

A game of Catshill and Mouse Hill

Posted on July 16, 2017 by [BrownhillsBob](#)



Modern day Catshill seems focused on the area of Sadler and Ogleby Roads, but in earlier times seems to have extended some way up Shire Oak Hill. Image of the area on a snowy day in 2016 supplied by drone pilot Pete Hummings.

We've not been doing enough local history here lately, and I'm rectifying that forthwith a remarkable article from David Evans, whose research into what could well have been the first place of worship in Brownhills is stunning.

I thank David for this, and also a whole bunch of local and not so local collaborators, [Sir Gerald of Reece](#), [Peter 'Pedro' Cutler](#), [Andy 'Captain Wyrley' Dennis](#) and Keith Arblaster, amongst many others. Once more it's a pleasure and an honour to be able to feature material of such a high quality on the blog.

Please, if you have anything to add – you're welcome: either by commenting here, or mailing me – [BrownhillsBob at Gmail dot com](mailto:BrownhillsBob@Gmail.com). Cheers.

David Evans wrote:



The very first Primitive Methodist church, built 1811 in Tunstall, as a row of houses Image courtesy of myprimitivemethodists.org.uk

A Game of Cat and Mouse

Some while ago, when researching the Walsall Wood Ebenezer Primitive Methodist Church opening I was made very welcome in the Local history Centre in Walsall, and there I set about trawling through the index of the vast archives. One simple reference caught my eye, and this has led to a long, protracted game of cat and mouse.

The index showed that the minute book for the Lichfield Primitive Methodist Circuit for the mid 1800s was to be found in Lichfield Record Office. Walsall Wood Primitive Methodist Church, the first chapel, dated back to 1865 or thereabouts, so it would be useful to see this valuable record.

The Circuit Minute book is a small, thick tome and, unlike the Minute Book for Ebenezer, and is full of beautiful, clear pen and ink handwritten minutes. Reading through these minutes I noticed a reference to a chapel in 'Catshill'... in later years, a reference to 'Mr Green, dealing with the affairs for Brownhills' and later still, a reference to 'Brownhills' chapel – and no more reference to 'Catshill'.

So, had the chapel changed its name, or had the Catshill chapel closed?

Catshill is an area in modern day Brownhills, more or less around the junction of High Street and Ogle Road. But Catshill seems to have been its own discrete community, and seems to pre-date Brownhills as the settled town it has been for the last 150 years.

I turned to Gerald Reece's wonderful history book, 'Brownhills. A walk into History' for help. Sure enough, his book does include his own pencil copies of old maps and plans of this area, Catshill, from as far back as 1797, where Catshill is shown, and much further away a 'Brownhill'. Here I pay tribute to dear Gerald, for his book is the fruit of many years' work where he sat in libraries and made hand-drawn pencil copies of documents, way before the time of the internet.

Sadly, no chapel is apparent – at least, not at first sight. More of this later. But a 'Gospel Bank' is named, opposite the Warreners Arms former pub in High Street, and set away from the road a little.

I contacted another researcher par excellence, Peter 'Pedro' Cutler, and asked if there were any other 'Gospel Banks' or was the name used here only. He could find no other Gospel Bank mentioned in newspaper archives but suggested it may be a phrase from antiquity.

Intriguing.

I consulted another local historian of note, Bill Mayo. Did he know of a 'Gospel Bank' near the Warreners? I described where I thought it may have been. Bill remembered that there had been a blacksmith's forge there (1900s) Was there any significance in this? I do not know.

A phone call and discussion with Gerald followed after a while. I love conversing with Gerald. He is full of measured enthusiasm and often makes a simple point which clarifies, bless him. There had been a chapel, somewhere along the Ogleby Road. It had been sold.

I turned to another friend for help. Andy Dennis has a fine academic perception, thoroughness and skill. Within a few hours he sent me his measured response. Perhaps the arrival of the railway through Brownhills, mid 1850s, brought commercial growth at the other end of the village, as well as an increase in population: two reasons for the need to move and build a larger chapel elsewhere, in the growing and developing Brownhills.

