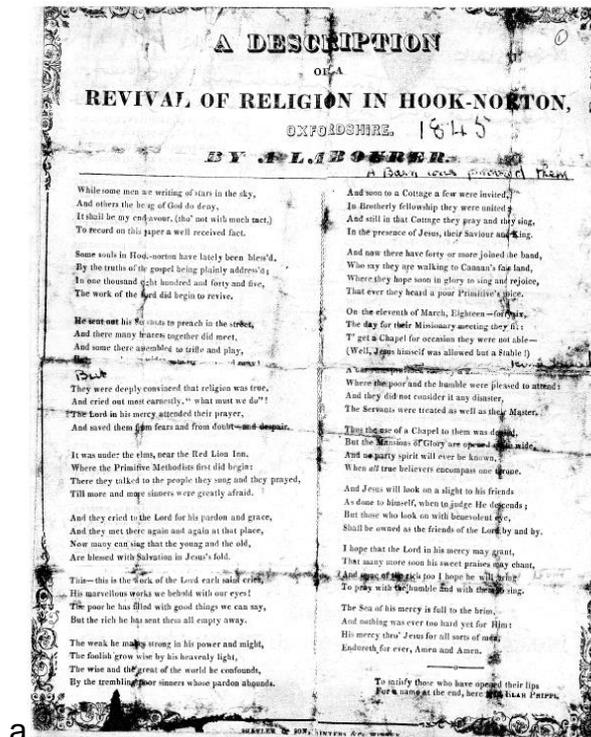


Primitive Methodists

At the national level, the Primitive Methodists broke away from the Wesleyans in 1812 because they thought that the original movement was losing its original spiritual purpose and taking on too much the character of a second Established Church. The Primitives appealed strongly to working-class people and developed a tradition of political radicalism which attracted the discontented in some older Dissenting sects.



This pamphlet was printed in Whitney, which was already a well-known centre for Primitivism.

This copy was given to the Village Museum by Tom Williams, Sr.

The text is given more fully below.

The movement began in Hook Norton in 1845 as a revival meeting under the elms near the Red Lion,¹ according to a labourer named Elah Phipps who described it in the contemporary poem copied below. Open-air services were soon followed by

¹ It is not clear which Red Lion this was. The modern Red Lion stood next to (and was absorbed by) The Sun, but when did it become known as the Red Lion? The most likely candidate for 1845 seems to be the Red Lion in Southrop which Perce Hackling found evidence of existing in 1837.

A DESCRIPTION
OF A
REVIVAL OF RELIGION IN HOOK-NORTON,
OXFORDSHIRE,

BY A LABOURER

While some men are writing of stars in the sky,
And others the being of God do deny,
It shall be my endeavour, (tho' not with much tact),
To record on this paper a well received fact.

And soon to a Cottage a few were invited,
In Brotherly fellowship they were united;
And still in that Cottage they pray and they sing,
In the presence of Jesus, their Saviour and King.

Some souls in Hook-Norton have lately been bless'd,
By the truths of the Gospel being plainly address'd;
In one thousand eight hundred and forty and five,
The work of the Lord did begin to revive.

And now there have forty or more joined the band,
Who say they are walking to Canaan's fair land,
Where they hope soon in glory to sing and rejoice,
That ever did hear a poor Primitive's voice.

He sent out his servants to preach in the street,
And there many hearers together did meet,
And some there assembled to trifle and play,
But others remained to listen and pray.

On the eleventh of March Eighteen-fortysix,
The day for their Missionary meeting they fix;
T'get a chapel for the occasion they were not able—
(Well, Jesus himself was allowed but a Stable!).

They were deeply convinced that religion was true,
And cried out most earnestly, "what must we do?!"
The Lord in his mercy attended their prayer.
And saved them from fears and from doubt—
and despair.

A barn was provided them by a kind farmer friend,
Where the poor and the humble were pleased to attend;
And they did not consider it any disaster,
The Servants were treated as well as their Master.

