

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



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

By Samuel T Stewart

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thanks to Mr. Kevin Jackson, the current owner of Providence House built on the site of the Chapel and Schoolroom, for kindly providing the photographs and map shown on page 4 and the front cover.

PUBLISHED BY SAMUEL T STEWART

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**PROVIDENCE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHAPEL AND SCHOOLROOM WAS
A BRANCH CHAPEL OF THE GRIFFYDAM WESLEYAN METHODIST
CHAPEL ON ELDER LANE, AND WAS ORIGINALLY BUILT TO TAKE THE
CONGREGATION OVERFLOW FROM THERE.**

Providence Chapel was situated on Gelsmoor Road, just beyond Aqueduct Road, but on the opposite side when heading towards Rempstone Road. This area is commonly known as Gelsmoor, Coleorton but is actually in Worthington Parish. The exact location is shown on the 1923 published O/S map on page 5.

The photographs on the following page, taken c.1980, help to give an impression of what the chapel site was like. The chapel itself was only a small building with an entrance, and a schoolroom and a house (Manse), originally for the Minister, built onto it. We do not know when Providence Chapel was built, but it was no later than 1826 as "The Ashby Circuit Wesleyan Methodist Preachers Plan" for that year records it, and services were held at 6 o'clock in the evening as they were on the 1838 plan 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.

The 1861 Trade Directory of Leics & Rutland and both White's 1863 and 1877 Directories refer to the Wesleyan Chapel in Gelsmoor. It is recorded on a "Leicestershire History" website that the Chapel appears to have been built c.1809 with a capacity of 100-120 with 90-100 seats being free. On an average Sunday morning around 40 to 46 people would attend, and 80 would be present in the afternoon. **The Ecclesiastical Census taken on Sunday 30th March 1851, states that there was only an evening service, which was attended by 90 people.**

An attractive, traditional, much extended property currently stands in its place, and is named "Providence House". Part of the original Chapel and house were incorporated into the house extensions.

From the 1933 Circuit Plan, we know that the Chapel was still open for worship, with 10.30 morning services, however, we do not know when it closed exactly, but it was probably not much later than this. 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 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 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**



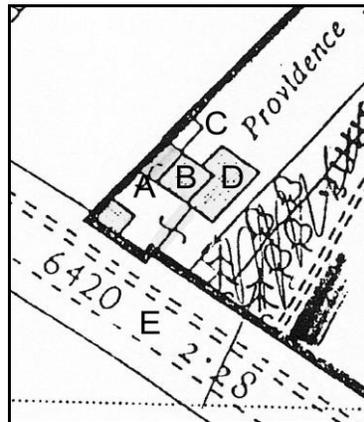
View from Manse side



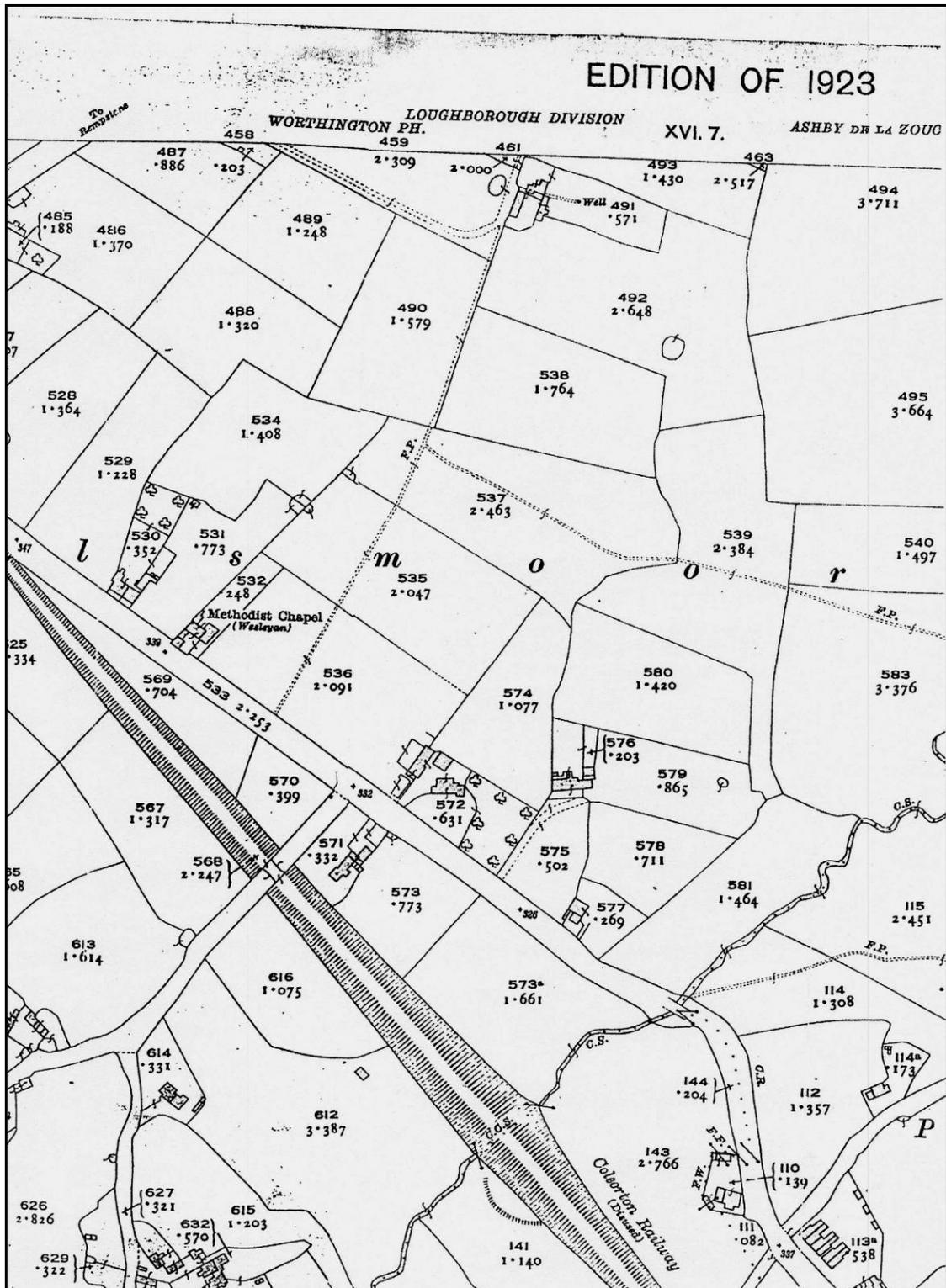
View from Chapel and Sunday School side



View on corner of Chapel from the road



It is thought that **A** was the Chapel entrance, **B** the Chapel Hall and **C** the Schoolroom. **D** was the house / Manse built onto the side of the Chapel. **E** is Gelsmoor Rd.



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)"