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Records of Beech Hill Baptist Church, c.1885-2005 (8 vols, 21 bdls, 7 docs).

Deposited in June 2005 (acc. 7638).

Cat : LS 6/2005

Introduction

An Independent congregation is recorded in Beech Hill in 1715, and it has been suggested that this subsequently became Baptist. Deeds of the church (missing by 1909) apparently indicated services being held in a building subsequently used as the manse (and sold in 1950) from c.1724-1725.

In 1786 Baptist landowner Abraham Atkins gave two cottages to be converted into a chapel. A new chapel was instead built and registered for worship in 1794. The first recorded minister, in 1798, was John Wills, also minister of Wokingham Baptist Church, 1795-1804. The first full-time pastor was James Rodway, 1809-1843.

By 1880 the building had fallen into disrepair and had to be closed as unfit for public use. It was restored and re-opened in 1881, and the church was reformed in 1885. The building was again unsafe in 1959, but the Sunday School continued to meet in a member's house and the village hall. The church re-opened in 1960.

In 1946 the church united with Shinfield Free Church (until 1965) and Bethel Baptist Church, Riseley (which closed in the 1980s). Membership declined in the 1970s, and weekly services were in abeyance, c.1978-1981, but the Sunday School continued to flourish. Pastoral oversight was obtained from the Berkshire Baptist Association, 1952-1990, Carey Baptist Church, Reading, 1996-c.1999, and subsequently from Yateley Baptist Church. A dedicated pastor was called in 2005.

Schedule of accessions

Acc. 7638 : 1/1/1; 1/2/1-3; 1/3/1; 5/1/1-3; 5/2/1; 6/2/1; 6/3/1-9; 6/5/1-4;
8/3/1; 12/1/1; 12/2/1; 13/1/1; 13/2/1-3; 14/1-6

Summary

CHURCH ADMINISTRATION : church book, c.1885-1928; church meeting minutes, 1909-1983; correspondence, 1967-1983.

TREASURER : accounts, 1897-1984; annual statement, 1977/8.

PROPERTY : copy deeds, 1786-1953; fabric papers, 1911-1994; inventory, 1911.

REGISTRATION AND MEMBERSHIP : register of children, 1881-1908; burial certificates etc, 1945-1961 (incomplete); lists of members, c.1880-1977.

PUBLICATIONS : newsletter, 1951; church history, 2005.

OTHER BODIES : Beech Hill, Shinfield and Riseley Group Fund accounts, 1948-1965 (incomplete); Berkshire Baptist Association yearbooks, 1966/7-1974/5 (incomplete), constitution, 1974, and newsletters, 1980-1982 (incomplete).

MISCELLANEOUS : invitation to mission, 1955; photographs of reconstruction of baptistry, 1996-1997; reminiscences of church (1965-1982).

Records in other collections

Copy trust deed of chapel site, 1790

D/N2/13/4/1

MIs

T/T61

1	<u>Church administration</u>		
1/1	<u>Church books</u>		
1/1/1	Church book. (Includes, in the following order: notes on the stipulations of the church trust and the reform of the church 1880-1885, n.d. [c.1885]; lists of members, c.1880-1899; brief notes of church meetings and events, September 1885-April 1894 (possibly incomplete); accounts, 1897-1909; register of children presented by their parents in lieu of baptism, May 1881-January 1908; brief notes of church meetings and events, March-May 1909; lists of members, 1909-1928; and names and addresses of trustees of the Atkins Charities, n.d.)	1 vol	c.1885-1928
1/2	<u>Church meeting minutes</u> [For brief notes of church meetings, 1885-1894, see D/N 49/1/1/1.]		
1/2/1	"Secretary's book" containing record of church events, February 1909-January 1928, including minutes of church meetings, March 1909-March 1927.	1 vol	1909-1928
1/2/2	Secretary's record of church events, January 1928-March 1961, including minutes of church meetings, January 1928-September 1950. (Also includes, on flyleaf, notes on the use of the burial ground, 1928, 1960; and, at end, list of members, 1948.)	1 vol	1928-1961
1/2/3	Secretary's record of church events, april 1961-March 1972, April 1977, January 1981-February 1983, with summary of events, 1977-1980. (Includes minutes of church meeting, May 1981, and, at end, lists of members, 1966-1977, and statistics and instructions for the baptistry, 1970.)	1 vol	1961-1983 Closed until 2014
1/3	<u>General correspondence and administrative files</u>		
1/3/1/1-152	General correspondence and papers. (Subjects include membership, local inter-church organisations and mission work.)	1 bdl	1967-1983 Closed until 2014

5	TREASURER		
5/1	<u>Accounts</u>		
	[For accounts, 1897-1909, <i>see</i> D/N 49/1/1/1.]		
5/1/1	Accounts, April 1909-March 1934. (Includes, at end, Sunday School accounts, 1909-1918.)	1 vol	1909-1934
5/1/2	Accounts, March 1934-January 1983. (Includes, at end, accounts of special collections towards repairs to the chapel, 1949-1956.)	1 vol	1934-1983 Closed until 2014
5/1/3	Accounts, January 1983-January 1984. (Includes, at end, building fund accounts, January-November 1983.)	1 vol	1983-1984 Closed until 2015
5/2	<u>Statements of accounts</u>		
5/2/1	Annual balance sheet, year ending August 1978.	1 doc	1978

