

## Nonconformity in Kegworth

### Early Nonconformity

In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century tensions mounted in Kegworth between those who supported the established Church of England and those with other religious views. In 1603, 4 recusants were recorded.<sup>1</sup> In 1646, Reverend Honeywood of Kegworth was charged by Parliament on 8 articles for his conservative religious beliefs. He had been rector for 6 years but may have been a pluralist. It was alleged that he had not officiated more than 6 times since his installation, and then only once on a Sunday. It was said that he had only once administered the sacrament, had not lived in his parish for three years, and before that, 'not above a week together'. He allegedly 'observed ceremonies', countenanced Sunday games and had not kept parliamentary fasts. Notwithstanding the abolition of the episcopacy, and indeed of his absence from services, it was said that he prayed for the bishops before his sermons, and he was accused of giving money to the Royalist garrison at Ashby.<sup>2</sup> His curate at Kegworth, James Bracknall, probably held similar religious views, and was forced to remove himself to Prestwold, where he was taken prisoner and carried prisoner to Leicester.<sup>3</sup>

Following the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, nonconforming ministers were ejected from their livings in 1662. One such ejected minister was Luke Cranwell, who had been vicar of St. Peter's church in Derby. Following the Five Mile Act of 1665, which prevented ejected ministers who had held livings in corporate towns from living in those towns unless they swore an oath of allegiance to the crown, Cranwell went to live in Kegworth. Calamy described him as "a knowing, courageous, zealous, and upright man" who also "had some competent skill in Physick".<sup>4</sup> In 1672, his house in Kegworth was licensed for Presbyterian worship.<sup>5</sup>

By 1676, there were 11 nonconformists recorded in Kegworth.<sup>6</sup> By the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, their number had reduced. The incumbent advised Bishop Wake in 1706 that the parish contained just four dissenters from the Church of England: one Presbyterian, two Anabaptists and one Quaker.<sup>7</sup>

A meeting house for Protestant Dissenters was registered in Kegworth in 1795.<sup>8</sup> By this date there were Independents and Baptists worshipping here, but this date does not tally with any known changes to their chapels.

### Baptists

According to the ecclesiastical census of 1851, a Baptist chapel was built in Kegworth in 1755.<sup>9</sup> This was rebuilt in 1818,<sup>10</sup> (or perhaps just extended, given its minister in 1851 said the building dated

---

<sup>1</sup> A. Percival Moore *Leicestershire Architectural & Archaeological Society* p. 150

<sup>2</sup> A.G. Matthews *Sufferings of the Clergy during the Grand Rebellion 1642-60* p. 237

<sup>3</sup> A.G. Matthews *Sufferings of the Clergy during the Grand Rebellion 1642-60* p. 232

<sup>4</sup> A.G. Matthews *Being a Revision of Edmund Calamy's Account of the Ministers and Others Ejected and Silenced, 1660-2* p.142

<sup>5</sup> F. Bate *The Declaration of Indulgence 1672* p. lxxii

<sup>6</sup> A. Whiteman ed. *The Comton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition* p.329

<sup>7</sup> J. Broad ed. *Bishop Wake's Summary of Visitation Returns From the Diocese of Lincoln 1706 -1715* p.737

<sup>8</sup> ROLLR QS 44/2/101

<sup>9</sup> HO 129/444/1/7

<sup>10</sup> White, Hist. Gaz. & Dir. Leics. (Sheffield, 1846) p.345

from 1755), and was 'in the High street'.<sup>11</sup> In 1829 there were 300 Baptists who attended services here.<sup>12</sup> In 1851, it generally contained around 70 people during a morning service and 210 in the evening.<sup>13</sup> There were 200 free sittings and 150 others.<sup>14</sup> It was enlarged in 1865,<sup>15</sup> to contain 500 people.<sup>16</sup>

### **Independent chapel**

An Independent meeting house was registered in Kegworth in 1755.<sup>17</sup> An Independent chapel was built in 1842.<sup>18</sup> In 1851, an average of around 116 people attended the afternoon services. It contained 150 free sittings and 75 others.<sup>19</sup> It is not clear whether that congregation suddenly dwindled or decided to affiliate itself to another group, but at some point in the 1860s the congregation who worshipped here were described as Free Methodists.<sup>20</sup>

### **Wesleyans**

A Wesleyan chapel was built in 1809.<sup>21</sup> In 1829, there were 250 'Methodists' in Kegworth, who appear to have been Wesleyans.<sup>22</sup> In 1851, around 114 people attended the morning service and 330 attended in the evening. The chapel contained 180 free sittings and 60 others.<sup>23</sup> A new chapel was erected in 1875 in place of the old one,<sup>24</sup> 'with stone dressings, in Gothic style'<sup>25</sup>.

### **Primitive Methodists**

In 1829, there were 90 'Ranters' meeting in a chapel in Kegworth.<sup>26</sup> By the early twentieth century, there was 'a Primitive Methodist chapel in Nottingham road, open in 1902.'<sup>27</sup>

### **Free Methodists and United Methodists**

As stated above, by the 1860s the Free Methodists were meeting in the Independent chapel, built in 1842.<sup>28</sup> However in 1864, a new building was erected for the Free Methodists,<sup>29</sup> on Derby road.<sup>30</sup> At the start of the twentieth century, the Free Methodist chapel became a United Methodist chapel.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Kelly's Dir. (1895) p. 538

<sup>12</sup> ROLLR QS 95/2/1/75

<sup>13</sup> HO 129/444/1/7

<sup>14</sup> HO 129/444/1/7

<sup>15</sup> White, Hist. Gaz. & Dir. Leics. (Sheffield, 1877) p.250

<sup>16</sup> Kelly's Dir. (1908) p. 109

<sup>17</sup> ROLLR QS 44/2/17

<sup>18</sup> White, Hist. Gaz. & Dir. Leics. (Sheffield, 1846) p.345

<sup>19</sup> HO 129/444/1/6

<sup>20</sup> White, Hist. Gaz. & Dir. Leics. (Sheffield, 1863) p.491

<sup>21</sup> HO 129/444/1/5

<sup>22</sup> ROLLR QS 95/2/1/75

<sup>23</sup> HO 129/444/1/5

<sup>24</sup> White, Hist. Gaz. & Dir. Leics. (Sheffield, 1877) p.250

<sup>25</sup> Kelly's Dir. (1895) p.95

<sup>26</sup> ROLLR QS 95/2/1/75

<sup>27</sup> Kelly's Dir. (1908) p.37

<sup>28</sup> White, Hist. Gaz. & Dir. Leics. (Sheffield, 1863) p.491

<sup>29</sup> White, Hist. Gaz. & Dir. Leics. (Sheffield, 1877) p.250

<sup>30</sup> Kelly's Dir. (1895) p.95

<sup>31</sup> Kelly's Dir. (1908) p. 109