

Owners of the Primitive Methodist Chapel on Peddars Lane, Beccles

On the 3rd May 1847 a plot of land on Peddars Lane measuring 4 rods (5½ yards) was bought by 15 trustees of the Primitive Methodist 'Society' (under the superintendence of the Reverend William Sapcoat [1807-1872]) for the purpose of erecting a chapel or place of worship and school. Thirteen pounds was paid to William Suggate (1796-1873) a Thatcher from Mutford for the land. The chapel opened on the 5th September 1847 with a sermon preached by Mark Warnes (1820-1888). Preaching services were held for several years but due to an ever-increasing congregation the Society were forced to move to a new site on Smallgate in 1872 (was Taylor's electrical shop and now a shop named Keith Skeel). The old chapel was put up for sale or to be let with applications to be made to Mr William Vyse (1827-1882) of Northgate, Beccles, a shoemaker and trustee of the chapel.



Reverend William Sapcoat

However, the former chapel proved difficult to sell and in 1881 it was rented out as a warehouse for £4 per annum by John Oldrin (1834-1910), whose Vulcan ironworks were nearby (now the Drill Hall and recording studio). The old chapel was eventually sold on the 8th October 1890 for £50 to Anna Stevenson [1851-1920] (working as a lady's maid and domestic servant) of Sudbury. It was a further five years (11th June 1895) before approval for conversion of the chapel to a dwelling and outbuildings was granted for Anna Dixey (Anna aka Georgianna Stevenson [1851-1920] was born in Halesworth and had married William Henry Dixey [1860-1911] in Sudbury in 1893). The new dwelling was designed by Arthur Pells (1851-1927), a well-respected local architect. The renovation cost £150, and was carried out by builder George Abraham Dunn (1846-1930), Denmark Road, Beccles. On the 31 August 1895 Anna Dixey arranged a mortgage of £120 via Miss Emily Katherine Andrews

(1851-1931) of Sudbury (her father was George William Andrews a solicitor and Justice of the Peace). Anna made half yearly payments to Katherine and the mortgage was paid off on 19th August 1912. Anna died on the 25th June 1920 and her effects were left to Albert Edward Stevenson (1883-1963) a builder.

On the 9th July 1924 Albert sold May Cottage to Agnes Hilda Aldous (1889-1974). She was already living at the cottage with her parents George and Eliza. Agnes had a younger sister Elsie Mildred. In 1911 both daughters were drapers' assistants. Agnes arranged a mortgage for £240 via The Trustees of the Loyal Temple of "Friendship". Living at May Cottage with the Aldous family in 1911 was Florence MAY Frederica Elmy (1897-1976) a milliner's apprentice. I wonder if the cottage was named after her? In 1939 Agnes was living at 27 London Road with her mother Eliza. Agnes was working as a shopkeeper. In 1943 Agnes married Mapplestone E Webb. She died on the 13 March 1974 and was living at 35 Grove Road.

On the 10th September 1934 Agnes sold May Cottage to Mr Horace Mortimer (1887-1953) for £255. In 1939 Horace lived on 47 Station Road with his wife Elsie and their two children. Thus, he was letting out May Cottage. Horace was a Master Butcher and Elsie was a State Registered Nurse and working for the Mobile Surgical Unit, Beccles Hospital. She died in 1973.

On the 21st April 1967 May Cottage was sold to Mr Geoffrey Patrick Fisk (1930-2018) a gas fitter for £800 by representatives of the deceased Mr Horace Mortimer. Mr Fisk had been living at May Cottage as a tenant for several years with his wife Doris and their 3 children. Mr Fisk arranged a mortgage with the council and borrowed a further £400/£500 on the 28th March 1972 for improvements and repairs. Following the death of Doris in 1997, Mr Fisk lived alone for several years and died in 2018. The cottage was put up for sale.

On the 9th February 2019 May Cottage was bought by Ray Poll (author of this article) and his wife Anne Deeney. The cottage has undergone an extensive renovation including en-suite shower room to the master bedroom, separate toilet and radiators upstairs, and a single-story rear extension downstairs with underfloor heating throughout. The renovation took almost year with some interesting discoveries along the way. For example, an imprint on an upstairs wall of the old chapel gallery (added in 1865 at a cost of £28) pews, and an old hymn board found in the loft.



Imprint on wall of chapel gallery pews



Old hymn board found in the loft

There is much more to find out about the chapel including the people who preached and attended their sermons, and the cottage including its former tenants.