



*DENNE ROAD GOSPEL HALL,
HORSHAM, WEST SUSSEX*

*150 YEARS OF WITNESS
1863 – 2013*

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1. Foreword

It was felt important that the milestone of the 150th anniversary of Denne Road Gospel Hall should be marked in a narrative way. Whilst such a task is a daunting one, given the time, literary ability and historical resources necessary for it to become a reality, it was felt that there were sound reasons for proceeding.

Firstly, to have maintained an unbroken witness to the saving and keeping power of the Lord Jesus Christ over a century and a half is something worth recording – not only as a tribute to the fidelity of those who “kept the lampstand burning”, but primarily as a testimony to a God who sustains His people, and to the unchanging and vital need for men and women, in Horsham and elsewhere, to claim the Saviour as their own today.

Secondly, a multitude of people have been closely associated with Denne Road over the years. Of course, many are now enjoying the blessings of Heaven, but a significant number of others are still with us - some in Horsham, others throughout the UK or overseas. It was hoped that this history would serve both as a conduit for their memories, and as a reminder of their fellowship with others at Denne Road.

Thirdly, it was humbly desired that such an account might contribute a tiny piece to the historical jigsaw of Horsham, a town in which the Assembly has been privileged to maintain a presence for so long.

In order to present a “self-contained” narrative, the following history is concerned with the period from 1863, i.e. since the building and occupation of the current Hall.

In compiling this account, we are greatly indebted to the efforts of those who have gone before, in particular the editors of the church newsletters from 1960 to 1987 (see Appendix 7). Please forgive any errors that you may come across. They will keep us humble and reminded of our human weakness this side of Heaven.

Graham Heaney & Ian Topalian

March 2013

2. Introduction - Horsham in the 1860's :The Social Context

The town of Horsham has had a significant presence in the South-East of England for many centuries.

“The first historical record of Horsham is from AD 947. The name either originates from 'Horse Ham', meaning a place where horses were kept, or 'Horsa's Ham', named for a Saxon warrior who was granted land in the area. The town has historically been known for horse trading in early medieval times, *(and)* iron and brick making”*

In the mid-nineteenth century, it was one of the foremost market towns in the County of Sussex. It was a prosperous community, its economic health being the result of a long association with various trades and professions. It was also situated effectively mid-way between London and the South Coast.

Horsham has an ecclesiastical pedigree which might suggest that it was populated with saints of every persuasion: in no small part, this impression is due to its long history of Non-Conformism. The Society of Friends, Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists and others all founded active congregations within its boundaries during the nineteenth century.

In the wider world, it was a time of great bloodshed, as brother fought brother in the American Civil War and, shortly before, Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole had tended the broken bodies of young men in the Crimea. Beneath the veneer of Victorian respectability, the mid-nineteenth century in England was an era of appalling spiritual and social darkness – William Booth founded what later became the Salvation Army in 1865 and, some twenty years earlier, the politician and novelist Benjamin Disraeli's book “Sybil, or The Two Nations” had sought to awaken the people of Britain to the reality that, for swathes of the population, neither religion nor politics had made any real impact whatsoever. Many people lived in fetid hovels, accommodating several families to a room. Life expectancy was short, infant mortality rates were high, and alcoholism and child prostitution were endemic within our teeming towns and cities. Unsurprisingly perhaps, it was also at about that time that the Metropolitan Police, in order to combat a tide of ever more sophisticated criminality, identified a need to place officers in plain clothes - *much to the consternation of some people, who saw the move as being un-British and reminiscent of the Tsar of Russia's Secret Police !*

Against this background, Horsham was a town where, Sunday by Sunday, many gathered, in various places, to sing the songs of Zion and to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ.

* source: Wikipedia

3. Who Are “The Brethren”?

Denne Road Gospel Hall is inexorably linked with “The Brethren” or “The Assemblies”. It behoves us at the beginning to explain who they are, what they believe and how they seek to meet.

Obedying the Lord’s command and remembering the Lord in the breaking of bread is central to the Brethren and those “in fellowship” seek to be present whenever they are able.

Other comments are taken from an article written in a Denne Road Hall newsletter in 1964:-

"Statements of doctrine which have been issued regarding the assemblies have often been no more than a reiteration of doctrines accepted by all evangelical circles. The following summary of the features which are distinctive may be found helpful.

In the first place we seek to show that we are a part of a spiritual organism rather than a worldly organisation. Having no headquarters on earth and receiving all who truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, we are neither a sect nor a denomination and could be described as non-denominational rather than interdenominational. Our head is not a human leader but Christ, the Lord in heaven.

Secondly we have no priestly caste amongst us. In the scriptures we read 'Holy and reverend is His name.' We do not feel free therefore to use the title of Reverend in any other connection, nor do we recognise the validity of any ordination by men after apostolic times. On the contrary, we believe in the priesthood of all believers, the Holy Spirit making manifest those who are specially equipped for the ministry. In this way, the Holy Spirit is not limited to using one man as in a “one man ministry,” but is able to present the truth in a variety of ways, just as the Scriptures were written by many people.

Finally it is considered that holiness cannot be applied to buildings or places. In the teaching of John ch.4. the Lord speaks of worshipping in spirit and in truth. Identifying holiness with the characteristics of the Christian life, worship is the gathering together of such saints – being a body or assembly of God's people met to honour, praise, serve and witness the love of God through their Risen Saviour.”

In the case of Denne Road, this does not mean that the people who worship there have no dealings with others who have placed their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and who meet in other places and in other ways. They readily acknowledge that all such believers are an integral part of the Body of Christ: there are many other Christians whom they are pleased to count as close friends, inviting one another to services in their respective buildings and often having speakers from those churches to preach from their pulpit.

4. A brief look back over the first 100 years

Prior to the opening of the present meeting place in Denne Road, in 1863, the Assembly had met in premises on London Road. The construction – indeed the very existence - of the new building was due, in no small part, to the patronage of Charles G. Eversfield, a local gentleman and landowner of Denne Park nearby*.

Mr Eversfield had been converted as a young man, following a serious accident which left him disabled for the rest of his life. In a booklet entitled “Give me the light!” he recounted how, through the witness of a Christian cousin, he was finally caused to consider his sinful state before God, repent of the profligacy which had characterised his life up to that point, and place his trust in the Saviour (see Appendix 1).

In its earliest years, the building was known as “The Denne Road Meeting Room” (although an early reference to the Chapel is shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1876 where it is designated "The Plymouth Brethren Chapel seating one hundred."

From its establishment until approximately ninety years ago, the fellowship was associated with the Exclusive Brethren. That said, it would be wholly wrong to assume that the Christians who met there were not interested in the situation of those around them. Indeed, Mr. & Mrs. Eversfield were characterised by their generosity: provisions, including joints of meat, were distributed around the area, so much so that the building was sometimes referred to as “The Leg of Mutton Chapel”*.

As well as establishing a Sunday School in the new Hall, the fellowship also ran a free day school, attended by children both from the Denne Park Estate and from Horsham itself.*

One interesting feature of the new Hall was that, whilst all its members would doubtless attest to their equality in the sight of God, they were partial to the comfort of frilled and brocaded cushions: these were placed out by an elderly caretaker who ensured, from memory, that each was on its correct family seat. The Eversfields had a reserved bench, its austerity lessened by a long red cushion.*

The meeting became eventually one of the largest of its type in Southern England, numbering about 300 members. Its size was such that benches along the side walls were all occupied. (*Those benches still exist – sadly, the people eager to fill them Sunday by Sunday do not...*) It appears to have been made up largely of local tradesmen, including a confectioner (Mr Gravely), an outfitter (Mr Apedaile), a draper (Mr Colson), a butcher (Mr Augustus Blackiston), a coal merchant (Mr Hughes), the owners of a small general shop (Mr & Mrs Lempriere), a miller (Mr Baverstock), a tailor (Mr Charlwood), a shoemaker (Mr Urry), a sweet shop owner (Miss Lovegrove), a baker (Mr Whiting) and a garage owner (Mr Jackson – whose premises had been used for worship before the building of the Hall).*

Many gifted Bible preachers and teachers conducted services in the Hall over the years, some being used of God to considerably influence those who gathered to listen.

In 1929, Denne Road Hall – which had, up to that time, been part of the Eversfield Estate - was purchased by its members, at a very reasonable price, from Mr Eversfield's niece who continued to be a member of the fellowship until her death in 1940. At the start, the ownership was placed in the names of nine trustees - see Appendix 6 for a list of the Trustees in whose name the building has been held since 1929.

