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All things bright and beautiful? Church and Chapel in the Wychwoods

JOHN BENNETT

> The rich man in his castle,
> The poor man at his gate,
> God made them, high or lowly,
> And ordered their estate.
>
> Cecil Frances Alexander, 1848[1]

> The labourer is as respectable as the farmer, because God made him, and to trample upon the labourer is to trample upon God's property.
>
> Joseph Arch, July 1873[2]

The verse above, from the popular hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful', illustrates a still rarely contested world view in mid-19th century England. It encapsulates the establishment view of the divinely ordained relationship between the agricultural labourer ('the poor man'), the landowner ('the rich man'), at the time of the Ascott Martyrs' story. The second quote, from a speech given in Milton-under-Wychwood by Joseph Arch, illustrates the challenge to this world view by the champion of the agricultural labourer and sometime Primitive Methodist preacher – but a challenge still citing a Christian God in support of his cause.

This essay considers the relationship between landowners, farmers, agricultural labourers and their shared God in the Wychwoods area at the time of the Ascott Martyrs' story. Central to this is the question often asked of the relationship between the agricultural worker and Christian church in all its forms – how far did the ethos and authority of those institutions hinder or support the workers' plight?

In the Oxford Prison charge sheet (see pages 22–3 and 162), each of the jailed women gives their religion. Eight identified as Church of England, seven as Baptists, and one as Methodist. These bald facts show that half of the women declared an allegiance with the established Church and half identified as belonging to one of the common Nonconformist denominations in the Wychwoods area. This division is broadly in line with national estimates for the religious divide in mid-19th century England.[3] Of course, the selection of a religious allegiance on a charge sheet may not be entirely reflective of actual affiliation. Having been convicted by clerical magistrates from the Anglican Church, the Ascott women might be inclined to favour an identification with the established Church in the hope of more lenient treatment from those in such positions of power. We also know that religious affiliation was, even in the 1870s, a more fluid affair than a box-ticking exercise on a charge sheet might suggest.[4]

Other than this we know nothing about the personal spiritual lives of these 16 women. However, we

can build some picture of the role of religious institutions in rural lives of the working classes in rural Oxfordshire and the Wychwoods in particular. It is also possible to look at the attitudes of the various religious denominations towards the worker. These two themes will form the main content of this study, alongside a particular consideration of the significance of Nonconformism for the birth and growth of the NALU in the Wychwoods area. For the purposes of this essay the geographical area under consideration comprises the three Wychwood villages, Shipton, Milton and Ascott and the other local townships within their hinterland.

The Church of England

The Church of England, as the established church, had a long-held hegemony in the religious, social and political lives of the English citizenry. However, it was having to cope with significant challenges to that position throughout the 19th Century, and was also having to contend for membership with the rapid growth of a number of Nonconformist Christian sects who were now able to operate in a much more liberal religious environment. This challenge Is visible in the religious life of the Wychwoods from the early years of the 19th Century.

St Mary the Virgin, Shipton-under-Wychwood (Figure 1), was the historic mother church of the area, once forming the centre of an ecclesiastical and administrative parish comprising the townships of Ascott-under-Wychwood,[5] Milton-under-Wychwood, Lyneham, Leafield, Langley and Ramsden. However, by the mid-19th century these townships had begun to achieve some independent parochial status.

Besides St Mary's in Shipton, there were a number of historic parish churches within the region with deep social and religious roots. Ascott had Holy Trinity, dating back to the 12th century (Figure 2); Leafield had an old Church of England chapel dateable back to the 15th Century[6]; and Fifield had the medieval church of John the Baptist dating back at least to the 14th century. There were other historic parish churches in nearby Chadlington, Fulbrook, and Burford. However, from the later 18th Century and into the 19th Century, a steep rise in population in rural Oxfordshire was putting pressure on parishes to increase their provision of church accommodation. For the Church of England the situation was made more urgent by the growth of Nonconformist groups, who were making particular inroads in areas where there was no parish church, or the parish church was remote. Shipton parish encompassed a number of such areas.

The government had also recognised this need for increased church accommodation and the Church Building Act of 1818 established the Church Building Commission with a budget of one million pounds to build new churches particularly in growing urban areas. The budget was increased by another half a million pounds in 1828.[7] This programme increased provision in the growing urban areas from the 1820s to 1850s. In rural areas there was a continued expectation that the lay community would provide additional accommodation. In Oxfordshire it was often the rural gentry who stepped in to fill this void.

