

Life and Letters of  
William Boorman



from yours in the truth  
Wm. B. Brown

# Life and Letters of William Boorman

(1849-1926)

*For 45 years the esteemed pastor of  
Lamberhurst Strict Baptist Chapel*

Edited by Matthew J. Hyde

Gospel Standard Trust Publications

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*For my friends worshipping at  
Lamberhurst Strict Baptist Chapel*

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# Preface

This book had its origin in three things.

Firstly, after the publication of three “Memento” volumes on William Boorman’s friends and ministerial colleagues (Reuben Weeks of Tenterden, John Kemp of Biddenden and Thomas Butler of Flimwell), William Boorman’s letters were the next set of letters from the archive of Mrs Thunder of Pell Green, which awaited publication.

Secondly, although I had had an interest in William Boorman ever since reading my father’s copy of J. C. Philpot’s *Memoir and Letters* which is neatly signed in the front by William Boorman, my regard for him increased while researching the history of Lamberhurst Strict Baptist Chapel (where Mr Boorman was pastor) in 2016.<sup>1</sup>

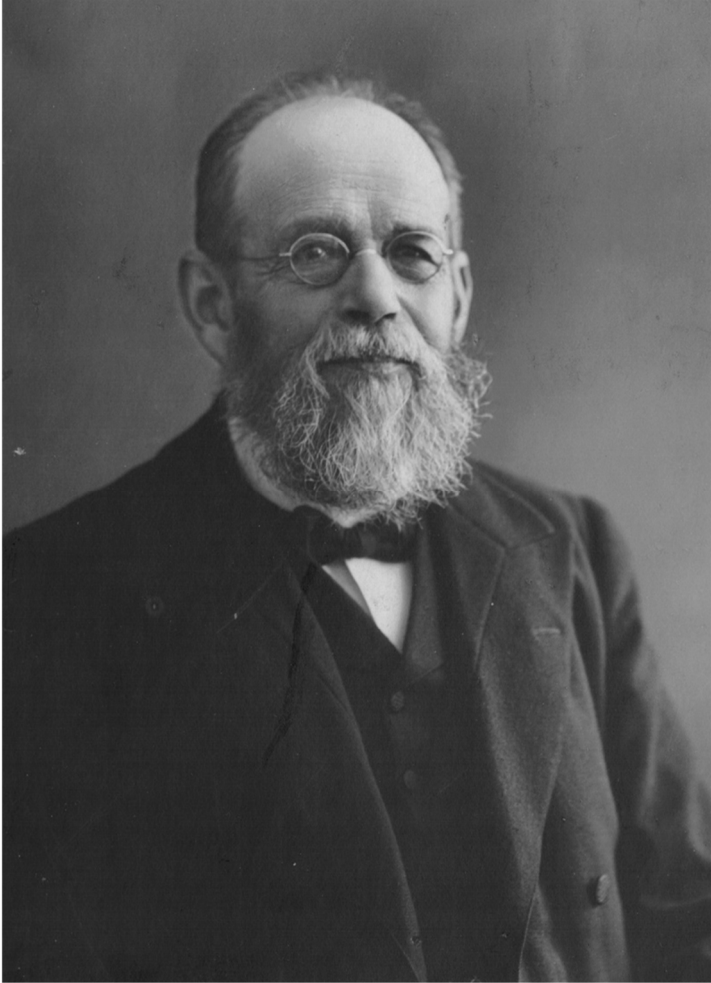
Thirdly, Mr Andrew J. Collins (current deacon at Lamberhurst Chapel) researched all the extant letters of William Boorman and kindly typed them up for publication. Without his valuable input, the project would not have got to this stage.

I have been thankful for the testimonies received regarding the spiritual benefit obtained through the perusal of the previous “Memento” volumes. My desire is that the Lord would similarly bless the contents of this book to the good of souls, and that its publication would be for his honour and glory.

Matthew J. Hyde

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<sup>1</sup> Copies of this history are still available from Mr D. J. Playfoot, Cavepits House, Marle Place Road, Brenchley, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7HS.



*William Boorman*



# MEMOIR

William Boorman was born on 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1849,<sup>2</sup> the eldest of a family of nine. His parents Thomas Boorman (1819-1914) and Mary (née Fuller) were married on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1846, in Wadhurst. They settled down to married life in the house built by Thomas's grandfather, James Boorman (1736-1815), Yew Tree Farm, Lamberhurst – this property was later sold to the Marquis of Camden and became part of the Bayham Abbey estate.

Thomas Boorman was a farmer and served as local constable in Wadhurst. The family were staunch Wesleyans. Thomas played the recorder to lead the singing in Wadhurst Methodist Chapel, and strictly initiated his children into Wesleyanism.

