Primitive Methodist Chapel 1880-1983

The earliest record of Non-Conformism in Collingbourne Ducis is a Dissenters' Meeting House certificate dated 6th October 1697 which refers to "The dwelling house of Thomas Crouch of Sunton".

Similar entries occur during the early part of the 19th century and, following the immense popularity of John Wesley's style of preaching, the Collingbourne dissenters adopted the Primitive Methodist name and in 1849 opened the first Primitive Methodist Chapel in the village. On Census Sunday 1851 about 195 people attended the morning service, 194 the afternoon one and 210 the evening service.

A new chapel was built at Cadley in the village in 1880 and was finally closed in 1983 when it became a family home, thankfully tastefully preserved. In keeping with the Primitive Methodist tradition, dating from the time when John Wesley was forced to hold his meetings outside, an Annual Camp Sunday service was held in a field near the chapel. The preacher would stand on a farm wagon lent by a local farmer but, if the weather was bad, he and the congregation would adjourn to a nearby barn. As I recall, though, not all preachers adhered to the rule drawn up at the Primitive Methodist Conference in 1860 which said: "The leader should not indulge in long speaking, nor should he encourage it in his members."
Following the unification of the various branches of Methodism, the practice was established of dividing the chapels into Circuits. The 14 chapels of the Andover Circuit were: Andover, Longstock, Wherwell, Upper Clatford, Collingbourne Ducis, Amport, Charlton, Lower Clatford, Appleshaw, Upavon, Figheldean, Netheravon and Chisenbury.

Obviously there could not be a Minister for each chapel and the services were normally led by an informally trained Local Preacher. These men were very proud of their work in this regard and my Great Grandfather, Abraham Vivash, actually showed his occupation as "Local Preacher" in the 1871 census, although by 1881 he had reverted to the title "Agricultural Labourer".