He also sent me some intriguing newspaper cuttings. In 1864 the former Catshill chapel was put up for sale, and the advertisement suggested the possibility of converting the former chapel into houses.

Very Eligible FREEHOLD PROPERTY at OGLE Y HAY,
Staffordshire.

To be SOLD by AUCTION, by H. FARRINGTON,
at the house of Mr. Woodhouse, the WARREN HOUSE,
OGLE Y HAY, on Monday, the 19th day of July, 1852, at
four o'clock in the evening, by direction of the Mortgagees, sub-
ject to conditions, all that modern and newly built RESIDENCE
and PREMISES, situate at Ogle y Hay, near the Ogle y National
School and the new Church, fronting to the road leading from
Ogle y Hay to Lichfield and Burntwood, and also to a new street
leading to the Brownhills Station on the South Staffordshire Rail-
way.

The above house contains entrance-hall, two parlours, china
closet, kitchen, brewhouse, good cellars, four good bedrooms, and
closet, an excellent supply of good water; also the range of cow-
sheds, a capital stable for three horses, barn, and out-offices,
large productive garden, having an extensive frontage to the main
road for building purposes, together with the small Cottage,
brewhouse and premises adjoining, the whole in the occupation of
Mr. H. O'Robin and his under-tenant.

The site of land, including the buildings contains 2,420 square
yards, or thereabouts.

The above property is delightfully situate in one of the best
parts of the fast-improving town of Ogle y, and may be consider-
ably increased in value with the erection of new houses, which are
much wanted.

For further particulars, apply to WILM. ALLEN, Esq., Solicitor,
Warwick; or the AUCTIONEER, Walsall.

Staffordshire Advertiser, Saturday July 10th 1852. Click for a larger version.

So, what did this first chapel look like?

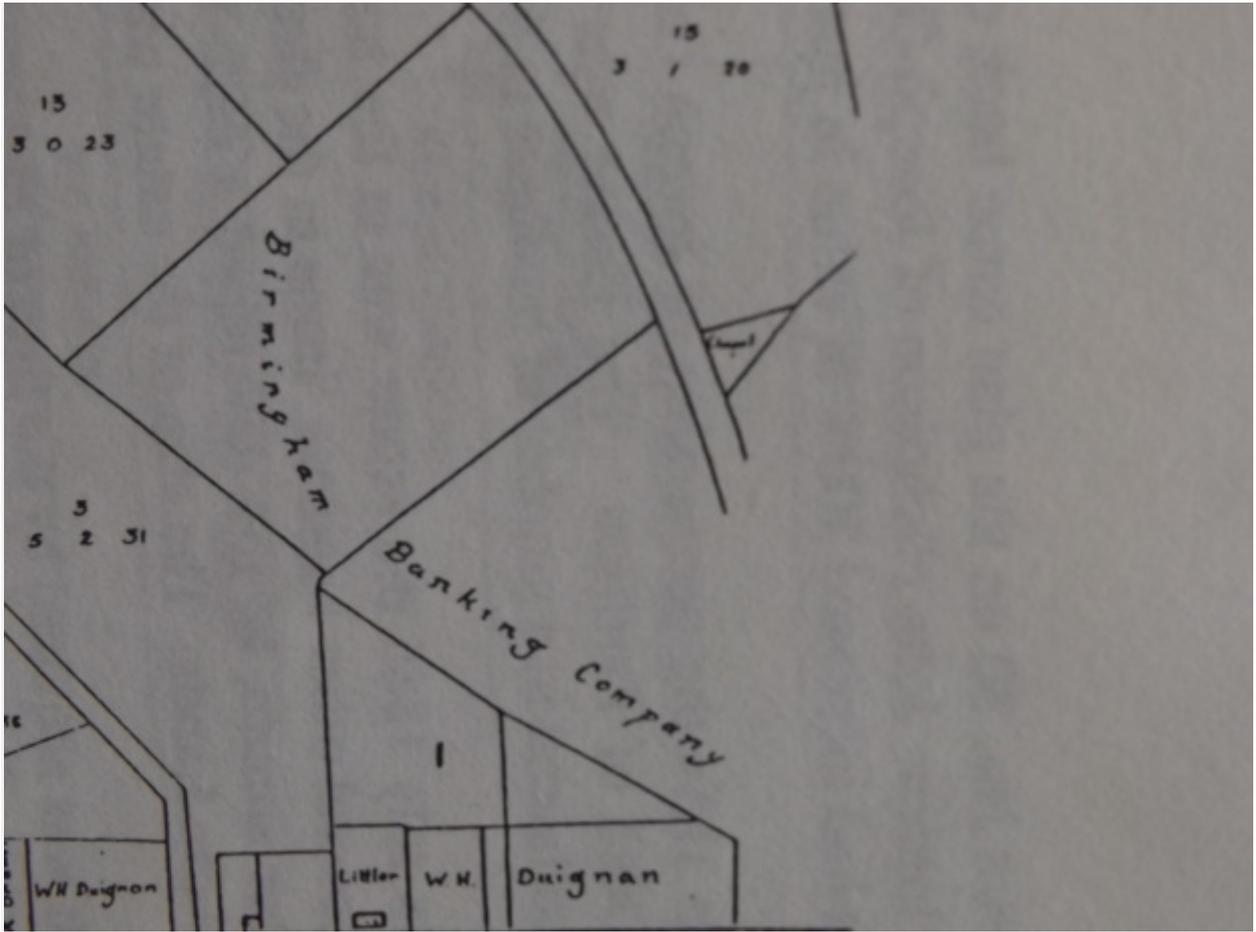
Gerald had suggested that at the time it was common for the Minister to live by the chapel. The press cutting certainly hints that may have been the case at Catshill. So I turned to a website, My Primitive Methodists, to learn that the Reverend Bourne (one of the two founders of Primitive Methodism) had built his first chapel near Stoke on Trent, I believe, as a row of houses so that if the movement failed, it could be easily re-used. As far as I am aware, no image remains of that little chapel at Catshill, but...