William attended Wadhurst School alongside John Kemp (later the pastor at Biddenden) and Reuben Weeks (later the pastor at Tenterden).<sup>3</sup> One wonders what these youthful companions would have thought then if they had been told that one day all three would be ministers of the gospel, and pastors according to God's heart.

William was called by grace in his teens while working in his father's hop garden, in October, 1867. Mr John Kemp writes in his obituary: "This was without human instrumentality; he was brought to feel himself a lost sinner before a holy God."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *The Christian's Pathway* (1927) p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> *The Christian's Pathway* (1923) pp. 49-50.

<sup>4</sup> *The Gospel Standard* (1927) p. 96.



*Thomas Boorman (sitting centre left), with his wife Mary (sitting centre right) and family. William is sitting to his mother's right.*

When 19, he began to preach amongst the Wesleyans in Lamberhurst. Mr Stephen Hyland (who afterwards also left the Wesleyans and eventually became pastor of the Strict Baptist church at Bodle Street, Sussex) was the instrument used in Mr Boorman venturing into the ministry.<sup>5</sup>

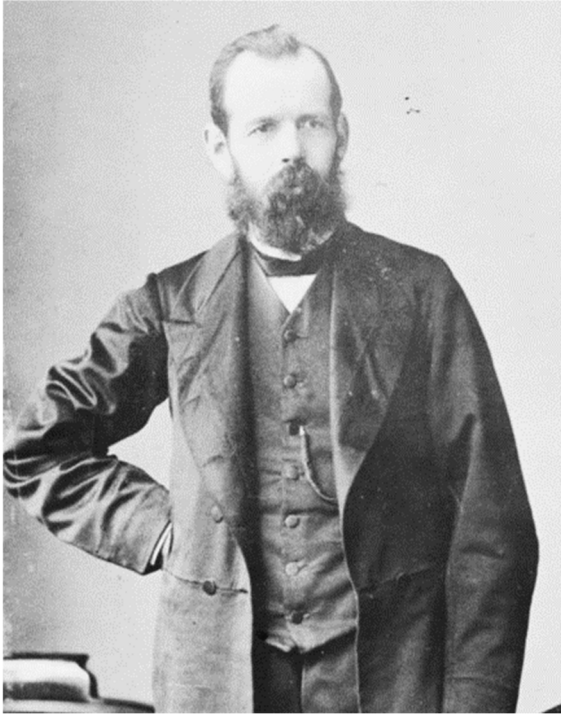
From the age of 30, until 1924 (when he retired due to ill health), Mr Boorman worked as a tax collector in Wadhurst and Mayfield districts. He was well known and well loved. It was reported when he retired that his policy was to walk out a consistent Christian calling in his daily life, and that he found this example more

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<sup>5</sup> For an obituary of Stephen Hyland, see *The Gospel Standard* (1886) April wrapper, p. 11.

*Biography*

effectual at making persistent tax dodgers to pay their debts than any harsh words or threats.<sup>6</sup>



*William Boorman as a young man*

As the work of grace deepened in Mr Boorman's heart, and he was brought to trust in the finished work of Christ alone for salvation, so his ministry altered, and although he had been acceptable to his Wesleyan hearers to start with, he was now accused of preaching Calvinism and turned out of their

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<sup>6</sup> *Kent and Sussex Courier*, Friday 6 June 1924, p. 13.

connection. He found himself dissociated from all religion, other than what the Holy Spirit had revealed to him.

Mr Kemp records in his obituary:

Mr Boorman was raised to a hope in the Lord Jesus, and of salvation by grace through his blood and righteousness. Having been brought up a thorough Wesleyan, he was not at that time prepared to discard all creature righteousnesses as ‘filthy rags,’ but what he had felt greatly weakened his trust in anything apart from the finished work of Christ. His preaching therefore was such that, though he preached among the Wesleyans for several years with a measure of acceptance, yet he was by them charged with preaching the Calvinistic doctrine, and was turned out of their community by one of their circuit ministers. The teaching of the Holy Spirit, which he then had, was in direct opposition to that which he had received from men; and, ‘How can two walk together except they be agreed?’<sup>7</sup>

Finding himself without a spiritual home and feeling he belonged to no people, he used to occasionally go to the Lord’s Day afternoon service at Cousley Wood, conducted by a Church of England minister.

In 1876, renovations at Shover’s Green Chapel meant that services were held for a time in an oast house at Walland Farm. Through this circumstance Mr Boorman heard for the first time the gospel as preached amongst the Strict Baptists. The Lord was pleased to bless that sermon to him, and a strong bond was forged between the minister, Mr James Jones (pastor at Shover’s Green), and Mr Boorman. Mr Boorman very soon joined the church at Shover’s Green and they formally sanctioned him to preach the gospel amongst the Strict Baptists. After the death of the pastor

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<sup>7</sup> *The Gospel Standard* (1927) p. 97.

