took over setting the Communion Table and arranging flowers – she and Jack were real stalwarts. On returning we found the same warm friendliness during our retirement years. So rewarding to hear Don Lacey's Midland voice sharing the adventures he and Joyce had in faraway places. Strange to think there was a time before John Pring and Jo Russell kept us on our toes – ecumenical relations and Fair Trade in particular. Who can forget Audrey Smith's smile, undiminished by dementia? What a clear voice Daphne Hartill had as she shared with us the Authorised Version. We can never repay the kindness of Vicky Gren, who gave sanctuary to Pat when we moved house. Dear Jill Bayliss has been a much-loved recent attender, such a witness of faithfulness as she tries to sing the hymns she cannot see. "The people, Lord, the people!" We shan't forget.

Michael Newman

Coming to the Cwm and Kingstone Circuit after a varied ministry, we hoped for a living community where we could belong, dependent on and supporting one another, serving the neighbourhood, sharing the Christian Way, grounded in God's good earth. All this we found. I was Minister, but we were ministered to throughout our five years and encouraged in body, mind and spirit. There were stalwart preachers, firm advocates, joyful singers, great story-tellers, those who cared for our premises and finances, and others quietly affirming in their way of life and farming that God is with them. I warmed to conversations about how the world including ourselves existed, what is its meaning and in what way will it all end.

There were peak moments in our common life - George Thomas, former Speaker of the House of Commons held a large congregation spell-bound. At an open-air service on the hills the address was given by a former President of Conference who said he had experienced there what it must have been like in early Methodism. Over the New Year baked potatoes were enjoyed by many at the Manse. Elisabeth's mother came to live with us and when she died her funeral was almost a whole Circuit event. Ewyas Harold itself organised a monthly Pop-In which was helpful to many people, some of whom lived alone.

Foreground to all this activity was the natural world in which we were privileged to live – hedgerows of entangled wild flowers, particularly foxglove, dog rose and honeysuckle and then the autumn crocus on the Common. With a local shepherd I watched a lamb being born. I was taken to Abergavenny to experience the cattle market there. All the time birds could not be missed, especially buzzard and sparrowhawk. One night returning from a Circuit meeting we were amazed by the sight of Northern Lights spreading over much of the horizon.

Sometimes there were misunderstandings and cross purposes. But kindness prevailed. There were already signs that the world as we knew it locally was changing, old folks among us could not go on for ever, buildings would have to be used for other purposes. Yet we are immensely grateful for the happy memories of our stay where we were so included in the Circuit's life.

Gordon Tonge

It's after midnight and the car is packed to the roof with mops, buckets, brushes and all the bits and pieces that remain after the removal men have departed with what you *thought* were all your goods and chattels. I stop in a layby to look at the map, in what I later discover is Kentchurch. No sooner have I stopped than a blue and yellow car pulls up alongside and a uniformed officer gets out. Wondering what offence I have committed, I wind down the window..... "Can we help you, sir?" he asks. I explain that I am on my way to Ewyas Harold, but am a little lost. "Follow us, sir", he says and soon I arrive in the village which is to be my home for the next twenty one years (sixteen as Circuit Superintendent I thought that I knew what 'rural' meant. After all, I had spent the last eight years in 'rural' Lincolnshire. I soon discovered differently! The chapel in Ewyas Harold was one of four places of worship in a village with a population of about a thousand people and I was made very welcome, not only by the Methodist friends, but also by the members of the other three churches. We shared on a rota basis the leading of school assemblies, Lent meetings, children's holiday clubs and many other seasonal acts of worship.

Ewyas Harold chapel had about thirty members in 1995, a small Sunday School and a good mixture of members. Coffee mornings, Cwm Crafts events and the annual Christmas Fair were essential to maintain what was one of the smallest circuits in Methodism. Social events were very much a part of life at the chapel: Christmas parties, visits from other churches, and who can forget the annual event of our friends from Smethwick in Birmingham? Oh, and I almost forgot a certain event in 2004 when Eric Locke conducted a service of blessing for my marriage to Lynne - an opportunity for local folk to celebrate with us. This was followed by a celebration in the Smiths' garden to mark her arrival at Val D'Or as my wife and helpmate - all in all, a truly memorable day! You will probably have sung, "We are here to help each other, walk the mile and bear the load." Very true in these parts. We gather our memories and remember the faithful witness of the years.



Fred Wilcox (1959-1964)



Colin & Pamela Harbach (1968-1977)



Donald & Brenda Rogers (1977-1982)



Michael & Elizabeth Newman



Eric & Pat Locke (1982-1990)



Gordon Tonge



Jon Chesworth & Frances Biseker (2011-2020)



Once upon a time

1990 worshippers

A Letter from the Chair of the District, the Rev. Rachel Parkinson

I was sad this week to receive the news that Ewyas Harold congregation are now "Ceased-to-Meet." You have a special place in my heart after that walk on the Common – and also as one of the far outposts of the District.

I'm comforted to hear that the decision was made with sadness but without acrimony and hope that all members of the church family will remain at peace with the decision. I also remember that your community is blessed by churches of other denominations and hope everyone can find a new spiritual home.

Please pass on my love and prayers to everyone I met at my visit and those I did not.

With every blessing,

Rachel

THE HAPPY BAND 2020



David



Pat



Janet



June



Vicky



Joyce



John



Jo



Eric



Pat



Sylvia



Jill

Tributes

The Golden Valley was my home,
Its winding lanes I loved to roam.
As travellers on life's common way
A new born snowdrop herein lay.
At turn of year this nodding flower
Unfolds the Resurrection hour.

Fred Wilcox, minister 60 years ago

I have some very happy memories of the welcoming atmosphere at the chapel. My first wife Jean, being a Methodist, felt very at home there. When she knew that she was going to die, the Ewyas Harold minister was always there to help.

Geoff Loosemore, regular visitor 30 years ago

Sometimes I would lose my place in the service, because I was too busy staring out through those tall, dignified windows at the back of the chapel. It didn't matter whether the rain lashed on the window panes until they were grey as slate, or whether that distant hill with bright sunlight gradually moving over it filled the horizon, it was a view that took me into the mystery of God... These reflections come shaped by a congregation that was as warm and welcoming as the building.

Frances Biseker, present minister