

THE BAPTISTS IN OXFORD

1656 - 1819

By order of Charles I, on 24th June 1646, the city of Oxford capitulated to Fairfax's New Model Army of Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists. Six Presbyterians, Cornish and Langley, Reynolds and Harrys, Cheynell and Wilkinson, whom Anthony Wood, chronicler of events in Oxford, described as "two fools, two knaves and two madmen",¹ were appointed to settle doctrinal disputes in the University, and had power to preach in all the city churches, whose services the frequenters of conventicles of Independents, Anabaptists and Presbyterians attended.² Five days later the Oxford Council passed an Act repealing an earlier one, passed at the King's request, that had meant disenfranchisement, forfeiture of freedom and deprivation of office for any who had purposely absented themselves from the city during Charles I's stay in Oxford.

One whom the Act concerned, Roger Hatchman, the son of a radical parliamentarian citizen of Oxford, had, as a freemason, been employed on the construction of the north side of the Great Quadrangle of Christ Church from 1641.³ He was re-admitted to the freedom of the city on 1st July 1651⁴ and, perhaps, at this time began a meeting of Baptists in his tenement in The Hamel, St Thomas,⁵ which he had leased on 20th December 1636 for twenty years.⁶

In 1654, John Camm and John Audland, both itinerant Quakers, visited Oxford where they were given a welcome by James Jennings and Richard Quelch, the butler and porter of New College. The travelling pair "went to the Baptist meeting, and, waiting there until the person that was speaking had done, John Audland began to speak upon the same matter, and made those things more clear to the peoples understanding, greatly to the satisfaction of those that were there; and the man in whose house the Meeting was kept received John Audland and John Camm into their house".⁷

By 1656 a distinct Baptist church had been formed in Oxford which was received into the Abingdon Association at a meeting of the messengers at Tetsworth on 11 January.⁸ The messengers from the Oxford Church were Thomas Tisdale, a mercer, who had transferred from the Abingdon Church and lived in St Martins in the parish of St Thomas from 1666-c.1726,⁹ and Richard Tidmarsh, a tanner, also living in the parish of St Thomas.¹⁰

About this time, Wood writes that it was common to declare against uniformity in public, "so it was also in private meetings and conventicles of Baptists, Quakers and such like unstable people ... This I have seen and heard when the Baptists publickly baptised people at Hythe Bridge; and some I have seen baptised by one King, a glover of Oxford, beheld by hundreds of people that would shout at it and make it ridiculous".¹¹ Lawrence King was messenger to the twentieth meeting of the Abingdon Association, in June 1658, arriving at Tetsworth a day

late, on the fifteenth.¹² At the next meeting, in April 1659, Richard Tidmarsh was messenger reporting the state of the Oxford Baptists. One member had transferred from Wantage, two had been cast out, two had become Sabbatarians and about four had been added.¹³

Put up by Andrews, the butler of Exeter College, Ralph Austen and Major Hatchman, says Wood,¹⁴ John Belcher, "a notorious Sabbatarian Baptist and Fifth Monarchy Man",¹⁵ preached at St Peter le Bailey on 16th January 1660, but was turned out by the Vice-Chancellor. Three months later Roger Hatchman was the messenger to the Abingdon Association when all the churches, save one, agreed to abide by Abingdon's decision to excommunicate John Belcher.¹⁶ Concerning the state of the Oxford Baptists, Hatchman reported that "two members are lately fallen to the Quakers".¹⁷

In a letter dated 18th June 1672, James Penny, of Christ Church, wrote that there were two Meetings in Oxford, a Presbyterian, and a mixed congregation of Independents and Baptists, Dr Langley being the teacher at the former. "The teacher to the other Assembly is a Tanner of this Town, by name Tidmarsh, who is cryed up much above Langley even by his own party, and possibly would spoile the credit of any other pretender to *Gifts* in this County ... The Junior Schollers have been something rude to these *Parlour Preachers*, as you know they usually are ... and it would make you laugh to heare the *Mouth that speakes from the Joynt-stool* pronounce his *Anathemous Maranathas*, in the very express termes".¹⁸ Earlier that year Charles II issued his Declaration of Indulgence, and Richard Tidmarsh took the opportunity to secure a licence for his house as a Baptist meeting-place and for himself and Lawrence King as preachers.¹⁹

