

CHURCHES & CHAPELS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Iain Wakeford 2015



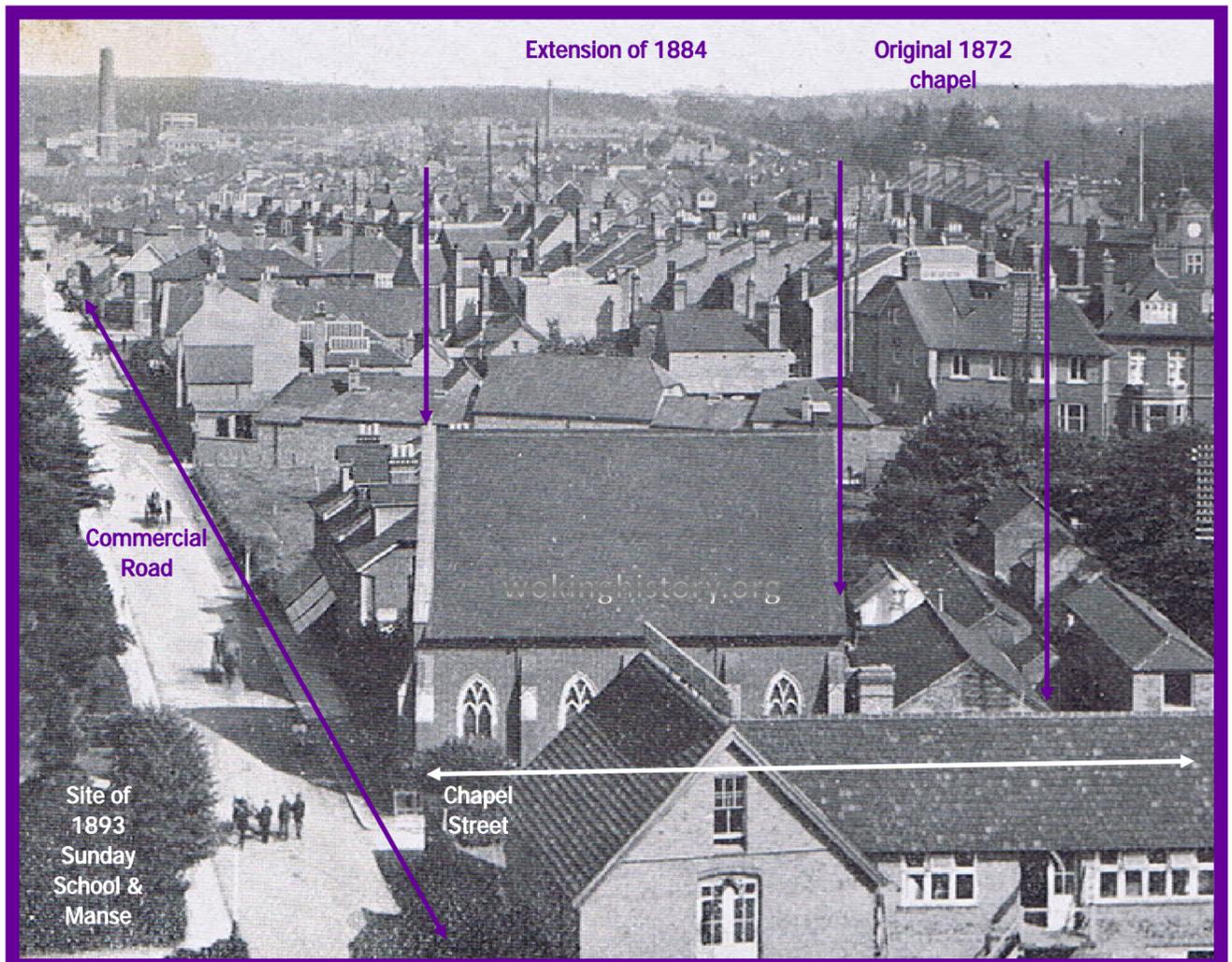
Originally the Sunday School and Manse of the Wesleyan Chapel across the road, I wonder what some of the original congregation thought of the building's new use as a ballroom and dance hall.

