

## THE HISTORY OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH IN BLISWORTH

Tony Marsh & Stephen Dyster from NRO documents

pre - 1689	There are various records in England of the imprisonment and execution of non-conformists.
1780	This is the date of the first formation of a Baptists 'movement' in Blisworth though more isolated, and legal, meetings are recorded from 1701. Meetings were held in various houses in the village that had to be certified regularly as prayer meeting houses. Leadership is thought to have come from Roade and/or Northampton initially. All of this was despised by the Anglican Church. Relationships gradually improved. The Duke of Grafton was moved to support the Baptists in a letter in 1825.
1807	A Baptist 'Sabbath' school for children was first set up. It enjoyed a Sunday attendance that briefly grew faster than the adult membership of the movement; children from <i>all</i> village families were welcomed.
1825	With a John Goodridge as the first minister, a simple chapel was built here on <i>his</i> plot, which was known as 'Little Ease'. The name suggests that a cramped punishment 'box' was set up hereabouts in medieval times. Up to this time the lane was known as Mill Lane (the overshot watermill at Pond Bank was closed in 1794 due to the canal works)
1825 to 1890	Over this period there was a substantial growth in membership of this Church, see below, that was 'kept to high standards' by regular judgement sessions with fear of exclusion (eg. due to drunkenness, inappropriate gazing at women, being seriously in debt) The excellent practice of exchanging preachers from other Baptist Churches became commonplace right from the start. It was primarily a 'workers Church' though some members of important families had joined, such as Joseph Westley in 1856. Shortly after this date a formalised evangelism was established to enlarge the Church, members being encouraged to recruit two others.
1871	The chapel building was enlarged to its present form, with more pews and a balcony, and immediately afterwards various out-buildings and the Manse were built. The gable to the lecture hall, facing Chapel lane, carries the date 1885. Probably from 1780, the relatively old house that stands alongside the driveway was occupied by the two families of chapel officials.

**APPROXIMATE MEMBERSHIP : 1825 11+    1880 100    1905 130**