



# The Old Chapel

aka Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Drill Hall, Drapery,  
Cinema, Engineering workshop

# CONTENTS

- Building the Wesleyan Chapel in Sedlescombe 3-6
- Poverty in Sedlescombe 7-8
- Swing Riots 9-11
- The Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 and the Workhouse 12
- A possible way out of poverty 13
- First emigrants choose Illinois, America 14
- Emigration to New South Wales, Australia 15-20
- Second emigration to Illinois, America 21-23
- Third emigration to Illinois, America 24-25
- Continuation as a Chapel 27-28
- Volunteer drill hall in WWI 29-31
- Daggett the Draper 32-34
- Cinema 35
- Carpenter/Engineering Workshop 36-37
- Kevin Doswell turns the Old Chapel into a residential property 38
- Phyllis Cotton finds a use for an Old Chapel window 39-40
- The end of this part of the story 41
- Acknowledgements 42

**BARRACK COTTAGES**  
originally built as a  
much larger building in  
the 14<sup>th</sup> century

**THE OLD CHAPEL** originally started to be  
built in 1810, ?on the site of the old  
King's Head, during the Napoleonic Wars  
as a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel and was  
converted to house in 1985

2009



# Building the Wesleyan Chapel in Sedlescombe

- For about 10 years from 1800, a group of people through the influence of **Mrs Lucy Crisford** met together in the house of James Pankhurst in Kent Street to pray and hear preachers from the Wesleyan Methodist persuasion following the Christian ethics preached locally by the Rev. John Wesley in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- Around 1810, 35-year-old local farmer **Henry Freeland**, who lived in Homestall opposite, acquired the site and, helped by Lucy's son 15 or 16-year-old John Crisford, started building the Chapel. According to a newspaper article written when the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel closed in 1925, the Chapel was built on the site of the **King's Head public house** at the bottom end of Sedlescombe Village Green and was completed in about 1812.
- However, a certificate was signed by Thomas Boots, James Goodsall, Thomas Richardson, Thomas Martin, James Parks and Henry Freeland registering the newly-erected Chapel with the diocesan authorities dated **24/11/1810**. (ESRO NMB/83/4/1)
- Sedlescombe's Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was included in The Register of Dissenting and Roman Catholic Places of Worship 1813-51. (ESRO QDR/11/1, ref 87 dated 1813)

Taken about 1905 when the Chapel was still open for worship

Photo from the late Neil Farrow's estate



During the Napoleonic Wars, many British troops from all parts of Britain were stationed on the Sussex coast. Soldiers from 1803 onwards began to have a great influence in the furtherance of the Wesleyan Methodists movement in eastern Sussex, west of Rye. Troops guarding the Sedlescombe Powdermills opposite are thought to have been at The Barracks next door to the Chapel site and could have encouraged the building of the new Chapel.

As well as the visiting troops, it was the farmworkers and village craftsmen, who found themselves at odds with the Parish Church, who gravitated towards an offshoot - the new Methodist Church.

# Those involved with the Wesleyan Chapel in Sedlescombe

- Within a few years, Henry Freeland had died and was buried in Sedlescombe Churchyard. After this, builder John Crisford, became a very important mainstay of the Wesleyan Chapel being both a class leader and an intellectual preacher.
- The majority of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Sedlescombe men would describe themselves as labourers but not only agricultural. Men might be working at the slaughter yard that stood behind the butchers on the Green where there were also the blacksmiths, shoeing horses and making every type of fence, pot, pan, tools and utensils and wheelwrights turning out complete wagons for the transport of goods and people. They might be tanners, making leather, or shoemakers using it, gardeners, bricklayers, tailors or sweeps. They might even have been gunpowder makers. Whatever their job, they were feeling the pinch during the 1820s.

Agricultural wages were already below subsistence level and there was insufficient work for local farmworkers to do. Efficiency was the name of the game and with the introduction in the 1820s and 1830s of a wide variety of machinery for amongst others things cutting, reaping and threshing the grain, there was less need for the ordinary farmworker with his sickle. If a worker was not needed, he would lose his home as well as his job. Bad weather meant no work and no money to support large families. The only relief for the poor was at the behest of the overseer from the Parish Church. Between 1828 and 1830 there were three bad harvests.





## **WAS THE WESLEYAN CHAPEL A HOTBED OF UNREST?**

It might seem fanciful, but as time went on into the 1820s and 1830s Sedlescombe's little Methodist Chapel seems to become quite a hotbed of poor farmworkers and trades people, who felt driven by poverty to react against the situation they found themselves in.



As the 1820s progressed, matters were reaching a head in this area and men were getting together eager for some kind of action against the landowners, particularly to get a minimum wage. This led to various types of unrest in the Sedlescombe area.

The action was called the **SWING RIOTS** because warning letters sent to landowners were signed "*Captain Swing*". Some actions were peaceful whilst others were not. There were instances of breaking of farm machinery and setting fire to hayricks, an activity that carried the death penalty.