The squire of Sarsden, James Haughton Langston (1796 - 1863), was a key local benefactor. Langston (figure 3) inherited considerable wealth from his father along with the Sarsden estate and increased his land holdings to include extensive acreages In Churchill, Lyneham, Milton-under-Wychwood and Chadlington. He was by all accounts a progressive and beneficent local estate manager and farmer.[8] He instigated and fully-funded the build of All Saints, a brand-new parish church in nearby Churchill in 1825-27. He provided land and largely funded the build of SS Simon and Jude (figure 4) and adjoining school and schoolmasters house in Milton-under-Wychwood in 1853-54. He had also offered to build and endow a new church for Lyneham around 1850, but this was vetoed by the vicar of Shipton[9], however, Langston

provided a new school room in Lyneham in 1862, which was also licensed to hold regular Church of England services.[10] Langston was a popular local squire. There was even a plan to erect a statue of him on the Recreation Ground in Milton, but Langston objected to this "It would be only for the boys to throw stones at the old Squire". The money raised, was put towards the provision of a new water supply to Milton village.[11]

Other significant new churches were provided or subsidised by other local landowners. The land for the building in 1841 of the church of Holy Trinity in nearby Finstock was donated by Francis Almeric Churchill (1779–1845), the first Baron Churchill, built just one year after the Finstock Methodist Chapel had opened. The old chapel in Leafield was demolished and supplanted by St Michael and All Angels in 1859–60, the stone provided by Francis George Spencer (1802–1886), the second Baron Churchill, while the build costs were covered by the Crown. A new parish church was built In Ramsden in 1841-42, this was again replaced in 1853–54 with the building of St James, largely funded by the incumbent, Robert Lowbridge Baker, and other local benefactors, the builder being Groves of Milton.[12] All these churches are still in use.

Thus, by the 1870s the Wychwoods area was well provisioned with Anglican churches, both old and new. The Church of England as the established church of course had distinct advantages in terms of longevity, status and resources that were not available to the non-established Nonconformist sects. But by the mid-19th century various Nonconformist missions had made significant inroads into the Wychwoods area, especially those peripheral to the location of the parish church in Shipton. The build of new Anglican churches was one response to this challenge, but both sides had to up their game to win and keep their congregations.

While the Anglican Church might be perceived as in league with the landowners and the build of brand-new churches can be seen as a countermeasure to the Nonconformists, it does not mean to say that they were insensitive to the plight of the agricultural labourer. The clergy sat on Poor Law Unions, on boards of guardians for workhouses, and administering to the poor in other, more informal ways. A local example of church charity occurs in 1871: ‘the Rev. R. Tweed, the Incumbent of Ascott, has, with his usual kindness and liberality, presented 4 cwts of coal to each of the poor families living in the village.’[13] This kind of *ad hoc* charity was not unusual; however, the donation was probably to those unable to work through disability and infirmity rather than to the underpaid agricultural labourer.

The Church of England would have been a significant presence in the lives of the Ascott Martyrs, whether they were regular attendees or not, because of its administrative, religious and political control within the parish. Essay 8, on the clerical magistrates, offers a further illustration of the Church’s continuing religious and judicial authority. The Church of England still had a virtual monopoly on the sacraments and rites including births, marriages and deaths. We know that all the Ascott Martyrs were baptised in the Church of England, despite what other congregations they may have joined in later life. Most of the Ascott Martyrs who remained in the area were buried In Church of England graveyards.

The Ascott Martyrs, as already noted, had Identified as eight Church of England, seven Baptist and one Methodist. The choice of a religious denomination was not necessarily an "either or" option, parishioners were often to be seen at the church in the morning and chapel in the evening.[14] The Church's aim was to provide a seat for every parishioner, though this was a constant battle against a rapidly growing population. The Anglican Church did have "establishment" and history on their side; the familiarity of the old parish church with its accompanying graveyard where villagers could find their relatives buried was a symbol of stability, continuity, patrimony and identity; a strong idea in the minds of all parishioners. No wonder that new parish churches were invariably built in a neo-gothic style, the style embodied these notions. [15]

