



The History of Stratton Green Baptist Church 1751 - 2014

The first church building on this site was built in 1751 by a group of Christians who had been regularly meeting in a house in Stratton Green since 1740. They encountered much opposition from other 'Christians' in the area for being non conformists. John

Cennick gathered a mob and persecuted the Stratton Green Christians. It was considered to be God's judgement when he was thrown from his horse and died.

Caleb Bailey of Berwick Bassett left two small fields in Stratton in his will to William Lawrence, a Baptist and Glover of Swindon. This land was next to a small orchard belonging to Mrs Read. This land was acquired and a trust was drawn up for the building and licensing of a Baptist meeting place; and so it was built in 1751.

In the late 1700's Mr Thomas Smith became pastor helped by John Mayell who was a preacher here. John Mayell was born in 1764 and died in 1807. He was buried in Stratton Green graveyard and his stone reads.

"He was a faithful preacher of the Gospel of Christ
to many perishing sinners in his neighbourhood.
His labours were blessed in the conversion of souls to God
Reader, art thou converted. Consider there is no heaven without it."

In 1786 during the pastorate of Thomas Smith another endowment was left to the church by Abraham Atkins, a Methodist from Southwark, to be divided among the congregations of Protestant Dissenters who scrutinised against infant baptism. In 1791 Mr Atkins left a further £2,000 of Indian stock in his will. In 1845 the stock held by the Trustees amounted to £4,000.

In the beginning of the 19th century, the Stratton Baptists enlarged their meeting house and a plaque inscribed "T.S.1801" (after Thomas Smith) was placed over the door. This inscription can still be seen at the base of the present vestry building where it was placed after the demolition of the earlier building.

The old building deteriorated and all except the balcony was demolished in 1934. As there was no baptistery baptisms took place in the River Cole and later in the Clay Pits in Swindon Road. Arthur Burson, the main benefactor of the new building was born in 1861 and died in 1934 aged 54. He was born in Steventon, Berkshire. His connection with Swindon started in 1880 when he was an assistant in the grocery business of H Freeth & Son. Following the death of Mr Freeth in 1890 Arthur Burson became the sole owner of 7 shops and retired in 1926. On his retirement he presented to the town the clock over the bandstand in the town gardens.

Arthur Burson was a magistrate and held a seat on the Town Council. He was baptised in 1880 at the Baptist Church in Fleet St. and later became involved with the Baptist Tabernacle. He married Emily Solway from Somerset and had 4 daughters.

Annie was born in 1888 and died in 1974 aged 86. Elsie was born in 1892 with curvature of the spine and was never very strong. She died in 1932 aged 40. Hilda was born in 1897. She attended

boarding school in Weston Super Mare, became ill there and died in 1913 aged 16. Grace was the last child born in 1902 and died in 1991 aged 89.

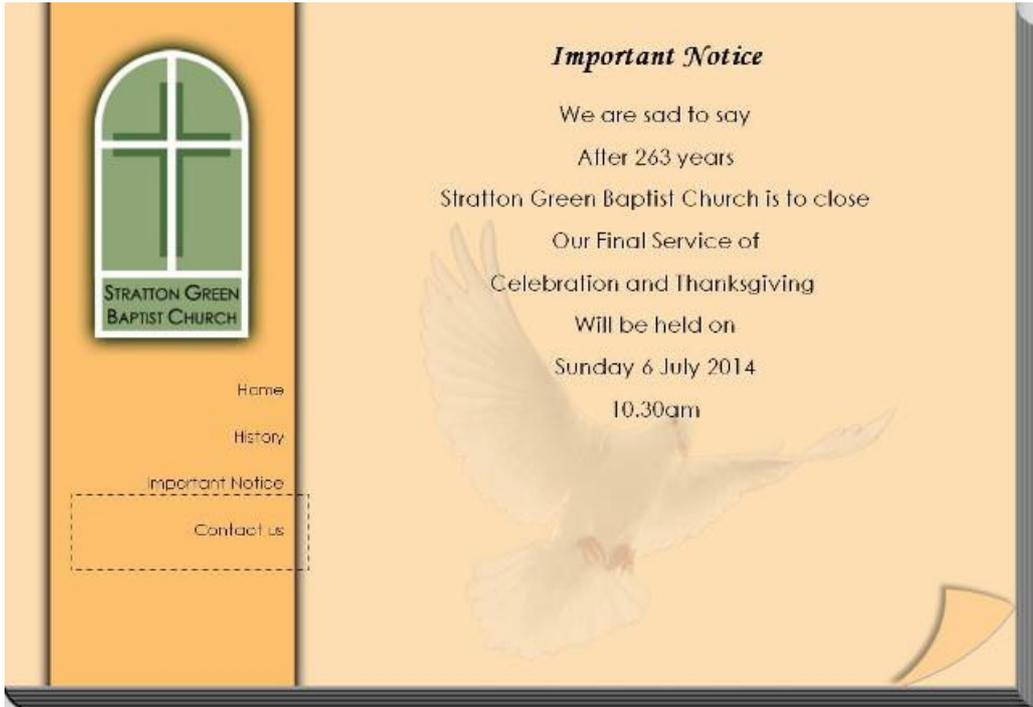
Arthur Burson left £1000 towards the building of a Baptist Church at Stratton Green in memory of his daughters Elsie and Hilda. This was opened in October 1934. The window over the pulpit was put in place in memory of the sisters. Emily Burson then gave £2000 to build a Sunday school at Stratton Green in memory of her husband. This was opened in Dec 1937.

In 1940 Pastor Bown introduced a matter of vital importance to the church – the decline in attendance at divine worship and the prayer meetings. He was concerned and was eager to discuss the matter of the spiritual life of the church. There was a long discussion whereby they might fully enter into the life intended for them as a Christian church. That discussion continues today!

The church has continued to see peaks and troughs; at one time the church was down to just one member. God has remained faithful to the people here as they have remained faithful to Him in worship and prayer. Long may this continue!

After 263 years of worship at Stratton Green the Baptist Church held its last service on 6th July 2014. A final service was held and a souvenir photograph (above) was given to all those who attended the service and an order of service was produced which can be found on the Wiltshire OPC Parish page for Stratton St. Margaret and is published under the Stratton Green Baptist Church section under the under Non-Conformity and Other Places of Worship section.

The closure was announced on the church website with the following notice:-



The image shows a screenshot of a website notice. On the left side, there is a logo for Stratton Green Baptist Church, featuring a green cross inside a white arched window frame. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links for Home, History, Important Notice, and Contact Us. The 'Important Notice' link is highlighted with a dashed box. The main content area on the right has a light orange background and contains the following text:

Important Notice

We are sad to say
After 263 years
Stratton Green Baptist Church is to close
Our Final Service of
Celebration and Thanksgiving
Will be held on
Sunday 6 July 2014
10.30am

In the background of the notice text, there is a faint, large illustration of a white dove with its wings spread, symbolizing peace. The entire notice is framed by a dark border.

Source:- Stratton Green Baptist Church Web Site