

**WILLIAM GARNER'S COTTAGE  
GRIFFYDAM**



**BY SAMUEL T STEWART - SEPTEMBER 2022**

## COMPLIMENTARY READING ON THE AUTHOR'S WEBSITE

The publication entitled "Griffydham Wesleyan and Reform chapels" which appears under *Publications - Griffydham and Pegg's Green - Religion*

© **Samuel T Stewart** - September 2022

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.

A Headstone to the grave of Mary Knight in Griffydam Wesleyan Methodist Chapel reads:-

*Sacred  
To the memory of  
Mary Knight  
Who departed this life  
March 12<sup>th</sup> 1811  
Aged 69 years  
She had been a member of  
The Methodist Society for  
More than 50 years and she  
Knew well in whom she had believed*

Assuming that “more than 50 years” means what it says, rather than “for as long as can be remembered”, the Griffydam Methodist Society had been in existence since before 1761.

It was in 1759 that the Rev Walter Sellon became curate at Breedon on the Hill and Smisby and it was he who ignited the fire which took Methodism to the villages and hamlets of North West Leicestershire, including Griffydam, through the likes of John Hall, John Massey and others.

Rev Sellon had also been curate at Long Whatton for a year and whilst there he had impressed one of the villagers William Garner, so much so, that when he left there for Breedon and Smisby, William, with others, would travel to listen to him, and it was on one occasion whilst hearing the Rev Sellon preach that we are told he found peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The beginning of Griffydam Methodism is attributed by Jane Sanson to William Garner who “was the means of forming a society and of erecting a chapel at Griffy-Dam where he resided for several years” (Methodist Magazine 1825 page 585).

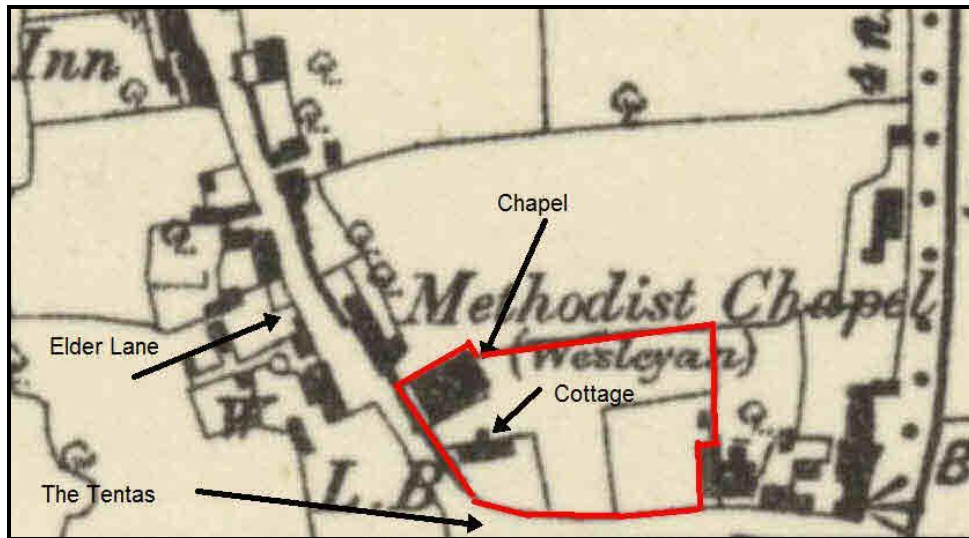
By trade, William Garner was a bricklayer. He moved from Long Whatton to Worthington and, in July 1776, he and Ralph Pope, who appears to have been his labourer, bought part of a close comprising one acre in "Griffiths Damm" for £57 15s.

This piece of land has a complex history which is described by the author in his history of "Griffydam Chapels" which is free to download and read on his website

William Garner built a cottage on this piece of land to the south of where he and Ralph Pope subsequently built the Griffydam Wesleyan Methodist chapel, originally described as a Methodist Meeting House. The chapel was erected in 1778, and William Garner's cottage was built during the preceding two year period. The Methodist Magazine dated 1825 refers to William Garner building the chapel and residing there for many years, but that obviously meant in the cottage not the chapel.

Eventually, adjacent land was purchased for the graveyard and William Garner's cottage occupied a portion of this. See the following map, which is based on the 1885 issued O/S map. This shows the relationship of the chapel and cottage to the Tentas and Elder Lane and the whole plot including the graveyard is outline in red.

After William Garner died or moved elsewhere, the cottage was used as a preachers house and finally as the Chapel caretaker's house and it was eventually demolished, probably in the 1950s



William Garner's cottage is shown to the right of the chapel in the following photograph and in fact a gravestone can be observed adjacent to it.





The cottage was eventually used to house the chapel caretaker and the last of these was a Mrs. Witham, who is seen sitting outside the cottage in the following photograph.



The 1939 register records Sarah Hannah Witham (unpaid domestic duties) aged 65 living on the "Tentus" with her daughter Doris, aged 22 as a domestic servant. From this we can deduce that they were living in William Garner's cottage. Her husband Thomas Witham who was a coal miner is not mentioned, so presumably he had passed away.