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at Lamberhurst, Mr Thomas Ray, in 1878, the church at Lamberhurst invited Mr Boorman to preach, and that ultimately led to them inviting him to take the pastorate there.



*James Jones*

The initial letter the Lamberhurst church wrote to Mr Boorman follows.

Baptist Church at Lamberhurst, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1880.

To Mr William Boorman,

Dear Brother in Christ Jesus;

We are requested by this church to make known to you that, at a meeting held after the services on Lord's Day, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1880, over which, at our particular request, our esteemed brother

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Saltmarsh<sup>8</sup> presided; the following resolution was unanimously carried, "That Mr Boorman be asked to exercise his gifts for the ministry for six months, with a prospect of receiving a call from the church, to take ministerial oversight of the church and congregation at the end of that period."

We therefore desire that the dear Lord's hand may be seen in this solemn and important matter, and that as we have, so may you be enabled to seek counsel and guidance from the Lord; and be led, if his blessed will, to give us a favourable reply. We feel that your coming amongst us, and the tokens of the Lord's presence with you in breaking the bread of life to us, are evidences of the leadings of his providence, as well as your lot being cast so near to the place of your labours.

With respect to remunerating you, we shall continue to give you the same as you have been having. Should the Lord graciously bless your ministry with an increase of numbers, and prosperity in temporal things, we shall be only too glad to increase the same according to our means. As our brother Saltmarsh is engaged several Lord's Days until the end of the year, we shall expect you to allow him to fulfil them; and should you accept the pastorate the pulpit will then be entirely under your control; but we feel sure that our wishes will be consulted in that, and all matters relating to the church's welfare.

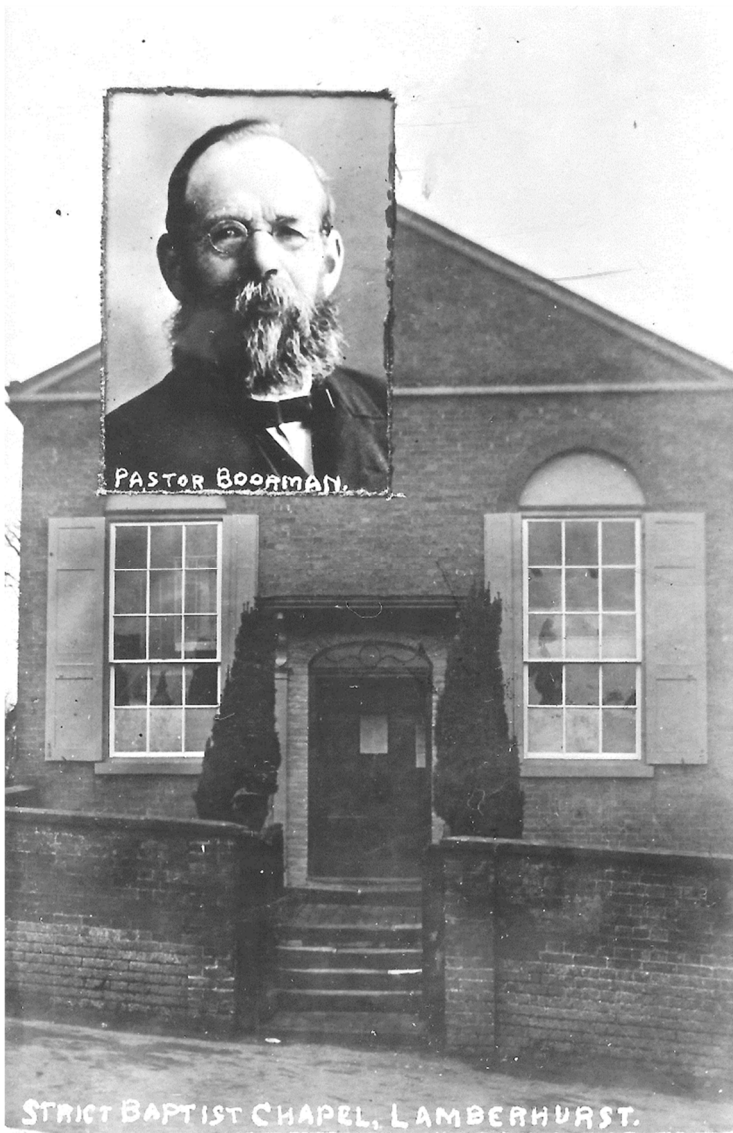
May God strengthen you in body and soul, and all belonging to you, comfort, encourage, and build you up, and make you an instrument in his hand of gathering in some of his dead elect, and of edifying, and comforting his dear manifestly blood bought family, is the prayer of yours for the truth's sake, as it is in Jesus. Signed on behalf of the church,

Richard Huggins and Thomas Fullbrook.

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<sup>8</sup> Mark Saltmarsh of Hanover Chapel, Tunbridge Wells. See: *The Gospel Standard* (1911) p. 439.