The rapid growth of Nonconformist churches, however, now meant that the Church of England had to compete for attendees. A key strategy in winning over hearts and minds was the provision of Sunday School education, and in particular the Sunday School treat. Newspapers of the period feature frequent reports on Sunday school events by all denominations. The following report of an event in Shipton in 1869 gives a flavour of such occasions:

> On Thursday 29th ult., a most liberal treat was given to the children both of the Sunday and Day School on the lawn in front of the vicarage. At 3 o'clock the children with their teachers, numbering 200, assembled and amused themselves until four, when a most sumptuous repast was served to them by their teachers and other ladies of the village. . . they then proceeded to the amusements provided for them, such as racing, cricketing, jingling, Aunt Sally, and with various other games for the females, which was heartily enjoyed by all present.[16]

In the 1870s the vicar of Ascott complained that the Shipton farmer John Fowler Maddox, a committed Baptist, was 'bribing' local children to attend the Baptist Sunday School rather than the Anglican one.[17] It seems that both sides were not above providing 'incentives' to their parishioners.

It is also important to note that despite the Anglican Church's identification with the gentry, some ministers were more proactive in wanting to alleviate the plight of the farm worker. The renowned cleric Edward Girdlestone (1805–1884) was one such example. He became known as 'The Agricultural Labourer's Friend' when he took up a curacy in the parish of Halberton, Devon in 1862, and was moved to action when he witnessed the impoverished state of the farm labourers there. He proposed the formation of an agricultural labourers union as early as 1868, while he also helped over 600 agricultural families to move from the west of England to secure more lucrative work in the industrial areas of the north.[18] However, he was the exception rather than the rule.

Nonconformists in the Wychwoods: the Baptists

There had been large growth of the so-called new Dissent from the early 19th century despite the frequent hostile opposition from local squires and the established Church. In the Wychwoods and wider area there could be found Quakers, Baptists, Wesleyan Methodists, Primitive Methodists, Congregationalists, and Plymouth Brethren. However, the two sects most visible in the Wychwoods were the Baptists and the Primitive Methodists.

A flourishing Baptist community existed in the Wychwoods and wider region by the mid-19th century. The Baptists first found a foothold in Milton in the very early years of the 19th Century and built their first chapel there in 1808.[19] They were patronised by the important Milton family of Groves (Figure 8), who were successful masons, quarry owners and builders, and were already well established in Milton from the early 18th century.[20] The Groves' connection was important, bringing influence, money and respectability to the Baptist cause.[21] There was additionally a Particular Baptist congregation in Milton, established in the 1840s and well attended into the 20th century (Figure 6). Their presence is a further illustration of how fertile this area was for the establishment of Nonconformist congregations, Milton being able to support two Baptist chapels, and a Primitive Methodist chapel by the mid-19th century, the population in 1851 being 800 persons.

The Milton Baptists rebuilt their chapel in 1839 (figure 7), and in 1867 they had resources to add a sub-

stantial school room next to the chapel. It should be recalled that before 1853 there was no Church of England presence in the village, which now exceeded the size of Shipton in population. The Baptist cause spread to neighbouring villages though Milton remained the hub of local organisation throughout the 19th century.

A Baptist chapel in Ascott was apparently first built in 1812 (Figure 7).[22] The 1851 religious census return for this chapel reports free sittings of 100 and an average congregation of 25.[23] However, the congregation faltered in the 1850s but reopened and revived in 1862 with the Scottish tailor William Irvine as the resident minister.[24] The Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce, writing of Ascott in 1855 described them as a "rough impressible set",[25] suggesting disapproval of a tendency to Dissent.

The Shipton Baptist chapel was opened in 1861, the build financed by the local farmer and Baptist John Fowler Maddox (1824–1920), who we have already seen bribing children to attend the Ascott Baptist Chapel. Maddox had considerable status in the Wychwoods,[26] but though a Baptist he was also a farmer and a member of the Oxfordshire Association of Agriculturalists which had been expressly formed to challenge the Agricultural Labourers' Union. At a meeting of the Association in July 1872 he is reported to have said:

'All who joined the union from his farm had been discharged, and he was determined that so long as he supplied the money to pay those he employed, he should be the master. The farmers must admit that to an extent the labourers had been paid at a somewhat low rate. He had plenty of work for the men he employed, and he should always pay them well, and endeavour to maintain the good feelings which ought to exist between master and men. Rather than employ union men, he would permit every acre of turnips on his lands to remain untouched.'[27]

Maddox had influence in Shipton, and one suspects he would not tolerate the local Baptists, whose chapel he had paid for, agitating on behalf of the union, though he does betray some sympathy for the depressed state of wages. The build of the chapel was no doubt an act of philanthropy, but intended more as an agency of temperance, stability and spiritual welfare than of revolution.