In February 1957, a fortnight of evangelistic meetings was held, conducted by Mr Bob Pettifer. It was noted that, despite extensive advertising in the town, the results did not match those of previous outreach campaigns – perhaps a sign of the times.

* see Appendix 8

5. The centenary celebrations on 16/17th March 1963

At the centenary in 1963, the Assembly had about 80 members. It was engaged in a breathtaking range of activities including Sunday School, Covenanters Classes for boys and girls; a Young People's Fellowship; a Saturday Night Youth Meeting; a Women's Meeting; a Missionary Sewing Meeting and a Missionary Technical Team (which sent equipment out to missionaries overseas).

The local newspaper included an article entitled "Gospel Hall hundred years old" and gave a brief history of the Horsham Christian Brethren together with an account of the special celebrations over the weekend.

Saturday afternoon

Douglas Polley was in the chair.

The first hymn sung was "To God be the glory! great things He hath done".

Bernard Southall told of the conversion of Charles G. Eversfield (see Appendix 1).

Dr Stephen Short of Weston-super-Mare spoke on the Christian church in its universal aspect.

There were about 100 to tea.

Saturday evening

Bernard Southall was in the chair.

He spoke about the condition of people and the times when the hall was built 100 years before.

Three respected past members gave reports of the work and reminiscences: (i) R. Mathieson who had arrived in Horsham 38 years before, (ii) Gordon Lennox who recalled changed conditions when Canadian troops were stationed in the area during the war and the continuance of well-attended week-night meetings despite blackout conditions and (iii) Robert Snaith who spoke of post-war years and how principles had remained firm.

Dr Short then spoke on The Local Church.

Sunday evening

The hall was comfortably filled.

William Evans was in the chair.

Robert Snaith led in a prayer of thanksgiving.

Councillor George Vincent read Psalm 90.

The Hall's own choir sang "Wonderful grace of Jesus".

Dr Short then spoke on the changing times and unchanging personal problems.

Please see the centenary information sheet (see Appendix 8).

6. A longer look back over the last 50 years

6. (i) Assembly members (1963-2013)

It has not been possible to name all those who were in fellowship during these years. There will be many not mentioned who were wives without whom their husbands could not have done what they did. The importance of bringing up children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, providing catering at meetings and giving hospitality to the Lord's servants should not be underestimated. Also, we should not forget those who prayed in secret who will receive a reward from the Lord.

Oversight members:

Alex Fraser (until 1977)
Bernard Southall (until 1967)
Douglas Polley (until 1987)
Geoff Holmwood (until 1966)
William Evans (until 1965)
Ken Orman (until 1965)
Alan Phillips (1965-1970)
Stanley Debenham (1965-1972)
Edward Stanford (1968-1981)
Basil Evans (1980-1986#)
Edward Harston (1981-1989#)
William Riddell (1981-1987#)
Ian Topalian (1986# -)
Peter Geary (1988# -)
Ron Hofmann (2010-)

Deacons:

Geoff Myerscough (1972-1983)
Ron Parrott (1972-2007)
Ian Topalian (1981-1986#)
Alan Poile (in 1990-2002)
Sydney Ashton (1987# - 2006)
Martin Rowland (1999-2002; 2007-)

Treasurers:

Douglas Polley (until 1972)
Ron Parrott (1972-1995)
Peter Geary (1995-2008)
Martin Rowland (2008-2013)

Caretakers:

Mr. J.Cobb (until 1968 with a few months' gap)
Mr.L.F.M.Gould (1964-1965)
Roger Ottley (1968-1985)
Kathleen Elder/Edward Harston (1985- 1989#)
David Ansell (1989# -2008)
Team on a rota basis (2008-)

approx.

Like Bernard Southall, Douglas Polley was responsible for booking speakers and for correspondence. Because of his early training in music, Douglas too was able to take on responsibility for starting the singing at the Breaking of Bread services. During the evening Gospel services, he would accompany the singing either with his playing of the piano or the organ. In his last years in Horsham, Douglas would enliven the pre-service singing by playing the piano whilst his (second) wife, Janet would play the organ. There are other parallels with Bernard Southall that ought to be mentioned - they are that Douglas also was an Elder and Trustee, and at one time Sunday School Superintendent. When Douglas and Janet Polley moved up to Scotland in 1987, it was found that he fulfilled 13 roles which were divided amongst the Brethren remaining. Sydney Ashton became Speaker Secretary and Peter Geary became Correspondence Secretary. Ian Topalian became responsible for booking the speakers for the Sunday Specials.

In 1963, there were 80 in fellowship, but numbers fell significantly in the 60's. In 1968, there were only 25 at the annual fellowship meeting (although not everyone attended).

In 1969, the Handcross assembly closed, bringing the Hibbs family and Allan Poile to the meeting. In 2007, the Crawley assembly closed, bringing Ron Hofmann and Graham Heaney to the meeting.

In 2003, numbers in fellowship had fallen to 11. Since then, they have risen to the low twenties. In recent years, a feature has been the attendance of many originating from other parts of the world, e.g. India, Italy, Japan, Mauritius, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Sri Lanka and Uganda.

6. (ii) Gospel Meetings (1963-2013)

Visiting gospel speakers included:

D.Heyman of the Brighton & Hove Mission;

T.W.J.Dickerson, W.J.Harris, T.Hill, J.Le Boutillier, J.Stewart and H.Tunstall of the Christian Colportage Association (now Outreach UK);

G.E.Andrews, G.Cardwell, R.M.Chilvers, L.Clargo, R.Dadswell, C.Dougan, J.D.Fraser, J.H.Hughes, D.J.Iliffe, J.C.M. Riddell, R.S.Saunders and J.Smyth of the Counties Evangelistic Work; and

E.Dunbavand (retired), J.Chittenden, W.Galyer and A.Greenbank, of the Open Air Mission; together with:

R.S.Atkins (Haywards Heath), T.Bateman (Wokingham), A.R.Bunker (Reigate), D.N.Caldecourt (Redhill), J.R.Casswell (Ashted), R.Catchpole (South Norwood), W.G.Clark (Worthing), K.Cowell (Horley), H.Doey (Eastbourne), J.Dryden (Eastbourne), A.Fidler (Horley), D.J.Gilderson (Hove), M.Girard (Chichester), A.Guyatt (Haslemere), P.Hedley (Sidmouth), G.Hobbs (Bognor), R.F.Hofmann (Crawley), D.Howell (Oxted), S.Houchin (Reigate), I.Jackson (Eastbourne), J.Jackson (Wallington), L.Jerome (Chichester), A.C.Jones (Haywards Heath), J.Knight (Guildford), J.S.Knight (Chandlers Ford), R.Lacey (Hailsham), D.D.Lear (Dorking), H.J.Lee (Bognor), E.M.Legg (Worcester Park), J.H.Levett (Fetcham), R.Levett (Wonersh), P.W.Licence (Croydon), A.E.Long (Nutley), R.Mathieson (Eastbourne), A.Michael (Maidenhead), V.Michael (Maidenhead), S.Neill (Fetcham), J.Nickless (Littlehampton), D.R.Nixon (Guildford), N.Patel (South Norwood), R.Reed (Nutley), W.J.Reed (Littlehampton), J.Robinson (Redhill), A.W.Rousham (Dorking), J.Simms (Bognor), C.E.Stokes (Ealing), S.Topalian (Littlehampton), G.Tryon (Dulwich), W.W.Vellacott (Aveley), L.Voke (Littlehampton), R.N.Wyatt (Woking).

For a few years from 1987, Special Evangelistic Meetings (“Sunday Specials”) were arranged on the first Sunday of the month (excluding January and August) with invitation cards and a bookstall.

6. (iii) Prayer & Ministry Meetings (1963-2013)

The Monday Prayer Meeting and the Thursday Ministry Meeting were combined in 1984, becoming the Thursday Prayer & Ministry Meeting (starting at 7.45 p.m. with prayer until 8.15 p.m. followed by ministry until 9.00 p.m.). On 13 November 2008, the start and finish times changed to 7 p.m. and 8.15 p.m. respectively.

Many who preached the gospel at the Hall were invited to give ministry on Thursdays. Others included those involved in missions and missionary work such as:

A.Morrison (India), J.Burt (S.I.M. Niger), E.R.Grove (Congo), G.Hill (India), R.McLenaghan (Operation Brotherly Love) and T.J.Field (Trinitarian Bible Society) and F.A.Tatford (Alfold).

In January/February 1984, F.A.Tatford gave a series of four meetings on prophecy; in January 1985, a series of five meetings answering important questions people ask and in March 1986, a series of three meetings on the Minor Prophets Amos, Micah and Habakkuk.

From time to time, there are series of subjects taken by speakers from the Hall.

