

**A HISTORY OF PROVIDENCE
WESLEYAN METHODIST CHAPEL,
GELSMOOR**



THE OLD REMAINS OF THE CHAPEL, SCHOOLROOM AND MANSE c.1980.

BY SAMUEL T STEWART - UPDATED NOV 2021

COMPLIMENTARY READING

A publication entitled "A History of Griffydham Wesleyan Methodist & Wesleyan Reform Chapels", is free to download and read on the author's own website:-
<https://samuelstewart940.wixsite.com/mysite>

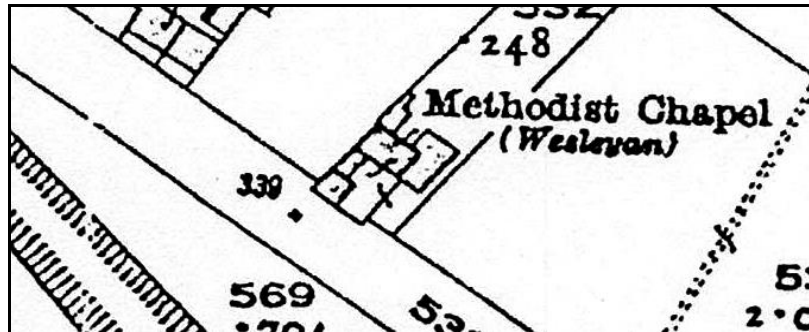
© **Samuel T Stewart** November 2021

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by means, electronic, mechanical or otherwise without first seeking the written permission of the author.

Unless stated otherwise, all photographs are copyright of the originator.

**PROVIDENCE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHAPEL AND
SCHOOLROOM WAS A BRANCH CHAPEL OF THE GRIFFYDAM
WESLEYAN METHODIST CHAPEL ON ELDER LANE.
IT ORIGINATED AS A MEETING HOUSE IN A BARN TO TAKE
THE CONGREGATION OVERFLOW FROM THERE.**

The location of the former *Providence Chapel* in Gelsmoor (Worthington Parish) is shown on the 1923 O/S map on page 6.



Plan of chapel buildings with Manse built onto the RH side - 1923

An attractive, traditional, much extended property now stands on the site, and is named "Providence House". Part of the original Chapel and Manse were incorporated into the house extensions.

From a lease for a year indenture (DE9109/49) held at the L&RRO, and dated 17th March 1814 we know that the Gelsmoor Wesleyan Methodists had a *Meeting House* in an enlarged barn called by the name of *Providence Chapel*:-

DE9109 / 49	Lease for a Year	17th March 1814
<p>1. James Cooper of Gelsmoor in par Breedon on the Hill, tailor and Nathaniel Curzon of Breedon, gent.</p> <p>2. Ambrose Beaumont of Melbourne, co. Derby and others.</p> <p>Meeting House called by the name of Providence Chapel, the greater part whereof was a barn which has been altered and enlarged upon the north east part of lately enclosed common ground in the liberty of Worthington & Gelsmoor and piece of ground lying in front of the chapel (fuller details given in original document).</p> <p>Consideration: 10s.</p>		

How long prior to 1814 the Wesleyan Methodists' had been worshipping in this building is not known, and the author has not seen any reliable evidence to confirm this.

The following is recorded on the *leicestershirehistory.co.uk* website:-
The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Gelsmoor was known as Providence Chapel. Two returns appear to have been completed for this chapel in 1851, although John Hague (Wesleyan minister) and James Knight (leader) did not quite agree on the details. It appears that it was built in 1806-12, with a capacity of 100-120, with 90-100 of these seats being free.

We need to bear in mind that Griffydam Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, built in 1778, would almost certainly still have been a single story building at this time even though it was enlarged in 1791. It can therefore be seen why a need for another branch chapel to accommodate the overflow developed.

The photographs shown on the following page, taken c.1980, help to give an impression of what the chapel site was like. It was made up of a number of small buildings, presumably added over the years, included a schoolroom and a house (Manse), originally for the Minister, built onto it on the RH side.