Richard Tidmarsh attended, in 1689, the General Assembly of Baptists in London, then visited some of the Baptists in Essex.²⁰ The following year he left the Baptist congregation in Oxford to become minister at Tiverton, Devon, being ordained on 12th November 1691 by Thomas Whinnell of Taunton.¹² According to Wood, the next minister of the Baptist Church in Oxford was Richard Claridge, but this is denied by Besse, Claridge's biographer.²²

It is probable that the Oxford Baptists were without a pastor for the first few years of the eighteenth century for, in 1707, they were being supplied by Joseph Collet, of Cote, and William Fuller, an elder of Abingdon, some years after John Toms, the last minister, had, according to Crosby, removed to London.²³

The rivalry between the Whig and Tory parties, brought to a head at the death of Queen Anne and the succession of George I, was mirrored in society when, on 28th May 1715, an Oxford mob, animated and assisted by scholars of the University, attacked the Presbyterian meeting-house in New Inn Hall Street. The Quaker and Baptist meeting-houses suffered the following

day, the anniversary of the Restoration of Charles II, which, though it fell on a Sunday, did not hinder the mob from taking the opportunity to show their disaffection to the government, and great rage against the Protestant Dissenters.²⁴ The Baptists had only a room in a house near the Castle, but this did not protect them from the furious mob who "contented not themselves with destroying the pulpit, forms and other things, which they found in the room used as a meeting-place, but also rifled the whole house ... and pulled down the front of it, whereby the part the family dwelt in lay open and exposed to the weather".²⁵ The master of the house, a member of the Church of England, had lived in that house the previous twenty-two years and reckoned the cost of the damage to be at least £40, but the Commissioners of George I awarded him only £17, while the Presbyterians received £108.²⁶ The differences in compensation did not matter as the congregations joined together, under William Roby, to rebuild on a new site, where the present Baptist church stands in New Road, given by Rebecca Burrows who owned an ironmonger's business in the High Street. A copy of part of her original deed of conveyance that was dated 5th April 1720 still exists. Part of the message was to be pulled down and a meeting-house erected for the use of "a society, or congregation, of Protestant Dissenters in and about Oxford", of which William Roby was to be pastor. John Song and John Warner were to "hold such premises on Trust for that use and sell the rest to erect and furnish a meeting-house, or as a manse for the use of the pastor".²⁷ The meeting-house, seating 230,²⁸ was entered via a narrow passage between a row of cottages, and was opened in 1721 when Mr Roby preached from 1 Kings 8.^{27.29} It was registered on 31st July.³⁰

The united cause, it seems, was not strong for, according to James Hinton, the years 1730-65 were a "period of melancholy declension"³¹ when public services were seldom held. It also seems probable that the majority of the members were from the Presbyterian congregation. When William Roby died, in 1734, he was succeeded by Mr Snashall, but he soon removed.³² His successor, Samuel Park, was recommended by Dr Jabez Earle, a Presbyterian, but, after about four years, he moved to Bicester.³³ Richard Harrison, recommended by Samuel Chandler, next held the pastoral office, but for only one year, leaving Oxford in 1741. This, writes Turner, was their last settled pastor for some time.³⁴

In 1743, there was public preaching once a month, and the Lord's Supper administered three times, but for the next ten years there was no public service. A few members met in a private house to pray and to read Dr Owen's sermons.³⁵ Hinton records that one of his members recollected, in 1821, having attended for many years a Sunday morning prayer-meeting at which eight or ten gathered.³⁶ These few apparently had a minister in 1760 for Thomas Gibbons noted in his *Diary* that when he visited Oxford on 19th September he "dined at Mr Foxe's, a draper. Conversed with Mr Hickes, the present minister there".³⁷ This was, perhaps, Nathaniel Hicks, a grantee under the Trotman Trust for the assistance of ministerial

students, who was at Brentwood Congregational Meeting, Essex, 1761-c.1767.³⁸

A few years after this the congregation consisting of Baptists and paedo-Baptists, some of the latter being followers of Whitefield and Wesley, was supplied by neighbouring Baptist ministers, among whom were John Reynolds and William Wilkins, both of Bourton-on-the-Water.³⁹ The public service of God was restored regularly and on Thursday, 16th November 1780, thirteen people entered into a new Church Covenant, on the basis of "open communion", which was witnessed by their minister, William Miller.⁴⁰