6. (iv) Annual Conferences (1963-2013)

Each March, an annual conference takes place. Speakers have included: K.Cowell (Horley), M.Doig (Sutton Coldfield), R.Forster (Forest Hill), J.Frost (Tottenham), E.R.Grove (New Malden), W.E.Grunbaum (Tunbridge Wells), G.E.Harpur (Brentwood), P.Hedley (Sidmouth), D.J.Iliffe (Littlehampton), J.Knight (Guildford), J.S.Knight (Chandlers Ford), C.Lacey (Stourbridge), M.Lacey (Bath), C.R.Marsh (Enfield), G.Polkinghorne (Sutton), A.Pulleng (Bognor), H.Rowdon (London Bible College), D.Rudge (Bracknell), S.Short (Weston-super-Mare), G.Stokes (Deal), R.Taylor (Staplehurst), D.Tinkler (Cheshunt) and K.Totton (Ipswich).

6. (iv) Women's Meetings (1963-2004)

Leaders: Mrs Ena Burr (until 1968); Mrs. Florrie Debenham (1968-1972);
Mrs. Mary Myerscough (1972-1983); Mrs. Elsie Parrott (1983-2004).

Sometimes, there was an assistant leader and sometimes a little organising committee.

The Women's Meeting used to meet every Tuesday afternoon at 2.30 p.m. Owing to more women working, the average age of women attending increased and numbers began to decline (25 in 1964, 20 in 1972, less in 1974). It was decided to close the Women's Meeting in 2004. A number of the women who attended went to other church women's meetings as well.

Generally, the women would have refreshments and there would be a speaker (man or woman) from Denne Road Hall, another assembly or from elsewhere. Visiting speakers included: Mr. Baker, Mrs. Baker, Mrs. Bird, Mr. Charman, Mr. L.Clargo, Miss Dench, Mrs. & Miss Greenfield, Miss Haines, Mrs. Jackson, Miss James, Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Laird, Mrs. Le Boutillier, Miss Reed, Mrs. Sexton, Mrs. Steere, Mr. Stenning, Mrs. Tatford, Miss Turner, Mrs. Weller. Sometimes there would be a members' afternoon without a speaker. Men would help with transport. This was particularly helpful when the car park was full as there was then no need to park.

For many years, they had an annual all-day outing, e.g. Eastbourne (1963 & 1969), Tunbridge Wells (1965) or two half-day outings (e.g. Wisley and Singleton/Arundel in 1972). In some years, they had a Christmas tea, with or without a party, and an epilogue (e.g. 1969). In the latter years, when there were few attending, a popular excursion was to the home of Mr. Briant in Holmbury St. Mary.

6. (v) Missionary Support (1963-2013)

Missionary Secretaries: Ken Orman (until 1965); Ron Parrott (1965-2007 approx.); Martin Rowland (2007 approx. -2013).

a) Missionary Sewing Meeting (1963-1968) (started in 1956)

Leaders: Mrs. E.F.V. Kennedy (until July 1963); Mrs. McCaghery (1963-1968)

Examples of work

Knitting of a cardigan for India.

A cotton dress for India.

Six coloured dresses for leper and orphan children in India.

A winter dress and three pairs of socks for Zambia.

From the end of 1964, work sent to the Missionary Sewing Fellowship rather than for individual missionaries.

For many years since 1968, Elsie Parrott organised the production of many items, e.g. blankets and baby garments, and she & Ron delivered them or had them collected for delivery to Medical Missionary News.

b) Missionary Technical Team (1963-1965)

This team sent out equipment to missionaries overseas.

Examples of work

Outboard motor crated for Zambia.

Intercom system crated for mission station at Johnston Falls, Zambia.

Model of Hebron Hostel for girls in Chettipetta, West Godavari, India (specified by Miss Joyce Harding)..

Gift of £25 from sale of chain saw sent to Zambia.

c) Missionary Conferences (1963-1964)

1963: E.R. Grove (Congo); Miss J. Harding (India); A.G. Phair (India); J.B. Pugmire (Honduras)

1964: G. Hill (Ramnad district of India); J. Ford (Zambia)

6. (vi) Sunday School & Bible Class (1963-2013)

Over the past 50 years, Sunday School Superintendents have been Douglas Polley (1963–1964, approx.), Stanley Debenham (1965 approx. -1972) Ron Parrott (1972-1981) and Ian Topalian (1981 to date).

Those who have helped in teaching including: Audrey Tunstall, Carol Cusack (née Debenham), Chris Densham, Dominique Rowland, Elizabeth Manser, Elizabeth Prior, Esther Rowland, Eloise Kimbowa (née Rowland), Gill Burley (née Worsfold) (saved and baptised at Denne Road and now worshipping at Rehoboth Chapel) (current), Jacqui Amos (née Gladman), Jean Rose (née Burr), Joy Dale (née Fensome from Oakhill Road Baptist Church), Julie Murtagh, Martin Rowland (current), Michelle Walker (née Smith), Paul Wilcock, Rosabel Topalian (current) and Wendy Smith (from Rehoboth Chapel).

Sunday School has been held at different times. In 1964, it moved earlier to 2.30 p.m. (to fit in with Boy Covenanters), then, in the late seventies, to 3.00 p.m. (to give more time for picking up children), then, in 2001, to 9.15 a.m. (to give teachers a break in the afternoon in the middle of a very busy day) and, finally, in 2005, to 9.30 a.m. (to give parents and children more time to wake up).

Activities include an annual party in January and an annual Prizegiving Service (now in June). For most of the 50 years, there has been an annual Summer outing to Littlehampton. In the early years, a tea was provided at the Bungalow Café. For a few years in the early seventies, the outing was to Chanctonbury Ring and Climping but it was not long before Littlehampton became the favoured destination again. For the last few years, outings have been restricted to those in Adventure Club as there have not been enough helpers to look after the very young. Children and their parents have been invited to Easter, Harvest Thanksgiving and Carol Services.

In 1969, numbers rose to 15 but, in 1974, numbers had dwindled from 12 to about 4. Elizabeth Prior was the district nurse in Warnham and used to transport a few children from there in her car.

In 1975, Hubert Tunstall became the Horsham & Crawley representative of the Christian Colportage Association. He joined the Assembly and provided names of a number of potential Sunday School children.

Numbers were increased further by hiring a minibus owned by local leaders in Horsham Crusaders and picking up children from Warnham and Southwater. Eventually, the minibus became full. In particular, around 10 children came from Gardeners Close, Warnham. A second-hand minibus was purchased to help pick up the increasing numbers of children.

As a result of two of the Warnham children moving to Roffey, children started attending from there again. Soon afterwards, it was decided to concentrate on collecting children from Horsham and Roffey.

In 1982, David Iliffe, the Counties Evangelistic Work evangelist for West Sussex came and ran a children's mission in the Hall for a week in June and children from Denne Road Gospel Hall (32) and Rehoboth Chapel (16) attended. Two extra minibuses were hired. Over the week, attendances increased from 66 to 92 with over 100 being reached. 14 children were counselled and 4 professed faith in Christ. 8 new children started attending Sunday School. 20 parents attended the final meeting on the Sunday.

A brand-new minibus was bought in 1984 which lasted for 20 years and then a second one not long afterwards. From then on, there were always two minibuses in use. Generally speaking, one would pick up in Horsham and one in Roffey. Section 9 shows pictures of the minibuses used from 1980 up until the current day. Those who drove the minibuses included: Chris Densham, David Ansell, Ian & Rosabel Topalian, Joy Forward, Ron Parrott, Sydney Ashton and Vic Meeten (parent).

In January 1983, the Sunday School & Bible Class numbers peaked at 60.

In 1984, Ron Parrott and Ted Harston built four screens for use in the Sunday School and these are still in use. At that time, there were about 60 on the role with roughly half coming from Roffey.

In 1985, the Carol Service had an attendance of 110.

6. (vi) Sunday School & Bible Class (1963-2013) continued

From time to time, the Bible Class had weekends away: Eartham (1981); Exmouth (1982); Eastbourne (1983); Portsmouth (1983). Some leaders were borrowed for these events, e.g. from Rehoboth Chapel.

Bible Class became Covenanters from 1984 until 1990. In the 1990s, there was a gradual decline in numbers of young people attending Sunday School & Bible Class from the thirties to the twenties.

In 2008 and 2009, numbers fell to single figures quite often but through door-to-door visitation, the numbers have risen to the mid-teens, the increase being accounted for partly by second-generation pupils. It has been good to have opportunity to speak to the parents again after many years.

In 2007, in keeping with best practice, a child protection policy and procedures were introduced and Criminal Records Bureau checks started to be made every three years.

