

A Last Goodbye

by John Collett.

We are told the only constant in life is change and yet my Oxford English dictionary say 'constant' is or means 'any thing that does not vary' and that 'change' means 'to become different' so how can you stay the same and not vary and at the same time becoming different, it beats me, and yet as you look around, things still seem the same, the buildings around us look the same and so do we, give or take a few years, and yet there is a very sad change occurring all around us, for as you look at those buildings we have seen every day for years, buildings where we went with our parents and grand parents on so many occasions, being entertained or informed and just enjoying what was happening inside them, But now all around the parish there is becoming a ghostly silence from inside these buildings, because something is missing, 'what ?' I hear you say, well basically its you and I that are missing, and its hard to say why. The buildings have not changed, the things that go on inside them have not changed, so that only leaves us, have we changed that much that we no longer want to laugh, or cry or just socialise with our kith and kin. It seems that way, for in the June addition of this great magazine we read how the Old School/ Far Forest Centre is closing because of lack of support, then in July's copy of the R&DN we are told this will be the last season that the Pensax Thrift Shop will trade because it is struggling to survive due to lack of customers, and this in turn will have a major impact on Pensax Village Hall as the hall in general is now very under used, and yes you have guessed it, because of lack of local support, And here we are in August and most of you will already be aware that the Methodist Chapel in Callow Hill and it's adjacent school/meeting room closed their doors for good back in April, and yes again mainly down to lack of local support, (that's you and me folks). Where have we all found to go that now appears to say we no longer see a need for our local meeting places ?!!. We seem to be letting these mile stones of our life just go without a whimper, forgetting how much they have contributed to our life and developing personality with no care or concern for their passing and therefore our history.

There has been a chapel in Callow Hill for well over 220 years, the first building erected in the mid 1790's was a little further up Chapel Lane and stood on that land for around 70 years, near where Rob and Kim Simmonds now have their holiday homes, but when that building began to show signs of it's age the local residents did not just walk on by without a care, funds were soon raised and in 1864 a brand new replacement chapel was planned and built, on a new plot a little nearer to the main Cleobury Road but still in Chapel Lane. And that prompts me to have a Michael Caine moment, which is, have you ever noticed or wondered why Methodist, Baptist and other nonconformist chapels or churches are always up a little lane and never on a main road ? Well I am reliably informed its because (and not a lot of people know this) of an act of Parliament passed in 1689, called the 'Toleration Act' included in that Act besides many other things, and due to pressure from the Church of England, the Act banned Nonconformists from building their place of worship on a main road !! ?. Which to me shows as ever, the power of large organisations seemingly able to dictate preferential terms for themselves at the cost of the general public.

The present 'school room' at Callow Hill was a much appreciated addition to the chapel and the community, opening in the September of 1930 enabling the committee to cope with the growing numbers of children that attended the Sunday School sessions, which were a very popular asset to the parish and the education system. I say the 'present' school room because as can be seen in the old photo of the premises, there had been an earlier school room on the site, somewhat smaller and described at the time as 'a dilapidated prefabricated building which left much to be desired' whereas the new building is of all brick construction and with a proper tiled roof and an impressive porch entrance, The boundary wall and hedge in the picture have also long since gone giving the current view a much more appealing look.

The 'new' school room has had a much wider use in more recent times, with it being hired by the local WI, the Parish Council, Toc H, the Luncheon Club, and Far Forest Horticultural Society, to name but a few. I can also remember attending a meeting there when 'we' were producing the 'Parish Map' on behalf of the Parish Council. But that all seems to have gone and now lack of support and therefore lack of funds means that much needed vital repair work, caused be a high water table, can not be carried out. (that hopefully explains my reference to the 'sinking' of the Methodist Chapel in last month article).

If all else fails and the building gets demolished, it has been suggested it would be a good idea to keep some sort of link to the chapel and it's local history alive, by retaining the plaque dedicated to Mr Francis

Bint, which is currently set into the west wall of the chapel, and install it where it could be best seen by future generations so that they might know more of their parish history.

Mr Bint was one of the main stalwarts of the chapel in his day, as a preacher and a regular teacher at the Sunday school sessions throughout his 45 years at Callow Hill Methodist Church. He was a local man, born in Chapel St. Kidderminster and lived for many years after he married, at Rose Cottage, just a little way down Bliss Gate Road, up until his death in 1917 age 75yrs. Having lived there with both his 1st wife Rebecca, and his 2nd wife Harriet, Rebecca had died in 1889 age 69. Francis was buried in Far Forest churchyard, as was his 2nd wife Harriet when she died in 1936 age 86 years old. Although Francis did not appear to have any children with either wife, the Bint's were a large family, mainly living around Upper Arley but spreading into Alveley and Kidderminster, although originally the first Mr Bint I found was from Hagley in the mid 1750's, his christian name was also Francis, but then it is common in many families to name children after a previous relative.

If anyone has suggestions or ideas as to how or where the plaque could be retained for posterity please give me a ring or send an e-mail to john.collett3@bopenworld.com