*Biography*



*Lamberhurst Strict Baptist Chapel c.1910*

After he had supplied acceptably during the remainder of 1880, at a church meeting convened on Lord's Day, 12<sup>th</sup> December, the church wrote again to Mr Boorman, extending a unanimous invitation to him to accept the pastorate. Mr Boorman replied to accept the pastorate in two letters, both written on the same day; the first gave an outline of his doctrinal views, the second a practical exhortation to the church. Extracts from the letters follow.

To the members of the church of Christ meeting in the Baptist Chapel, Lamberhurst.

Grace, mercy and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, be with you, Amen.

Seeing it hath pleased God the Father, Son and Spirit, three persons but one God; to separate, according to his determinate counsel and foreknowledge, a people, eternally loved, the love flowing from Jehovah's Godhead above, and not because of any goodness foreseen, or good works done by them. They having through their first father [*Adam*], head, and representative, become sinners, and alienated from God by wicked works, therefore losing all right to, and the blessings of eternal life and felicity; for the wages of sin is death, and death having entered the soul through sin, man cannot do the things that are pleasing in God's sight any more than a dead corpse can perform the functions of life, for they are dead to God, haters of God, nor can they discern the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto them. Therefore, as they (the elect) are eternally loved by the Father, and given to Christ the Son, as the gift of the Father, they falling into a lapsed state, (God the Father, word and Spirit, seeing they would fall into this state), the Father gave the Son, the Son gave his life a ransom for many, to be exalted in due time, then in the fullness of time, Christ wrought out and brought in an everlasting righteousness, by which the broken law



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is fulfilled, divine justice satisfied, Satan and hell conquered, sin put away, and the kingdom of heaven opened. In this is fulfilled the word: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob and seen perverseness in Israel." So the eternal Godhead looks with delight upon these (though fallen in themselves) objects of his love; now the eternally elect of God have a righteousness to put on, and not to work out, or to make, or gain. "I put on righteousness and it clothed me, &c." Now the natural heart, as before stated, being dead to God and the things of God, having no life in itself, it hath pleased the Father and the Son to send the Third Person, the Spirit of Truth, to quicken their dead souls to life, and to apply the salvation by Christ to the heart. "For he shall take of mine and shew it unto you." Faith, being the gift of God, is wrought by the same Spirit. Repentance or godly sorrow for sin is the gift of God, and is wrought by the same Spirit. The gift of faith, and the other gifts and graces, are as extensive as the salvation, and the salvation extends to all the election of grace. The Apostle saith, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; how shall they hear without a preacher, how shall they preach except they be sent." "Now it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but as it is written, Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain &c." Thus it hath pleased the Lord to direct my steps to come amongst you, and to labour amongst you in word and doctrine, and that you have been led, I trust, by his Spirit's power upon your hearts, to give me a unanimous invitation to accept the pastorate or office as an under shepherd, to feed the flock of Christ with knowledge and understanding; to which office I feel myself quite insufficient and unworthy. But seeing the hand of him who is too wise to err either in the leadings of his providence or grace, directing me this way, I feel bound as before God to comply with your call. I therefore accept it in the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

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... As I accept the office of Pastor, I trust you will, as you are enabled, hold up my hands, by your prayers and pleadings at a throne of grace, by seeking the peace and welfare of Zion, that your conversation be such as becometh the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. By your attendance as much as lieth in you, upon the ministry of the word on Lord's Days or otherwise, when the doors are opened. By contributing toward the support of the ministry. That ye be not forgetful hearers of the word, but approving, by faith and practice, the things that are most excellent. So that ye shall be living epistles, known and read of all men. And may the Lord add to your number such as are saved, lively souls, built up a spiritual house, being built upon the foundation of the prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. So prays,

Your humble servant,

William Boorman.

February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1881.

At the commencement of William Boorman's pastorate, there were just seven members in the church, including the new pastor. During his pastorate, 36 names were added to the church roll.

Mr Boorman's ministry was evidently blessed to many, and several obituaries in the *Gospel Standard* testify to this. One example is Jane Bartholomew, the daughter of Mr Matthew Funnell, the founder of Blackboys Chapel, who was one of the first-fruits, so to speak, of Mr Boorman's ministry at Lamberhurst.

It pleased the Lord to convince her of her state as a sinner before God after the birth of a child, on Mr W. Boorman's returning thanks. She felt from that prayer she was not right, and was brought into trouble of soul. Mr Boorman's ministry was much blessed to her. He was invited to be pastor there, and he felt to

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need some confirmation, and to see fruits following the word spoken, when she with two others came forward to testify of the Lord's mercy and goodness to their souls, and were the first baptised by him.<sup>9</sup>

Mrs Bartholomew was not able to remain under Mr Boorman's ministry for long, due to a move in providence. She later attended Ninfield Chapel.