6. (vii) Covenanters (1963-1970) & (1984-1989)

Covenanters provided the older young people with competitive activities against other groups and camps and houseparties in the holidays. However, the demands on leaders were significantly greater than in taking a Bible Class lesson once a week and running a mid-week club. Not many were available to commit themselves in such a way on a regular basis. Hence, the reason that Horsham Covenanters closed twice. However, the two periods did see relatively good numbers of teenagers attending.

The Covenanters group started in 1960. Alan Phillips was responsible for the Boy Covenanters ("Covvies") and Elsie Parrott was responsible for the Girl Covenanters. Derrick Steere helped for a time as an Assistant Leader and others gave support from time to time. The boys met on Sunday afternoons at 2.30 p.m. in the Hall and then the girls met there afterwards at 3.30 p.m. In 1964, the girls moved from meeting in the Hall to meeting in the home of Alan & Ruth Phillips at 9.45 a.m. In 1967, they moved to the home of Ron & Elsie Parrott for a while. Later still, the two groups joined together and met at 3.30 p.m. in the Hall. Total numbers are recorded to have been in the high teens and more on occasion. The group closed in 1970, the year that Alan & Ruth Phillips left.

Activities for the boys included football.

Activities for the girls included fortnightly cooking evenings, knitting and embroidery.

There was an annual swimming gala. Seven of the Covenanters went on a 25 mile walk in May 1968.

There were annual Bible reading contests against other groups such as Caterham, New Addington, Redhill, Wallington and Worthing. There were area and national rallies with speakers.

There was a birthday weekend held each year (e.g. on 8-9 March 1969 when Geoffrey Simmons, the Secretary of the Covenanter Union came).

On 5th February 1984, the Hall had a Covenanters Group again. The Bible Class changed into a Covenanters Group with Chris Densham as leader. In 1984, the group had a weekend away in Leicester. After his wedding in May, his wife Lyn joined the leadership until she had to relinquish her leadership in 1986 because of family responsibilities. After Chris & Lyn left the Assembly in 1987, Paul & Maria Wilcock took over and then Ian Topalian had a spell in charge until the group's closure in 1989 through the lack of leaders.

6. (viii) Young People's Fellowship (1963-2010)

In 1963, it is recorded that David Rice was responsible for the young people's fellowship on Sundays at 8 p.m. For most of the time from 1981 until 2010, there was an after-church group held after the Sunday evening service in various homes. Typically, there would be refreshments, singing, a quiz and an epilogue. Now that there are refreshments in the Hall after the evening service, there is less time available.

6. (ix) Mid-week children's clubs (1979-2013)

(a) Key Club (1979-1982)

In 1979, Key Club was started, meeting on Tuesdays in Mannings Heath Village Hall. It was intended for children attending the Sunday School held in Mannings Heath Village Hall every Sunday morning and for children attending Denne Road Gospel Hall Sunday School. After a few years, all the children attending came from Horsham.

In 1982, Key Club was split into two, Adventure Club for the younger children and Focus for the older children.

(b) Adventure Club (1982-2013)

Adventure Club was held on Tuesdays in Mannings Heath Village Hall until October 2007 when it moved to Denne Road Gospel Hall because there were increasing restrictions and the number attending did not justify the expense of hiring Mannings Heath Village Hall. The day was changed to Mondays in 2010.

The leaders over the years at Key Club/Adventure Club included Andrew Smith (Rehoboth Chapel), Bryony & David Ansell (Oakhill Road Baptist/Rehoboth Baptist), Caroline Leighton, Chris Densham, Dominique & Martin Rowland (current), Elizabeth Manser, Ian & Rosabel Topalian (current), Joy Forward, Michelle Dewdney (Trafalgar Road Baptist) and Ray Amey (Trafalgar Road Baptist).

(c) Focus (1982-1989)

Focus met on Tuesday evenings at Denne Road Gospel Hall. The leaders included Chris Densham, Christine Williamson and Peter Williamson.

(d) Second Stagers (1993-2002)

Second Stagers met on Friday evenings at Denne Road Gospel Hall. The leaders were Ian & Rosabel Topalian and Paul Wilcock for a while.

(e) Friday Club (2007-2010)

Friday Club met on Fridays and was designed for those aged 14 & over who attended on Sundays. The leaders were Ian & Rosabel Topalian together with Caroline Leighton for a while.

6. (x) Camps & Houseparties (1975-2013)

Since 1975, many of the Sunday School and Bible Class have been encouraged to go on Summer camps when the Sunday School and Bible Class have been suspended. The main camps supported have been:

Good News Camps (1975-1982)

These camps were run by David Iliffe, the Counties Evangelistic Work evangelist in West Sussex and took place on various sites in the county.

Mid-Wessex Christian Camps (1986-2007)

These camps were held on a field near New Milton in Hampshire which was not too far from the sea and near the edge of the New Forest.

Thames Valley Christian Camps (TVCC) (1996-1997, 2002-2003, 2005-2012)

These are assembly-based camps which were held at Climping until 2000 when they moved to a site run by the Hampshire Christian Trust in Lockerley, near Romsey in Hampshire. In the Spring and Autumn, houseparties are run for those aged 15 and over in Swindon and Chepstow, respectively.

Sussex Christian Camps (1996-1998, 2009)

These camps are held at Whitesmith in East Sussex and cater mainly for children in East Sussex.

South East London Christian Camps (SELCC) (2010-2012)

These camps are held at Whitesmith too and cater mainly for children in South East London and Sussex.

6. (xi) Practical matters (1963-2013)

1964: new chairs in place of forms

In 1962, the 9 forms in the back hall had been replaced with 50 chairs. In 1964, the 20 forms in the main hall were replaced with 120 chairs. This was to the relief of many who had sustained injuries to legs, hands and particularly stockings.

1967: a new kitchen

One must remember that catering in 1963 was done under difficulties. There was no kitchen! This meant that sandwiches, cakes, etc. had to be prepared at home and brought to the hall, which some might say, was no problem. But what about washing up the crockery and cutlery? Was this taken home? Not at all! It was done in a large galvanised bath and as this was used at other times -for other purposes, (that is until two plastic 'baby baths' were provided, one pink and one blue, which were kept specifically for washing-up) it was necessary for the helpers to give it a good scrub before it could be used. The water heating was done in an old copper.

Plans for a new kitchen had been delayed by the onset of war in September 1939 and by the possibility that the Hall would be affected by proposals for 'new town' development. In the end, one was built in 1967.

1968: a new heating system

The heating system was changed from coke fired to oil fired and an oil tank was placed at the northwest corner of the Hall's land.

1969: a new porch

A new porch and store cupboard were built in the back hall.

1969: a new appearance

The appearance of the hall was improved by the lowering and repointing of the north east and south walls, and the relaying of the paths around the Hall.

1973: new lights and new doors

In 1973, strip lighting was introduced and the front doors were replaced.

1981: another new heating system

In 1981, the oil-fired system was replaced with a gas system. This has proved to be more economical to run than the oil system and the thermostatic control helps to provide the required heating throughout the week.

1986: new sound reinforcement system

In 1986, Mr. A. G. Haughton, a member of the meeting at Hastings, built a new sound reinforcement system.

2004: a new audio loop

In 2004, a new loop system was introduced to help the hard of hearing.

2005: a new toilet for the disabled

The gentlemen's toilet with access from an outside door was refurbished and converted to a ladies' toilet suitable for the disabled with access from the back hall.

2009: a new outside look

The outside of the hall had been repainted, including, for the first time ever, the front of the hall.

2011: new blinds

In 2010, cheerful new blinds replaced the rotten old ones in the main hall.

2011: new inner doors

In 2011, new inner doors were inserted to allow passers-by to see into the main hall during meetings there.

7. Denne Road Gospel Hall Today

It is noteworthy that, at the time of the Centenary, fifty years ago, concerns were expressed that the Hall might be demolished as part of the re-development of Horsham Town Centre. This fear subsequently proved to be unfounded and the building still occupies its historic site, effectively mid-way between the bustle of the shopping streets and the former home of its founding patron.

Unfortunately, its central position is posing its own challenges in the 21st Century. The rise of Sunday trading, and the development of part of East Street as Horsham's "Restaurant Quarter", have created a situation in which it is becoming increasingly difficult to park close to the Hall – a serious problem for those members of the Assembly who are less sprightly than they once were. The adjacent public car park is often full on Sunday mornings and at the time of mid-week evening meetings. At the time of writing, this problem has been partly reduced by members being kindly granted the use of the tyre centre forecourt at the top of Denne Road when the premises are closed. (It is rather fitting that this mirrors the early years of the Hall, when worshippers were able to stable their horses on the same site.)