The Baptists associated with the chapels in Ascott, Shipton and Milton were, despite some early hostility, generally respectable Christian congregations within these villages. The evidence of their patronage by the local Groves family (Figure 8), and by farmers such as J. F. Maddox and other tradespeople gave them respectability and sufficient means to play a beneficent role within the parish, providing resource for the spiritual, moral and educational welfare to all classes within the community. The identification of seven of the Ascott women with the Baptists also demonstrates their success in finding adherents among the agricultural workers.

By the 1860s the Baptists were also tolerated, if not directly supported, by the local gentry. Their main asset in this regard was the charismatic Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892) (Figure 9). C. H. Spurgeon was something of a national celebrity in the 1860s and 1870s. His audiences often numbered in the thousands, and Queen Victoria is said to have gone incognito to hear him preach. He travelled widely to speak and preach, and his influence was felt in the Wychwoods area. He also held a number of outdoor services in Minster Lovell, just five miles from Ascott in the 1870s. The *Oxfordshire Weekly News* for 19 June 1872 advertises two sermons by Charles Spurgeon to be delivered at Ringwood Farm, Minster Lovell; tickets were 1 shilling each, a half day's pay for an agricultural labourer.[28] The local farmer and diarist John Calvertt also records several encounters with Charles Spurgeon; In 1877 he records In his diary having "…heard Spurgeon preach to about 3000 persons under the Oaks at Ringwood'.[29]

Spurgeon did express sympathy for the agricultural workers' cause. A press report from April 1872 rec-

ords: ‘Mr Spurgeon referred with satisfaction to the strike of the agricultural labourers as an unexpected sign of life amongst a long-neglected class.’[30] But there is no evidence for Spurgeon extending this support beyond occasional pronouncements from the pulpit.

The Nonconformists in the Wychwoods: The Primitive Methodists

The meteoric rise of the Primitive Methodists from their foundation around 1810 to the mid-19th century is a remarkable story. Their spread and influence throughout Britain by the 1870s put them on an equal footing to many of the other Nonconformist denominations with much longer histories. They began as a secession from the Wesleyan Methodists in north Staffordshire, adopting the name ‘Primitive Methodism’ as an expression of their desire to return to what they saw as the more authentic evangelical roots of John Wesley’s early missions. They spread their word via a network of travelling preachers and tended to target working class communities. In Britain the Primitive Methodists joined with the Wesleyan and United Methodists in 1932 to form the Methodist Church.

The Primitive Methodists had begun to establish congregations in Oxfordshire from the 1820s and had a flourishing circuit in existence covering the Wychwood area by the mid-19th century. They were established in Milton by the 1830s, having built their first chapel in 1834.[31] The 1851 religious census records an average morning congregation of 110.[32] They had built their second, presumably larger, chapel in 1860 (Figure 10) in a significant location facing the extensive village green.

Though there was no Primitive Methodist chapel in Shipton or Ascott, there were a number of other chapels in the area with circuits covering Chipping Norton and Witney. The Charlbury stonemason and amateur chronicler of local history John Kibble (1866-1951), writes:

'Primitive Methodism got a strong footing at Milton. A chapel was built [1834] and glorious camp meetings were held upon the Green. The late Mr Isaac Castle was a tower of strength. His tent was a feature for all good work, both religious and temperance, and he built a house with a room for a coffee tavern, so that there should be somewhere besides the public house as a place of call and refreshment.[33]

Kibble's words highlight the appeal of the Primitive Methodists, and the name of Isaac Castle reveals a connection between the Primitive Methodists and the NALU.

