

Where and when did Milborne Port's Methodist community first meet?

William Pearse

By following the source in the link below and searching Edward Ensor's book (Jubilee of Wesleyan Sunday School Milborne Port, 1870), I was able to locate where William Pearse lived and took the first meetings.

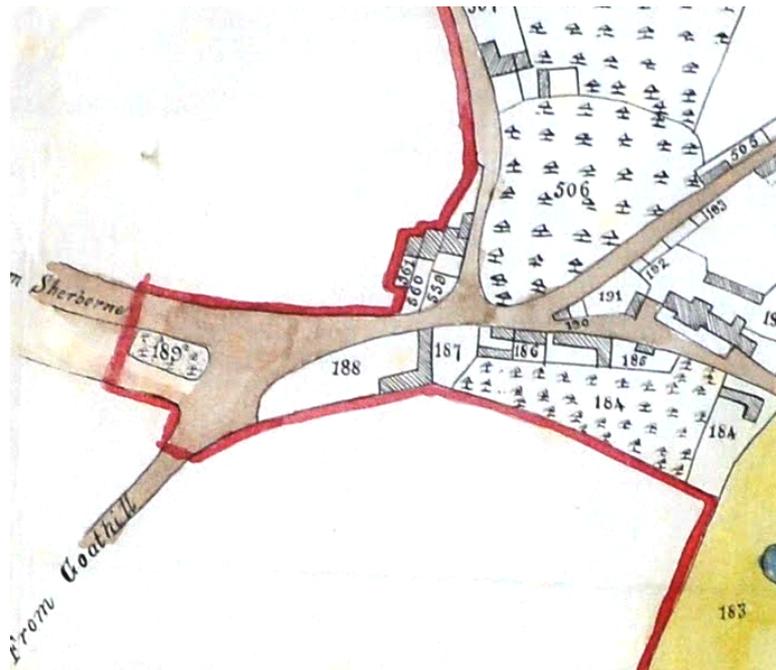
<https://dmbi.online/index.php?do=app.entry&id=3449>

A passage that Ensor writes about between the dates of 1818 and 1820 reads, 'The first Methodist Meeting house was the residence of William Pearse, Stonemason. It was situated at the entrance of the town from Sherborne, and joined one now occupied by John Winter, with which it formed a right angle, the gable of Pearse's house being towards the road.'

The map below shows John Winter's house on the 1839 Tithe Map (355) and is recorded as such in the Apportionment.



The map below is from 1817 and shows the same property but one or two years before the first mention of Methodism in the village. This time it is shown as two residences of which Pearse's property would be 187 'with which it formed a right angle, the gable of Pearse's house being towards the road.' (No survey is known for this map).



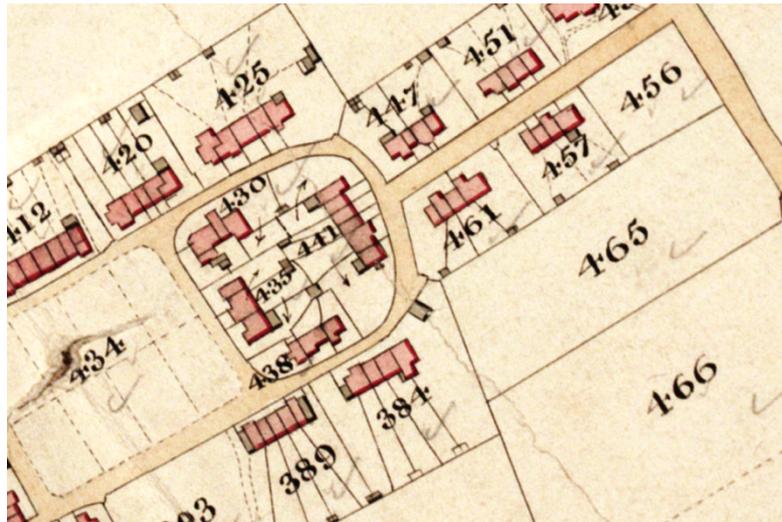
John Roberts

Ensor further writes:- 'Here in the year 1820 the Sunday School was begun by John Roberts, Ann Barrett and Rhoda Fudge... John Roberts in the course of the year removed to Newtown, and occupied a house now tenanted by Henry White.' (At the time of Ensor writing, this would be 1870).

Ancestry

John Roberts was born 15th Jan 1791 to parents Robert and Mary; he was baptised 10 July 1791 and married Ann Northover on the 1st December 1811; their son Robert was born 23rd July 1820. All in Milborne Port.

Although Ensor is writing in 1870 he is referring back to the time of the early Methodist days and when referring to Henry White at Newtown, we can find him in the 1839 tithe apportionment living in plot 435 shown below.



Families Baker, Cooke and Day are living in plot 438; by combining the information from the apportionment and the 1841 census, this would make the house of Henry White and the earlier John Roberts the lower of the block of three of plot 435. Pink indicates residential and grey non-residential. The grey square - which is central to plots 435, 438 and 441 - would have been the shared toilet to which the boundaries all gave access.

Would it be too much to assume that the grey building attached on the back of John Robert's house was where he held his Sunday School?

Hugh Vincent, February 2026