Beryl Lucey in her book "Twenty Centuries in Sedlescombe" describes how a mob of 300 people attacked the assistant overseer of the poor in Brede taking him in a dung cart from Brede, through Sedlescombe passed the Queen's Head, up Church Hill, along Stream Lane and eventually to Vinehall where the overseer was unceremoniously dumped and told never to show his face in Brede again.

# Cobbett visits Battle

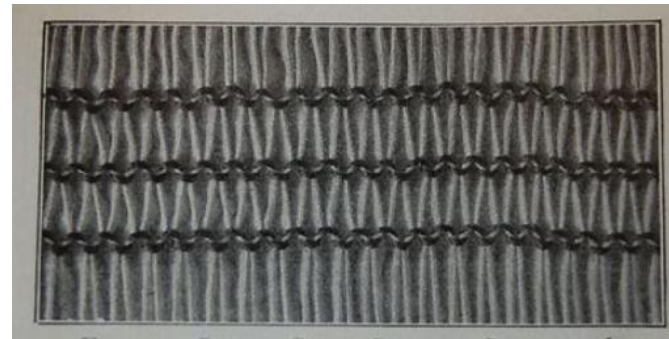
William Cobbett was a journalist and an MP who had already spent 2 years in prison for expressing his views. In 1822, he was campaigning for poor rural workers when he visited Battle to see the problems for himself during his “Rural Rides” around the countryside. In October 1830, William Cobbett planned to visit the area again and sent the word around that he would be speaking at a rally in the Battle area. Men and women managed somehow to get to the appointed place to listen to what William Cobbett had to say. Although William was keen not to be seen to be inciting violence, that is exactly what he was accused of when, soon after his rally, trouble started to break out.

William hoped to help his case by getting people who had attended the rally to sign a petition confirming that they had not been influenced to, for example, set fire to hayricks by what he had said at his Battle rally. This is a useful document because it helps us to see who was interested enough to both attend and sign the document and we see a spread of people from Battle and surrounding villages. We know that Sedlescombe was represented by at least 22 men and that more than a few of the men were attendees of the Sedlescombe Methodist Chapel. The men signed, or made their mark if they couldn't read or write. Spears, Pepper, Golby, Dennett, Noakes, Ades, Reed, Cook. **John Crisford** – a bricklayer – the mainstay of the Sedlescombe Wesleyan Methodist Chapel signed his name as did **George Booth**, the Sunday School superintendent. Also, **Samuel Sinnock** signed and **Jesse Buss** made his mark. All were pillars of the Methodist Chapel In Sedlescombe.

# A COMMON SIGHT IN THE RURAL AREAS



In the 1800s, men wearing the Sussex round smock would have been a common sight in Sedlescombe. At least a third of the men at the rally were wearing these smocks. The working men's wives and mothers would have been expected to run the smocks up for them. No sewing machines at that time so all hand sewn and with only the benefit of candles to light their dark rooms. A simple garment made from a tough natural linen or cotton which was the same back and front. The fabric had to be cut 3 times the length measured from a man's neck to his knees, and then divided into 3 equal pieces. One piece for the front, one for the back and the rest for the sleeves, collar, cuffs etc. It was doubled at the shoulders to try to keep out some of the wettest weather. Then came the tricky bit – gathering at the neck, wrists and under arm, held together with smocking, a type of embroidery which needed mastering.



On their heads the men would wear brimmed hats ready to doff to those they considered either superior or who might one day give them a job. It was usual for them to have string tied below the knees of their trousers, it is said to keep the mice out!

# ***THE NEW POOR LAW***

## ***The Government enacted THE POOR LAW ACT IN 1830***

### **DESTINED FOR THE WORKHOUSE**

Unfortunately, although some did receive a rise in wages, conditions were not really improved, but, instead, because the riots had hardened the hearts of the lawmakers, it was decreed that able bodied men who could not find work and their families would not be given money by the parish but would be put into the workhouse, split up, and not allowed to see, let alone have contact with, each other.

The workhouses were conducted on the assumption, widespread among the landowners who had been paying the poor through their taxes, that poverty was the result of laziness alone, and the Battle Union workhouse which included anyone in this category from Sedlescombe was no exception. Broadly, the idea was to make the workhouse so unattractive that the poor would be forced to find work outside at any rate available, rather than submit to the semi-starvation and indignities of the workhouse. Problems for the poor agricultural worker, impacted adversely on other village trades people.

The shame of your family being put into the workhouse was feared by all working men.

# A possible way out of poverty?

It seemed an impossible situation for members of the little Wesleyan Chapel who had signed the Battle Declaration. For example, **John Crisford** had 7 growing children who were themselves needing jobs, The **Sinnocks** lived in what we now call Chapel Hill, but was then, before the Congregational Chapels were built, called Selescomb Hill. The Sinnocks had 9 children and Samuel e was a shoemaker. What were his sons going to do when they needed to get work? Archer was the shoemaker in the centre of the village and he had sons too who wanted to follow their father. There was only so much work for a shoemaker. What was he to do? **Jesse Buss** also living at Harts Green, a humble farm labourer, struggling to find work on the Oaklands Estate. He had 12 children, although two had died young!

