

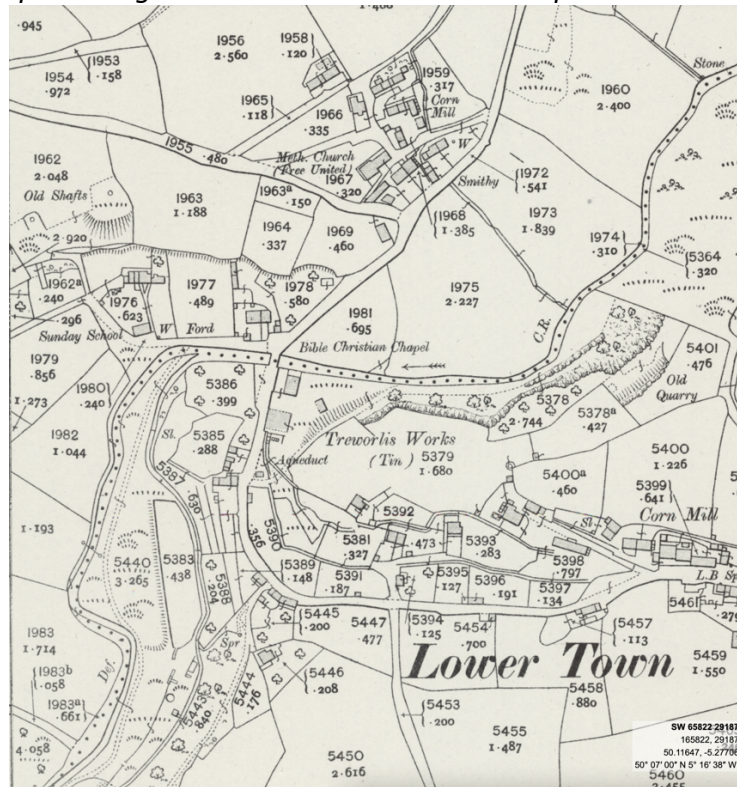
Mapping Methodism

Lowertown Bible Christian Chapel

Researched by Guy Watson

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OS 25 Inch, 1892-1914 map showing Lowertown Bible Christian Chapel.



Modern day (2022) aerial view of Lowertown with Lowertown Bible Christian Chapel visible.



Lowertown is a small hamlet on the edge of Helston wrapped around the River Cober. Lowertown Bible Christian Chapel is built alongside a small Grade II listed road bridge that crosses the river.



Illustration of Lowertown Bible Christian Chapel drawn by FT Splatt during the 1980s.

1884: Decision made for a “new chapel” to be built in Lowertown. The Lowertown estate declared free; and £86 placed in the bank towards a new chapel.

1887: Foundation memorial stones laid, and chapel construction begins.



Photo of dated stone above entrance doors. Photo from 1990s Survey of Cornish Chapels.

Extract from 1887 Bible Christian Magazine:

Lowertown, Helston – The little village of Lowertown in the Cober valley, about one mile from Helston, presented an animated appearance on the occasion of the laying of eight memorial stones of a new Bible Christian Chapel.

The old building was erected about half a century ago, and had been improved once or twice. But the lease expired, and the property is now held only year to year. It was, therefore, deemed fit to erect a new chapel. A freehold site was granted by Mr. James Harvey for £10, and stone as well for building. Mr. W. J. Winn is the architect, and the builders are Messrs. Winn and E. Jory. The Rev. Alexander Trengove, of Plymouth (Connexional President), came down for the occasion, and was accompanied by the Revs. J. Wilson (Free Methodist), and W. F. Ellis (Circuit Minister); the Rev. J. Mallett (Superintendent) being absent through illness. About noon the ceremony commenced with a hymn and prayer. Afterwards Mr J. Richards laid the first stone, on behalf of the local preachers on the north side of the circuit, with £2 10s. The second stone was laid by Mr. S. Pryor, of Craskin, in the name of the past generation, with £5. Mrs. Harvey laid the third stone on behalf of the past generation, on which was placed £15. The fourth stone was laid by Master Ernest Harris, on behalf of the Sunday School, with £15 14s 9d. The fifth stone was laid by Mr. Harris, sen., for the trustees, with £14. The sixth was laid by Rev. W. Ellis for the Society, with £5 7s. The seventh was laid for the Denomination by Mr. B. Eddy, jun., of Porthleven, in the absence of his father, with £2 2s. The eighth stone was laid by Mr. Harvey, for the local preachers of the south side, with £2 10s; total £62 3s 9d.