Not Brownhills, but Filkins chapel and house, built in 1850. Did Catshill chapel look like this? Image courtesy of myprimitivemethodists.org.uk

Is it possible to accurately locate the first Catshill chapel?

Gerald Reece's map does show something, so small I could not make it out..in a triangular piece of land, along Ogley Road.



That triangle of land is indeed very interesting. Image from 'Brownhills: A walk into History' by Gerald Reece.

Andy Dennis, with his expert eye, located this piece of land at the junction of Ogleby Road and Valley View. I took a close-up photo of that part of Gerald's map. 'Chapel'!



1884 mapping



1901-1903 mapping



1915-1921 mapping

Andy Dennis of the [wonderful Andrew's Kindred blog](#) helped with the above map segments identifying the probably location of the chapel off Ogle Road. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. Click for larger versions.

He said the following:

I think I might be able to put an, albeit speculative, slant on this from an Andrew's Kindred perspective. 2x great grandfather Henry Dennis lived at Catshill from about 1852. His son, at least was a leading light in Park View. I wonder if the apparently reported conditions at Catshill had something to do with [setting up Park View](#)? Maybe it was just that the Deakins and Shinglers were on the Watling Street and found a place there? Or was it that Buckley and Dennis both came from NW Leicestershire? Or was it just that they were all miners who converged in Brownhills? Maybe there was a falling out? What about the role of women in the Wesleyan movement? This is something for to be developed when we get a chance. There is some speculation about the origins of Catshill, which seems pretty ancient, but there seems to be no precise evidence.

Anyway, on the 1882 OS map the same triangular plot is shown as, probably residential development, which you refer to in your article. See attached.

You can see the same boundary on the 1901-1903 map. Where there are two years the first is when surveyed, the second in when published.

Boundaries tend to persist and you can still see that kink in the southern boundary on Google Earth!