Across the other side of the world, at first without these Sedlescombe people realising, countries were desperate for manual workers. Then posters began to appear encouraging emigration to Australia, America, Canada and New Zealand.

# ILLINOIS IN AMERICA WAS LOOKING FOR WORKERS

DESCRIBING THE AVAILABLE LAND AS THE  
“**BEST FARMING LANDS IN THE  
WORLD**”  
FOR SALE BY THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD  
COMPANY

And the first to go from Sedlescombe Wesleyan Chapel were two of the shoemaker Sinnock's boys. In 1836, 15-year-old **Samuel Sinnock** left Sedlescombe and ended up in PAYSON, ILLINOIS, joined the next year by his slightly older brother George. It is said that the village of Payson was first laid out in 1835 so these two lads would have been there at its very beginning. The family stayed close to the Methodist tradition and **George Sinnock** later even called one of his children Charles Wesley Sinnock!

# A WAY OUT OF POVERTY?

The loss of two of the Sinnock boys from the Wesleyan Chapel to America was probably not that noticeable. But when parents of large families started to wonder whether emigration could be their way out of poverty too, the effect on the Chapel would have been very difficult indeed.

The “Bounty Immigration Scheme” operated in Britain between 1835 and 1841, boosting emigration to New South Wales, Australia.

## **EMIGRATION**

### **To Small Farmers, mechanics & Laborers.**

The precious years of your life are passing away, while you are waiting for a relief that may never come. The REAL REMEDY for your accumulated distress is **EMIGRATION**. Embrace the present favorable opportunity of leaving a Land “where you live BY TAKING THE BREAD OUT OF EACH OTHER’S MOUTHS.”

### **In South Australia, Western Australia, AND NEW ZEALAND.**

You can be rewarded for your Labor, and bring up your Families in comfort “free from the griping curse of Poverty”, and may, by industry, in a few years become INDEPENDENT LANDHOLDERS.

**Free passages are offered to persons of good character.**

# EMIGRATION TO NEW SOUTH WALES

**Married men of good character belonging to Battle Union, not exceeding 50 years of age with any number of children, provided that not more than two are under seven years of age, who are desirous of emigrating to**

**the above Colony**

**FREE OF EXPENCE (sic)**

Apply Mr Thomas Ticehurst, Battle

February 13<sup>th</sup> 1839

This poster which would have been displayed prominently in Sedlescombe in 1839 must have seemed a godsend to Sedlescombe's desperate men. However, we can imagine the ordeal of making the life-changing decision to emigrate in the 1830s. There was so much to think about.

Then the landowners started to encourage the men with promises of wonderful new lives.

New arrangements were in hand for a person's parish to pay for this emigration, having the effect of removing those people who might be a strain on parish rates, and Australian Bounty Immigration Scheme encouraged those desperate for working men to agree to employ the British poor at good rates and pay for or contribute towards their travel.



# SHIP RULES

A broadsheet was drawn up detailing which occupations were particularly needed in New South Wales in 1839 such as carpenters, bricklayers, stonecutters, wheelwrights, house servants, gardeners and all types of agricultural workers. Single females who were house servants were “greatly needed”. The sheet paints a very positive and impressive view of what would happen on board but in reality it was far from accurate. Those travelling “steerage” would be living in overcrowded stagnant conditions crammed into small spaces for months on end. Males and females would be separated. Instructions are given for packing the required clothing into different small boxes, 15”x15”x18”, in preparation for the monthly change of clothing scheduled during the three-to-four-month voyage. They also needed to take other specified items including sheets, cutlery and tin pots and a Bible.

Each prospective passenger needed a character reference signed by someone from their home parish, as well as a certificate confirming that each of them had either had, or had been vaccinated against, smallpox. (The Vaccination Act making smallpox vaccination mandatory was not introduced until 1853.)

The Battle emigration poster was dated February 1839 and by the middle of June the same year, several Sedlescombe families were onboard a 1-year-old ship the “Florist” moored in Gravesend bound for New South Wales on the other side of the world. Leaving on 18<sup>th</sup> June, the ship first stopped in Plymouth and then set off for Australia, not reaching there until 26<sup>th</sup> October!

## IN CHARGE ON THE SHIP “FLORIST”



A Scot called **John Stephen Hampton** was the Surgeon-Superintendent on the emigrant/immigrant ship the “Florist”. He was a medic in the Royal Navy and was capable but described as “cold-blooded”. Afterwards he would be in charge of 3 more ships, but on these occasions, the ships were transporting convicts to Australia. Incidentally, eventually he became Governor of Western Australia before returning to England where he died in St Leonards-on-Sea!

