HISTORY PROJECT: DISSENTERS & UNITARIANS AT BRIDPORT 1672-2020

BY ELIZABETH HARLEY



In 1662, two thousand clergymen of the Church of England were ejected from their livings because they could not accept the conditions of the new Act of Uniformity. Among them were the Rev. John Eaton, Rector of Bridport, and the Rev. Joseph Hallett, Rector of Chesleborough, who was born in Bridport and returned to Bridport after his ejection from Chesleborough. It is thought, though not proved, that John Eaton and Joseph Hallett gathered a group of sympathisers around them; but the first public meetings organised by Bridport Dissenters occurred in 1672, when Richard Downe, another ejected clergyman, licensed a house as a place of worship. This house was gradually altered till it assumed the character of an old Dissenting Meeting House. The congregation grew and flourished. In 1742, during the ministry of the Rev. Thomas Collins, an attempt was made to induce Mr. Collins to declare his belief in the Godhead of Jesus; he refused, whereupon a portion of the congregation withdrew and started the society now known as the Bridport Congregational Church. The majority continued under the leadership of Mr. Collins, and his successors, and still continues on the basis that neither minister nor members shall be bound by the words of ancient creeds and confessions, but shall be free to seek bruth from whatever quarter it may come. The present Chapel was erected in 1794, and liturgical services (an innovation among Dissenters) were introduced about the same time. The Sunday School began in a private house prior to 1818, and Sunday School buildings were opened in 1841. The old liturgical services, being out of print, were discontinued in 1866, when the Liturgy now in use was introduced. (G.R.J., 1949).

EARLY DISSENTERS

Ministers of the Chapel, 1672-

1672-1687 Richard Downe 1687-1727 Samuel Baker 1729-1734 Robert Drewett 1735-1762 Thomas Collins 1764-1768 William Sutton 1769-1787 George Waters 1788-1820 Thomas Howe 1821-1827 George Barker Wawne 1825-1827 J.G. Teggin (Assistant) 1827-1834 Robert Cree 1835-1840 Philip Harwood 1840-1841 Samuel Wood 1841-1847 E.B. Maclellan 1847-1864 John Lettis Short 1864-1888 Russell Lant Carpenter 1873-1888 John Davies (Assistant) 1888-1907 Henry Shaen Solly 1907-1926 W.L. Tucker 1927-1961 G. Randall Jones 1962-1968 Lawrence Hallworth 1968-1980 E. Basil Short 1981-1982 John S. Keggen 1985-1989 Jeffrey Bowes 1990-1993 Roderick Dixon 1994-2009 Roger P. Booth

THE NEW CHAPEL

Opened Sunday 9th March 1794



REV THOMAS HOWE

THE FOUNDING MINISTER OF THE NEW CHAPEL

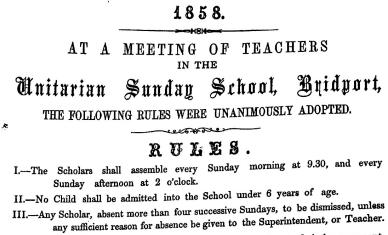
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COLUMN DESIGNATION DESIGNATION



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- IV.—The Scholars to be moved into different classes, according to their improvement, by the Superintendent and Teachers after consultation at half yearly meeting.
- V.--The Scholars to return their books before leaving the School, or moving into another class.
- VI.—The teachers are to inform the Superintendent during the week, if not able to attend, or to find substitutes.

VII .-- No teacher to leave the Class until the School be dismissed.

VIII.-Neither reading nor lesson books to be lent out of the School.

IX.—The Superintendent and two of the Teachers to be annually chosen to form part of a General Committee, who shall hold quarterly meetings to transact the business of the School.

- X.—There shall be a general Depot, at Mr. Male's, for all the books (of both Schools) when not in use, the Depot shall be under his management, and he shall mend and cover the books charging the cost to the funds.
- XI.—Books from the Depot shall be attainable only by application to the Committee, at their quarterly meeting, or to the Superintendent during the quarter, and shall be returned to the Depot when done with.
- XII.—A half yearly meeting of the Teachers in the Girls' School, and a quarterly meeting of the Teachers in the Boy's School, shall be held for the transaction of business.

MALE, PRINTER.]