For Thomas Barham, a wheelwright on the Bayham Abbey estate, near Lamberhurst, William Boorman came with a word in season in providential trials. His obituary records:

His path was not an easy one, [for he had] much affliction and many trials in providence. On one occasion, after being out of work for some time, he heard Mr W. Boorman speak from Psalm 46:5, "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." The Lord blessed him under that sermon, and the next morning he found employment.<sup>10</sup>

Another case is that of Mr and Mrs Benjamin Midmer.

They moved into Lamberhurst district, and his wife became warmly attached to Mr W. Boorman's ministry, and eventually expressed her desire to become united with the church. But when she made this known to her husband, it appeared to stir every evil passion in his depraved heart, and he said, if she did so, he would go from her, and leave her to her own resources. This brought her to take counsel with Mr Boorman, who at once suspected that there might be something more than enmity working in Ben's mind, and he advised delay, united prayer, and watching, as he believed something would grow out of this. It soon became manifest there was a softening and a subduing of this evil spirit. He continued to attend the services, but walked

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<sup>9</sup> *The Gospel Standard* (1922) pp. 309-310.

<sup>10</sup> *The Gospel Standard* (1926) pp. 161-162.

in silence. At length free communion and sympathy were restored between him and his wife, and they were able to reason together upon the things they had been exercised with. It appeared now he was in real concern about his state before God, and also drawn to Mr Boorman's ministry; but with regard to joining the church, there was a grave difficulty in the way, [as he had] through affliction in family incurred a heavy doctor's bill, and he felt he could take no step while this debt remained. Therefore they besought God to provide means to enable them to clear this debt, and he was graciously pleased to do this in a very marked way. But then he feared to go forward, though he had made a kind of vow, that if God appeared for them in answer to their cries, he would accept it as a token for good. This went on for a time, until on a certain occasion he went to Matfield to hear Mr Boorman, and these words fixed upon his mind, "Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High." He now opened his mind more fully to Mr Boorman, who thought the time had now come for him and his wife to unite, and pay their vows. This they did, and a very happy and memorable day for them it proved to be, when they walked in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord's house.<sup>11</sup>

Mr Boorman's ministry was also blessed to his own children. The Lord began to work in the heart of his son, William H. Boorman, when he was about 16 years old. Mr Boorman baptised him at Lamberhurst on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 1911. While still relatively young, his health broke down and he passed away suddenly, aged 35, on 9<sup>th</sup> February, 1919. His father wrote in his obituary:

I am not able to state the exact time of his first convictions of sin; but when only about sixteen or seventeen years of age, I could perceive in him the marks of grace, and he loved to be in

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<sup>11</sup> *The Gospel Standard* (1919) pp. 234-235.

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the house of God and under the word. He was baptised on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1911, and was a member with us at Lamberhurst.

The last Lord's Day that he was able to get to chapel, he, living nearer to the railway station than to Lamberhurst Chapel by nearly three miles, went to Hanover Chapel, Tunbridge Wells, and heard Mr Seth Pack; pleading with the Lord that Mr Pack might be well pressed; that he might be led into his exercise of mind, as he was very depressed at that time; when Mr Pack spoke from the words, "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction" (Isaiah 48: 10). But the last time of hearing was at Lamberhurst Chapel on a Wednesday evening, the text was, "The LORD trieth the righteous" (Psalm 11:5). Both these subjects were made a great comfort to him, and were as an anointing for the end. Little did I think, that Wednesday night as we journeyed home together, it was to be the last time. His conversation on the way home was most savoury; the Lord was evidently preparing him for his end. Mr George Rose, at the funeral, said of him, "He was one who feared God above many, for the grace of God was so manifest in him." On the following Lord's Day afternoon I was enabled to speak from the words, feeling they were applicable to his case, "To die is gain." He is the gainer though we are the loser, both as a parent and pastor, and as a church we suffer a great loss. He leaves a widow and three children to mourn the loss.<sup>12</sup>

It was also under her father's ministry that Gertrude Boorman received her spiritual deliverance, and she was baptized at Lamberhurst on Lord's Day, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1918.<sup>13</sup>

In the sovereignty of God, Mr Boorman was also involved in the sending out of several of the Lord's servants into the solemn work of the ministry. One was Matthew Mercer, later pastor at St

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<sup>12</sup> *The Christian's Pathway* (1919) p. 54.

<sup>13</sup> *The Gospel Standard* (1968) p. 158-159.