At the time of writing, membership of the Assembly stands at approximately twenty. From time to time, desires have been expressed to move to another building. Now these desires have increased because of the parking difficulties. The financial implications of such a move on a small and ageing fellowship would necessitate very careful consideration.

In the meantime, the Assembly continues to function with an extensive range of services and activities for young and old which - whilst significantly reduced from those of fifty years ago - belie its size.

Denne Road Gospel Hall became a registered charity on 23 December 2011 (number 1145226). The charity Commission website (www.charity-commission.gov.uk) gives brief information about the work to the public. Currently, Ian Topalian, Martin Rowland and Ron Hofmann are the trustees of the charity.

The Breaking of Bread service is held each week. Its time was at 11 a.m. for most of the last 50 years but was changed in 2010 to 11.15 a.m. to allow time for taking children home after Sunday School. The Gospel Meetings, Prayer & Ministry Meetings and Missionary Prayer Meetings continue as does the Sunday School & Bible Class and the Adventure Club.

New developments in the last ten years have been:

1. Home bible study courses both for unbelievers (such as Christianity Explored) and newer believers;
2. Church bulletins for around 1,400 homes locally;
3. Calendars for around 600 homes locally every Christmas; and
4. Our website (see Appendix 9), accessible to people around the world.

The oversight seek to be open to the Lord as to His leading regarding the meetings and activities undertaken, that energies might be directed aright for His glory.

8. Postscript – The Future

What will Denne Road Gospel Hall be like in its bi-centenary year of 2063? Will the Assembly still be meeting in the same historic building, or elsewhere? How many members will it have?

These are all questions that only God can answer.

What we can say is that the eternal God, who has faithfully carried his people in this little corner of West Sussex through the last 150 years, is more than capable of carrying them through the next half-century and beyond.

However, there will be no need for believers to meet at Denne Road once the Lord Jesus Christ has returned as He promised for His people (not just at Denne Road Hall, but everywhere - all those who have acknowledged their sin and need before God, and put their trust in the Saviour's work on the cross – just like Charles Eversfield did a century and a half ago). They will be taken to Heaven to be with Him there.

The Bible makes it clear that no-one knows when Christ's return will be. Although Denne Road Hall has witnessed many changes since 1863, e.g. faces, styles of dress, modes of transport, etc., one thing that has never changed is man's need of salvation, and the members' desire to present the Lord Jesus Christ as the only answer to that need whilst opportunity remains.

As you, the reader of this humble attempt at outlining the last 150 years of Denne Road Hall, face YOUR future, the most important questions you must ask yourself are :-

“Am I ready to meet God?” - “If not, am I prepared now to put my trust in Jesus Christ as my Saviour?”

Only then can any of us face the next fifty years – or fifty minutes – with confidence.

9. Photographs to help us remember

(i) The Hall in three pictures



1958 approx.



2005



2012

(ii) The Breaking of Bread Meeting



After a recent Breaking of Bread Meeting (1)



After a recent Breaking of Bread Meeting (2)

(iii) The Gospel Meeting



After a recent Gospel Meeting



Refreshments have been offered after Gospel Meetings since 2008.

People enjoy staying to talk with the speaker and with each other.

(iv) The Women's Meeting



Miss Burwood, Mrs. Debenham, Mrs. Pratt, Miss Garner and Mrs. Langford at Seaford (1969)



Gathering in the Parrott's garden (about 1987)



Afternoon tea in the Geary's garden (1994)



At Jack Briant's home in Holmbury St. Mary (2001)

(v) Celebrations



The Parrotts' golden wedding anniversary (2000)



The Topalians' wedding anniversary (2005)

(vi) Sunday School & Bible Class (1963-2013)



Games in the back hall (1980)



Trip to South of England Show (1981)



Sunday School Outing to Littlehampton (1985)



Sunday School Outing Swanbourne Lake (1986)

(vii) Key Club (1979-1982)



Mannings Heath Village Hall, an excellent facility with hall, kitchen, parking and closeness to the village green.



The early days (1980)



Bottom of Denne Road (1980)



Eating chips in the minibus (1980)

(viii) Adventure Club (1982-2013)



Outing to Chislehurst Caves (1983)



Outing to Wildfowl Park in Arundel (1987)

(ix) Covenanters (1984-1989)



“Sink or swim?” Leicester Weekend (1984)



Resting at Covenanters Sports Day (1985)

(x) Minibuses used for transporting children (1980-2013)



1980-1984



1984-2004



1985-1995



1995-2004



2004-2013



2004-2013

Appendix 1: "Give me the light!" – the conversion of Charles G. Eversfield (Mr. E-)

Mr. E- was a young man, one of those whom the world deems fortunate. Born to wealth and position, endowed with good abilities and with a handsome and striking personality. Many would have thought-as he himself thought at the time - that there was nothing lacking to make his life happy and successful. Doubtless many envied him his life of gaiety and "pleasure," so called; and his powerful athletic frame awakened admiration.

And yet he was, as regards true happiness, afar off, "without hope, and without God in the world". As he himself expressed it: "I was, until the age of twenty three IN the world and OF it. I delighted to exceed all my boon companions and to dare what they would not dare, I was an acknowledged leader and boasted that I was on the way to hell myself and that I would have plenty of companions there! Thus I ran riot seldom opening my lips without an oath, serving Satan well."

It is difficult to convey an adequate idea of the intense earnestness and self-aborrence with which he would refer to this Christless period of his existence, longing that all should magnify the Lord on his behalf. He loved to say that Deuteronomy ch.32 v.10 described his history (and this text was one of those upon his memorial card)

-"He found him in a desert land
and in the waste howling wilderness;
he led him about, he instructed him,
he kept him as the apple of his eye."

But to continue the story often told by himself. "Returning to my house after a cricket match, with two or three others, we came to a wide ditch spanned by a plank. I proposed we should jump the length of the plank instead of walking over it. The proposal was a wild one and at first they tried to dissuade me, and then defied me which only made me the more determined; and though I knew it was a risk, I was too foolhardy to care. One tried and failed. This was enough for me, and with one bound I cleared the whole length of the plank but as I came down on the other side an awful pain shot through my head. I would not let the others know it and while they laughed and applauded I made an excuse to return to the house. There I writhed in agony.

Presently the pain passed off and in the evening I joined my company and was as merry as any of them. Next morning I awoke to find myself a helpless log; I was paralysed. Never could I describe my feelings better than Job's wife did - 'Curse God and die.' Everything was spoiled. I could not bear the sight of my gun. My former revelling, in which I had delighted, made my helplessness more intolerable. I often asked my servants to wheel my chair behind some trees, that I might weep unseen.

Three years of open rebellion followed - oh, what years they were! - and hard thoughts of God. None dare to speak to me of Him, for my temper was so violent that they feared me. Life was worse than a blank.

Amongst other Christians who doubtless prayed for me was a cousin, Mrs. T-, for whom I had a sincere affection. The only thing I disliked about her was her religion; but though she must often have spoken to God about me, she had never spoken to me about spiritual things, until one day-a day that changed the whole course of my life; never shall I forget it.

To pass away the time, I had a workshop fitted up with every requisite. Here I learned to turn and many hours were thus spent. I generally went to my shop directly after breakfast; but on this particular morning, in my 'working clothes' as I called them, I went into the drawing room and sat down. I had never done that before. Soon I heard a timid knock at the door and my loud 'Come in' brought Mrs T -. I saw a little black book in her hand which aroused my suspicion.

Appendix 1 continued: "Give me the light!" – the conversion of Charles G. Eversfield (Mr. E-)

‘Sit down, sit down,’ I cried; for I could see how nervous she was. She paused, and then said, very gently: ‘Charlie, God loves you.’ I replied angrily: ‘You and your God, and your love! It looks like it! I’m a helpless log. Is this love? I tell you Theo’ (his favourite name for her), ‘I believe this life is a school. I was the worst boy in the school and God hit me hard. I was going to hell and he stopped me, little thinking of my own words.’

‘Did I not tell you God loved you?’ Mrs. T- replied. ‘Your own words have said it – ‘I was going to hell and HE stopped me.’.

I started. For the first time in my life the truth came home - love did it.

After a few moments silence I asked: ‘Tell me Theo, can it be possible that your Holy God loves me?’

‘Yes Charlie, He does; your own words admit it. Shall I read a verse to you?’

‘Go on, go on’ I said crossly; and she began to read John ch.3. ‘I know that,’ I interrupted and began in a flippant way: ‘There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus - - -.’

She stopped and asked quietly ‘May I read one verse?’

