

Kelly's Directory for 1848 says there were places of worship for the Independents and the Primitive Methodists in the village; the Primitive Methodists were part of a movement nationally that felt the Wesleyans had 'lost their way'. The Wesleyan Methodist congregation in Charlton had probably died out and their chapel in Gravel Lane had come into the hands of the Independents; then by 1848 the number of Primitive Methodists had grown sufficiently for them to have some sort of meeting room of their own.

I can find no further mention of Methodism in the village until 1877 when a Mr W Hunt bought a row of cottages in The Close and made two of them into a Primitive Methodist Preaching Room which was opened with a public tea and platform meeting in July of that year. The previous year a site had been bought for a new chapel in Albert Street Blandford and the first named trustee was 'William Hunt late of Charlton Marshall but now of Spettisbury (sic), Dairyman'; presumably one and the same. Leading lights in the preaching room were Charles and Sarah Easton, shopkeepers who had come from Fontmell Magna up the valley towards Shaftesbury. He often played the harmonium and spoke at services and she was one of the leaders in the thriving Sunday School. The local press frequently reported Harvest Thanksgiving services, Sunday School Anniversaries and teas, Missionary meetings and Circuit meetings and one of the Primitive Methodist specialities, the annual Camp Meeting; these were open air events for preaching, praying and singing and were usually held in Mr Ball's field which was lent for the occasion.

Around the turn of the century changes were afoot in the village chapels; Mr Hodges chapel closed and was taken over by the Primitive Methodists as it was probably larger and better built than theirs in The Close which seems to have been unused for the next forty years or so except perhaps as an animal

shelter and it was eventually demolished for bungalows to be built.

Records are scanty but a preaching plan from 1912 shows that T Courage from Charlton Marshall was a Local Preacher and that in February that year the Gospel Victory Car was in the area and Mr Halford was holding mission services in Charlton on Sunday February 11th. Methodist meetings were also being held somewhere in Thorneycombe (sic) around this time. The Primitive and Wesleyan Methodists reunited in 1932 and one of the stalwarts of the 1930s and 1940s appears to be Mrs Vacher who lived in what is now No 9 The Close; she was faithfully supported by Mr J Yeatman from Spettisbury, a woodman and hurdle maker known as Jimmy, but sadly, along with many others, the chapel was in decline. It continued through the war years but by the end of the 1940s it was clear that closure was the only option. It was perhaps fitting that part of the proceeds of the sale went to refurbish the chapel at Winterborne Zelston that Robert Compton and Joseph Palmer had helped to establish over a hundred years earlier.

Among other names and families associated with the Primitive Methodists in the twentieth century were Mr Hopkins, Miss G Foot, Phyllis Hunt, Mrs Frost, AE Ballard, Mrs Miller, Mrs Irvine and Miss I Moore. From the registers it is not always clear whether christenings took place in the village chapel or in Albert Street but between 1876 and 1936 some recurring names are Palmer, Davies/Davis, Billows, Edwards, Dennett, Eaton, Scovell, Courage and Brown. The chapel was not licensed for weddings; these took place in the Albert Street chapel.

The Inclosure (sic) Act of 1799

In 1799 an Act of Parliament was passed 'for Dividing, Allotting, and Inclosing the Open Fields, Meadows, Downs, Marshes, Commonable Lands, and Waste Grounds, within the Parish of Charlton Marshall, in the County of Dorset.' These were estimated to