The Woking area has a long tradition of non-conformity with the 'Huntingdon Connection' Chapel at Shackleford established in the 1770's in Old Woking and dissenters meetings being held in places like Worplesdon, Pirbright and Knaphill in the late 18th and early 19th century. In earlier articles I have written about the Baptist Chapels in Horsell – at Wheatsheaf, Cheapside and Anthony's (the latter rebuilt in 1901) – as well as at Goldsworth, and have noted the Primitive Methodist chapel at College Road, Maybury (opened in 1863 and later transferred to Walton Road).

I have noted too the Wesleyan Chapel in Chapel Street, the first place of worship to be built in what became the new town of Woking.

The Wesleyan's which later merged with the Methodist's, were evidently very active in this area in the late 19th century.

Having built the first little chapel in 1872 they found that it had to be extended twelve years later and five years after that a separate Sunday School and Manse was constructed across Commercial Road. The original Chapel and extension, as we have seen before, was later used by Woking Library, whilst the 1893 building opposite may be remembered by some older residents of the town as the Atlanta Ballroom.





The Wesleyan Chapel on the corner of St Johns Road and St Johns Hill Road was later turned into a garage - a fate that many old chapels and halls would succumb to in the early 20th century.

The Wesleyan had a number of chapels in the Woking area, including at Brookwood, Knaphill and later St Johns (on the corner of St Johns Road and St Johns Hill Road) and there was also apparently a Methodist Chapel in Woking Village (Kelly's Directory, 1899), but I have no idea where.

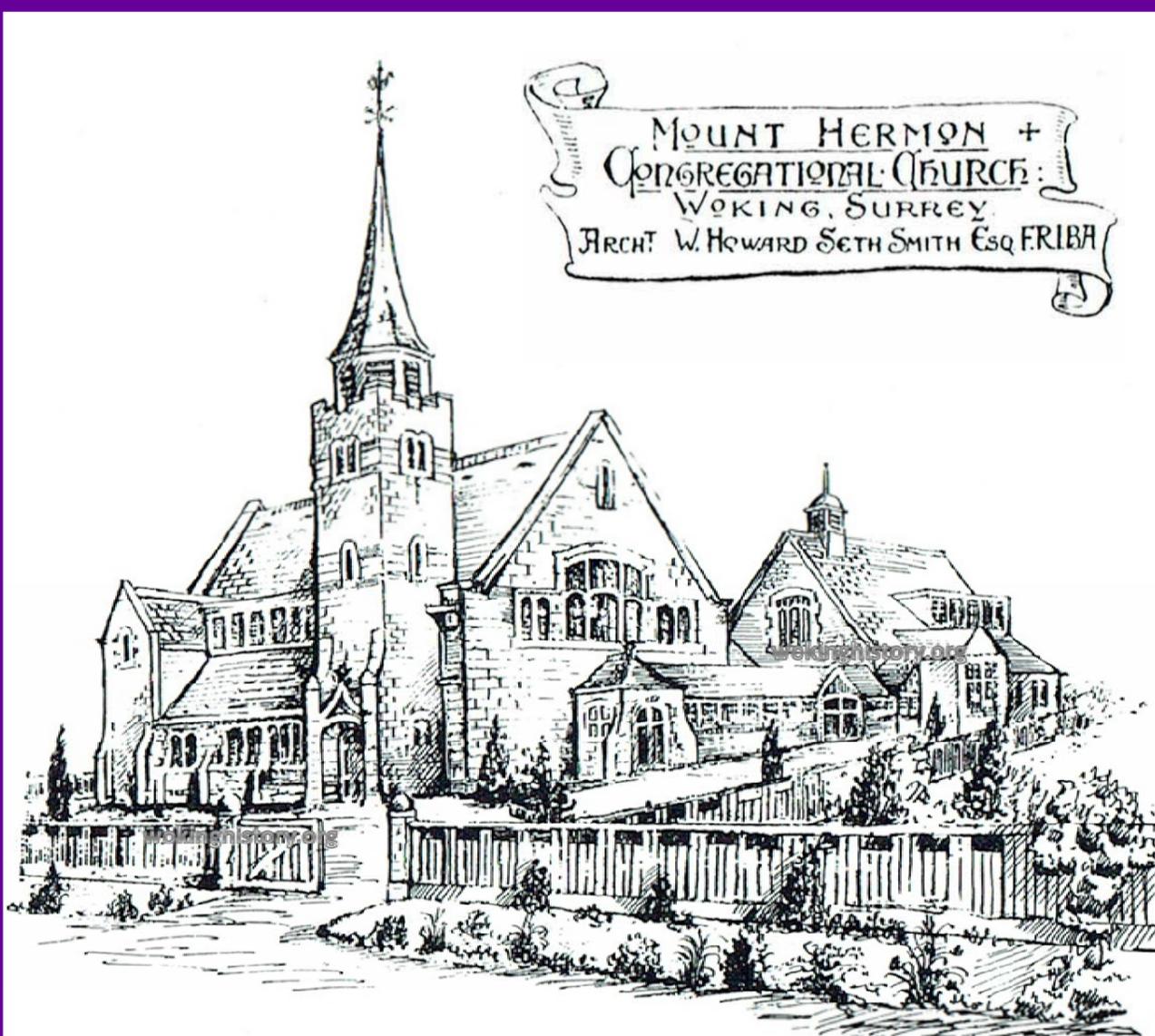
They were not the only non-conformist sects in the area as the Evangelists, Congregationalists and the Plymouth Brethren also had chapels - the Brethren Chapel at West Byfleet apparently being sold in 1902 to the Congregationalist, who in turn appear to have transferred (some years earlier) the ownership of their chapel at Byfleet (that had been in existence since 1858) to the Wesleyans!

