



The **1901 Census** stated that Mary and Fanny Williams had moved much nearer to Sutton Poyntz. They were living at Osmington house. This was a short horse and carriage drive away from Sutton Poyntz village. Unfortunately, there is no record of exactly when they moved there. In 1891, they were still living with their family in Hove plus spending time in Little Bredy. (Right - Osmington House)

This census tells us that Mary was 50 years old, called Head of Osmington House and living by her own means as was Fanny who was age 49. They were both single. They had 6 staff, all single - two Domestic Maids, a Housemaid, a Kitchenmaid, an Under Housemaid and a Footman. Their brother, Robert Williams IV who was 52 and his wife Rosa 56 were visiting them. Robert was a Banker and M.P.

Their other visitor was Leila McBean 33 who was single, a Church worker and Preacher, born in Marylebone like all of the Williams' children. Leila McBean continued working for the church and supporting women in particular and the 1911 Census stated she was Secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association.... another inspiration for Mary and Fanny to support evangelical and social work.



It is interesting to note that the Chapel at Osmington was very similar to the size and shape of the **Mission Hall** Mary and Fanny built. Were they so impressed with Osmington chapel's design, religious, moral and social intentions that they decided to replicate the ideas in Sutton Poyntz? The Osmington chapel is still there in 2024 but has been modernised and extended. (Right - an older photo of Osmington Chapel)



In **1901**, the C. of E. evangelist, Alice Oaker (1861-1953), who would soon move into **Church Cottage** was boarding with Amy Knaption and her family at 1 Lindale Road, Wyke Regis, Weymouth. Her occupation was given as a C. of E. Deaconess. Alice was ordained by Salisbury Diocese on 26th July 1896, most probably by Bishop John Wordsworth. Around **1902/1903**, Alice Oaker moved to **Church Cottage**, replacing Samuel Mould as Church Army evangelist. Alice would have served under the direction of the local C.of E. minister, to "lead the people in public worship, to exercise pastoral care, to instruct the people in the Christian faith and to prepare them for the reception of sacraments." \* Alice would have been able to lead worship and meetings in the **Mission Hall** next door to where she was living plus know the villagers around her.

In **1903**, the revised 1888 O.S. map was published and the **Mission Hall's** 'footprint' was shown for the first time adjoining **Church Cottage**. However, it was still not given a name on the map.

The **1911 Census** showed the C.of E. Deaconess, Alice Oaker, was still living in Sutton Poyntz. She was 52, a spinster and living in a house with 4 rooms including the kitchen. No house name or location was mentioned but a local person today recalls people talking about the Sister who lived in **Church Cottage** at this time confirming it was her who still lived there.

By **1911**, Mary and Frances Williams had moved away from Osmington and were living at Westleaze House in Charminster, North of Dorchester.

No specific records have yet been found for the **WWI** years in Sutton Poyntz, although there is a memorial in the grounds of St. Andrew's Church with the names of 20 local villagers who died fighting for their country.

In **1917**, a local newspaper advertised that **Church Room Cottage** had a number of cockerels for sale, presumably owned by Deaconess Alice Oaker because she was still living there.

In **1919**, Frances Williams died at Westleaze and was buried in Little Bredy churchyard.

The **1921 Census** showed that Deaconess Alice Oaker, age 61, was still living in **Church Room Cottage**, after nearly 20 years in her role there. Mary Williams was still living at Westleaze, Charminster.

In **1925**, Sutton Poyntz village was sold in lots by the Welds of Lulworth. The **Mission Hall** was sold to Salisbury Diocese with a conveyance stipulating it for church, religious and educational uses that, "promote the spiritual, intellectual, moral, social or physical welfare of the members of the C.of E....not necessarily to the exclusion of others from sharing in the advantages provided."