ENARY OF THE BUILDING OF DIVINE SERVICE will be held in the Chapel FRIDAY, MARCH the 9th, 1894, On D.D., HERFORD, WEETING WILL BE HELD IN THE TOWN When the Chair will be taken at 7 p.m. by W. Colfox, Esq, J.P. ADDRESSES will be delivere . on "A Short History of the Congregation," by Mr. T. A. COLFOX. "What the last hundred years have tai ght us about the Bible," by Rev. J. F. SMITH, of Bristol. "What the last hundred years have taught us about Religions other than our own," by Professor J. E. CARFENTER, M.A., of Oxford. "The Divisions and the Reunion of Christendom," by Rey. BROOKE HERFORD, D.D., of London. "The Outlook for our Young People," by Rev. JEFFERY WORTHINGTON, B.A., of Taunton. "Our Nonconformist Lineage. by Rev. F. K. FREESTON, of London. " Creed and Priest in Public Schools," by Rev. W. COPELAND BOWIE, Member of London School Board. LUNCHEON at the Bull Hotel, chair taken by HENRY RENDALL, Esq., J.P., at 2 o'clock. Tickets, 2s. 6d. each. TEA in the School-room, Rax Lane, at 5.30. Tickets, 6d. each.

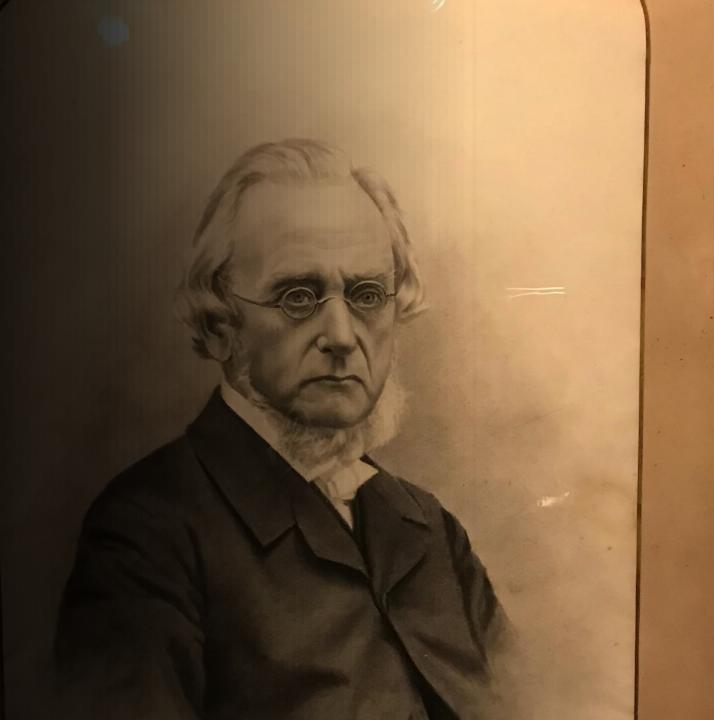
ALL ARE CORDIALLY INVITUD. Dated February 19th, 1894. Dated February 19th, 1894.

W & E. FROST, PRINTERS BY GAS POWER, WAARFEDALE WORKS, WEST STREET, BRIDPORT.