‘Go on, go on’ was my only answer; and she read: ‘Jesus answered, “Verily, verily I say unto thee, ‘Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’”’

She said no more and soon left the room; but God had spoken. If miserable before, I was now ten times more miserable. More than that I saw myself nothing but sin - sin seemed to be everywhere. Wretched outside before, I was now wretched within. I cursed myself, wished I had never seen Theo and vowed she should not again be admitted to my house. My work lost its interest; everything else did too.

So a fortnight passed in untold misery, ‘till one evening, as I went in to tea, who should be there but Theo. Later on, when I found myself alone with her, I said: ‘Theo, if I had known you were coming, you would not be here. Do you know, since you spoke to me I have been ten times more wretched than I have ever been in my life. I wish you had left me as I was,’ I added crossly.

‘O Charlie, I am so delighted to hear it.’ ‘Delighted, are you? Thank you. You are a nice friend!’

‘Charlie, God is speaking to you.’

‘He is showing me how bad I am, if that is what you mean. I never saw myself such a sinner before; I am nothing but sin.’

‘Yes God is speaking,’ she said.

‘I tell you what, Jesus is a holy God. He would not listen to such as I am. Write out a little prayer for me.’

‘ONE WORD OF YOURS WERE WORTH ALL MY WRITTEN PRAYERS,’ she urged; but at last she wrote out a very simple prayer and gave it to me; and so we parted for the night.

After my man-servant had left the room, I tried the little prayer, but could not say it; and as miserable as ever I fell asleep. Next morning I desired the man to leave the room, and again, when alone, I tried the little prayer but could not say it. Suddenly there flashed back the verse that Mrs. T- had read: ‘Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’ I remembered that I had heard that the Holy Spirit is a light, and I cried aloud: ‘O God! I have heard thy Holy Spirit is a light; give me THE LIGHT.’

Appendix 1 continued: "Give me the light!" – the conversion of Charles G. Eversfield (Mr. E-)

In a moment the room seemed flooded with light. The burden of sin was gone. I was full of joy, and it was so instantaneous that I could not conceive what had happened; but I shouted for joy: ‘Theo, what has happened? The burden is all gone; I am full of light!’ Then I told her all, and she could only rejoice. ‘God has answered your prayer, and given you His Holy Spirit,’ she said.”

Mr. E- always ended the recital of this story with the same assurance: “From that hour it has been nothing but joy. I never have had the shadow of a doubt.”

And this exceeding cloudless joy in God was his blessed experience for forty years, during which he delighted to bear witness how fully Christ satisfies. Though laid aside by paralysis, and dependent on others (for he was obliged to have his servants wherever he went) yet hundreds it is believed, could testify that he carried sunshine with him always and everywhere he went.

Christ was his one theme. It was this that characterised him. The blessed person of Christ was the one object before him. The living word, God's manna, he fed upon; the written word, God's lamp, by this he walked; and it is written, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John ch. 8 v.12. The Bible was his constant companion, and he loved to repeat it, also to quote beautiful hymns, some of which he would alter to express his own experience. A well known hymn of Madame Guyon's was an especial favourite: "A little bird am I." Mr. E- paraphrased it thus:-

“A shattered wreck am I,
Enjoying now a chair;
And full of life I sit and sing
To Him who placed me there-
Content a shattered wreck to be
Because, my God it pleaseth Thee.”

Very clear was he as to believer's security in Christ, and would ask of doubting Christians, "Whom are you doubting?" He was much used of God in establishing weak believers, and also in his circle of personal friends and relatives.

He it was, too, who on one occasion put a placard on his gate saying that anyone who called before twelve o'clock the next day would have his debts paid. Only one person appeared before noon, and his debts were paid. He went and told the good news, whereupon quite a crowd appeared in the afternoon. But he said: “Look at my placard. It says: 'Before twelve o'clock!'" And from this incident he preached the gospel, showing how many refuse to believe God's good news. But the long happy years of happy service were suddenly ended.

Brighter and brighter the light had shone, the glory of God filling the earthen vessel, so that all might magnify the Master; it seemed now but a step into the immediate presence of the Lord he loved.

He seemed as well as usual then, but the next day, in his chair, he passed away. “Lord take me,” he said simply, with his happy eyes uplifted. And “he was not, for God took him.” He had previously said to his gardener: “I am like a caged bird; some day you will come and find the bird gone.” Happy bird! How pleased to fly home!

N.B. This article first appeared in the January 1925 issue of “A Message from God” which at that time was edited by Dr. Heyman Wreford. Miss S.B. Bethune-Eversfield annotated a copy of this magazine explaining that “Mr. E-” was Mr. Charles Eversfield and that “Mrs. T-” was Mrs. Tredcroft.

Appendix 2: My earliest memories

My earliest memories of my association with the Denne Road Meeting Room (later known as The Denne Road Gospel Hall) go back to the closing years of the war of 1914-1918 when I was four or five years old. My parents attended the Meeting Room and, of course, took their children with them.

I remember that the heating of the building was provided by two coke-fired boilers, one on each side of the Hall. On these were placed bowls of water which heated up, giving off steam to keep the atmosphere moist. When the sun shone through the windows on the water the movement of the water produced dancing reflections which, to my childish mind, were quite fascinating. These boilers were eventually replaced by a central heating boiler in the 1930s, the boiler being located in the coal store underground on the north side of the building. A further change was made subsequently when a gas-fired boiler was installed.

Originally a small reading desk, about 3½ feet high by 2½ feet square, stood at the front of the Hall. Here the preacher stood. This was replaced by the present platform in the 1930s after the Hall was purchased from the owners of the Denne Park Estate to whom the Hall belonged. The platform was constructed by one of the Elders, Alex Fraser, who was a cabinet maker by trade. He was assisted by Percy Franklin and other Elders.

There was no baptistry at the Hall until the 1950s when the present baptistry was installed. Also at about this time the wooden floors of both Halls were found to be decaying and were becoming dangerous so were replaced with new flooring. Long wooden benches, each seating about six people, provided the seating accommodation in my early days, but these were replaced later by chairs. A notice board was attached to one of these benches requesting those in fellowship to sit in front of this notice.

Garners (Builders) had a yard in Talbot Lane adjoining the Meeting Room premises, and, in order to provide easier access to their yard they asked permission to change the corner of the boundary wall to make it curved rather than square. This was agreed and in return they built the toilets located at the end of the smaller Hall.

There was a large Sunday School in my youth, Mr. George H. Jackson being the Superintendent. When a new Council House Estate was built at Roffey many families were re-located and attendances fell.

A small 'daughter church' existed at Warnham, and, for a long time, John Russell held Saturday evening children's meetings there. He worked tirelessly for a long period until the onset of the Second World War.

In February 1957 a fortnight's mission was held at the Hall. Bob Pettifer, an Officer in the R.A.F. during the Second World War, was the leader of the Mission. The town was widely covered with invitations but produced little response.

Charles Polley

(who reached 100 in 2012 and has been a trustee since 1950)

Appendix 3: Excerpts from notes

Born in 1924, I was the product of Brabazon and Tredcroft. My father (*Ernest*) was Irish, reared in Waterford as a member of Open Brethren... Nathaniel Tredcroft was the last Puritan rector of the Parish Church. At the Restoration of Charles the Second, in 1660, he was ejected from his living in company with many Puritan ministers – because they would not accept the High Anglican regimen. They stood for the purity of New Testament teaching and were predominantly Calvinist...Grandfather Henry (*Tredcroft*) was born in the Manor House (*in the Causeway*). My mother, Mabel Alice, the fourth of nine children...took the post of companion to Mrs. Farnham Close (*see Appendix 8*), who was a member of Denne Road Gospel Hall...The beautiful old house in the Causeway which Mrs. Close owned, stood virtually opposite the Manor House. The elderly widow died within months of Mabel's marriage in 1923 to Ernest (born 1892).

Mabel (born 1884) was a very active cyclist who thought the road journey from London to Reading in no way remarkable. Immensely strong in the heart, her decease at 106 in 1990 seemed totally in character...She constantly challenged people she met with the claims of Jesus Christ. Bus driver, butcher, seller of vegetables, (*seller of*) shoes, pharmacist, grocer or bank clerk, you soon found out what she believed.

In the road directly opposite the Hall, lived the family Gravett. There were several daughters. Louis (the eldest, I believe) possessed a very fine contralto voice. One of the sisters became Mrs. Fraser and for many years led the Women's Meeting. I recall her as a calm, dignified and godly lady, distributing an influence that showed 'specific gravity' (for want of a better phrase).

