

Sion Baptist Church

Stephen Duxbury, *The Brief History of Lancashire*, Stroud, The History Press 2011 p. 82

The 8th Earl (of Derby) was...anti-Papist, anti-Puritan and proNonconformist, and was lenient in the application of Charles's laws against Nonconformists in Lancashire.

Extracts and notes from JS Hardman 'Notes on the History of Sion Baptist Church, Cloughfold, c. 1950.

It is likely, but not proven, that the 'Barne of John Pickop' licensed as a meeting place for the dissenting 'Church in Rossendale' in 1672 was within the Springhill area.

There is a suggestion that Mr Kippax was a minister on Newchurch who resigned his living in 1662 after the passing of the Act of Uniformity. There is a Johannis Kippax, curate, who conducted marriages in St Nicholas in Sept 1661 and baptisms in April 1661.

After the signing of the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672 under Charles II, a licence for a place of meeting was granted on Oct 28 1672, for 'the Barne of John Pickops of Dedwinclough, Lancash, indep.'

Hardman continues (p.5),

'Can the site of "the Barne of John Pickops: be identified? We think it can. Newbigging's 'History of the Forest of Rossendale' – 2nd edition, 1893 – throws much light on the subject. A careful study of pages 160-163 show:

1. The old farm house (last known as Lodge Fold Farm), which was demolished for road widening at Higher Cloughfold in the year 1935, was formerly the Vicarage of Newchurch Church.
2. This house, and the barn adjoining, were apparently built by Wm Horrocks who was the vicar from 1622-1641. A stone, which is preserved by the Rawtenstall Corporation, and which was placed in the barn, gives the date 1629.
3. An earlier vicar, George Gregory, left a Will dated Apl 5th 1548, in which he left a horse to a 'John Pycoppe' and sums of money to the four sons of the same man (note this will is signed Sr. George Gregory). [see below]

Now if in 1662, when this house was still the vicarage, a vicar of the name of 'Kippax' was living there, and he was evicted from the living at Newchurch, we can well imagine him gathering together others like-minded and commencing meetings for worship here. And, if at this date there were living descendants of the "John Pycoppe" and his sons of the year 1548, and one was using this 1629 barn, the "Barne of John Pickops" in the licence of Oct 28th 1672 may well have been the site of "The Church in Rossendale" [licensed to meet in Pickop's barn].

We can therefore very well picture a group of 'Protestant Dissenters' beginning with Kippax in 1662 worshipping here, more or less in secret and always in fear of persecution, and growing in numbers until ten years later they were a sufficiently large body as to obtain a licence for a meeting place."

Hardman continues (p. 7 ff)

"In 1705 a house was given to the church for a meeting place. The Deed making this gift is our oldest legal document.. It is in Latin, but the following is a rough translation of its terms:-

"Mr Robert Lichford, formerly of Blakeley, in the County of Lancaster, gentleman, on the 11th of Feb 1705, surrendered into the hands of the Lord and Lady of the manor of Accrington all that edifice or building, standing within Cloughfold in the said manor, heretofore purchased by him from one John Townsend, to the use and behoof of Richard Holden, Richard Ashworth of Tunsted, Simeon Lord and John Hartley, who shall at all times forever thereafter stand and be seised of the said edifice, for the use and benefit of all such Protest Dissenters, called Anabaptist or Independents, within the Forest of Rossendale and parts and places adjacent as shall there from time to time assemble for religious worship when the same shall be made fit and commodious for a chapel or meeting house."

This house was on the site of the present Church and remained in the Church for 132 years – until the year 1837. a minister's house ...was built 'at the east end of the Church' in 1773 at a cost of £30, which sum was taken from the legacies"'This was a minister's house for 65 years until it was taken down in 1838 when the new chapel was built.'

Thus:

The Vicarage was probably the old farm in Higher Cloughfold.

This may have been a focus for dissenters after 1662.

The Barne of John Pickop was probably associated with the farm,

This is close to, but distinct from, the house left to the church by Robert Lichfield.

(The stone dated 1629 was stolen from Rossendale Museum in 2012).