A TIME OF FLOURISHING IN THE 1800S

REV. RUSSELL LANT CARPENTER

MINISTER: 1864-1888



FREDERICK DOUGLASS 1818–1895

FREDERICK DOUGLASS 1818–1895

MARY CARPENTER

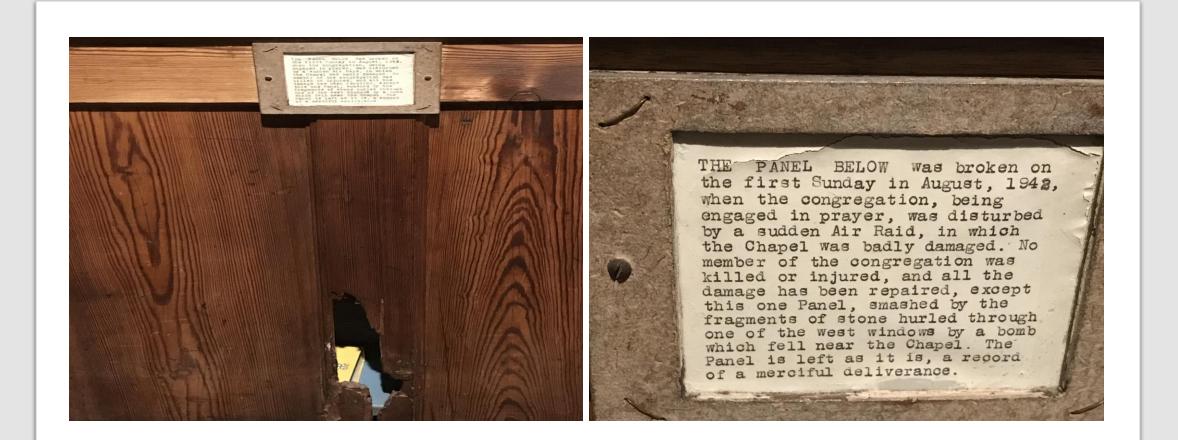
3 APRIL 1807 – 14 JUNE 1877



ALICE LEE COLFOX

2.4.1856 -21.10.1933







In Loving Memory of RUSSELL LANT CARPENTER B.A. A FAITHFUL FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, GENTLE, CHIVALHOUS AND EARNEST, A STRENUOUS ADVOCATE OF PEACE WHILST BOLD IN DEFENCE OF THE WEAK AND OPPRESSED HIS SYMPATHY FOR WHOM WAS BOUNDED BY NO RACE OR CLIME. HE FOSTERED INDEPENDENCE AND PUBLIC SPIRIT AMONGST HIS FELLOW TOWNSMEN, LEADING THEM TO ESTABLISH MANY USEFUL INSTITUTIONS. AND SPARED NOT HIS STRENGTH NOR THE POWERS OF A RICHLY CULTURED MIND IN THE SERVICE OF TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. BORN AT EXETER, DECEMBER 17 1816, DIED AT BRIDPORT, JANUARY 15 11 1892. THIS TABLET IS ERECTED BY THE CONGREGATION OF WHICH HE WAS THE LOVED AND HONOURED MINISTER FROM 1865 TO 1888.

> IN LOVINC MEMORY OF ALICE LEE COLFOX. BORN 3RD APRIL, 1856. DIED 9TH OCTOBER, 1936.

A LIFELONC WORSHIPPER AND WORKER IN THIS CHAPEL AND ITS SUNDAY SCHOOL. BY HER SIMPLE COODNESS SHE MADE IT EASIER FOR OTHERS TO BE COOD.

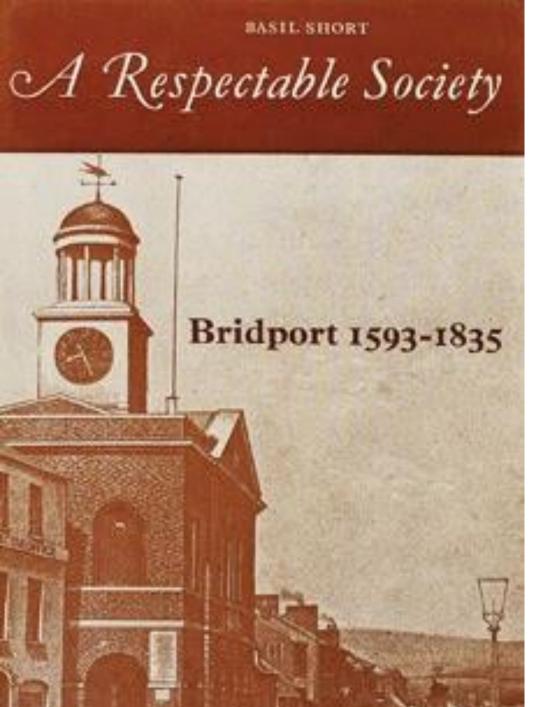
A FERVENT WISH FOR OUR FUTURE...

'...I pray Almighty God, that zeal for the cause of Unitarianism, which I most firmly believe to be the cause of Truth, and <u>strictly</u> Evangelical, however at times it may appear to languish, may <u>never die</u> at Bridport.'

THOMAS COLLINS COLFOX 1755-1835

ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE NEW CHAPEL, CHAPEL IN THE GARDEN.





References:

Rev. Basil Short - A Respectable Society, Bridport 1593-1835 (Minister at Bridport 1968-80)

The Colfox Family Papers by Evelyn Helen Chichester Halls (Colfox) documenting Colfox History 1550-1954 (PDF in circulation by request)

Online Articles:

"If You Don't Go To Chapel You Will Never Get On Here" Cecil Amor, Hon President, Bridport History Society. <u>http://www.marshwoodvale.com/history-</u> <u>community/2019/09/if-you-dont-go-to-chapel-you-will-never-</u> <u>get-on-here/</u>

"Two men, one name" By Cecil Amor in the Marshwood Vale Magazine. <u>http://www.marshwoodvale.com/history-</u> <u>community/2016/07/two-men-one-name-by-cecil-amor/</u>

Professor Karen Hunt for Bridport Museum: Bridport and Slavery <u>https://www.bridportmuseum.co.uk/bridport-slavery/</u>





Finding treasures...

To my Priends of the Brid post Unitarian Congregation

I thank you, warmly & affectional for the viry beautiful token of your rega which that this week been placed in my hands. It will always be dear to me, as a memorial of the days to years that I have spent in your see and which the consciousness of enjoy a indeasoning to deserve, your person regard & public support, has rendered among the happiers of my life. Be appred that the regret were which you contemplate our approach separation is fully shared by mappe I feel that in learing Bridport I an learing such friends as may not f

afrare ingrilf, follow me waycohere with the feelings & hapes of fliendship. With every affectionate desire for the personal & domestic happiness of every one among you, I for the Wilfare & Christian Union of the Decity of which you are a portion, Jam, my dear Friends, Ever & very truly yours Philip Marwood Phidport April 19. 1940.

AN AFFECTIONATE LETTER FROM THE RETIRED MINISTER REV. P.HARWOOD 1840