BERKSHIRE RECORD OFFICE

BEECH HILL BAPTIST CHURCH RECORDS

D/N 49

6	PROPERTY RECORDS		
6/2	<u>Title deeds</u>		
6/2/1/1-51	Copies of deeds of the chapel and its site, 1786-1953, and Charity Commission Schemes and Orders for Abraham Atkins' Chimney Trust, 1882-1989 (most photocopies).	1 bdl	20 cent.
6/3	<u>Fabric papers</u>		
6/3/1/1-4	Fire insurance policies on the church and manse and related papers.	1 bdl	1911-1937
6/3/2/1-2	Detailed bills for repairs to the church and manse.	1 bdl	1925, 1930
6/3/3/1-8	Correspondence and papers relating to the installation of electricity in the church.	1 bdl	1936
6/3/4/1-9	Correspondence and papers relating to the building's being declared unsafe and attempts to raise funds for repairs.	1 bdl	1959-1960
6/3/5/1-6	Bills for repairs to the church.	1 bdl	1962-1969
6/3/6/1-4	Papers relating to the provision of drains.	1 bdl	1968, 1984
6/3/7/1-4	Architect's report on the condition of the church.	1 bdl	1979
6/3/8/1-2	Letters relating to the re-starting of services and proposed repair of the church.	1 bdl	1981
6/3/9/1-16	Plans and elevations of proposed extension to the church.	1 bdl	1984-1994
6/5	<u>Miscellaneous</u>		
6/5/1	Inventory of church contents, 1911, with, reversed, [organ fund] collection accounts, 1910.	1 doc	1910-1911
6/5/2/1-2	Public liability and workmen's compensation insurance policies.	1 bdl	1940
6/5/3/1-8	Correspondence concerning a requested right of way over Chapel Drive, Beech Hill (the lane leading to the chapel).	1 bdl	1973-1975
6/5/4/1-7	Miscellaneous correspondence relating to property matters.	1 bdl	1950-1977

8 REGISTRATION AND MEMBERSHIP

8/1 Registers of birth, baptism, marriage, death and burial

[For register of children presented in lieu of baptism, 1881-1908, *see* D/N 49/1/1/1. For some burials, *see* D/N 49/8/3/1; a burial register existed at some point but its current whereabouts are unknown. For MIs, *see* T/T 61.]

8/2 Membership registers and lists

[For lists of members, c.1880-1899, 1909-1928, *see* D/N 49/1/1/1. For list of members, 1948, *see* D/N 49/1/2/2. For lists of members, 1966-1977, *see* D/N 49/1/2/3.]

8/3 Miscellaneous

- 8/3/1/1-11 Miscellaneous papers relating to burials. I bdl 1945-1984
 (Includes certificates for disposal of remains of John Rowe, 1945, Emma Banks, 1956, William Isaac Griffiths, 1961, and Lydia Jane Bacon, 1961; letters relating to burials of the Wiseman and Dowling families (1907-1933), 1968; and letter and application relating to altered inscriptions on the tombs of George Malyon, 1983, and the parents of George Malyon's wife Zingra Eleanor, 1984.)

12 PUBLICATIONS

12/1 Magazines

12/1/1 *The Link*, June 1951 (joint newsletter with Shinfield Free Church and Bethel Baptist Church, Riseley, Swallowfield). 1 doc 1951

12/2 Miscellaneous

12/2/1 *The History of Beech Hill Baptist Church 1724-2005*, by Mary K Wheway (Beech Hill 2005). 1 doc 2005

13	OTHER BODIES		
13/1	<u>Beech Hill, Shinfield and Riseley Group</u>		
	[Between 1946 and 1965 Beech Hill was part of a Group ministry with Shinfield Free Church and Bethel Baptist Church, Riseley, Swallowfield.]		
13/1/1	Group Fund accounts, October 1948-July 1957, September 1965. (Includes, at end, accounts of special collections for the pastor's baptistry outfit, 1949-1952.)	1 vol	1948-1965
13/2	<u>Berkshire Baptist Association</u>		
13/2/1/1-4	Berkshire Baptist Association yearbooks, 1966/7, 1972, 1973, 1974/5.	1 bdl	1966-1974
13/2/2/1-2	Constitution and rules, with draft of revision.	1 bdl	1974, n.d.
13/2/3/1-9	<i>Berks News</i> (Association newsletter), issues no. 5, 7, 8, 10-12 (December 1980/January 1981, April/May and August/September 1981, December 1981/January 1982-April/May 1982.)	1 bdl	1980-1982

BERKSHIRE RECORD OFFICE

BEECH HILL BAPTIST CHURCH RECORDS

D/N 49

14	MISCELLANEOUS		
14/1	Invitation to "Good-News" mission events to be held at the chapel (with programme).	1 doc	1955
14/2	<i>The Dedication Service</i> , by Stephen F Winward (2nd edition) (Baptist Union 1967).	1 doc	1967
14/3	<i>Progress : A Journal of News and Clean Living and Sensible Citizenship</i> (newsletter published by Amethyst of Reading [formerly Reading Temperance Society]).	1 doc	1981
14/4/1-18	Photographs of building work during the reconstruction of the baptistry.	1 bdl	1996-1997
14/5/1-5	Reminiscences of life at Beech Hill Baptist Church, 1965-1982, by former church organist, Sunday School teacher and preacher Pete Smith. (Includes comments on named church members.)	1 bdl	1997
14/6/1-8	Leaflets and invitations relating to other Baptist churches. (Includes leaflets advertising Berkshire Baptist Association's Church of the Year, namely Tilehurst Free Church (Baptist), 1973; Ascot Baptist Church, 1975; Henley Baptist Church, Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire, 1977; Cholsey Free Church, 1979; and Sindlesham Baptist Church, 1981; and invitations to the inductions of the new pastors of Wycliffe Baptist Church, Reading, 1981, and Grovelands Baptist Church, Reading, n.s. [1981].)	1 bdl	1973-1981