The ‘camp meetings’ were mass outdoor preaching events which could last all day. Whilst ostensibly being an opportunity for Christian evangelism, they were also popular social events accessible to all within the local area, and a powerful recruitment opportunity. The provision of food, music, singing and charismatic sermons would have made them lively social events, with sometimes thousands of people in attendance, camp meetings are known to have taken place in Milton and other local villages.[34]

The proximity of the Milton Primitive Methodist chapel made the denomination accessible to Ascott and Shipton, and the camp meetings enabled the Primitive Methodists’ voice to extend widely in the local area, without the need for bricks and mortar chapels. While we have no evidence to know that the Ascott Martyrs attended these camp meetings, it is more than likely that they were familiar with such events.[35]

A significant feature of the Nonconformist chapels, of all denominations, is that their organisation and management, and even the building and maintenance of their buildings, was largely supplied from their own congregations. This connection with the local community made them more accessible to the labouring class and gave these members the opportunity to participate in the administration and delivery of their religion, and, through its Sunday school, its key educational role[36].

The Primitives were also not averse to using female preachers. In about 1870 Joseph Arch’s own daugh-

ter, Annie (1851–1904), became a Primitive Methodist preacher on the Leamington circuit when she was 19 years old.[37] To see their sex in such a position of trust and authority alongside their male counterparts must have given confidence to the women of the Wychwoods (*see Annie's picture here*).

The name of Isaac Castle (1824–1891) also connects us to the NALU. He was a signatory on the deeds of the Milton Primitive Methodist chapel, and we also find his name as a regular committee member in the minute book of the NALU during the 1870s.[38] He appears to have begun working life as an agricultural labourer but by the 1870s is described as a 'wood dealer' with property interests in the area. He was well known as promoter of Primitive Methodism, Temperance, and the Agricultural Labourers' Union. His marquee was available to all three for the promotion of their cause and was also certainly used for meetings promoting emigration opportunities to the agricultural workers of the Wychwoods, (see essay 9, which deals with emigration). There is a plaque to Isaac Castle's memory inside the Milton Primitive Methodist Chapel.

The link between membership of the Primitive Methodist church and membership of the NALU is well known.[39] Joseph Arch was himself a Primitive Methodist lay preacher, and many of the key leaders in the early NALU such as Joseph Leggett, Christopher Holloway and George Banbury all had key roles in their respective Methodist and Primitive Methodist churches. An explicit connection between the early formation of the Union and the Milton chapel is recorded in the Oxford District minute book for 7 May 1872, where the secretary was ordered '…to request of the Trustees and Minister, the use of the Primitive Methodist Chapel Milton for the purpose of holding a Meeting of delegates from the Branches, such Meeting to be held when Mr. Arch or other Friends shall be among us…'[40] This Is despite the fact that the rules of Primitive Methodist Chapels expressly forbade the use of chapels for political purposes.[41]

The evangelical flavour of many of the union meetings, which were often accompanied by bands[42] and the singing of Union songs, is another indicator of the allegiance between the Primitive Methodists and the Union. In her preface to Arch's autobiography, of 1898, the Countess of Warwick quotes an anonymous source:

> Another thing that appealed to the imagination was the extent to which the meetings of the strikers were inspired by song. The hymn tunes were easily linked to the verses in which the labourers expressed their hopes, and embodied their demands. The industrial revolt had in it some of the elements of a religious revival, and one of the most conspicuous of these was the resort to singing as a relief of emotions otherwise too difficult to articulate.[43]

Press reports of these meetings often comment on the number of women and children present.[44] It is almost certain that the 16 Ascott women must have seen Arch speaking at one of the meetings he attended in the Wychwood area, reportedly attended by thousands, even before their release from prison. His name was a big draw.

Arch's speeches often included an appeal to the gospels and a Christian morality in support of the labourers' cause, as evidenced by the quote at the head of this essay. He was often referred to as 'the apostle of the labourers' movement'.[45]

A number of early mass rallies for the promotion of the NALU and establishment of Oxfordshire branches took place in the Wychwoods area. Large meetings of agricultural labourers took place on the Milton recreation ground in 1872, which led to the formation of what became known as the Milton Union, soon after becoming the nucleus of the Oxfordshire District branch of the NALU.[46] It seems that the organisational structures of the Methodists in general and the Primitive Methodists in particular provided a

ready-made 'infrastructure' upon which the NALU could piggyback for the building of the Union. The hierarchical networks of branch, district and region were duplicated within both organisations.[47] When the NALU spread into the Gloucestershire district of Cirencester, the local branches all coincided with the location of an already existing Primitive Methodist chapel.[48]

We know that the Primitive Methodists targeted the poorer classes of society, and their core membership was undoubtedly working class. However, they also relied on some of the more professional members of their communities to help set up congregations in agricultural areas, to help with the administrative and organisational skills required to purchase land, build chapels and establish trusteeships for the sustaining of these chapels.