The Brethren Chapel in Station Road, West Byfleet (now a Day Nursery) was purchased along with four cottages for £1,200, with two of the cottages later being sold for £600 to help pay off the debt on the chapel.

Meanwhile in Woking the Congregationalists had opened their church in York Road, called originally the Mount Hermon Congregational Church - as a plot of land in that road had originally been purchased in 1897 (before it was discovered that a restrictive covenant on the site prohibited the construction of their intended church).



The Congregational Chapel at Byfleet, built in 1858, that was transferred to the Methodist Church, was later by the Church of England, after the new Methodist Church was built in Rectory Lane in the 1920's.

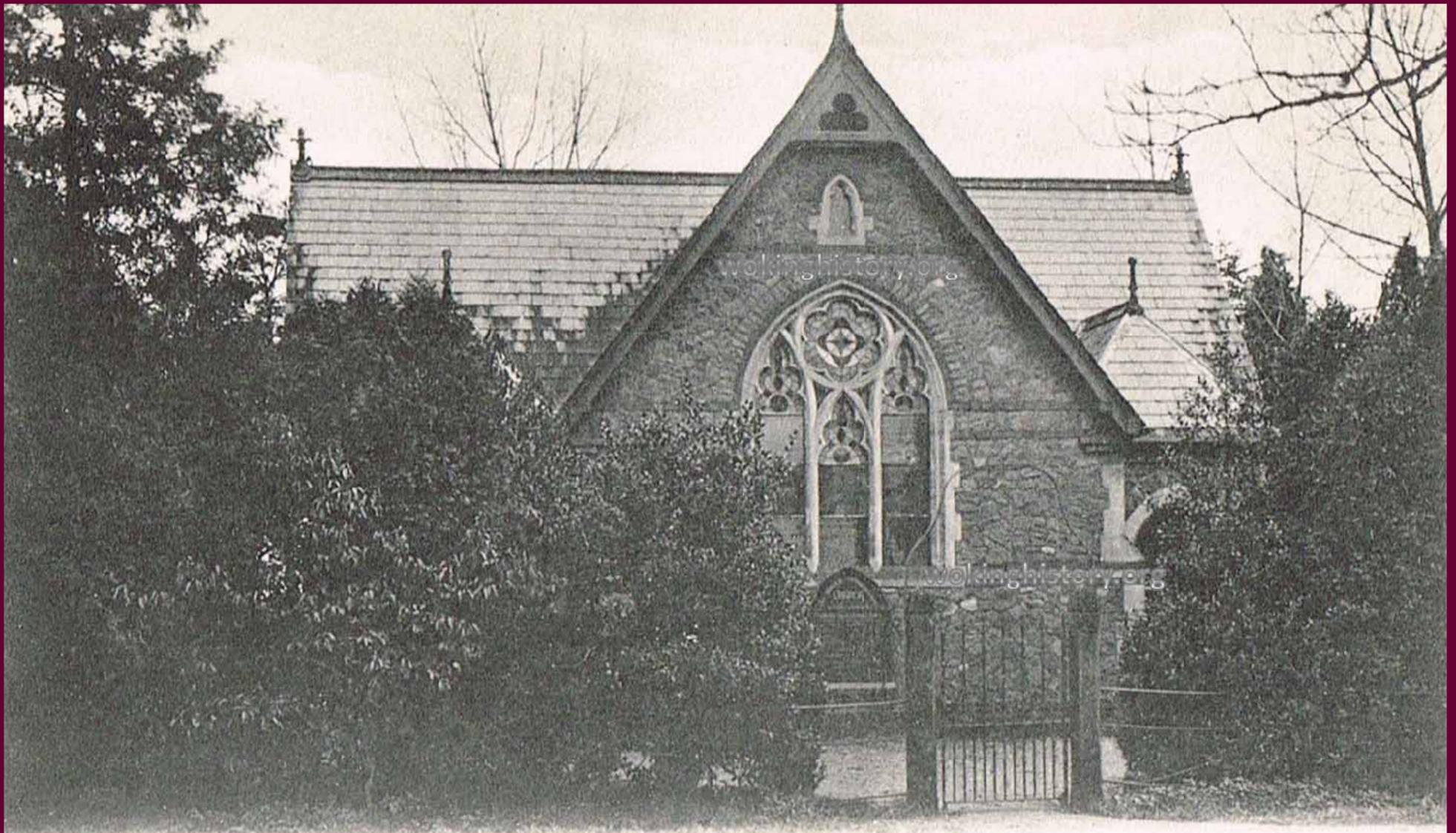


But a church 'is more than its buildings', as pointed out in the history of the 'York Road Congregational Church', published in 1974 to celebrate its 75th anniversary, 'and in 1899 a group of Christian men and women who had worshipped hitherto at the Baptist Congregational Church in Goldsworth Road, met in the home of Mr Unwin and convened together as a Church "according to the practices and beliefs of that called Congregational".'

The new site in York Road was purchased for £600 and the architect William Howard Seth-Smith was appointed to design the new church, whilst the congregation met in the Onslow Hall in Guildford Road, quietly raising the funds for the first part of the scheme to be built. Unfortunately Seth-Smith's design was never completed, but the foundation stones for the lecture hall were laid on the 8th October 1900, and some extension were carried out before the Congregational Church merged with the United Reformed Church and the York Road site sold off for development. But that part of the story is a long way in the future!

Mr Seth-Smith's plans for the church in York Road were never completed.

CARTBRIDGE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH



Cartbridge Congregational Church.

