

CHAPTER 9

A new building, Rev. John Butcher (1889 - 1899)

The vacancy did not last long, for in November 1889 the congregation invited Rev. John Butcher to be its new minister. Born in Baldock in 1837 and educated by private tutor, he joined the Wesleyan Methodist Society in 1857 and became a Methodist local preacher. He was called to be an evangelist at Alton in Hampshire in 1864, and significantly in two other places where he served (Upwey and Hedley) he built a new church.

This expertise stood Mr. Butcher in good stead when he arrived in Great Chishill from his previous church in nearby Buntingford, for it soon became apparent to him that the building was becoming unsafe and it would be necessary to build a new one. In the minds of others there was a natural reluctance to demolish a place so sacred, and where so many generations of forebears had met for prayer and praise.

Nevertheless, the necessary money was raised with such speed that the former building was closed on 23rd September 1894, the foundation stone laid on 8th November, and the new Chapel received from the builder Mr. Parker and opened for worship on 3rd May 1895.

Not only was Mr. Butcher energetic in conducting three Services each Sunday (two in Great Chishill and one in Barley), but he also gave strong leadership to the village community in general, being chairman of the Parish Council and Parish Meeting, as well as a District Councillor.

Enthusiasm for building churches remained with Mr. Butcher when he moved a short distance in 1899 to a pastorate in Baldock, for he secured a plot of ground in a principal street there and was collecting funds for building on it when he died on 22nd November 1901.