On 14th July 1784 Edward Prowitt was ordained pastor, having ministered to them for about twelve months on probation. He resigned the pastorate on 11th November 1786 having adopted heterodox views.⁴¹ Being destitute of a pastor, the church requested a supply from the Baptist Academy in Bristol, and, through the influence of Samuel Harris, his friend James Hinton was invited to supply for six months with a view to settlement at a salary of £56 7s.⁴² He arrived in Oxford on 1st June 1787 to reside with the Bartlett family.⁴³ After three months the invitation to settle was renewed and a final call given on 20th January 1788. On 11th June following, James Hinton was ordained pastor when Caleb Evans gave the charge and Dr Samuel Stennet preached.⁴⁴ The church now consisted of 25 members and about 130 hearers.⁴⁵

By 1792, excepting the Quaker meeting-house, which was seldom used, there were only two places of worship where the form of worship differed from that of the Establishment; one of them belonged to a "society of Protestant Dissenters" that had existed for over a century; the other to the followers of Wesley, who were without a pastor.⁴⁶ Hinton, as the only dissenting minister in Oxford, wrote to Samuel Bardsley in Birmingham, on 2nd April 1799, to request assistance for the Methodists.⁴⁷ His own labours, however, were greatly blessed so that an extension of the meeting-house was being contemplated towards the end of 1797. The antagonism of some of the townspeople could not diminish the eagerness of those wanting to attend, as during the two previous years "many had stood during the whole service and not a few had been unable to gain admittance at all".⁴⁸ On 8th October Hinton preached on "We shall rise and build" and, "the following day a public meeting was held for the consideration of the design, when it was unanimously and cordially agreed on".⁴⁹

Work commenced on the enlargement at the beginning of 1798 and was to cost, including the vestry, nearly £750. Of this, the congregation raised £300, and the rest, within about £80, was defrayed by the large circle of Hinton's connections as he made collecting tours.⁵⁰ The meeting-house was now more than forty feet square and, by a judicious disposition of room, was made to seat comfortably about 530 persons, with a further 120 in the vestry.⁵¹ The opening services were performed on 16th August that year by Dr Ryland, Mr Hughes and Mr Cooke.⁵² The place of worship now built was, according to Hinton, "neat

and convenient, but by no means handsome; as much use as possible was made of the Old Meeting, and the pulpit restored exactly in its original state, only the entrance from behind being new. Even in its external appearance, however, great improvement was effected, especially by throwing it open to the public road: for the space in front, now used as a burying-ground, had been previously occupied by a line of very old and irregular houses, a narrow passage only being left in the western side for access to the Meeting-House. At this period the said buildings were removed and the present avenue formed."⁵³

While Hinton was travelling, collecting to clear the debt, Daniel Trotman, a student at Bristol, supplied the pulpit.⁵⁴ After completing four "tours", in the summer of 1799, Hinton became ill; it was in fact the beginning of an illness that was to keep recurring for twenty-three years.⁵⁵ Hinton's complaint produced painful stomach spasms, and must sometimes have prevented him preaching. On 18th February 1800 a meeting was held in the vestry to open a subscription to provide an assistant.⁵⁶ The first to benefit from this subscription was Mr Morgan, another Bristol student, assistant from 1st April 1800 to the spring of the following year.⁵⁷ The generosity of Charles Hughes, who died in 1802, enabled a Trust to be founded which required the recipients to preach once a year at Oxford. Thus, with the pulpit provided for on twelve Sundays, another assistant was not an immediate requirement.⁵⁸

James Hinton was active in promoting the gospel in several neighbouring villages and, in 1807, with the aid of a £100 legacy from Thomas Pasco, a place of worship was erected at Littlemore.⁵⁹ The following year a "pretty, neat little chapel"⁶⁰ was opened at Eynsham with the help of the Baptists in Oxford and Witney. In Oxford, however, Hinton was disappointed and wrote, in 1807, to John Bartlett, one of his deacons: "Give me back again my little dwelling concealed by cottages; my vestry-meeting, with twenty hearty members, and thirty more to add the powerful Amen. These gates of the heart admit the King of Heaven far better than the splendid gates of iron".⁶¹ Even though the congregation had increased Hinton was concerned that their "internal not external state was at fault".⁶² They were late for divine worship, absent from the prayer-meeting, irregular at the Lord's Supper and lacked co-operation. In May 1810 Hinton had a bad attack of stomach spasms so that in the coming spring he took a vacation and visited Lymington and the Isle of Wight.⁶³ The church raised £100, in September 1811, in order to invite Joseph Price to become Hinton's assistant.⁶⁴ In February 1813, Hinton was without an assistant until Mr Kershaw, of Glasgow, accepted an invitation to supply the pulpit from May. In March of the following year Mr Kershaw removed to Abingdon.⁶⁵ While visiting Norwich, in 1816, Hinton had an almost fatal attack of his illness which caused him to resign as assistant secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society. The following year, Jenkyn Thomas was invited not as an assistant but as co-pastor. His ordination was delayed until 7th October 1818 on account of his own illness!⁶⁶