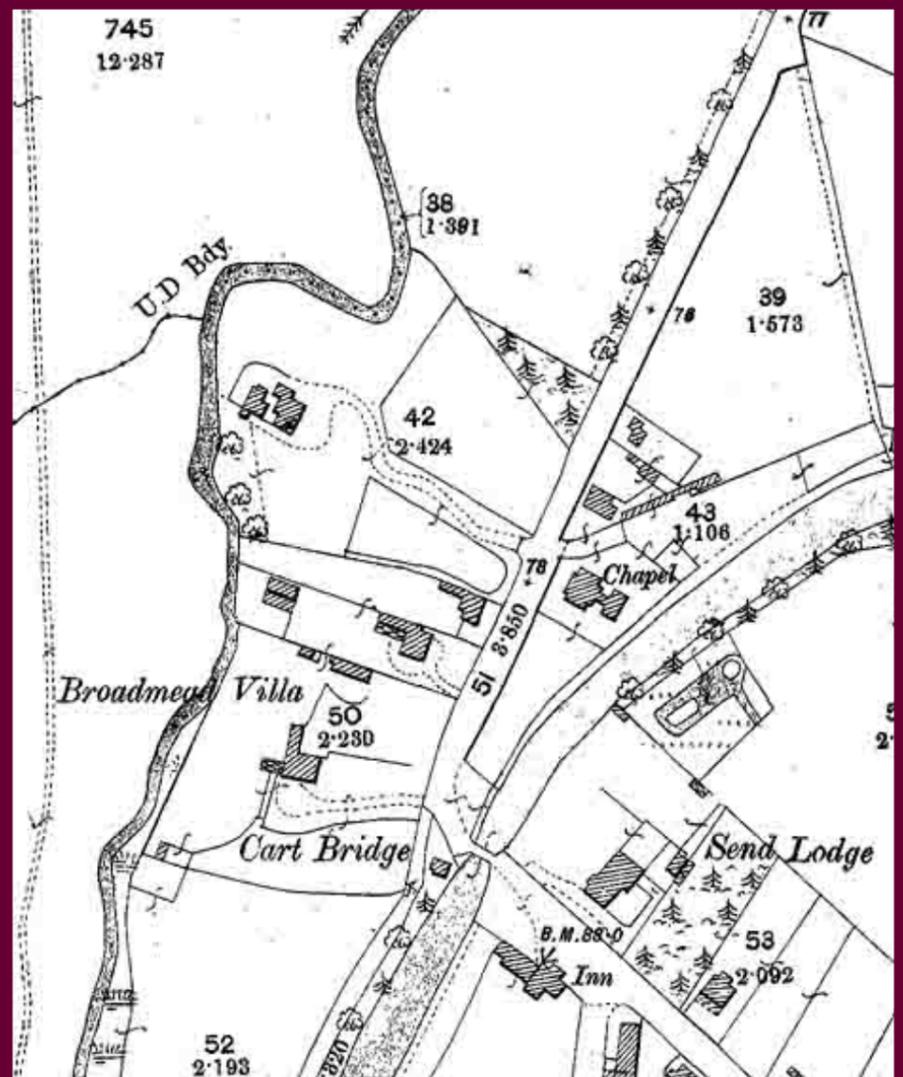
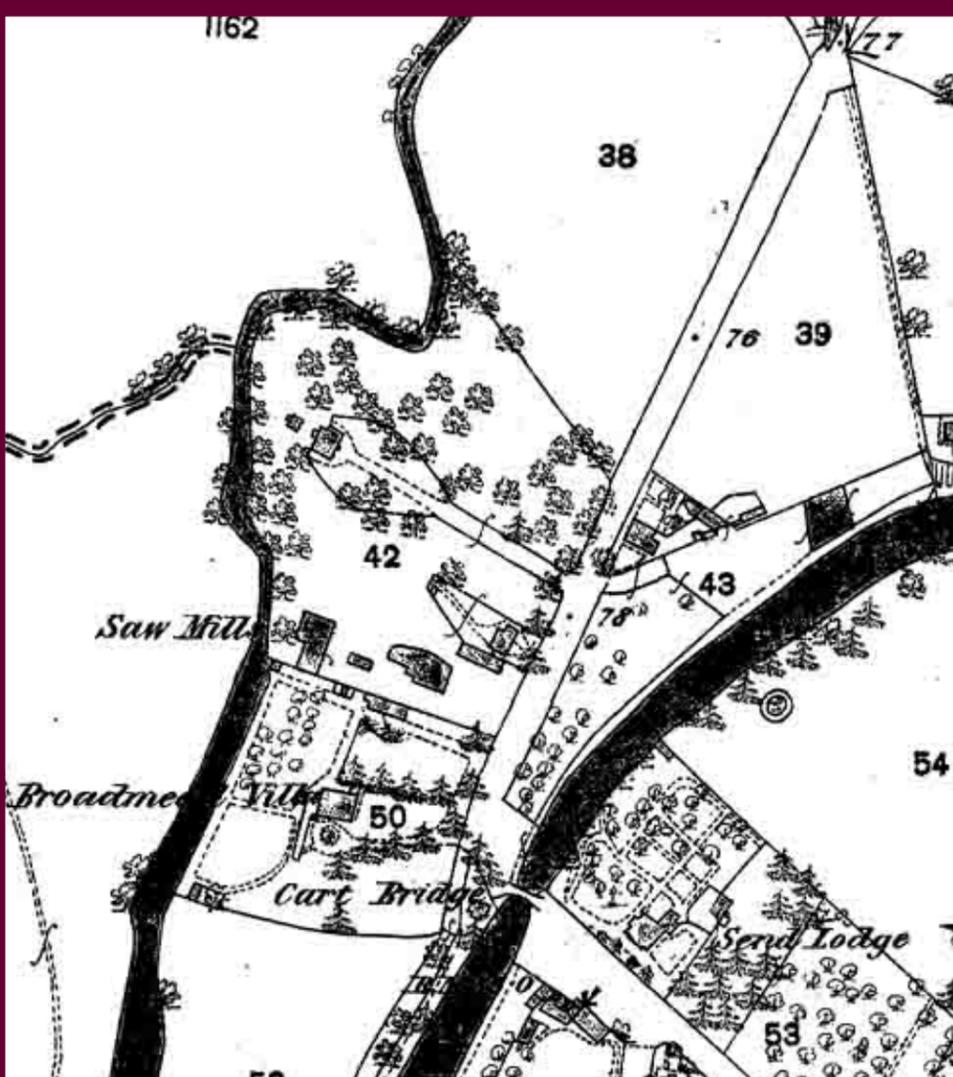
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The Cartbridge Congregational Church (now an Evangelical Church) was built in 1875 on land given by Frank Apted who was presumably one of the early members. Before then, for up to ten years, the Congregationalist held open air meetings in the area during the summer months, with indoor meetings being held in Old Woking during the winter.

