

# CHURCH HISTORY

## POUND LANE FREE CHURCH

1693 - 2001



This booklet, compiled by Mr R. Woodroffe from the minute books of the Pound Lane Baptist (and later Pound Lane Free) Church, was originally produced to commemorate the first three hundred years of the church at Pound Lane.

## POUND LANE PASTORS AND LEADERS 1693-2000

Robert Moody	1699 - 1703	Ruling Elder
Rev Samuel Campion	1708 - 1724	
Rev Thomas Mumford	1726 - 1747	
Rev John Cranston	1751 - 1753	
Rev Samuel Lambert	1757 - 1805	
Rev Hugh McKenzie	1806 - 1817	
Rev John Reynolds	1819 - 1842	
Rev David Rees	1843 - 1845	
Rev W W Cantlow	1846 - 1872	
Rev A J Wilson	1872 - 1923	Minutes Missing
Rev G Savage	1923 - 1925	
Rev B J Wicks	1926 - 1927	
Rev H Wardle	1928 - 1932	
Rev A R Cook	1934 - 1943	
Rev W J Chapman	1945 - 1955	
Pastor E A Robins	1956 - 1958	
Pastor E V Woodroffe	1961 - 1990	
David Brown & Dave Hall	1990 - 2000	Elders
Pastor Dave Hall	2000 -	

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CHURCH AT POUND LANE ISLEHAM, CAMBS

The church began 300 years ago in 1693. It was started by a French Hugenot David Culy. First a brief word of how this came to be: David's grandfather Abraham Culy, John his son, and their family came over from France to assist Sir Cornelious Vermuden with the drainage of the Great Level and the Fens, probably about 1655 to 1660. They settled at

Thorney near Peterborough (a colony made for French and Dutch immigrants by Earl Francis, the Duke of Bedford), a church as built for these people to worship in their usual way and they were free to choose their own pastors.

Now David did not like this; he was a non-conformist Calvinist. He travelled quite a bit to find the worship that he agreed with. He was converted at March, Cambs, through the preaching of the Rev. Francis Hollcroft in 1687.

Hollcroft was a great Calvinist who travelled almost all Cambridgeshire preaching the gospel he came to Isleham as well. David moved to Gyhirn near Wisbech and joined a little Independent church which still stands today. David became Pastor and travelled quite a lot preaching the gospel. He came to Pound Lane Isleham in 1693 and gathered a few believers together for worship which took place in houses; one in particular called John Smiths Chamber.

David Culy was a man of great outreach he began the first church at Soham, and also Burwell, and Southery Norfolk. All were independants since hardly any Baptist churches existed in those days. Services were held at alternate churches for some time. After five years (in 1698) David moved to Lincolnshire near Holbeach; he started churches around that county, moving up to Billingham where he died. After he left Isleham church, a man named Robert Moody (a ruling elder here) took on the church. This lasted from 1699 to 1703; it appears that the burden was great for him, and eventually a minister was sought for. A pastor came from the independant church at Wellingborough. He was well received; his name was Samuel Champion. He served as Pastor from 1708 to 1724, we don't know a lot about him, but it appears that he died soon after leaving the church in 1724.

The church's third Pastor was Thomas Mumford from Wicken and a member of that church. He was well esteemed by the people here. The first Meeting House was built in 1723; standing the opposite way around to the present church. About 1740, Isleham Pound Lane church and West Row seem to have joined together; the meeting house at West Row being in Friday Street. Mumford died in October 1747 and John Cranston became Pastor. He is thought to have come from Suffolk and it was at this time (1748) that the present Manse was built. Cranston was a 'high' Calvinist and did not find favour with everyone, and left in 1752 after only 2 years ministry.

In the April of 1753, a man named Samuel Lambert came to preach from College Lane Church in Northampton. He was well received by the church and subsequently married

Mary Moore a daughter of one of the church families. He was a paedobaptist and his ministry must be considered one of the most successful in the history of the church. When he came there was a deep division in the church on doctrine and with great patience and moderation he appears to have settled this problem. On April 27th 1757 he was ordained as Pastor. Ministers attending that meeting include Mr Wayman of Kimbolton, Mr Sibly of Cambridge, Mr Mauldon of Burwell and Mr Boodger of Willingham.

Mr Lambert went to West Row every six weeks to preach and administer the sacrament and quite a number of members came from West Row to the Isleham church. He had hard times as well as good; in 1777, he had a great problem, members here and at West Row were found to be purchasing smuggled tea. Lambert took a great stand against this, and whilst most members at Isleham accepted that they were wrong, some at West Row bluntly refused. On his next visit there he told them that he would not come again until the tea affair was settled. Six members were cut off from membership, and Mr Lambert became very ill over this matter. He cried to the Lord for help and his prayers were answered, and despite the numbers becoming few in 1785, he continued to preach for 13 years with no sign of growth; what courage the dear man had. He was helped during this time by two deacons who stood by him, David Riste (see the plaque in the church) and Charles Pond. Lambert's son-in-law, Robert Fuller was also of great help to him.