Under the very popular ministry of Jenkyn Thomas the congregation again increased, so at length another enlargement of the place of worship was necessary. The congregation now numbered eight hundred, of whom a quarter were communicant. The New Road Church, "that commodious and handsome building, adapted to seat eight hundred persons, was opened for divine service"⁶⁷ in 1819 having been enlarged, and a new front added which was designed by John Hudson.⁶⁸ The work cost £1,600, but this time the congregation raised the whole sum themselves.

A more detailed description of the enlargement was provided by Alden, in 1844, during the pastorate of Dr Godwin, before the alterations of 1847, the repairs of 1856 and the enlargement of 1865.⁶⁹ "In those days the old chapel was much lower in height than now, its ceiling was a shallow dome, surmounted by a cupola, very much like the arrangement in the new Kingsgate Chapel in the Baptist Church House. There was an old-fashioned lofty pulpit, on a fine moulded stem, or shaft (octagonal, I think), and nestling beneath it on either side was a 'square pew' like a box, shut in with doors and surrounded by closely drawn curtains. The pulpit was entered from behind through a small doorway in the wall, by a narrow staircase from the vestry".⁷⁰ Singers were accommodated in the organ gallery, at the rear of the church, and conducted from the table pew.

On the enlargement of the building it was the wish of the congregation to construct a baptistry at Oxford. Hinton pointed out that it was not fear of a disturbance in the meeting-house that prevented this being fulfilled earlier, nor that the Paedobaptists were prevailing before the new covenant.⁷¹ Dr E B Underhill, a member in 1819, provided an account of the first baptism. "At that time, as now, the church was based on the principle of open membership, Baptists and Paedo-Baptists being admitted to its fellowship on equal terms ... When the work of enlarging the chapel was taken in hand, it became a question whether a baptistry should or should not be built ... Mr Collingwood, although a conscientious Paedo-Baptist, heartily approved the proposal ... with which all Paedo-Baptist friends concurred. He, Mr Underhill, could never forget the crowds which tried to press themselves into the building on the occasion of the first baptismal service. Their forefathers were never ashamed of that rite".⁷²

NOTES

- 1 A. Wood, *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood*, vol.1 (Oxford, 1891), p.130.
- 2 J. Gutch, *History of the University of Oxford*, vol.2, pt.2 (Oxford, 1796), p.489.
- 3 W. G. Hiscock, *A Christ Church Miscellany* (London, 1946), p.200. The same mason, or a namesake, worked on the Sheldonian Theatre under Wren in 1664.