At what may be described as the beginning of the Brighton Road, lived the Sopers. Barbara (probably the second sister) ran a ladies' clothes shop. I considered her gentle & sympathetic. As a child, Audrey who drove the van, took me on a long-remembered picnic expedition to Leith Hill. Brother John, an architect, was an extremely gifted artist in pastels. The family home was a picture gallery. Most local exhibitions showed work far below his standard.

I always greatly admired the character and the humour of Mr. Dawes. His prayers were notably uplifting. I did not know him very well – but he remains a vivid memory. This tall, lanky man, who had seen so much suffering in the trenches, would have appealed to Dickens.

The patriarch was, of course, 'old' Mr. Jackson, partner in Jackson Bros. in two garages – one in Horsham. As a small child I saw in him a composite of Abraham and Moses. Very quiet and dignified, I think of him as a sort of gyroscope. He gave out hymns, occasionally prayed, but I never heard him preach.

Of all the preachers at the Gospel services, Ellison – who became very well-known as theologian and Free Church leader – was outstanding in eloquence; but only appeared very seldom.

The war fragmented many relationships. I greatly enjoyed visiting Mrs. Polley about the time I was planning to attend Reading university (1948) to read History. I greatly liked and admired her sons, and her daughter Joyce, though contact was limited. Likewise, the Russell family. Mr. Russell senior (who was gamekeeper to the Eversfield sisters) was an important influence in the Hall; when I was very small, I viewed him as one of the prophets; a person of natural dignity.

Robert Snaith showed to me a highly engaging and charming personality.

But chiefly, of course, I thank God that through the membership, the truth and the presence of the Holy Spirit were imparted to me as the vital foundation of all living. At four years of age, when I looked at the lettering above the pulpit, it became for me the gateway to heaven.

Guy Brabazon

N.B. A Tredcroft girl married an Eversfield in 1815 the year of Waterloo.

Appendix 4: Excerpts from a letter

I am now 84 years of age...I started in the Sunday School aged 5-6 years and taught in the Sunday School until I married at the age of 24 years...

Miss Elcock started a sewing class for younger girls...I was one of them.

Mr. Southall started a small choir. We went to Horsham Cottage Hospital some Sunday evenings to sing to the patients.

At one time after the evening service, a small group of members had an open air service outside of the town hall but I remember this phased out after a time.

When I was about 8 years old (*c.1937*), in the chapel we had some special get-togethers for children. There were three young men from Aberdeen with their accordions who took the children's special club – this lasted about two weeks. The chapel main hall was packed with children. Many came from estates – Bennetts Road, Eversfield Road, etc., also from Roffey. We were given cards that they punched for attendance and answering questions etc. I can't remember if there were prizes. This was a super time and we all sang with gusto.

As far as I remember, there were always children from Roffey in attendance at Sunday School. I remember Mr. Jackson giving their fare home on the bus to them when I first joined the Sunday School when I lived in Denne Parade. I moved to Roffey and became one of them when I was 10-11 years old. Later, in my teens, I was asked to purchase tickets for our bus fares home direct from (*the*) bus company. This was a small company based in Rusper Road – a private family business. This continued until (*the*) bus company closed down. Our family moved back to Horsham, Redford Avenue in my late teens.

Dr. and Mrs. Mason went to the Belgian Congo as missionaries before their children were born We gave them a big send off from the chapel shortly after they married.

Daphne Singleton (née Boxall)

Appendix 5: Excerpts from an e-mail

I have some memories which I would like to share that have been very influential in my life and ministry.

Breaking of Bread Services

The sense of the special nature of the Communion as shared in the Gospel Hall was always very moving, even to a child. The spontaneous singing of hymns and the leading of the sacrament was always fresh and meaningful. The scent of the wine -real wine- and the breaking of the cottage loaf showed me a deeply spiritual meaning of the Lord's Supper which has stayed with me over the years in my church and hospital ministry.

The love of Scripture was always part of our family through Alice and Bernard, our parents. The exposition of the Word was effective and inspired in the Gospel Hall, both in the Gospel Services and in Bible Study. That love of the Word is very important to me from that time. This was reinforced by our Sunday School Teachers who shared their love of the Bible stories and their own personal faith. We attended three times each Sunday - the afternoon being Sunday School. I remember especially Douglas Polley whose gentle teaching lit up the Bible to us youngsters.

Prayer

Bob Snaith - Uncle Bob to us boys - had a great sense of fun – mischief - and there was always a deal of laughter when he was about. He and Violet were close friends of our parents and they enjoyed many times and holidays together. They bought their bungalow in Vale Drive from them when the Snaiths moved away. Bob had a very eloquent and profound prayer life. His prayers were sincere, Biblical, applied to the real world, and uplifting. I have valued that over the years.

Music and hymn singing

Being musical, I was interested in playing the harmonium - in the back hall, and when I could the grand piano. Mr. Southall was a very able pianist and I enjoyed the varied way he accompanied the hymns and songs. I remember that once he asked me to play two hymns at a Gospel service one day. I was so thrilled and it gave me confidence in leading that aspect of worship. Whenever I play now, I pay some tribute to him and the music in Denne Road.

Our father, Bernard, told us of the occasion when the electronic organ began smoking in the second verse of a hymn one evening. The congregation continued to sing even when flames appeared. The organist quietly unplugged the organ and calmly went over to the piano while the unruffled singers carried on with the remainder of the hymn.

Christian Colportage in Coolham Playing field

Mr. Sims, the local Christian Colporteur, used to cycle the seven miles to Coolham from Horsham and bring texts and tracts to the Coolham kids, who used to gather in the playing field. He cycled many miles through the villages and must have met many children like us. My family knew him through the Gospel Hall and he had such a winning way with him. He sometimes joined in our games, cricket or football, but always made time to tell us a Bible story and give us some text to take away. He later became a priest in the Church of England.

Our parents and Denne Road

We will always be grateful for the love, friendship and support shown to Bernard and Alice over many years. They loved the fellowship at Denne Road and this was expressed in the moving tributes that were expressed when they were 'called home'. After Dad's sudden death, Mum was well supported by the fellowship and that meant so much to her and to us.

David Langford

Appendix 6: Trustees of the Denne Road Meeting Room 1929-2013

John Gravett	(1929-1944)
Charles Soper	(1929-1945)
George Henry Jackson	(1929-1954)
Horace Albert Polley	(1929-1937)
George Ernest Russell	(1929-1963)
William Huggett	(1929-1929)
Percy Arthur Franklin	(1929-1967)
George Dawes	(1929-1968)
Alexander William Fraser	(1929-1977)
Charles Polley	(1950-)
Robert Grieveson Snaith	(1950-1963)
Bernard Arthur Southall	(1950-1967)
William Gwynfryn Evans	(1950-1971)
Norman Douglas Polley	(1957-1987)
Kenneth Alfred Orman	(1964-1984)
Geoffrey Charles Holmwood	(1964-1968)
Bernard George Langford	(1968-1984)
Richard Stanley Debenham	(1968-1975)
Alan George Phillips	(1968-1988)
Dennis David Cullingford*	(1977-2001)
Ronald Frederick Hofmann*	(1977-)
Robert Gavin Riddell*	(1977-1996)
Ian Vahan Topalian	(1982-)
Christopher Roy Densham	(1985-1990)
Peter Geary	(1990-2004)
Robert Stanley Atkins*	(1994-)
Harold John Lee*	(1998-)
John (Ian) Crawford* 1st time	(1998-1999)
David Ridley Nixon*	(2001-)
John (Ian) Crawford* 2nd time	(2010-)
James Martin Rowland	(2010-)

* not a member of our assembly when appointed

Appendix 7: Church newsletters 1960-2013

In 1960, Bernard Southall was Secretary of the meeting and he readily assumed the role of Editor of the new quarterly newsletter. In addition to his other responsibilities, he was secretary, precentor at the morning meeting and organist at the evening meeting as well as Elder and Trustee and this is by no means a comprehensive list.

The term "Editor" in this context may be misleading. Actually the job involved not only writing the editorial but filling in when contributors failed to submit copy. He prepared the layout and after Mrs. Southall had typed the carbon "skins" for the Gestetner duplicator, he would roll out copies of each page, collate these and assemble them in page order, adding covers and then distributing the finished newsletters. The standard of production and the content was very good indeed.

He continued with these tasks until his death which came most unexpectedly in March 1967 on the eve of his day of retirement from secular employment., His homecall left a great sense of loss within the meeting and more so in the heart and life of his widow, Marjorie Southall.