David's Bridge Chapel, Cranbrook. The account of his starting to preach, and the letters Mr Boorman wrote to him are included in this volume (Numbers 50 and 51). Another was Mr A. G. Wood, who recorded:

One Sunday afternoon I felt directed to leave Matfield Green Chapel and go over to Lamberhurst to hear Mr W. Boorman (pastor). His text on this occasion was: "He that hath my word, let him speak faithfully," etc. It appears to me Mr Boorman knew all about my exercises, and I was told some time after he felt the text had been given him for me, and further, he stated that he felt that one day I should be placed upon the walls of Zion.<sup>14</sup>

In March, 1919, Mr Boorman reached his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and a special evening meeting was held at the chapel to mark this occasion. The evening was reported as follows.

On Wednesday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1919, a goodly number of friends assembled at Lamberhurst Chapel to celebrate the Pastor's (Mr William Boorman's) 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. Mr J. W. Harmer, of Tunbridge Wells, took the chair at 6.30 p.m. The meeting was opened by the singing of Hymn 248, after which the Pastor read Psalm 103. This was followed by a short prayer offered by Mr Harmer, who then gave an address, in which he said: "We are met here to-night for a two-fold purpose - (1) To worship God; (2) To do honour to one of his servants, the beloved Pastor of the church here. We would record God's mercy in sparing him for so many years; I myself have known him for about thirty-two years. We have come tonight to show publicly our appreciation and love. There is no love like that which binds heart to heart in Christ. You have had your Pastor for forty years, and that is no

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<sup>14</sup> *Zion's Witness* (1968) November, p. 52. Mr A G Wood was a supply minister for many years in our churches (see his obituary in *The Gospel Standard* (1966) pp. 190-192). He was the father of the late Mr Clement A. Wood, pastor of Tamworth Road Strict Baptist Chapel, Croydon.

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small mercy for any church. I feel it an honour and a privilege to be here tonight, and on behalf of the church and congregation and friends who have helped outside, I ask you, my dear brother, to accept this wallet containing £35 in Treasury notes. In giving you this, the people say, ‘Our beloved Pastor, we wish you many happy returns of the day, and we do not want you to go from us.’ May you be spared to still go on preaching the old-fashioned truths of the Gospel.”

Mr Boorman then expressed his thanks and said: “To me this is altogether unexpected, undesired and unthought of. It’s true I’m not worthy of all the Lord’s mercies, but, having obtained help of God, I have continued unto this day. It was in 1877, on March 26<sup>th</sup> – forty-two years ago to this very day – I first entered this sanctuary. The Lord made the word a blessing to one who has now gone home. In the course of time I was asked to accept the pastorate. This was a great exercise to me; I wanted a token from the Lord that some soul had been called by grace under my ministry here. In due time God was pleased to give me a two-fold token, and I said, ‘Now I can accept the pastorate.’ That was in 1881, but after all these years I feel I can say that there is no pulpit like Lamberhurst to me. The Lord has sustained me all these years both in health and in the preaching of the Gospel.”

The 450<sup>th</sup> hymn having been sung, Mr Mitchell, Pastor of Flimwell, said how pleased he was to be present, and that the wallet was a proof that God must have blessed the people through Mr Boorman’s ministry, and the same love which prompted them had moved other friends around to contribute. This showed that others besides the Lamberhurst people appreciated their Pastor. He hoped the Lord would bless and sanctify them to one another, and wished the Pastor God-speed and spiritual blessings from time to time.

Hymn 373 was then sung, after which Mr Hickmott, of Brabourne, gave a short address, in which he said: “I feel very

glad to be here. I do feel it is strengthening to my faith to know what the Lord has done for your Pastor: the Lord has filled his empty vessel from time to time. What a mercy it is to have practical love, as is seen on this occasion by what you have done for your Pastor. What very little love there is among the churches today! I have felt encouraged by Mr Boorman's remarks about the assurance of having souls quickened under one's ministry. It is a mercy to see the Lord's hand going before us in providence and in grace. I will just thank Mr Harmer for coming over and making the presentation on behalf of the church, and I do so most sincerely."

Hymn 512 was sung, and Mr Mercer, of Cranbrook, made a few remarks. He said: "I little thought to have been called upon to speak, but I am glad to be here. Your dear Pastor was the means of putting me into the ministry, and Lamberhurst was the first door opened for me. I hope the Lord will bless your souls, and that you may all have a part and a lot in the matter of eternal salvation. Though your Pastor has reached the age of 70 we hope he will be spared for many years, and may he see fruit borne, though unfruitful in himself. May the Lord abundantly bless you and bless him."

Mr Harmer, in closing, dwelt upon the practical effects of vital godliness and brotherly love. He remarked that they had seen that evening some of the fruits of it, though there are many people today who say there is no use in religion.

The Doxology was sung, and the Pastor closed the meeting with a few words of prayer.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *The Christian's Pathway* (1919) pp. 90-91.



