

ASHBURY PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL

This is a very brief account of the beginning of Methodism in Ashbury - how the cause started and has continued to this day.

John Ride, the Apostle of Berkshire, when the Devil was rampant in this part of the country, was venerated for his missionary zeal and Christian worship.

In 1824, John Ride was appointed Superintendent of the Brinkworth Circuit, and commissioned by the conference to bear witness in Berkshire. God so blessed his labours that not only Ashbury, but Lambourne, Bishopstone, Albourne, Faringdon, and many of the villages of the Vale of the White Horse, built chapels and to this day maintain a witness.

The mission started in 1830 and the following is John Ride's report of the first meeting at Ashbury. "At Ashbury, two joined and many wept. Notwithstanding the good done, there is much opposition; the farmers are in general much opposed to Dissenters and particularly to us. They have threatened to turn the people out of work and out of their houses if they hear us preach or take us in. We had to preach out of doors in the cold as they durst not let us preach in their houses."

This is also when John Ride and Thomas Russell (who had been sent to help him) held the prayer meeting at Ashdown Park Corner. They went into the wood and prayed for several hours. The burden of their prayer was "Lord, Give us Berkshire". They received the assurance they needed and Thomas Russell rose from his knees and said "Brother Ride, yonder country is ours, and we will have it" and, despite much opposition, God prospered the work. In Ashbury and the surrounding districts progress was made and, in 1834, John Ride preached two sermons at Ashbury, where several were converted and a Love Feast held.

The land for the chapel was purchased in 1834 and the building itself, measuring 17 feet by 24 feet was erected and opened for worship in 1839, at a cost of £45. The chapel was lit by two hanging oil lamps and heated with a tortoise stove. Initially, only half the chapel was furnished with bench-type seats, but later the seating was extended to the whole chapel. The pulpit was on a raised platform.

Each Sunday, the chapel was used for two preaching services, two Sunday School meetings and a weekly prayer meeting. At the opening of the chapel on January 24th 1839, five sermons were preached. Whilst we have no information as to who took part, I think we can assume that John Ride, the Apostle of Berkshire, would have been one.