"The Ashby Circuit Wesleyan Methodist Preachers Plan" for 1826 records *Providence Chapel*, and services were held at 6 o'clock in the evening as they were on the 1829 and 1838 plans, although in 1838 there was a 7 o'clock meeting on a Thursday also. The 1898 plan shows services were held at 10.30 and 6 o'clock and in 1896 and 1933 there was a morning service only at 10.30. For interest, an example of the 1829 Ashby Circuit plan is shown on the last page. The Ecclesiastical Census taken on Sunday 30th March 1851, states that there was only an evening service, which was attended by 90 people.

A rather interesting event occurred in 1848 as follows:-

In the 1841 census for Griffydam, Mary Braithwaite is listed as a school mistress aged 65. The following transcribed newspaper article makes reference to the first anniversary of a school named "Providence School" (opened in 1847), and there is good reason to believe that she was a teacher at this school. The school was held at the *Providence Wesleyan Methodist Chapel* at Gelsmoor. The first anniversary of this school described below would have been held at the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel at Griffydam because the *Providence Chapel* at Gelsmoor was very small and would not have been able to accommodate all those attending. The Griffydam Wesleyan Methodist Day School at Pegg's Green which included a Sabbath school was opened in 1853 and was associated with the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel at Griffydam. This would have presumably replaced the small Providence School.

Leicester Mercury – December 16th 1848

Griffydam – Providence Day School. – *The first anniversary of this school took place in the Wesleyan Chapel, at the village, on Tuesday. There was a public examination of the scholars in the afternoon, which spoke well for the system on which they are educated. At the close of the examination, a large number of friends of the institution sat down for tea, which was furnished gratuitously by a few friends, so that the whole proceeds was donated to the school funds. After tea, a public meeting was held, when addresses on the subject of education were delivered by several ministers and others of the Wesleyan body. The whole proceedings excited great interest in the neighbourhood, and there is no doubt the institution will be benefited by them.*

The 1861 Trade Directory of Leics & Rutland and both White's 1863 and 1877 Directories refer to the Wesleyan Chapel in Gelsmoor.

From the 1933 Ashby Circuit Plan, we know that the Chapel was still open for worship, with 10.30 morning services. The following positions at this time, were listed in the Plan and Directory.

- Society Steward - Mr. Nichols of Coleorton (Owned Gelsmoor Farm on the Rempstone Road)
- Poor Steward - Mrs. Nichols
- Organists - Mr. C. W. Kendrick (Coleorton Post Office) and Miss Johnson of Griffydam.

The Ashby Circuit financial statement for the quarter ending Dec.14th 1932, left the membership number as blank, and the income as £1-7s-0d. This shows that the congregation numbers had fallen considerably, and must have meant that the Chapel would probably have closed shortly after this time. Eric Rowell, a Senior Citizen of Peggs Green, recalls his father Leonard Wesley Rowell (a stalwart of Griffydam Wesleyan Methodist Chapel), telling him that the Chapel was sold for £90. After the Chapel closed, the house (manse) that was built onto the side of it was later occupied by Fred and Violet Hodges c.1940. After Violet and Fred moved out, the Fretsme family lived there.

Further along towards Rempstone Road, stand two semi-detached cottages. An old resident of Gelsmoor, William Stacey lived in the first of these many years ago, and he recalled in a 1950 newspaper article, that when Sunday morning services only were held at the Chapel, members of the Rowell (Coleorton Rowell's?) family were amongst the chief supporters. The stables, that were part of his property, had previously been used for the knitting of stockings. Furthermore, from the deeds, he discovered that the ground / field whereon the house stood, was originally rented for "ten shillings and a peppercorn" per annum.