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*The interior of Lamberhurst Chapel in 2016*

There are, to our knowledge, no sermons of William Boorman's extant. The closest thing we have to a record of his ministry is a newspaper report of an occasion when he took the Thanksgiving services at Jireh Chapel, Haywards Heath, in 1921.<sup>16</sup>

The annual harvest thanksgiving service at the Jireh Strict Baptist Chapel were held on Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> October. The sun streamed from a sky of cloudless blue and the grateful shade of the interior of the chapel was especially welcome during the afternoon. The services took place at 2.45 and six o'clock and both were attended by large congregations. The officiating minister was Mr. W. Boorman, and at the organ was Mr. W Smyth. The hymns at the afternoon service were "O bless the Lord, my soul." "For mercies countless as the sands." and "And did the Holy and the Just." Mr. Boorman took his text from Psalm 50:14 "Offer unto

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<sup>16</sup> He took these services annually from 1916-1925.

God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High.” He said that God looked upon the heart of man and not on the outside appearance. No exterior gift would pass with him. They had assembled that afternoon to thank God for his mercies during the year that was past. Some men would say that they had little to be thankful for. They had been afflicted and things had seemed averse. That was the work of the enemy, who would try to hide God’s love. When men thought like that the Deity was robbed of honour and glory and Satan was well pleased. The sacrifice of God was a broken spirit. They could not break their own hard hearts, but when they realised how long-suffering God had been to them and had not dealt with them according to their sins, their hearts became as butter before the sun. God was the God of providence and had crowned the year with goodness, but were they satisfied with external things? The preacher quoted St. Paul when he said, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” That gift surpasses all others. It was no profit to a man if he gained the whole world and lost his own soul. Mr Boorman gave an illustration of the labouring man who was tried by most difficult circumstances and yet remained true and eventually triumphed. The point of the story was in fact that the man worked and had faith. The preacher pointed out that God would not help those who laid down beside their troubles and went to sleep. If a man did not work neither should he eat. He recalled the time when he personally was so tried that he thought he would end in a lunatic asylum. Thanksgiving should not only be given for harvest but for health and happiness and bodily comforts. Yet after all temporal mercies faded into insignificance before the greatest of all mercies – the gift of Christ. Was there not a cause for thankfulness, the speaker asked, in the fact that they were not cut off by their own sins in the depths of hell? True thankfulness did not spring from nature’s soil. People often said they were very thankful for different things. They might be very glad if it suited their pockets or temporal interests, but rendering thanks to God did not stand like that. Temporal

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interests sank into nothingness. It was not so, however, with spiritual things. What was the world and all it stood for to those with a hope beyond? God was not carried away by words. Heart service was essential. There must not be boasting of earthly riches, for wealth sometimes took wings and flew away. God's people should not build on anything they had done on earth. The preacher asked if his hearers had ever been thankful that God had provided a throne of grace in the day of trouble, or had they felt gratitude for his word? He feared that they were living in days when the great God of the universe was set at naught. Had they ever had cause to thank God that some pet scheme had been laid low and some lesson thereby gained? He thought they had. God was not in need of temporal help, but even a cup of cold water given in his name was given to him. He did not want them to send £5 notes up to heaven; there were God's poor and afflicted saints on earth who needed them. The speaker made an eloquent appeal to his hearers to make their thanksgiving practical and at the same time not let their right hand know what the left was doing. The collections throughout the day were in aid of the Gospel Standard Poor Relief Societies. Between the services tea was dispensed by Mrs. Scutt, Mrs. Lindfield, Miss Waters, Mr. H. Tanner and Miss H. Johnson. We may mention in conclusion that the Chapel Deacons are Mr H. Scutt and Mr. Johnson, of Scaynes Hill, and their work in connection with the edifice is much appreciated.<sup>17</sup>

In April, 1924, Mr Boorman's health failed, and he was unable to preach until July of that year, after which he had to sit while preaching. The church book goes on to record his death in 1926.

On Wednesday evening, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1926, the beloved pastor, Mr William Boorman, passed away to be forever with the Lord, after the long period of holding the pastorate of 45 years.

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<sup>17</sup> *The Mid Sussex Times*, Tuesday 11 October 1921.

## *Life and Letters of William Boorman*

He loved the doctrines of free and sovereign grace and earnestly contended for the same, which were meat and drink to his own soul. He realised the fulfilment of the promise that the Lord gave him many years ago, "Thou shalt come to thy grave in peace." The last time he occupied the pulpit, preaching his last sermons to his own dear people, was on Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1925. He preached from the following verses morning and afternoon: Acts 13<sup>th</sup>, 38-39. He read in the morning 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, Acts; in the afternoon he read Psalms 32 & 89. The following Sabbath he was enabled to go to Shover's Green. The last text he preached from was Psalm 23, 1<sup>st</sup> verse, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," in the Wadhurst Town Chapel. A faithful and loving pastor, ever seeking the good of the flock, has been taken from us to be with Christ, which is far better.