Hampton’s sick log for the 1839 Florist voyage is available and shows mostly minor illness such as indigestion, fever, rashes, stomach ache, severe constipation, diarrhoea, cuts, rheumatism, hysteria and inflammation of the kidneys and one or two cases of pneumonia. Children with whooping cough, who probably had the disease on embarkation, took a long time to recover, as did others who were on the sick list for a good part of the voyage.

There was just the one death of 3-year-old Sarah Veniss from whooping cough who had been brought on board ill, against medical advice. Despite anyone likely to give birth not being supposed to travel, there were four births during the voyage. In addition, the surgeon performed an amputation of part of a 7-year-old’s finger after a cask fell on it. He was a busy man.

# PASSENGERS FROM SEDLESCOMB ONBOARD FLORIST

A list of those onboard the “Florist” in 1839, reveals that it was meant almost entirely to carry people from the Battle Union area to New South Wales. There were 148 adults, 30 children under 7 and 30 children over 7. Families, single men and single women can be seen coming not only from Battle, but also from many of the surrounding villages. Amongst the men there were 58 Agricultural labourers, 5 bricklayers, 1 brickmaker, 1 bullock driver, 1 groom, 1 house servant, 1 milkman, 1 quarryman, 2 shoemakers and 4 shepherds. Amongst the women were 7 cooks, a number of farm servants, 18 house servants, 1 laundress and 1 nurse maid.

Married men from Sedlescombe were: 42-year-old John Crisford – the mainstay of Sedlescombe's Wesleyan Methodist Chapel with his wife and 7 children, 2 of whom were young men. Wesleyan John Crisford's name appears on the sick list on 03/08/1839 with obstipatio, discharged on 06/08/1829 cured; 40-year-old Spencer Bones, a Farm labour with a wife and son over 14 who was the only person on the voyage who didn't have a destination address and job lined up; 30-year-old Mark Dennet; 32-year-old John Veniss who declared he was a Wesleyan; 32-year-old Frederick Veniss, whose 3-year-old daughter Sophia was the only death on the voyage. She died from whooping cough, which afflicted several children from Sedlescombe such as Abraham Golby's children.

There were several single men including John Merrick from Forge Cottages, whose brother and mother had recently died in Sedlescombe. There were also a few single women including four young sisters from the Sedlescombe Baker family who as house servants, maybe at Oaklands Manor, would have been very sought after. A Baker family lived in a house called “Old Nicks” located somewhere between Harts Green and Selescomb Hill and maybe this was the family the four girls belonged to. At the time of the 1841 census, a couple of years after the girls had left for Australia, the parents were still living there with 2 younger children. How quiet the house must have seemed after they left. But how scary it must have been for the girls when, on reaching Australia, they were split up and sent to four different male employers.

# THE CRISFORDS IN AUSTRALIA

John Crisford would have been greatly missed in Sedlescombe but he had a job lined up in Australia working for Capt. McConell at Wolloomooloo, now an urban suburb of Sydney, with a wage of £2:5s/week without rations (the average rate for bricklayers was 7s/day). No doubt in the early days of settlement in Australia, there have been plenty of work in burgeoning Sydney, for a bricklayer and/or ordinary labourer. It seems that later, the family moved to Richmond, a suburb of Melbourne.

We know that the family remained life-long Wesleyans. When John's son Thomas Crisford, who was two years old on arrival in Australia, died in 1905, his obituary recorded that he was a dedicated servant of the Methodist tradition who spent his life trying to help people. He was also a preacher as his father John had been.

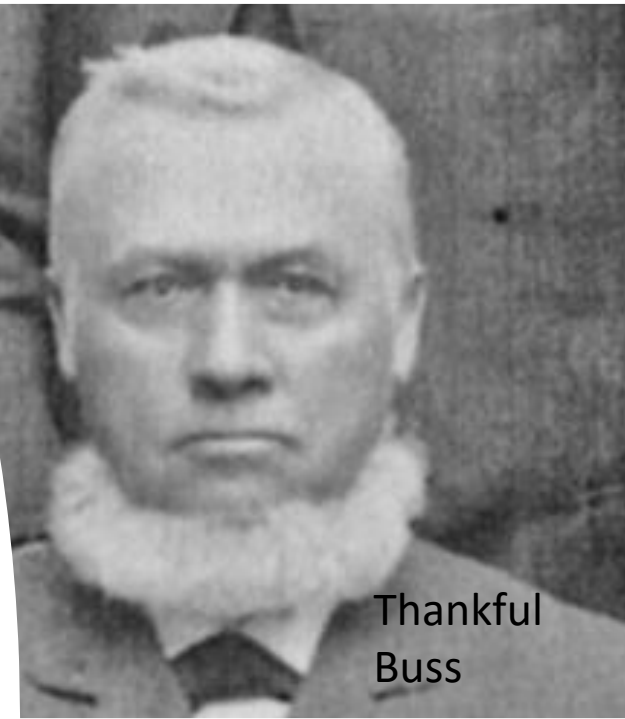


# EMIGRATION TO AMERICA

The end of the 1840s, saw the start of a further bout of emigration from the Sedlescombe Wesleyan Chapel, but this time to America.