Robert was brother to Andrew Fuller who became secretary to the B.M.S. He was known all over the British Isles and beyond. In 1798 he came to preach at Pound Lane and baptised 5 adults at Isleham Ferry. These, together with two others, joined the church. William Norman of Isleham married Elizabeth Riste (see plaque on church wall). He was an Armenian, and with a few others, left here and went to worship at Soham under John Gisburne who later became an Unitarian. Norman then returned to Isleham and built High Street Baptist church; his wife remaining in membership at Pound Lane. During Lambert's ministry Thomas Baron went to Cottenham and became their first pastor, James Woods went to Prickwillow, William Brown to the Baptist church at Keysoe Beds. and Robert Saunders of West Row, but a member here, went as pastor to Barton Mills. The Church Covenant of 1799 was written by Andrew Fuller and we have a copy in his own handwriting. Mr Lambert had been a sufferer with an intermittent illness for many years and his life was now drawing to its end, on Nov. 2nd 1805 he was dismissed from the church militant into the Church triumphant, he was 75 years old and on Nov. 7th his remains were laid to rest in the meeting house before the pulpit. He had preached there for 52 years and was pastor for 48 years, his funeral was a very mournful occasion, Mr Root of Soham preached the sermon from 2 Timothy 4 v 6-8, this passage having been chosen by Mr Lambert.

A great tribute was written in the minute book by Mr Hugh McKenzie from a Baptist church in Bury St Edmunds, he had taken Mr Lambert's job during his final illness and was warmly received by the church, who asked him to stay and preach for 6 months with a view to the pastorate, this he agreed to do and he was ordained on Nov. 19th. 1806. At this point the church became a Particular Baptist and Mr McKenzie's ministry lasted for 11 years when he resigned.

The church was without a pastor for 2 years then Mr John Reynolds came from London, he was warmly received and ordained sometime in 1819, he remained here until his death in 1842 ( see wall plaque). During his ministry in 1829 the old meeting house was taken down and the present church built, all in 6 months at a cost of 1600 ! During those months a barn down Church Lane was lent by a Mr Sheldrick and adapted for worship.

After Reynold's death Rev. David Rees from Bramly Yorkshire was invited to become pastor, he accepted in 1843, but it seems the climate here did not suit him and his family and he resigned in 1845.

The next pastor was the Rev. W.W.Cantlow from Great Shelford, he came in 1846 and remained as pastor for 26 years (1872). During his ministry he baptised pastor C.H. Spurgeon at Isleham Ferry on May 1st 1850.

After Cantlow retired the next pastor was Rev. J.A.Wilson, I cannot give minutes to his ministry as they were lost when he left in 1923, he died in 1927, and I am told by those who remember him that he was a great preacher.

From 1923 to 1925 George Savage served as pastor, then B.J.Wicks 1926-1927, next H. Wardle 1928 to 1932, A.R.Cook 1934 to 1943, then came W.J.Chapman 1945 to 1955, and Mr E.A.Robins 1956 to 1958. After Mr Robins left, the church was without a pastor for 3 years and I can remember all the pastors after Mr Wilson. They were all good men although short lived.

In 1961 pastor E.V.Woodroffe was invited to the pastorate which he accepted and he maintained a good ministry until 1990 when he resigned and the church continued under the leadership of its two elders Mr D Brown and Mr D Hall. Dave Hall was appointed Pastor of the church in October 2000.

The church is currently growing and expanding its work of supporting mission worldwide, evangelism, and the training and equipping of the local fellowship. The leadership currently comprises : Dave Hall (pastor) and David Brown (elder) with the assistance of three deacons Mr Ron Woodroffe, Mr Steve Neale and Mr Ron Bishop.

Pound Lane church has a wonderful history, I feel and I have given most of the main points, one of the greatest being that for over 300 years the Gospel has been faithfully preached and the doors never closed. In 1978 the Isleham Methodist church became unsafe for worship and the members joined with Pound Lane at this time; the combined church being re-named Pound Lane Free Church. May all who read these notes praise the Lord for all His blessings, for 300 years of ministry, and pray His blessings in the years to come. I must thank pastor E.V.Woodroffe and the Rev. George Mills of West Row, for all their help in preparing the history I have written, and may it be a blessing to all who may read these pages,

In Jesus' Name

Amen.