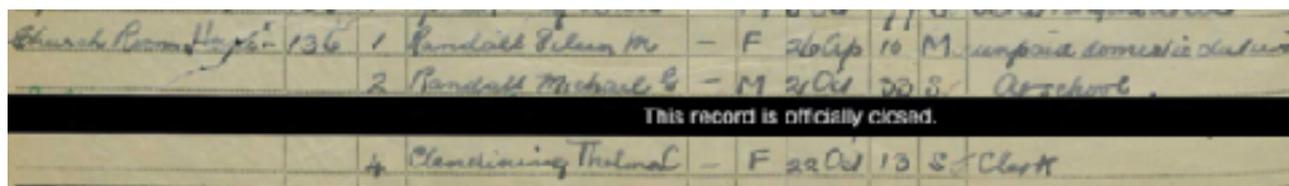
In **1927**, the 1925 conveyance was revoked and Mary signed a Declaration of Trusts for the **Mission Hall, Church Cottage** and its land, with the Bishop of Salisbury, P.C.C.of Preston cum Sutton Poyntz plus Reverend Medcalf. The new intentions for the future were regarding:- C. of E. services and religious education; the education of children and adults or children of the labouring manufacturing and other poorer classes in the parish; a residence for a Parochial church worker, teacher or school which may be held in the building; as a Sunday School, Class, Meeting or Lecture Room; as a meeting place for clergy or church workers; and "any other object or purpose which may promote the spiritual, intellectual, social or moral welfare of C. of E. members .... but not to the exclusion of others sharing in the advantages mentioned." No mention was made of the buildings' actual names in the document Mary's signature was witnessed by her brother, Robert Williams of Bridehead.

Also in **1927**, a newspaper advertisement referred to a cottage to let and responders were invited to apply to **Church Room Cottage**, Sutton Poyntz. It was described as comfortable, with 3 bedrooms, a living room and an hourly bus to Weymouth. The description fits the cottage as it would have been before it was modernised. Alice Oaker was 67 and had lived there for about 25 years so she may have been moving to her sheltered housing in Salisbury (see 1939 below).

In **1934**, the Western Gazette advertised that Mr. Guppy was selling various properties, including six cottages in Sutton Poyntz. The advertisement said that the properties were in Mission Hall Lane and Silver Street. This is the earliest written mention yet found of the lane's name and hence the **Mission Hall**'s present title.

By the **mid 1930s** there were four places of worship or halls very near Sutton Poyntz. The fourteenth century St. Andrew's Church was just across Preston Road and there were three halls in Sutton Road - the Old Chapel built in 1816, Scutt Hall built in 1909 and the Evangelical Church which was first shown on a map in 1937. Maybe the **Mission Hall** had finally received its name, explaining its original function, to distinguish it from the three other halls just up the hill in Sutton Road?

In 1936, Mary Williams died at Westleaze, age 85. She was buried alongside her sister, Fanny in Little Bredy's churchyard



The pre-war **1939 Register** for Sutton Poyntz (above) listed **Church Room House** as a dwelling and the words Mission Hall Lane were written above the entry of Spring Cottage on the next page of the Register, confirming again that the hall was now being called the **Mission Hall**.

Mrs. Eileen Randall age 30 was living in **Church Room House**. She was an unpaid domestic and her 6 year old son Michael was with her. Thelma Clendinning, a single lady age 26, was also there. She was a Clerk with the 41st Dorset A.T.S. The Auxiliary Territorial Service was formed in 1938 and tasked women with a range of vital roles during WWII.

The black line across saying, "This record is officially closed" hid the third person living there because they were born less than 100 years ago and whose death has not been registered. Fortunately, that person, Sue, is still living nearby in 2024 to confirm she was born in **Church Room House** in July 1938. Her father was away at war until 1945. She said her mother lived in the cottage rent free in return for cleaning the **Mission Hall** - another vital clue in the puzzle found!

So, just over 40 years after the **Mission Hall** was built, its original religious function had changed. Mrs. Randall was not an evangelist but a villager who was caring for the hall.

The **1939 Register** showed that Deaconess Alice Oaker was 80 years old and had retired. She was living in St. Paul's Homes, in the heart of Salisbury. These homes were six almshouses built in 1863 to provide suitable homes for women with limited incomes. She died age 95 in the Salisbury infirmary in 1953 but was interred at Wyke Regis, Weymouth.

**During WWII**, the Randall family continued to live in **Church Room House**. Sue recorded her memories of growing up in the village in, *Memories of Preston and Sutton Poyntz - under one cover*. She remembered that in the later war years American soldiers arrived, and put up huts in the fields surrounding the village. "We didn't see much of the war, only hearing the aeroplanes going overhead at night and mum putting us into the Morrison Shelter which was an iron 'table' situated in the living room, she used to put us under, it had wire mesh all around the sides and she always put blankets there and took a flask of hot milk to bed so we were ready if the sirens sounded.