First, three of Jesse and Mary Buss's sons, Horace (b1824), Isaac (b1826) and Thankful (b1828) left Harts Green, Sedlescombe for America and made their way to Payson, Illinois where Samuel and George Sinnock had settled a decade previously. Illinois was a popular destination, with around 8,000 adult English males there by 1850. The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw, in England, what was known as "American fever" and Midcontinental Illinois with its open spaces and frontier communities offered fertile soil, cheap land, jobs and freedom, comparing very favourably with the difficult situation for the working man in England.

Thankful had married Benedictor (Bennie) Richardson of Ewhurst just before leaving Sedlescombe and, in America, they went on to have 11 children. Horace married Mercy Spilsted of Sedlescombe.



# JULIUS BUSS'S ACCOUNT

Not long afterwards, Horace, Isaac and Thankful, were joined in Payson, Illinois by their parents Jesse and Mary Buss and their siblings where they became involved with setting up the Methodist Church. But it is **Julius Buss**, the 9<sup>th</sup> of Jesse and Mary's children that we know most about, because of the diary he wrote years later. He was aged 15 when he and his parents and siblings left Sedlescombe, and he remembered leaving without regret. When he died in Illinois in 1926, he left 6 children, 21 grandchildren and 16 great grandchildren.

Julius described how his parents were "strict" and devoutly religious in attending the Sedlescombe Wesleyan Chapel. Throughout his and his brothers' and sisters' childhoods, they were sent to Sunday School morning and afternoon every Sunday. He could not recall missing Sunday School more than 3 times in ten years walking from Harts Green, down Selescomb Hill to the Chapel and back in all weathers. Julius was not particularly gracious in his remembrance of his father, Jesse (1790-1854), describing him as an "inveterate smoker" which made "him nervous and ugly at times" Julius also said that Jesse did not excel at anything unless it was in the use of tobacco. Julius's comments about his father, forty years on, may have been influenced by the Methodists' condemnation of "worldly habits" including alcohol, playing cards, racing horses, gambling, the theatre, dancing and cockfighting. It may be that, in Julius's estimation, smoking should also be called a "worldly habit". However, what was in Jesse's favour, according to Julius, and helped him was that he could be found in The Methodist Chapel in Sedlescombe, next to the public house at the bottom of the Village, at the prayer meeting at 5 o'clock on most Sunday mornings.

Julius described his mother, Mary (nee Cruttenden/Critenden) 1794-1888, as "temperate in all her habits". When he was a child, Julius's parents had been extremely poor but his mother had taken in needlework so that he could go to School for which he was very grateful. According to her obituary, Mary remained very active in the Methodist Church all her life, being lovingly called "Grandma Mary" in the Kent part of Illinois in USA where she lived.

# JULIUS BUSS'S ACCOUNT continued

The first part of the journey that the Buss family undertook was by a large covered wagon that made the trip to London once a week from somewhere near Sedlescombe. Julius recorded that his eldest brother, named Jesse, after their father, came a few miles with them. Jesse, the younger, had already set up home with his wife Angeline in Whatlington and started a family. Presumably, Angeline did not want to leave all she knew in Whatlington and set off from an unknown land. After embracing and kissing all the family, Jesse broke down and cried bitterly when it came to saying goodbye to his mother. It would not be for another twenty years before, soon after his wife Angeline died, Jesse would leave England and join the rest of his family in Illinois, taking some of his own children with him.

Back to 1849, after doing some sight-seeing in London, once aboard their sailing vessel, they sailed down the Thames passing the great structure of St Paul's Cathedral which Julius thought looked like "a mountain of solid stone". This would be one of the last views of England that the Buss family would see. Julius commented that his thoughts as they sailed down the Thames were "*Farewell native land, farewell*". After an eventful, and at times rough, voyage, Julius and his family arrived in Quebec and somehow covered the long distance between Quebec and Payson, Illinois where they were reunited with Horace, Isaac and Thankful. The Buss family remained there for most of their lives. They were joined in due course by other Sedlescombe Methodist families, such as the Sinnocks, the Kenwards and the Inmans. It would be interesting to know whether there are any descendants of these Sedlescombe settlers still living in Payson. Even in 2020, Payson is still a small village with just over a thousand inhabitants, smaller than Sedlescombe itself!



*Julius Buss in his later years*

# EMIGRATION FROM SEDLESCOMB TO ILLINOIS IN 1853

In 1852, an advert appeared in the Sussex Advertiser newspaper. It told the story that **James Inman**, a wheelwright with a business at what is now The Bridge Garage was desperate to set off for America and wanted to sell his business in Sedlescombe urgently. Although only a young man, we know that at the time of the 1851 census, he was employing two men.