It was under the elms, near the Red Lion Inn,
Where the Primitive Methodists did first begin;
There they talked to the people, they sung
and they prayed,
Till more and more sinners were greatly afraid.

Thus the use of a chapel was to them denied,
But the Mansions of Glory are opened quite wide,
And no party spirit will ever be known,
When *all* true believers encompass one throne.

And they cried to the Lord for his pardon and grace,
And they met there again and again at that place,
Now many can sing that the young and the old
Are blessed with Salvation in Jesus's fold.

And Jesus will look on a slight to his friends
As done to himself, when to judge He descends;
But those who look on with benevolent eye,
Shall be owned as the friends of the Lord by and by.

This—this is the work of the Lord each saint cries,
His marvellous works we behold with our eyes!
The poor he has filled with good things we can say,
But the rich he has sent them all empty away.

I hope that the Lord in his mercy may grant,
That many more soon his sweet praises may chant,
And some of the rich too I hope he will bring
To pray with the humble and with them to sing.

The weak he makes strong in his power
and his might,
The foolish grow wise by his heavenly light,
The wise and the great of the world he confounds,
By the trembling poor sinners whose pardon abounds.

The Sea of his mercy is full to the brim,
And nothing was ever too hard yet for Him;
His mercy thro' Jesus for all sorts of men,
Endureth for ever, Amen and Amen.

To satisfy those who have opened their lips
For a name at the end, here read ELAH PHIPPS.

SHAYLER AND SON, PRINTERS &c, WITNEY

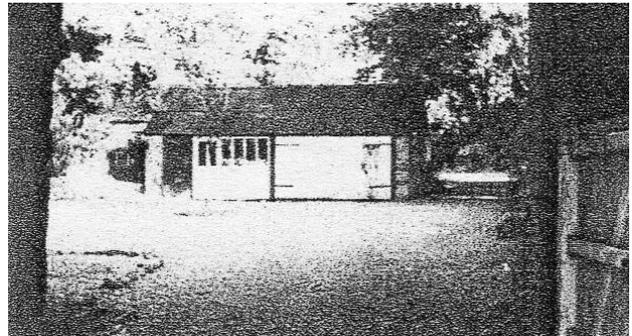
meetings in a cottage, some attended by more than 40 people. When the use of a chapel was denied to them, they were lent a barn, possibly by William Minchin (it has been suggested that Minchin, who was a former Quaker or Friend, was the “friend” referred to in the poem).

The membership of this denomination in Hook Norton remained distinctly lower-class. Of 37 children baptised between 1847 and 1860, 34 had fathers who were labourers, two were chimney sweeps and one was a dealer; 14 of the 16 families represented were described as labouring. The limited means of these families meant that the meeting never established a permanent meeting place. In 1851 the Primitives worshipped in an old school room, with an evening congregation of 100. Margaret Dickins records that the Primitive Methodists later used the small building behind “The Hermitage” at East

End as their chapel. This building can still be seen through the entrance to the yard and garden, as here on the right.

Its size reflects the fact that by the 1860s the number of full members had fallen to between 16 and 23, and to single figures later on. After the East End chapel ceased, the Primitives in 1881 began

hiring the Quaker meeting room in Southrop at five shillings (25p.) a year, and this was paid up to 1898. Thereafter the Hook Norton record grows dim, but apparently a small Primitive Methodist community continued in Hook Norton until the national organization reunited with the Wesleyans in 1932.



Possible meeting house at East End of Primitive Methodists

From Pauline Ashbridge, *Village Chapels*, page 60.

© Donald Ratcliffe

References:

- Kate Tiller: “‘The desert begins to blossom’: Oxfordshire and Primitive Methodism, 1824-1860”, *Oxoniensia* 71 (2006): 85-111, esp. 91-94.
- Pauline Ashbridge: *Village Chapels: Some Aspects of Rural Methodism in the East Cotswolds and South Midlands* (Hook Norton: Kershaw Publishing, 2004), esp. 55-60.