Summary

The religious institutions in the Wychwoods area provided a mixed set of Christian offerings to the agricultural labourer and their families in the 1870s. The principal denominations – the Church of England, the Baptists and the Primitive Methodists – were all familiar institutions by the 1870s. The Baptists and the Primitive Methodists had established chapels in the local villages at least from the 1830s and the Ascott Martyrs and their families who attended these chapels in the 1870s would have been second- or third-generation worshippers. The Church of England, in the face of this competition, had increased its provision and had raised its game in the preceding decades. Through its inherited wealth and through its establishment connections, and with the explicit support of benevolent landowners, it had built architecturally ambitious new parish churches in the area. While the incumbents of these churches were often of the same class as the local landowners, they were not always indifferent to the plight of the poorer classes in their parish and needed to fill these new pews. There was undoubtedly a tug of war to win over souls.

The Anglican Church represented the political interests of its incumbents from the bishop and vicar and downwards, and their officers were of the same class as the landed gentry. The Nonconformists, their preachers and their congregations were much closer to the agricultural worker, and their officials were often drawn from this class because they represented the interest of the congregation, often voting on who would be their ministers. However, while the Baptists could express sympathy for the downtrodden worker they never, at this period, espoused radical political reform in terms of promoting unionism or extension of the franchise. Indeed, some of their officials, such as John Fowler Maddox, actively worked against it. The Primitive Methodists were more overtly aligned with the agricultural worker and provided many of the 'determined and lively minded men of independent and radical spirit' who promoted and led the Oxfordshire branch of the NALU. Without the support of the Primitive Methodists the Agricultural Union would not have been established so rapidly.

For the Ascott women, the chapel, Baptist or Methodist, would have given them more opportunity for involvement in chapel affairs. In some of the Primitive Methodist chapels and at the popular camp meetings they would have also seen and heard women preachers, thus seeing their sex given a voice and mission beyond the domestic. Whatever their religious commitment and denomination, nominal or real, they were part of a religious society where the Anglican Church was attempting to reassert its control in the face of the advance of dissent and Nonconformity. The courage the women found to support their striking menfolk must have been, at least in part, kindled by the self-reliance and confidence they discovered in their dissenting chapels, their resolve further strengthened by the compelling oratory of charismatic union men, and sometime Nonconformist preachers, such as Joseph Arch.

[1] Verse from the Anglican hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' by Cecil Frances Alexander, 1848.

[2] The quote comes from a report on meeting of agricultural workers in Milton-under-Wychwood, *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 6 July 1873.

[3] Kate Tiller in the introduction of *Church and Chapel in Oxfordshire 1851*, Oxford: Oxford Record Society, vol. 55, 1987, gives a detailed analysis of religious affiliations derived from those census returns, pp. xv passim.

[4] On the fluidity of denominational affiliation see Frances Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church and English Society*, Cambridge, 1995, p. 24-36.

[5] Ascott had achieved some status as an independent ecclesiastical parish by about 1600; see *Victoria County History*, vol. XIX, 2019, p. 83.

[6] Recorded as early as 1458 – see *Victoria County History,* vol. XIX, 2019, p. 153.

[7] On the Church Building Commission see M H Port, *Six Hundred New Churches*, London, 1961.

[8] On J H Langston see *Chipping Norton Deanery Magazine*, Number 90, June 1888, unpaginated.

[9] *The Diocese books of Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford 1845-1869* Oxfordshire Record Society, vol. 66, 2008, p. 11.

[10] *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 16 August 1862, p. 5.

[11] *Chipping Norton Deanery Magazine*, 1888, op cit.

[12] *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 4 May 1872, p. 8.

[13] *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 28 January 1871.

[14] ". . . but many people here as elsewhere will attend both church and meeting" - Rev. Thomas Dand's (vicar of Bletchingdon) comment on the 1851 Religious census return, quoted In Kate Tiller, 1987, op cit. p. xx.

[15] Frances Knight, 1995, op cit. pp 61-86.

[16] *Oxfordshire Weekly News*, 11 August 1869.