## “TO WHEELWRIGHTS AND CARPENTERS

*To be disposed of, a desirable BUSINESS OF A WHEELWRIGHT AND CARPENTER which has been established five years, at Sedlescomb, Sussex. As the proprietor wishes to leave directly for America, immediate possession may be had. The Shop and Dwelling-house attached are situate within 50 rods distance of the intended Branch Railway from Whatlington through Sedlescomb to Rye. Rent and taxes moderate.*

*APPLY TO MR JAMES INMAN ON THE PREMISES; OR MR JOSEPH DAVIS, HELLINGLEY UNION HOUSE”. (NB Joseph Davis was James Inman’s stepfather.)*

In 1849, James had married **Harriet Sinnock**, daughter of Samuel Sinnock the shoemaker from Selescomb Hill. It had been Harriet’s two elder brothers who, a few years previously, had first left Sedlescombe and the Chapel and struck out for Illinois in America in the very early days of setting up the village of Payson. Now it was Harriet and her husband James Inman with their young children who were planning to move abroad. Later it emerged that Harriet’s parents Samuel and Mary and Harriet’s three younger siblings were going too.



*Samuel was in his fifties when he left for Illinois. He had been a shoemaker since he was 13.*



# FAMILY TREES

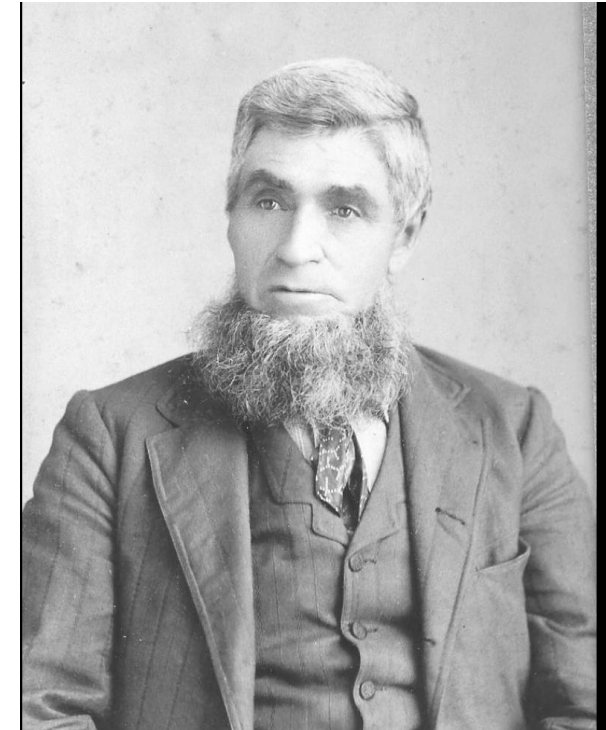
Also leaving Sedlescombe in 1853 was a girl called **Mary Ann Kenward** (Kennard in 1841 census) who lived next door to the Sinnocks in Selescomb Hill. Mary Ann was engaged to be married to her neighbour's nephew **Robert Sellens** who had already emigrated to America in 1850.

In May 1853, Samuel Sinnock and his family, James and Harriet Inman and their family and Mary Ann Kenward sailed on the ship "*Margaret Evans*" to New York, leaving Sedlescombe for ever. While the Sinnocks and Inmans made straight for Payson, Illinois, joining up with their old neighbours and friends from the Chapel, Mary Ann Kenward met up with Robert Sellens in New York and married him there in September 1853. But, needless to say, the newly-married Robert and Mary Ann Sellens moved to Payson, Illinois too.

The links don't stop there. James and Harriet Inman had a further 7 children in America to add to the 2 born in Sedlescombe. One of these children born in 1861 was named James Inman, after his father. In 1890, James went on to perpetuate the link with near neighbour Sedlescombe families by marrying Susan Sellens, one of Robert and Mary Ann Sellens' daughters.



*Susan Sellens born in US to Robert and Mary Ann Sellens (nee Kenward) went on to marry James and Harriet Inman's son James Inman in 1890*