Was the chapel sold off and converted?

Well, there number of dwellings does increase. In the 1841 census, 9 dwellings, (Staffs-Shenstone-Lichfield-district 19 using William Littlely as focus name): 1851, now 15 dwellings, 1861 also 19 dwellings. Does the 1871 census show an increase in people and no increase in the number of dwellings? Interestingly in 1841 the principal occupation was 'Miner'. Where were the coalmines in 1841?

Turning again to [My Primitive Methodists I found this amazing article...](#)

The Primitive Methodist magazine for February 1857 contains an account by John Lawley of the opening of Brownhills Mount Zion Primitive Methodist

chapel. Brownhills possessed “some of the richest coal and iron mines in the kingdom”.

A small society was formed by Richard Ward around 1837 and a small chapel built. Over time a bigger chapel was needed and a plot of land 300 yards square was bought at 62s per yard from Mr Arblaster, an independent church member sympathetic to the cause. The building was undertaken by Mr Croft of Walsall and the foundation stone was laid on August 26th 1856 by JW Round with a sermon preached by J Lawley.

By October “the walls were raised and the roof on without the least accident having occurred”. Building did not take long in those days! A tea meeting was held in the chapel on October 6th; the Trustees anticipated 600 attending. In fact there were 750 “and some went unsupplied”.

The opening took place on November 16th and 23rd. Sermons were preached by WE Saunders of Tunstall and H Wheeler of Ludlow.

The completed building was 36’ x 30’ and 26’ from floor to ceiling. It had “a good orchestra behind the pulpit” and was intended to have a gallery in the future. The cost was £420 and of that £212 had been raised. Donors included “the ex-mayor of Walsall” and Mr Harrison.

The Brownhills Bob blog tells us that the chapel was replaced in 1895 by a further building in the High street. It was closed in 1964. In 2013, Kwik-fit occupied the site. There are pictures on the Brownhills Bob blog.

This helps to confirm that there had been a small Primitive Methodist Community, which we can now locate in Catshill from 1837, that its chapel was smaller than 36 x 30 x 26, and that land for the larger replacement, along the High Street Brownhills had been bought from a Mr. Arblaster.

So I asked a friend, a Mr. Keith Arblaster, who lives in Walsall Wood, if he knew how big the local (i.e. from Pelsall Road area and towards Bullings Heath) farm was that his ancestors had owned in the early 1800s .

It stretched right up to the High Street in Brownhills. Two ancestors, Tom and Charles, were the farmers.

(Keith had previously fully researched his family tree some years ago, with access to the Church of the Latter Day Saints vast records and other sources).

So now we have a replacement for the Catshill Church. It was called Mount Zion, right from its opening in 1856, and was situated on the High Street.

What did the first Mount Zion, in High Street Brownhills, look like?

Quite recently Silver Street Methodist Church in Brownhills celebrated the 50th anniversary of their present-day building, which replaced the High Street Mount Zion chapel. In a commemorative chapel opening booklet from 1967 there is an article, written by Mr. AH Craddock who was a Mount Zion chapel elder, which recalled the original Mount Zion chapel in High Street Brownhills, and it

being identical to the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Paradise Lane, Pelsall before being enlarged in the 1890s.

Now, there is a photograph of the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Paradise Lane, Pelsall.



Image courtesy of myprimitivemethodists.org.uk.

It, too, was demolished many years ago. Like many Primitive chapels, it was built to be functional. The downstairs was a Sunday Schoolroom, social meeting place and function room. A wooden staircase led to the upstairs chapel, and I remember that the small pulpit was obviously made for the (somewhat smaller) preachers of the day.

Oh yes, the chapel in Paradise Lane Pelsall, was near to Mouse Hill!

I would like to thank those kind gentlemen named in this article, and an anonymous friend, for their wonderful help.

David
July 2017

Evans

8 Responses to *A game of Catshill and Mouse Hill*

1.  **Andy Dennis** says:

July 16, 2017 at 5:44 pm

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Rate This

Thank you gentlemen. Great article and first rate research!

