

PERSONALITIES

While I myself can go back nearly seventy years, having been christened in the old chapel in 1907, I can only relate to you information passed on to me.

My Grandfather, Uriah Partridge, was born in 1844. I remember how he used to speak of the struggles and hardships of that time. When he was married, he lived in the chapel house, a cottage next door, acting as caretaker. His work was that of hurdle maker, that is, making cribs and sheep cages that held hay to feed the sheep and cattle, and hurdles to pen them off or contain the animals. He used to tell the story of how, one Christmas with snow on the ground, he and his family had nothing to eat, and went to bed after praying for help to their heavenly Father. In the morning, they found lying on the doorstep a young hare, or leveret, which the cat had caught.

John Sealey, a real man of God, whom I remember best as our Sunday School superintendent, used to spread his handkerchief on the bare boards before kneeling in fervent prayer. He was convinced that the Devil was very real, even getting into his shoulders and making them ache. He was employed at the Great Western Railway Works in Swindon, and cycled every day the sixteen mile round trip to work.

Walter New was a stockman in charge of a large herd of cows, which meant that, Sunday or weekday, he had work to do, but you also saw him at worship, perhaps leading the weekly prayer meeting. He was a quiet, unassuming man and a firm Christian.

Albert Partridge, my uncle, coal merchant and carrier, left a sum of money to build and maintain the new chapel. Albert again was a quiet and sincere man, who at times suffered from ashtma but was always in his place for worship. A Christian who did his Lord's work where possible, his waggon was always ready for the Camp Meeting and waggonette for the Sunday School outings. He was a local preacher for fifty years.

William Bunce helped and attended the chapel with his family for many years. He came from Albourne and commenced business as a blacksmith: this was the start of a very successful engineering firm, which is still going strong. He was a sincere Christian, who helped many a person in trouble and kept a warm place in his heart for chapel.

Miss Letisha Stroud, who is now over ninety and living near Taunton, used to keep the village shop. She was, for many years, our organist, local preacher and Sunday School teacher. We remember her lovely contralto voice and how it was used to the glory of God. Miss Stroud remembers being told by her parents of the harrassment of some who were Primitive Methodists in the village in the bad old days. She is still firm in her faith and is waiting for the call to higher things.

William Partridge, my father, was one of the stalwarts of the old and new chapel. The local preacher for fifty years, he used to cycle and walk to his appointments, which were now in the Faringdon Circuit. Because of his powerful voice and fervent singing, he was nicknamed "Crown Him" after the hymn. It was said that you could hear him three miles away as he was climbing Ashbury Hill, which leads to Ashdown Park where he worked as a gardener. He travelled to many Camp Meetings and his faith was robust and strong till the end.