[17] See *Victoria County History*, vol. XIX, 2019, p. 120.

[18] Pamela Horn, *Joseph Arch*, Kineton: The Roundwood Press, 1971, pp. 26-27

[19] On the early history of the Baptists in Milton see G. W. Davidson, A Brief History of the Baptist Church, Milton, Oxfordshire, Chipping Norton, n.d. [1889]

[20] On the Groves dynasty in Milton see Norman Frost, 'The Groves Family of Milton-under-Wychwood,' *Journal of The Wychwoods Local History Society*, Vol 7 (1992), pp. 10-28; Vol 8 (1993), pp. 27-37; Vol 9 (1994), pp 48-55.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Build date of 1812 given in the 1851 Census return, see Kate Tiller, 1987, op cit. p. 4.

[23] Ibid p. 4.

[24] *VCH*, vol. XIX, 2019, p. 120.

[25] *The Diocese Books of Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford 1845-1869*, The Oxfordshire Record Society, Vol. 66, 2008, p. 106.

[26] Ernest Gaskell, *Oxfordshire Leaders, Social and Political*, London: The Queenhithe Printing and Publishing Co Ltd, n.d. [c 1900].

[27] *The Oxfordshire Weekly News*, 21 July 1872, p. 5.

[28] *The Oxfordshire Weekly News*, 19 June 1872, p. 5.

[29] Celia Miller (ed.), *Rain and Ruin. The Diary of an Oxfordshire Farmer John Simpson Calvertt 1875–1900*, Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1983, p.41. Ringwood is the farm of the Abrahams family, friends of the Calvertts and Mr Abraham being a close acquaintance of C. H. Spurgeon.

[30] *The Oxfordshire Weekly News,* 17 April 1872.

[31] See Kate Tiller, 1987, op cit. p. 68. This first chapel is no longer extant but was sited in a central location in Milton-under-Wychwood near to the village green.

[32] Ibid., p. 68.

[33] John Kibble, *Wychwood Forest and its Border Places*, 1928, re-issued by The Wychwood Press, Charlbury, 1999, pp. 79–80. Isaac Castle's coffee house seems to have come later, circa 1891, and is now a residential property at 64 High Street, Milton-under-Wychwood.

[34] M. K. Ashby, 1974, op cit. p. 375 mentions camp meetings in Chadlington, Milton, Lyneham, and Chilson.

[35] For an account of Camp Meetings in Ascott in the 1920s and 1930s See Eric Moss, *Walk Humble, My Son*, Charlbury, 1999, p. 74.

[36] See N A D Scotland, *Methodism and the Revolt of the Field. A study of the Methodist contribution to agricultural trade unionism in East Anglia 1872-96*, Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1981, p. 22.

[37] Pamela Horn, 1971, op cit p.16.

[38] Pamela Horn, *Agricultural Trades Unionism in Oxfordshire 1872-81*, The Oxfordshire Record Society, vol. XLVIII, 1974, p. 27.

[39] For further evidence of links between Nonconformist groups, including the Primitive Methodists, see: Nigel Scotland*, op cit*, 1981; and Pamela Horn, 1971, op cit.

[40] P. Horn, 1974, op cit. p. 28.

[41] See N. A. D. Scotland, *Methodism and the English Labour Movement 1800–1906*, "Anvil" vol. 14/1, 1997, p. 40.

[42] A brass band from Lyneham was in attendance at a Union meeting in Milton-under-Wychwood on 1 July 1872; see *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 6 July 1872.

[43] Joseph Arch, *From Ploughtail to Parliament*, London: The Cresset Library, 1986, p. xxiv. For examples of union songs see Pamela Horn, *Joseph Arch*, Kineton: The Roundwood Press, 1971, pp. 244–247.

[44] *The Witney Express*, 11 April 1872 reports on presence of women and children at a meeting in Stretton, Warwickshire; and *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 32 August 1872, p. 8, comments on the number of women present at a meeting in Woodstock.

[45] *The Witney Express,* 18 April 1872.

[46] Pamela Horn, 1974, op cit. p. 10.

[47] On this correspondence see also Nigel Scotland, 1981, op cit. p.76.

[48] N. A. D. Scotland, *Methodism and the English Labour Movement 1800–1906*, "Anvil" vol. 14/1, 1997, p. 42.