The newsletter continued to be produced however. Alan Phillips took on the task of editing until he moved away in 1970 to take up a post at Alton in Hampshire. At this point, Douglas Polley assumed full responsibility for the newsletter and continued to produce the quarterly copies without a break right up to the time of his move to Scotland in August 1987, a period of about 17 years. It is noticeable that Douglas Polley, even prior to his involvement as Editor, was a regular contributor on a diversity of subjects.*

After the departure of Douglas and Janet Polley, Sydney Ashton became Speaker Secretary and he and his wife Dorothy produced a quarterly list of speakers' and volunteers for the weekly flower displays.

In April 2007, a new quarterly newsletter began to be produced by Ian Topalian, the Assembly's secretary. The production was made simpler by means of a computer and newsletters were placed on the Assembly's website (www.horshamgospelhall.org.uk). These newsletters provide details of Sunday and Thursday meetings for the forthcoming quarter and provide news, reports of camps, conferences and houseparties and have a question spot with answers from scripture.

*source: Ron Parrott (in the Assembly from 1959 until his death in 2010)

DENNE ROAD GOSPEL HALL

HORSHAM, SUSSEX

CENTENARY YEAR 1963

APART from its name, Denne Road Gospel Hall has close links with Denne Park, an entrance to which is situated at the end of Denne Road. It is considered that the name "Denne" is derived from "Dane", Denne Park with its adjoining Picts Hill being in former times encampments of the warlike Danes and Picts.

For over 400 years Denne Park belonged to a member of the Eversfield family and it was an owner of the estate, Mr. Charles Eversfield, who built the Hall in 1863. Mr Charles Eversfield wrote an account of his conversion, which followed an accident, in a booklet entitled "Give me the light". Through the godly influence of both Mr. and Mrs. Eversfield many were converted including their own staff of servants as well as farmers and cottagers living in the surrounding farms. They were noted for their generosity. Groceries were ordered and sent out to any family in need. Joints of meat were taken out by relays of young brethren on bicycles and, as a consequence, Denne Road Hall was called and is still remembered by some as the leg of mutton chapel. To illustrate the way of salvation Mr. Eversfield on one occasion had a notice posted on the main gate to his estate offering to discharge without payment any accounts for rent which were received on a specified date before 12 noon. Only one accepted the offer.

At first the assembly met in a building that still stands in London Road and is now occupied by Messrs. George Potter, Ltd. Denne Road Hall was originally known as Denne Road Meeting Room. The term "Meeting Room" is of course associated with Exclusive Brethren. Separating from the Park Street meetings over the teaching of Mr. Raven the meeting was attached to the Lowe Party before the open principle was adopted about 40 years ago. It is quite possible that J. N. Darby preached at the Hall and some consider that he may have had something to do with its design. In so far as no baptistry was built this is certainly true since J. N. D. and his followers never saw the truth of believers' baptism. For many years baptisms were held at Green Lane Mission Room, Southwater, and a baptistry was only constructed at Denne Road quite recently.

Not only was a Sunday School started when the Hall was built but a free day school was held in the rear hall which is still called the schoolroom by some of the older ones amongst us. Children from the Denne Park Estate as well as from Horsham attended.

Horse and carriage or pony and chaise were the recognised means of transport, the horses being tethered at the stables across the road where the motor tyre service premises are now. For the Eversfield family a seat was reserved with a long red cushion, the envy of the children. The coachman, a little short man, used to sit just inside the door on a Sunday evening. The children were fascinated by the way he always stroked his high silk hat which was marvellously glossy. Several of the older men wore top hats. Cushions which were frilled with silk and brocade, were also used by other families, imposing quite a task on the elderly caretaker who always knew the correct owner.

At one time Mr. Eversfield turned his lower lodge into a holiday home for missionaries, provisions and staff being supplied from the estate. They would come with their families and sometimes stay for several months. Mr. Eversfield died in 1886. About 200 were present at the burial, the service being taken by one of the very early brethren. Mr. Vinall. Mr. Eversfield's generous hospitality was continued by his widow until her death several years later.

Mr. Farnham Close, a retired banker, and his wife, living in the Causeway, also entertained for the weekend many of the brethren who came to speak. Every August Bank Holiday Mr. and Mrs. Farnham Close held a tea meeting on their lawns.

Eventually the meeting became one of the largest in the South of England, there being about 300 in fellowship. The side seats were all occupied in those days. There were many local tradesmen in the assembly. Mr. Gravely, a confectioner in West Street, was Superintendent of the Sunday School. Later Mr. Apedaile (outfitter) took over the School. He was a gentle kindly man much loved by all the children. One of our number recalls sitting round a teacher on forms about a foot high, a diversion sometimes being caused by one of the infants toppling over backwards to the great amusement of the other children.

Among other tradesmen there were Mr. Colson (draper, Queen Street), Mr. Augustus Blackiston (butcher, East Street), Mr. Hughes (coal merchant and a leader in the meeting for many years—he used to sell coal at 11d. a cwt.), Mr. and Mrs. Lempriere (small general shop, London Road), Mr. Baverstock (miller. Worthing Road and father of the missionary in British Guiana), Mr. Charlwood (tailor, East Street), Mr. Urry (shoemaker, Queen Street), Miss Lovegrove (sweet shop, North Street where the Bible shop is now), Mr. Whiting (bakehouse and shop. Park Street where Hall's the coal merchant is now) and Mr. Jackson (founder of the motor engineering company in London Road).

Among many who have ministered the Word at Denne Road are the following: Mr Mace (son of Jem Mace, the prizefighter, and greatly used both in this country and America), Lord Pollock, Mr. Ord, Dr. McCarthy, Mr. Montgomery, Mr. Rouse, Dr. Morris, Mr. James Carter, Capt. Barton, Mr. William Lowe, Mr. Nightingale, Mr. Freeman, Dr. Wolston (brother of the well known W.P.T. Wolston), Mr. Bird, Mr. Strange, Dr. A. H. Burton (world traveller and speaker on prophecy—his ministry moved the whole town), Messrs. Fred and Arthur Wood (later of the Young Life Campaign), Mr. Harold St. John (a constant visitor before he went to the Argentine), Mr. Whybrow, Mr. Goss, Mr. Dunstall, Mr. Lepine and Mr. Charles Moore (manager of the Eversfield Estate).

A branch meeting was held at Warnham, the Sunday School children there being invited to join the Denne Road children for their treats. A wagonette was hired for the adults while the children travelled in a farm wagon. For many years the Summer treats were held at the top of Denne Park but in more recent times the children were taken to Littlehampton. Mr. Jackson already mentioned was Superintendent of the Sunday School at Warnham for 20 years before becoming Superintendent at Denne Road.

Over thirty years ago the Hall was purchased at a very moderate sum from Miss Eversfield, Mr. Charles Eversfield's niece. Deeds were drawn up and a body of trustees was appointed from among the local brethren.

The assembly now numbers about 80 members. Activities which are covered by a quarterly newsletter include a Sunday School, Covenanter Classes for boys and girls, a Young People's Fellowship, a Saturday night Youth Evening, a Women's Meeting, a Missionary Sewing Meeting and a Missionary Technical Team which has sent out equipment to missionaries overseas. Copies of the Emergency Post are distributed locally and several years ago services were initiated in the wards of the local hospital. In February, 1957 a fortnight's evangelical services were conducted by Mr. R.E. Pettifer. The meetings were advertised extensively in the town but the results did not equal the campaigns of Mr. Mace and others in earlier times.

At the moment the assembly is faced with the prospect of the Hall being eliminated under a new town plan. In this event provision would be made for another hall elsewhere and negotiations are proceeding with this in view.

Appendix 9: Church Website

The church website was set up in 2006 using the services of Church123.com .
Its address is www.horshamgospelhall.org.uk .

The following menu is available:

<u>Welcome</u>	Who we are
<u>Latest News</u>	e.g. New bulletin produced
<u>Our Beliefs</u>	As outlined in the Trust Deed of the Denne Road Meeting Room
<u>Regular Activities</u>	e.g. Breaking of Bread, Gospel Service
<u>Special Events</u>	e.g. Carol Service, Sunday School Prizegiving, Easter Service
<u>Newsletters</u>	Produced quarterly for church members
<u>Bulletins</u>	Outreach at Christmas, Easter and Harvest since April 2009
<u>Recordings</u>	Gospel messages and Ministry dating back to 2007
<u>Bible Courses</u>	Home Bible Study courses run since 2003
<u>Puzzles</u>	Anagrams, crosswords, jigsaws and wordsearches
<u>Find Us</u>	Using Streetmap.co.uk
<u>Contact Us</u>	Through a contact form sent by e-mail
<u>Useful Links</u>	e.g. Echoes of Service, The Gideons international
<u>Christmas Quizzes</u>	In 2009, 2011 and 2012
<u>150th Anniversary</u>	Details of the event on 16 March 2013