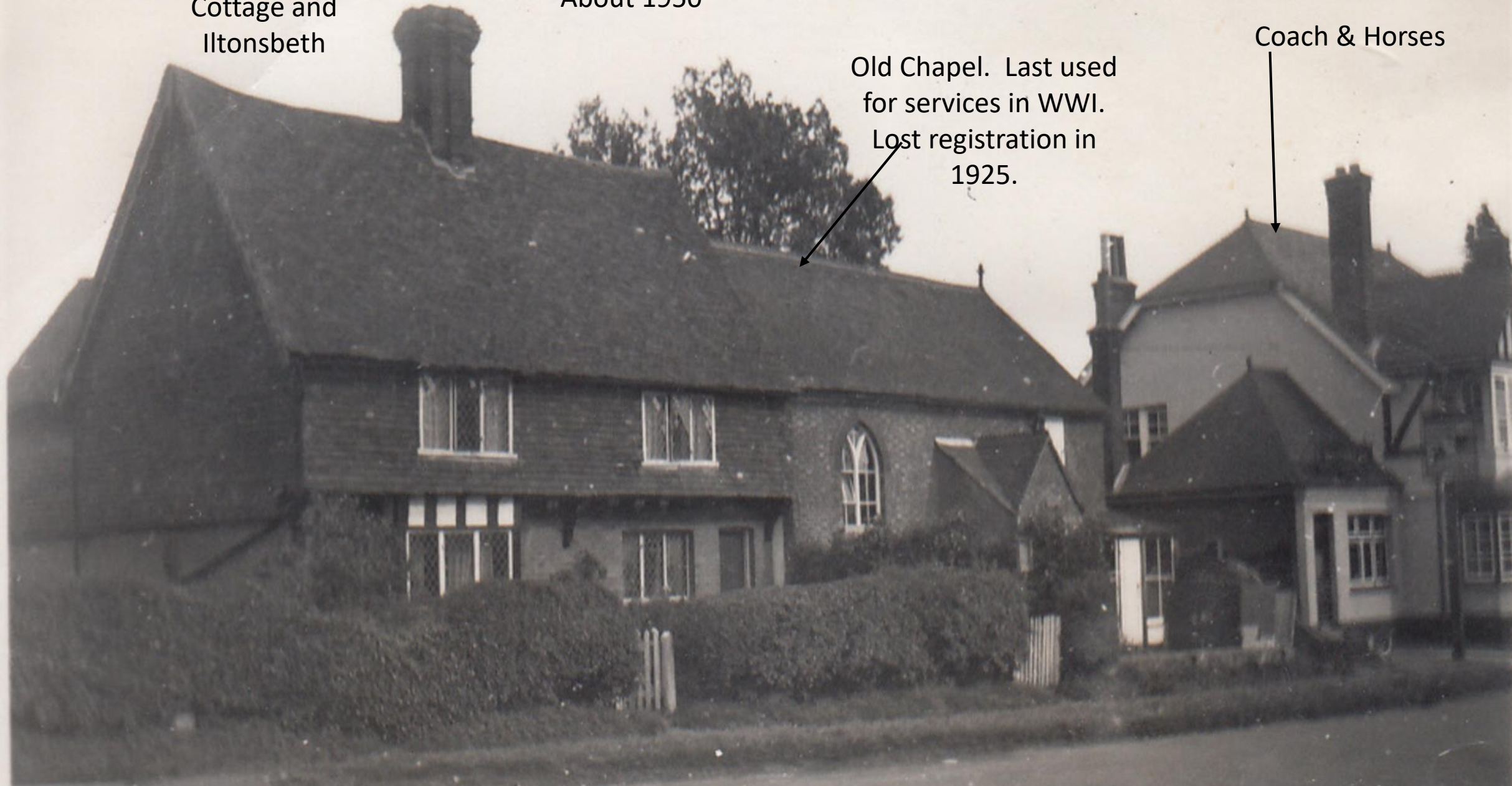
*Robert Sellens, whom Mary Ann Kenward left Sedlescombe to marry in America in 1853*

Barrack  
Cottage and  
Iltonsbeth

About 1950

Old Chapel. Last used  
for services in WWI.  
Lost registration in  
1925.

Coach & Horses



# The Chapel continued for about another 60 years

- In 1850, a group of men starting meeting for prayer in Hazelwood in Cripps Corner at 4am o'clock on Sunday mornings and then went onto the normal prayer meeting at the Chapel at 6am.
- In 1860, there were still enough people attending the Chapel to warrant a renovation and enlargement which necessitated the removal of the old gallery and the fence. The work was carried out at the cost of £170.
- In 1905, the local newspapers reported the Harvest thanksgiving at the Wesleyan Chapel. Miss Hook was at the organ and Mrs and Miss Hook and Clara Eldridge were responsible for the decorations. Beryl Lucey records in her book "Twenty Centuries in Sedlescombe" that the Hook family emigrated after the First World War, another blow to the Chapel.
- Also in 1905, the same week as the Harvest Thanksgiving, a public meeting was held in the Chapel in aid of the Wesleyan Foreign Missions

# The man with the churchwarden pipe

- The story is recorded that during one Sunday evening service, a man walked in smoking a long churchwarden pipe. He stood in the aisle and started to interrupt the preacher. The preacher asked him to either sit down or to leave but he refused to do either. A couple of chapel trustees were present and they summoned him to appear before the Battle bench.
- The Chairman of the Board explained to the man the seriousness of his offence and asked him to step outside to speak to the trustees. The trustees then agreed to withdraw their charge as long as the man erected a high fence between the public house and the chapel at his own expense which he did at a cost to him of £12.
- In 1915, the Chapel was empty and no longer were services held there. It took another 11 years before the Chapel was de-registered and other uses adopted.