**View from Gelsmoor Rd. with
The remains of Chapel on the left**



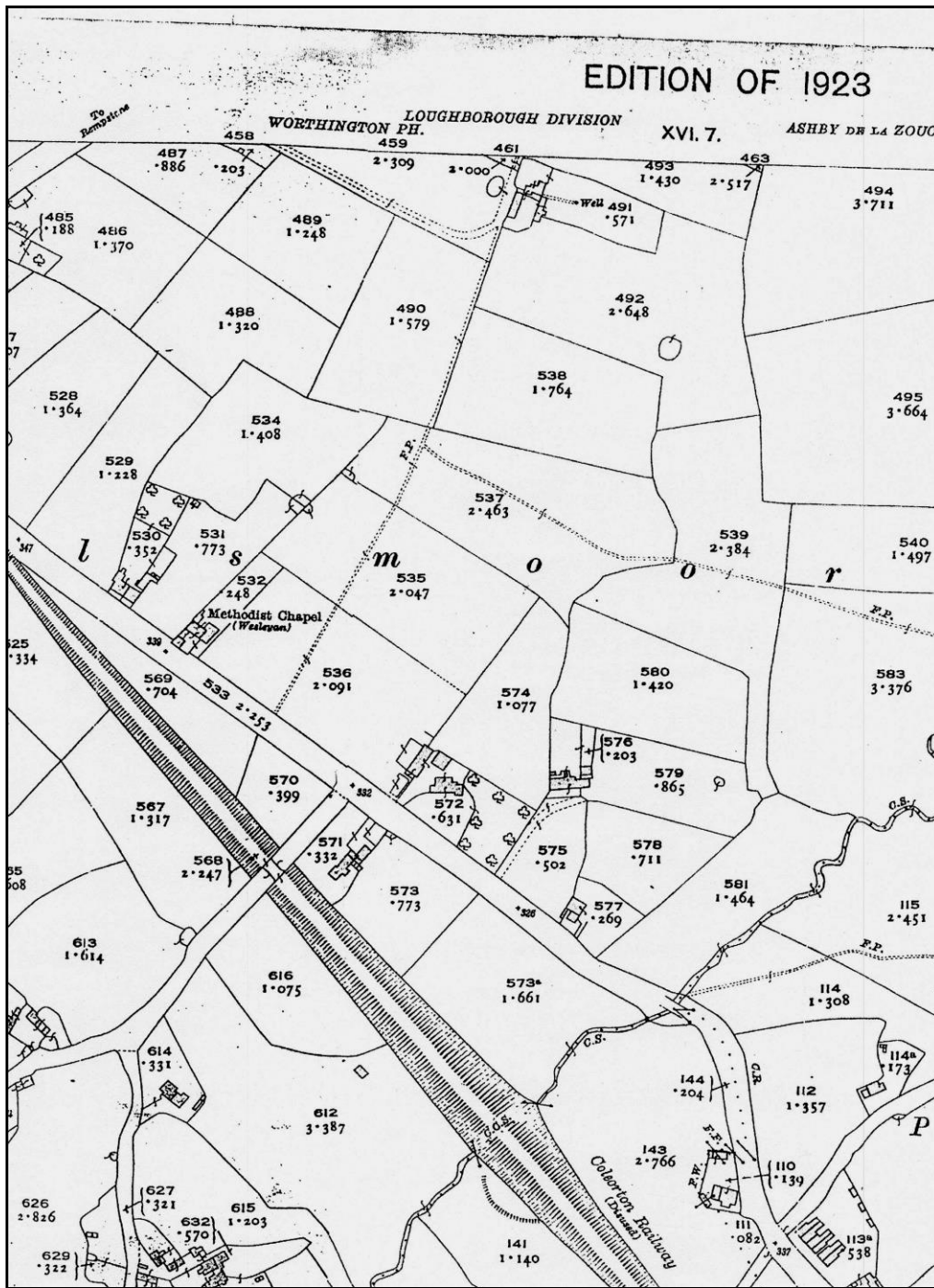
View from Manse side



View from Chapel and Sunday School side



View on corner of Chapel from the road



The above is an extract from the 1923 O/S map of the Gelsmoor area.
 Providence Chapel can be seen on the upper LH side, and is described as
 "Methodist Chapel (Wesleyan)"