- 4 M. G. Hobson, *Oxford Council Acts 1626-65*, (London, 1933), pp.134,183.
- 5 W. Stevens and W. W. Bottoms, *The Baptists of New Road*, (Oxford, 1948), p.3.
- 6 *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey*, ed. H. E. Salter, (Oxford, 1929), p.530.
- 7 *First Publishers of Truth*, ed. N. Penny, (London, 1907), p.212. They were accompanied by Richard Betteris and Lawrence Willier.
- 8 *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660*, ed. B. R. White, pt.3, (London, 1974), p.145.
- 9 *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey*, vol.2, pp.322-31. The Oxford Hannisters (Oxford City Library), in which apprenticeships were recorded, show Thomas Tisdale, mercer, son of Thomas Tisdale, Abingdon, gent., was made free on 19th Jan. 1652. Mr. W. Stevens (in a letter to the author) suggests that, if Tisdale was 20 when he was made a freeman, it is not impossible, but unlikely, that he was still living (and leasing a house) in 1726; rather it is a case of father and son of the same name. However, the children of Thomas and Jane (née Stibbs, vide Bodleian Library MS. Top. Oxon. c172, p.80) Tisdale are recorded in 1667 as Elizabeth and Hannah (*Surveys and Tokens*, ed. H. E. Salter, (Oxford, 1923), p.219.
- 10 Richard Tidmarsh was the son of Oswald Tidmarsh, husbandman of Adlestrop, Glos. He was baptised in that parish on 13th March 1626. On 25th May 1644 he began a seven year apprenticeship to become a tanner, being admitted to the freedom of the City of Oxford on 19th January 1652.
- 11 Wood, *Life*, vol.1, p.293, n.6. Lawrence King, son of Robert King, an Oxford innholder, was baptised on 18th November 1629 at All Saints' Church (MS. Top. Oxon. c172, p.52). He served an apprenticeship as a glover, being admitted a Freeman on 22nd September 1651, made a Common Councillor in 1688; he lived with his wife, five children and a journeyman at 119-120 High Street (*Surveys and Tokens*, pp.228, 418).
- 12 *Association Records*, p.186.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p.191.
- 14 Wood, *Life*, vol.1, p.302.
- 15 Stevens and Bottoms, *Baptists of New Road*, p.5.
- 16 *Association Records*, p.205.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p.204.
- 18 Baxter Letters (Dr Williams's Library), vol.ii, no.51, p.3.
- 19 G. L. Turner, *Original Records of Early Nonconformity*, (London,1911), p.830.
- 20 *Baptist Quarterly*, vol.4 (1929), p.119. Among the Rippon Papers in the Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford, is a transcript, by

- Joshua Thomas, of extracts from a book kept by Isaac Marlow. It shows that Tidmarsh received £20 on 17th March 1690, with the agreement of the General Assembly, from the public stock raised by the churches. He also received £15 "for his journey to visit the churches", presumably those in Essex. On 13th June 1690 £10 was awarded to John Tomkins for his Oxford ministry.
- 21 J. Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, (4 vols., London, 1811-1830), vol.1, p.504; vol.2, pp.135 f.
- 22 Wood, *Life*, vol.3, p.393. J. Besse, *Life and Posthumous Works of Richard Claridge*, (London, 1726), p.18.
- 23 T. Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, vol.4 (London, 1738), p.138. Evans' List in Dr. Williams's Library states that there are 150 hearers attending the Presbyterian meeting, and that the "Anti-paedobaptist" congregation is supplied by Fuller of Abingdon and Collet of Cote.
- 24,25 Crosby, *History*, vol.4, pp.136-7.
- 26 Stevens and Bottoms, *Baptists of New Road*, p.9.
- 27 "State of the Title to New Road Oxford", Oxford (13 April 1865), deposited in the church safe.
- 28 *Baptist Annual Register* (1798-1801), p.29, n.249. E. C. Alden, in *The Old Church at New Road* (Oxford, 1904), p.8, says the building seated 250.
- 29 D. Turner, *Charity the Bond of Perfection*, (London, 1780), p.iii. This was the sermon Turner preached at the re-establishment of "a Church of Protestant Dissenters" at Oxford in 1780. He added a preface containing information on its history which he had received from "an Intelligent Friend at Oxford, on whose Fidelity I can depend".
- 30 Stevens and Bottoms, *Baptists of New Road*, p.9.
- 31 J. Hinton, *Historical Sketch of Eighteen Baptist Churches in the Oxfordshire Association*, (Oxford, 1821), p.6.
- 32 Turner, *Charity*, p.iii.
- 33 *Idem*. The church at Bicester also apparently contained members of different religious sentiments, for its ministers were denominated as Presbyterian, Independent, Unitarian and Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, *V.C.H. Oxfordshire*, vol.6, p.48).
- 34 Turner, *Charity*. p.iv. The Minutes of the Presbyterian Fund (Dr. Williams's Library) show that William Roby received £30 per annum from Lady Day 1713 to 1722, when the grant was reduced to £21. He continued to receive this sum until his death, as well as a special payment of £5 on 3rd May 1725. His successor, who is not named in the Minutes, also received £21 each year from 1735 to 1738. Samuel Park was voted the same sum in 1739, and Richard Harrison also received a grant in 1740-41. On 7th January 1751 13 churches,

including Oxford, were struck off the list. It is noted that the £21 had not been paid since Michaelmas 1741.