My impression of the location of Catshill is that the focus was the stretch of Chester Road between the Middle Oak and the Warreners. Some of Mom's family lived at Poole's Row, which stood where the two inter-war semis are on Lindon Road, and she referred to that being in Catshill. Going back that stretch of Lindon Road was Catshill Road – the way from Walsall Wood to Catshill.

It had been claimed that there was an ancient burial mound known as Cutteslowe (or similar), and this is the origin of the name. The mound was destroyed when the canal was built. Cutha (fl. 592-648) was a noble member of the House of Wessex, which ruled that kingdom and, at least for some time, the kingdom of Mercia. My notes on this are in storage, but I never found anything to link Cutha to Catshill.

Andy

Reply

2.  **Ruth Davies** says:

July 16, 2017 at 7:52 pm

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Rate This

Hi there,

I teach at Millfield Primary School so the Catshill area is naturally an area of great interest so was really impressed that you have managed to find out about Catshill . If you have any other information regarding the area around the school, I would love to find out more.

Thanks Brownhills Bob for such an interesting post .

Reply



o **David Evans** says:

July 17, 2017 at 7:45 am

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Rate This

Hello Ruth

I would recommend Gerald's book ...There is a chapter on Catshill.... Brownhills library has,or can obtain, a copy. I think there may be a lot more still to emerge regarding the settlement.

Kind regards

David

Reply



o **BrownhillsBob** says:

July 17, 2017 at 9:10 am

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Rate This

Although these talk of Ogle Hay, this encompasses the area we think of as Catshill, including the mill.

<https://brownhillsbob.com/2013/10/20/grist-for-the-mill/>

<https://brownhillsbob.com/2013/11/24/ugly-ay-it/>

<https://brownhillsbob.com/2013/12/01/keep-out-of-cotterills-road/>

<https://brownhillsbob.com/2013/12/08/the-ironmaster/>

Also, what happened when the canal collapsed at the bottom of the school field at Millfield:

<https://brownhillsbob.com/2012/04/20/under-mined/>

Hope that helps

Bob

[Reply](#)



3. **David Evans** says:

July 17, 2017 at 7:41 am

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[Rate This](#)

Hi Bob

an excellent presentation. Most appreciated.

kind regards

David

[Reply](#)



4. **aerreg** says:

July 17, 2017 at 9:10 am

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[Rate This](#)

great reading well done as i have been reading so many past methodist families have gone through my mind also a more modern scene for a number of years as a lad i shared many happy hours at the gospel hall in school avenue in the fellow ship of MR DUCKET MR HEATH HR CRADOCK and yes today the words and music of those

happy choureses go through my mind OH HAPPY DAY WIDE WIDE AS OACION
JESUS WANTS ME FOR A SUNBEAM thanks again for taking me down memory
lane god bless you all for what you do

Reply



o **David Evans** says:

July 17, 2017 at 12:38 pm

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Rate This

cheers Reg

David

Reply



5. **David Evans** says:

July 19, 2017 at 2:45 pm

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Rate This

Hi Bob

the reference to the 1864 sale of the former Catshill chapel etc is to be found on the front page of Walsall Free Press and General Advertiser, dated Saturday April 16th, 1864 (price one penny)...right-hand column, two thirds the way down the page. I thank Andy Dennis for this remarkable find, which I was able to view, but not copy etc. I know that Rose Villa was the Manse for the Primitive Methodist Circuit in later years..It is the double fronted building on Brownhills HIgh Street..opposite Silver Street (see the article on the opening of Ebenezer in Walsall Wood c 1890, where Rev Roe gives this address) The building is a Suntan parlour now and is next to a fish and chip shop!..The modern rendering of the facade has covered the date stone. The 1864 newspaper advert mentions the land having a frontage of 21 yards “lately erected buildings..now used as a chapel and Minster’s residence “..and the land adjoining the property of Mr Horobin and Mr Woodhouse”

A huge thanks to Andy Dennis.

kind regards

David