This was followed by the President's address, in which he expressed the hope that their principles might be well and truly laid. He had laboured in the old chapel about twenty-seven years ago as a young minister, and had witnessed many noble conversions there. They ought, and must, combine to carry on the work. The proposed new chapel was for the people of the locality, held in trust for ever. He believed in Methodist union, and desired spiritual union, if they could not get organic union. He

also paid a high tribute to village Nonconformity, which he claimed had done much to bring the best aspect of the jubilee.

The Rev. J. Wilson moved a vote of thanks to the President for his address, and to all who had laid stones, coupling it with some admirable remarks on Cornish Methodism.

Mr Harvey seconded.

An excellent luncheon followed, which was served in a commodious booth, and to which a good company sat down.

The President preached in the chapel in the afternoon, basing his remarks on Zephaniah iii, 16, 17.

There was a social tea afterwards, at which many friends mustered.

A public meeting was held in the old chapel in the evening, the chair being taken by Mr. James Coad, of Roskilly, St. Keverne. Addresses were given by the Rev. Mr. Hobbs (newly appointed Baptist Minister), W. F. Ellis (Circuit Minister), and others.

The proceeds of the day were about £70.

The building is thirty-eight feet by twenty-four feet, calculated to seat 150 persons and will cost about £300. It will be built of granite and local stone, and cannot fail to prove an ornament to the village. – Local Paper.



Mr James Harvey, JP who granted a freehold site for the "new chapel" in Lowertown for £10 as well as stone for its construction. Date of photo unknown.

Extract from 'Hedged in Time', some recollections of old Cornwall, from the life and times of John Thomas (farmer) of Gwavas in the Parish of Sithney near Lowertown (date unknown):

There were six preachers in the village, Messrs. James Harvey, Percy Harvey, Tommy Christopher, Sam Christopher, Charlie Harris and Bert Rowe. Our oldest preacher Mr. James Harvey went to preach at one of our chapels. When we got there a lot of boys was standing up, and as he passed the boys he heard one of them say: "I'd rather hear that old man than a preacher, for he tells stories". Mr. Harvey had a good laugh about it.

Friday December 2nd 1887: Chapel formally opened

Extract from Bible Christian Magazine for January 1888:

On Friday, December 2nd, this new chapel was formally opened. Friends mustered in force, great interest being shown, and the gathering was highly representative. Rev. J. Dale of Penryn, preached in the afternoon to a large audience. Tea was served in the old chapel, to about a hundred persons, all the provisions for the tables being given free of cost. At a public meeting held in the evening, Mr. B. Cotton, of Helston, was in the chair, and addresses were given by Revs. J. Dale, J. Sheldon, J. Mallett and H.V. Hobbs (Baptist), and Messrs. W.J. Winn and E. Jory, and capable of seating a hundred and fifty persons. The site is freehold and was purchased off Mr. J. Harvey, one of the trustees, for a nominal sum. The front is of cut granite, most of which was given from the Trannack quarries of Messrs. Harris & Son, and in the end is a cathedral window, also of granite. The cost of the building is £300, of which sum about £210 has already been raised. It is intended to make a further effort by means of a Bazaar very shortly to again reduce the debt."

"At Lowertown we have built a beautiful and substantial chapel at a cost of over £300. The friends have worked so nobly and succeeded so well, that only about £50 or £60 will remain as a debt for a short time..."

Undated press cutting from Reed Johns Scrapbook (quote included in Lowertown Centenary Souvenir by WF Ivey:

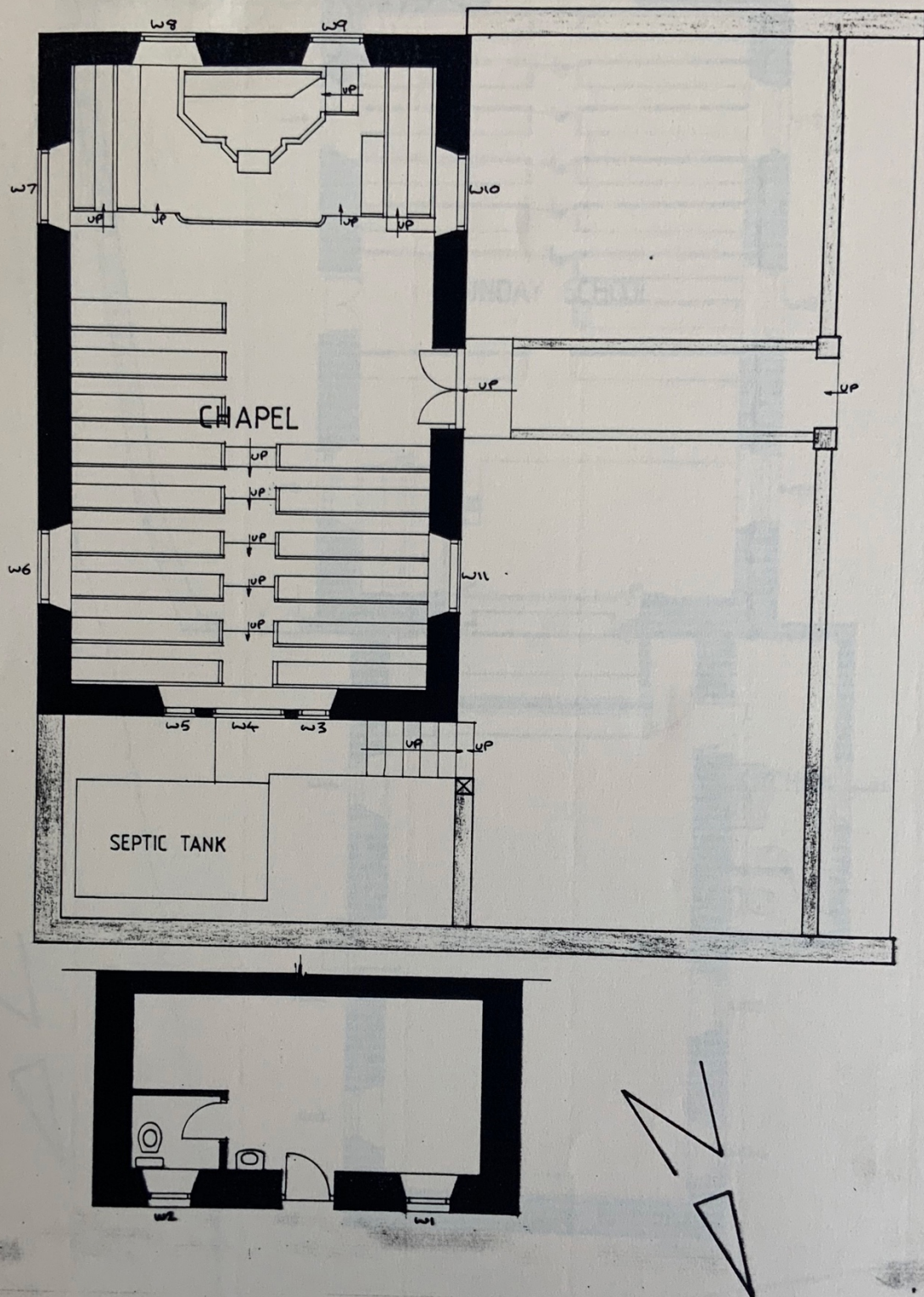
According to Mr. J. P. A. Harvey the 1842 deed refers to property no longer in own possession. It dealt with the old B.C. Chapel which ceased to be used after the building the new chapel in 1888. The farmer from whose land the plot had been taken used the old chapel first as a store. Then I was sold and converted into cottages. On consummation of the union in 1907 there were two U.M. chapels in Lowertown. One of them became the schoolroom, the other the U.M. Chapel.







The above images are from a series of photos of Lowertown Bible Christian Chapel taken during a 1990s survey of Cornish chapels.



LOWERTOWN METHODIST CHAPEL 1:100 ©

[Handwritten signature]

Extract from the United Methodist newspaper October 1928:

He [Mr James Harvey JP] believed that Lowertown was beautiful for situation, but the most worthy attractions at Lowertown were the Church and Sunday School on which Mr. Harvey had bestowed his choicest gifts.

1946: Death of Mr T Harris (last link with the building of the chapel)

Extract from the Cornishman April 1946:

MR. T. Harris

The death of Mr. Thomas Harris, Trannack House, Lowertown, near Helston, has caused the village to lose a life-long and greatly respected resident. Mr. Harris was aged 80, and proprietor of Lowertown Granite Quarries. Mr. Harris was a granite mason, and was actively identified with Lowertown Methodist Church, of which he was a trustee, and a member of the Sunday School. He was the last link with the local Lowertown men who took part in the building of the church. He was treasurer of the Band of Hope... For the funeral service on Tuesday Lowertown Methodist Church was filled to capacity.

1954: Mrs Rich (nee. Harvey – granddaughter of Mr James Harvey) was presented with a key to reopen the chapel following its redecoration.