# The Old Chapel is used as a drill hall 1917

From Hastings & St Leonards Observer 1917

**“SEDLSCOMBE - NEW DRILL HALL** – The local contingent of the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Sussex Volunteer Regiment have just taken over the Wesleyan Chapel (which has not been in use for the past two years) as a drill hall. Members lent willing aid to remove the pews and Mr H T B Combe JP (Oaklands) very kindly provided storage for them. The hall is now in the hands of workmen to make the necessary alterations and it is expected that the building will be in readiness by next Wednesday. On that evening, it is hoped Colonel Café, who is in charge of the Battalion, will attend a meeting to be held there, and declare the drill hall open.”



# Opening of the drill hall by Colonel Cafe

According to the 3 March 1917 Hastings and St Leonards Observer, Colonel Café did indeed declare the drill hall open the following week. General Nixon was also present as well as other dignitaries. Colonel Café said that some people asked:



Question *"Why should I join the Volunteers while my neighbours stand aloof?"*



Answer *"If there should be an invasion by sea or air the patriotic man would take his place as a member of the military force."*

# Opening of the drill hall by Colonel Cafe

When questions were invited, Sergeant Harvey asked:



Question "What would be the position of men in Class C in case of invasion, as they were not entitled to uniform? Would they be shot as non-combatants?"



*Answer "The armlet is equal to the uniform, though possibly it would matter little to the enemy what a man wore!"*

# Use of The Old Chapel as Daggetts the Draper



In 1926, the registration of Sedlescombe Methodist Chapel was cancelled and Mr Daggett, of Whydown Poultry Farm, Sedlescombe, bought the building and put the pews up for sale.

Daggett the Draper moved in and for the next few years ran his business from the Old Chapel.

**20 PEWS; GOOD CONDITION; FORMERLY USED IN WESLEYAN CHAPEL AT SEDLESCOMBE W H DAGGETT, SEDLESCOMBE**



# Daggett the Draper leaves the Old Chapel

Four years later in 1930, Mr Daggett was moving on

**“AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT AND A WORD OF SEASONABLE ADVICE** *W H Daggett, of Sedlescombe begs to announce that he is opening a Cash Drapery and Clothing Store at 26 Bohemia road, Sedlescombe Leonards. If you have not chosen your WINTER COAT, we advise you to wait and see our remarkable offers – many at Half-price to clear and make room for our Christmas Show. There will be some remarkable bargains in ladies’ coats, etc. and gent’s overcoats and suits.”*

**“We invite you Ladies and Gentlemen, to come and see – you will be convinced and satisfied. Note the address: W H DAGGETT, 26 Bohemia Road, St Leonards.”**



# Sale of the drapery business at the Old Chapel

In 1931 the drapery business premises  
in the Old Chapel were for sale

“£350 buys spacious business PREMISES in the centre of Sedlescombe;  
fixtures, office and counter included; suitable for drapery and grocery  
store – Apply W.H.Daggett, 26 Bohemia Road, St Leonards.”

# Cinema at the Old Chapel during WWII

According to Beryl Lucey in "Twenty Centuries in Sedlescombe", the Old Chapel was given planning permission in 1943 for use as a cinema. Well patronised during the war, it could not compete with cinemas in nearby towns when the war was over and it soon closed.

# Use of Old Chapel as a carpenters' and engineering workshop



For many years the Old Chapel was used as a store or workshop by Thomas and Sons and then by Eldridge and Cruttenden.

In 1966, it became an motor repair business run by Fred Allan of Meadow Lane.



1980s



In 1985, Kevin Doswell converted the Old Chapel to a residential property

# OLD CHAPEL, THE STREET

Window



1985 - Mrs Phyllis Cotton was walking past the Old Chapel during the building work when she noticed that the Church windows had been removed.





## Use of a Chapel window

Mrs Cotton contacted Mr Kevin Doswell and was able to purchase the windows for her Architect son who incorporated them into the conservatory of his London home.





And so we reach the end of this gallop through the life of the Old Sedlescombe Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, a building that has seen many changes of use since the early days when men, women and children connected with it decided to leave the poverty of their life in Sedlescombe and, instead, to travel across the world in search of good fortune but, all the time, taking with them the religious allegiance learned here in Sedlescombe.

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- Ruth Carter, Westfield Historian re the Inman family and Harts Green farmhouse.
- The American “find-a-grave” online project.
- Bob Gordon, descendant of the Buss family who years ago provided the diary entries for Julius Buss.
- The late Phyllis Cotton who provided the story about the use of the Chapel window.
- Various local newspaper reports about the Chapel and its uses but especially its history
- Various online web chats between descendants of the Sellens and Kenward families in America.
- 1841 Westfield census (NB Selescomb Hill was in the parish of Westfield at the time).



Further research is needed into what happened to the houses between Harts Green and Oaklands, listed in the 1841 Westfield census – Harts Green, Widows, Selescomb Hill, Old Nicks, Selescomb Hill x 4, Woodhouse, Oaklands. Anyone have any information please? All were inhabited at the time.

**END**

**PART OF THE 2020 SEDLESCOMBE LOCAL HISTORY VIRTUAL EXHIBITION  
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