

The Old Chapel Swerford



Some history of the Old Chapel, Swerford and photographs of it in 2007 and as it was in 1938, supplied by the current owners.



‘The Old Chapel’ Swerford

The Old Chapel, as it is now known in the village, was in fact a Methodist Chapel. It was officially opened on 19 November 1938 and the last service was held in 1992 when it became redundant.

Deborah and I are the first people to live in the The Old Chapel as a residence . However, people did live and work on the same site before it became a Chapel. The Chapel was bought at auction by Alfred Groves and Sons Ltd of Milton under Wychwood. One of the oldest builders in the country, established in 1660. We were lucky enough to purchase it from them in May 1994 and have lived here happily since then. We like to think we are purely the current custodians of the Chapel and site.

Before the Chapel was built, the site was occupied by a cottage that was the village Post Office and adjacent was the Blacksmith’s Shop. Unfortunately the Post Office was very badly damaged by a fire in 1929 and after that, stood derelict for some years. It was said that the sub postmistress, Mrs Clara Robins, knocked over an oil lamp which started the fire. The inglenook fireplace of the Post Office is in the wall that still stands with some railings that separates The Old Chapel from Leys Farm House.

The earliest document that we have come across about the site is from 27 November 1878 between two land farmers, William George Taylor and Henry Blea, passing on the property to John Robins. John was the husband of Clara and he worked the blacksmiths shop. It was the previous blacksmith, Nehemiah Franklin, who was in possession of the property before William George Taylor and Henry Blea. We have managed to obtain a

copy of Nehemiah's marriage certificate to Rachel Colegrove of Hook Norton dated 25 March 1847. They were married at Swerford Church. Rachel's gravestone is more or less the first on the right as you walk into St Mary's from the entrance by the village notice board. Close by is the gravestone of Thomas and Mary Franklin. Thomas was Nehemiah's father and was also listed on the marriage certificate as a blacksmith, so there have been at least three generations of blacksmiths who have worked the shop. Some of the existing Chapel walls are actually remaining walls of the blacksmith's shop which helps to explain why the Chapel actually looks older than its date stone above the double main entrance.

Our research into the site continues along with finding out about the previous inhabitants and is of continual interest. Maybe in a hundred years' time, somebody might record our connection with the Chapel and site?

Deborah Taylor-Lang and David Lang