Mrs Rich reopening the chapel in 1954

1987: Chapel celebrates 100th birthday

Extracts from Lowertown Centenary Souvenir by WF Ivey:

The little building which has continued its use for 100 years, now given over to Methodism, continues to proclaim the word of God only on Sunday mornings, the congregation has dwindled, but the spirit of the few is as enthusiastic as ever. Later we shall read of the memories of some of those who were regular attendance in bygone days.

“I was connected with Lowertown Chapel over 50 years and can remember six local preachers, James Harvey, his son J.P.A. Harvey. Sam and Tom Christophers, Charles Harris and H. Rowe. I was Secretary to the Trustees for a few years and also a steward. A member of the choir when I was

a teenager. Mr. C. Harris was organist. I have two nephews and niece who were christened in the Chapel. I can remember Ronnie Jenkin being brought to Chapel in his mother's arms with his feeding bottle. Lowertown Chapel to me is one of the prettiest chapels in the Circuit, it is such a homely little place. I hope and pray that Lowertown Chapel will still keep its doors open for a few years yet." M. Trewern

"When my husband and I went to live in Lowertown, it was a delight! The peace of the countryside was wonderful, but I felt there would be something lacking if I did not have the most important day of the week filled as I was used to, And then to find almost on our doorstep the lovely little Chapel nestling by a rippling river – spotless and shining.

The first time I went I thought I would go early so as to creep in without fuss, as I was a bit shy of going on my own. There was only one person there – Margery Cows, and when I asked where I might sit, she said "Come in beside me." A Christian gesture right from the start.

I was in for a surprise. It was not a crowded service but oh the singing, it really was lovely. I could not stop myself on coming out to say "My Goodness you could teach the folk up country to sing." I told them where I lived, and that was the start of a most happy time of Fellowship where I made many lasting friends. Some now sadly no longer with us.

There will always be a warmth in my heart for the Chapel and may it continue for many more 100's of years, with the Cober still chuckling outside the door, left open on warm evenings and the birds singing." Joan Partridge

Extract from the West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser April 1987:

A programme of celebration has been arranged by the Methodists at Lowertown to commemorate the laying of the foundation stones of their chapel 100 years ago. During the Easter weekend there were a number of services in the building which were carried out by the Rev L R Stedeford, Helston Superintendent Methodist Minister. Other taking part included the Rev Douglas Hodges. Mr Dennis Bassett and his wife Angela and children of the Sunday school. Mrs Margaret Eva played the organ on each occasion. On Saturday a fete was held in the field loaned by Mr Ronnie Jenkin at which Breage Silver Band, under the direction of Mr W King, played. A number of stalls and amusements was in evidence and Cornish cream teas were served by lady helpers of the society. The centenary of the opening of the building will place in December.



Wedding of Helen Matthews at Lowertown Bible Christian Chapel 1988

27th January 2008: Final Service Before Closure

Extract from Falmouth Packet Article by Laura Parsons 28th January 2008:

A dwindling congregation may have forced the closure of the 120-year-old chapel but there was certainly no lack of support for the last ever service to be held at the building.

Members of chapels from around the Helston Methodist circuit, and from further afield, attended the service, which included time set aside for those present to recount memories of the chapel and the characters who have peopled it over the years.

Helston Methodist minister the Rev Andrew Hill said it had been a service of thanksgiving for the valuable role the chapel had fulfilled within the community for over 100 years.

He said: "There was some sadness, but mostly there was a good atmosphere as we looked back and gave thanks for the contribution the chapel has made over the years. I think the people who were there will remember the last service with very positive memories."

There were only a handful of regular worshippers left at Lowertown when members of the church council decided last November to close the chapel.

Further discussions as to what to do with the listed building, which dates from 1887 and is owned by the Methodist Church, are due to take place at a council meeting tonight, Wednesday.



Final service held at Lowertown Bible Christian Chapel 27th January 2008



© Copyright Bill Boaden of Lowertown Bible Christian Chapel taken in 2014

Figure 11:
The side-entry chapel
at Lowertown, Wendron
(1887) replaces an earlier
former chapel (now a
ruin). Classical detail –
in this case rusticated
stonework to the quoins
and openings – has
been applied to a simple
symmetrical elevation.
© Eric Berry



Entry from 'Methodist and Nonconformist Chapels in Cornwall' document created by Historic England in 2019



Lowertown Bible Christian Chapel being converted into residential dwelling (images approximately 2016-17)



Lowertown Bible Christian Chapel today (June 2022)