At first, in 1865, these were held in the Old Market House (opposite the entrance to Church Street, Old Woking) - then owned by Mr Edward Hilder of Hoe Bridge Farm - but later they used the 'assembly room' at the White Horse Hotel (where Manor Mews are today).

Sadly by the early 1970's the congregation had declined and the church closed, but in 1973 members of the East Horsley Evangelical Church purchased the site and revived worship in the buildings, which has since been extensively added to.

The Ordnance Survey Maps of the Cartbridge area in 1871 & 1895, before and after the construction of the church



HORSELL EVANGELICAL CHURCH



In Manor Road Horsell the 'Mission Hall' – known affectionately as the 'Tin Tabernacle' - was opened in 1900 on land that had been bought for The Evangelization Society by Miss Rebecca Watney. She was apparently a member of the brewing family who had moved to 'The Pines' at Maybury Hill in about 1893. She had purchased the land in 1895 where tented services were held for a few months until in 1896 two cottages (facing the High Street) could be built, one for a caretaker and the other to be used for services until the new iron room was erected. Miss Watney continued to fund and support the church until she died in 1923 when the ownership of the site was transferred to the Evangelization Society before eventually becoming autonomous in the 1950's.

In the late 1970's the church bought the shops to the west of their cottages in the High Street and in 1982 built a new church hall, selling the High Street properties to a developer in order to fund the construction of a new church to replace the old tin tabernacle.

Fortunately myself, and others, took photographs of the old building before it was demolished.

