



Devon Family History Society
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DEVON RECORD OFFICE

ASHBURTON INDEPENDENT CHAPEL BAPTISMS REGISTER

1840-1881

DRO Reference – 5103D/2

DFHS Book Reference - D089

Ashburton Independent Chapel [also known as Ashburton Great Meeting] was founded as an English Presbyterian meeting in 1665. It was licensed in 1672, and was continuous thereafter. It was Ashburton's earliest nonconformist congregation, and is believed to have met in a converted barn, which stood where the chapel was later constructed in North Street, Ashburton in 1739.

It became an Independent Chapel and later a Congregational Chapel, finally becoming part of the United Reform Church. The chapel in North Street finally closed in the 1980s and is now an antique fireplace emporium, but still retains many of its features, including stained glass windows and memorials on the walls.

The first surviving register is merely a small notebook, and includes baptisms from June 1777 to October 1837. It bears the reference 5103D/1 and has been indexed in a separate booklet. A note written in 1828 and pasted into the front of this first register records that “*Mr Sparke [a chapel member] has in his possession a Baptismal register prior to this commencing in the year 1763*”. However, this earlier register from 1763 to 1776 has disappeared.

From 1817 baptisms were also entered in another original register. This other register, which covers the years from 1817 to 1837, was surrendered to the Registrar-General in about 1837, and is now held in the National Archives at Kew, near London. This register can be seen on film [film ref: RG 4/951] at the National Archives, at the Family Records Centre in London, in the DCRS collection at Westcountry Studies Library in Exeter, at any Mormon Family History Research Centre and at some other family history society libraries overseas.

The baptism register from which this index is taken is the second register for this chapel held at Devon Record Office [ref: 5103D/2], and is in the form of a small hardback notebook with the following label on the front cover: “*Baptismal Register For the Independent Chapel Ashburton*”. The title page inside the notebook states that the volume is “*a true copy of the Baptismal Register of the Independent Congregation of Dissenters Ashburton commencing April 20 1817 the whole was copied by me Lavington Evans*”.

It therefore begins as a copy of the above mentioned register surrendered in 1837 to the Registrar-General, with entries from April 1817 to July 1837, and continues with later original baptismal entries from August 1837 which end in December 1881.

This index, however, only covers part of this baptism register, beginning with entries in 1840 and ending in December 1881.

Other records of the same chapel are found in collections 5103D, 4080D and 4157D at Devon Record Office.