*The biggest excitement for all of the children was when the American soldiers arrived, they surrounded the village putting up tents and 'Nissen' huts in the fields. The favourite place for us was their 'cook house' we had never seen such food, they used to put jars of sweets outside for us to help ourselves. Then suddenly they were gone, we were too young to realise where they went or why."*

She recalled some of the soldiers stayed in the **Mission Hall** next door. The Randalls left the cottage around 1947 but still continued to live nearby.

The **WWII** American soldiers Sue talked about were the 298th Engineer Combat Battalion. They left Boston, USA for an unknown destination on the ship, USS Explorer, on January 19th 1944. They arrived in Grennoch, Scotland on January 31st and boarded a train for Weymouth. The Battalion arrived on February 1st and were taken by trucks on, "a short trip to Sutton Poyntz and Chalet Camps.....They immediately started an intensive training programme in preparation for the invasion of the European continent and subsequent battles of Western and Central Europe." \*\* In April 1944 the Battalion moved away from Sutton Poyntz and participated in 'Exercise Tiger' at Slip-on Sands in Devon. This was a rehearsal for the Normandy invasion codenamed Operation Neptune and often referred to as D-Day. The invasion by 24000 American, British and Canadian troops took place on June 6th 1944.

Another local child during **WWII**, G. Ferguson, lived in Winslow Road and he recalled, "the Yanks came. They were everywhere. The black or coloured ones (I'm not sure which is correct) were located in Came Wood and unknown to our parents we made several journeys there to see what we could scrounge in the way of sweets and gum. .... What is now the garage in Sutton Poyntz used to be the canteen for the Yanky Soldiers and I was once offered a slice of bread and butter there, the butter was a half inch thick slice which was the same size as the bread, I believe I wrapped it in paper and took it home as it was about 4 weeks rations at that time. .... Those of us who were keen to earn a bob or two used to make up a shoe cleaning kit which we carried in an old gas mask case and would be paid two or three pence for cleaning the Yanks boots or shoes. Mission lane hall was one of the favourite places, I remember the camp beds lined up along either side of the **Mission Hall**. The soldiers used to practice firing their mortar guns behind the canteen. .... My two sisters and I used to sleep in a Morrison shelter with our mother and father sleeping on top and I remember how it all shook when a bomb dropped near Preston Church. We used to watch the aeroplanes fighting, what they called Dog Fights over Weymouth Bay. .... I also recall the American Lorries lined up along the Sutton Poyntz road and also along the sea front at Weymouth."

It's wonderful to have the memories of villagers recalling what happened around them. Wouldn't it be amazing if the walls of the **Mission Hall** could share with villagers today everything they have seen and heard over the past 130 years?!

So, today, there are still many questions from the past unanswered. For example, a ship's bell from HMS Bandit which served during **WWII** hangs in the **Mission Hall**. Detective work has found her history and duties but why is her bell in Sutton Poyntz?

If you can help with any more details of the **Mission Hall's** history, please let the Trustees know!

Information gathered from:- [mac-catalogue.warwick.ac.uk/](http://mac-catalogue.warwick.ac.uk/) / [osmington-history.co.uk/](http://osmington-history.co.uk/) / [lambethpalacelibrary.info/](http://lambethpalacelibrary.info/) / [missiology.org.uk/](http://missiology.org.uk/) / [dorset-ancestors.com/](http://dorset-ancestors.com/) / Dorset History Centre / [historydch.com](http://historydch.com) Kelly's Directories / [opc.dorset.org/](http://opc.dorset.org/) / South Dorset Ridgeway / Sutton Poyntz Heritage Assets by W. Egerton / [maps.nls.uk/](http://maps.nls.uk/) / [suttonpoyntz.org.uk/](http://suttonpoyntz.org.uk/) / [westlulworth.org.uk/](http://westlulworth.org.uk/) / [victorianweb.org/](http://victorianweb.org/) / [ancestry.co.uk/](http://ancestry.co.uk/) / [churchofengland.org/](http://churchofengland.org/) / [freepages.rootsweb.com](http://freepages.rootsweb.com) \*\* / WW2 People's War, Preston, Weymouth [bbc.co.uk/](http://bbc.co.uk/) / [dorsetecho.co.uk/](http://dorsetecho.co.uk/) / [anglicanism.org/](http://anglicanism.org/) / [academic.oup.com/](http://academic.oup.com/) / *Life of Bishop John Wordsworth* by Watson /