- 35 Turner, *Charity*, p.iv.
- 36 J. Hinton, *Historical Sketch*, p.6.
- 37 Quoted by Rev. C. E. Surman in a letter to Rev. W. W. Bottoms, 2 Sept. 1953, deposited in the church safe.
- 38 T. W. Davids, *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in Essex*, (London, 1863), p.412.
- 39 J. Hinton, *Historical Sketch*, p.6.
- 40 Turner, *Charity*, p.vi. In 1772 Turner published *A Modest Plea for Free Communion at the Lord's Table, particularly between Baptists and Paedobaptists*. He was largely responsible for the new Covenant and preached at the service in which it was signed (vide n.29 above and E. A. Payne, "Abraham Atkins and General Communion", *Baptist Quarterly*, vol.26 (1976), pp.314-19).
- 41 Extract from the first Church Book, now lost, copied in the Church Book 1866-88. Cf. J. H. Hinton, *A Biographical Portraiture of the late Rev. James Hinton*, (Oxford, 1824), p.104, who says Prowitt left in 1787.
- 42 J. H. Hinton, *Biographical Portraiture*, pp.21, 105. The congregation contributed 40 gns, and the rest was £7 from the Atkins Trust, 2 gns. from a collection at Broadmead, Bristol, and 5 gns. from the Bristol Education Society.
- 43 *Ibid.* p.23.
- 44 *Ibid.* p.105.
- 45 J. Hinton, *Historical Sketch*, p.6.
- 46 J. Hinton, *A Vindication of the Dissenters in Oxford*, (Oxford, 1792).
- 47 J. H. Hinton, *Biographical Portraiture*, p.327.
- 48,49 *Ibid.* p.157.
- 50,51 *Baptist Annual Register*, (1798-1801), p.29. The architect was John Bartlett.
- 52 J. H. Hinton, *Biographical Portraiture*, p.157.
- 53 *Ibid.*, p.158.
- 54 *Ibid.*, pp.159-61. In September 1798 Hinton went to Birmingham; in December he visited Fairford, Cirencester and Bourton-on-the-Water; in January 1799 Coventry, Leicester, Buckingham, Banbury and London; and finally Nottingham, Sheephead, Leicester, Kettering, Olney, Reading and London.
- 55 *Ibid.*, pp.75, 163.
- 56 *Ibid.*, p.163.

- 57 *Ibid.*, pp.164, 196.
- 58 *Ibid.*, p.165.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p.281. (Cf. *Evangelical Magazine*, (1806), p.481).
- 60 Idem. Rebuilt in 1818, by William Fisher.
- 61,62 *Ibid.*, p.174.
- 63 *Ibid.*, pp.84, 179.
- 64 *Ibid.*, p.180. (Cf. *Baptist Magazine*, (1814), p.85).
- 65 *Ibid.*, p.181.
- 66,67 *Ibid.*, pp.186-7.
- 68 R. Lascelles, *The University and City of Oxford*, (London, 1821), p.237. Cf. H. M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of English Architects 1660-1840*, (London, 1954), pp.302, 747.
- 69 In 1865 the "walls were heightened, a new ceiling substituted for the low cupola, but the structure is substantially the same as at the enlargement of 1819", (J. Dann, *Centennial History*, (Oxford, 1883), p.26).
- 70 Alden, *The Old Church at New Road*, p.29.
- 71 J. H Hinton, *Biographical Portraiture*, pp.187, 205.
- 72 Dann, *Centennial History*, p.26.

PHILIP HAYDEN

NOTES

A "BRITISH" SCHOOL IN WILTSHIRE

The *History of Education Society Bulletin* No. 25 (Spring 1980) includes a brief reference (p.41) to "a 'British' school" at Imber, Wiltshire, which existed in 1893 but closed in 1895, and was "run by the Baptists". This information is culled from the records of the rival National (i.e. Anglican) School. The author of the article, L. Black, describes the British School as an "adventure school", that is, one which had not, or had not yet, obtained the government recognition which would both attract grants and establish that attendance at the school satisfied compulsory education requirements. The author adds that the British School "was not recorded in *Kelly's Directory*, nor do any records exist at the Department of Education and Science Archives or at Wiltshire Country Record Office", Description of a school as 'British' seems sometimes to have implied no formal connexion with the British and Foreign Schools Society, but merely a nonconformist sponsorship. Most of that Society's records perished in the Second World War.