After preaching on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1925, Mr Boorman said, "I have taken a chill today," as he felt cold internally. He had actually suffered an internal haemorrhage. During December he appeared a little stronger, and was able to get outside at times, although he felt his time here was short.

Mr John Kemp gives a few more details of his last days, as follows:

In speaking to a friend he said, "These lines are so sweet to me at times:

Thou shalt see my glory soon,  
When the work of grace is done;  
Partner of my throne shalt be —  
Say, poor sinner, lovest thou me?

The last time he came downstairs was on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1926, in pain and weakness, without a murmur; and he said he desired to be as clay in the Lord's hand. He spoke several times of a

## Biography

promise the Lord had given him in his early days: “Thou shalt come to thy grave in peace.” ...

About a fortnight before his death he was taken much worse, but it was not thought that his end was so near. He got weaker every day, and when asked by his daughter whether he felt comfortable in his mind at the prospect of death, he said, “Oh yes, it is peace and rest.” He asked for Hart’s and Beeman’s hymn books, and on the 34<sup>th</sup> hymn<sup>18</sup> in Beeman’s being found, he said, “Read that hymn, that’s it.”

When the writer visited him during his affliction, he was resting on the finished work of Christ, and felt a sweetness in reviewing the past, as we conversed together of the Lord’s gracious dealings; but he wanted another visit from the Lord to confirm the whole, and strength to endure affliction and patiently await whatever the future might bring. He naturally hoped he might yet somewhat recover, but having had the “earnest of the inheritance” awaiting him, he was willing to depart or to remain a little longer here, whatever the Lord’s will might be. This was some time before the end, and before extreme weakness prostrated him. During the last day or two he was only able to speak in a whisper, but his mind seemed perfectly clear. Just at the last he waved his hand, and fell asleep, agreeably to that word: “So he giveth his beloved sleep.” May our last end be like his.<sup>19</sup>

One of his daughters wrote to Francis Kirby, the pastor at Ramsgate and editor of *The Christian’s Pathway*:

I feel the Lord has been good indeed, both to us as a family and to our dear father in keeping his mind perfectly clear. The doctor told us that this was most unusual with the complaint from

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<sup>18</sup> “Let me dwell in Golgotha, Weep and love my life away, etc.” By John Newton. Beeman, I. (1845) *A Collection of Hymns intended as an appendix to Hart’s Hymns*. London: Eedes. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.

<sup>19</sup> *The Gospel Standard* (1927) p. 98.

which father was suffering. The last time father preached was on the second Sunday in November, 1925, from the words, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” The last few days of his illness were very painful ones, but no murmur ever came from his lips. He wished us all good-bye. He was only able to speak a few words, but enough to let us know it was ‘Peace.’<sup>20</sup>

The funeral was conducted at Wadhurst Town Chapel on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1926, by Mr John W. Harmer (East Grinstead)<sup>21</sup> and Mr Caleb Sawyer (Mayfield).<sup>22</sup> The chapel could not hold all the people who came to pay their respects. His remains were laid to rest in Wadhurst Cemetery in the company of about 200 friends. The hymns, “Immortal honours, rest on Jesus’ head” and “Fountain of life...” were sung. The local newspaper reported that, “As a minister of the gospel, he preached the whole counsel of God, adhered steadfastly to the truth and ‘wrapped up nothing.’”<sup>23</sup>

The esteem in which Mr Boorman was held is evidenced from the following newspaper cutting:

There were large congregations at the anniversary services on Wednesday, the preacher being Mr Sawyer of Mayfield. A marble memorial tablet, subscribed for by the congregation and members in memory of the late Mr William Boorman, who for 45 years was the esteemed and faithful pastor of the chapel, was dedicated. Tea was served between the services to about 140 people.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *The Christian’s Pathway* (1927) p. 64.

<sup>21</sup> *The Gospel Standard* (1945) p. 56.

<sup>22</sup> A brief obituary also appeared in *The Christian’s Pathway* (1927) p. 64.

<sup>23</sup> *Sevenoaks Chronicle and Kentish Advertiser*, Friday 1 October 1926, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> *Kent and Sussex Courier*, Friday 1 July 1927, p. 18.

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Mr Boorman was married on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1870, by Rev. W. S. Lawton, the first wedding to take place in the new Wesleyan chapel at Ticehurst.<sup>25</sup> His wife, Eliza (1849-1929; neé Sivyver), was a most supportive help meet. The Boormans lived all their married life at Nutlands, Cousley Wood, on the road between Wadhurst and Lamberhurst. From here William Boorman walked the three miles to and from the services at Lamberhurst Chapel for 45 years, in all kinds of weathers.<sup>26</sup> Of one of these walks, he writes: "How sweet the words last evening (as I was walking home from preaching, nearly three miles in snow), "Blessed is she that believed, for *there shall be a performance,*" &c. What could a poor creature like me do without that covenant, ordered in all things and sure?"

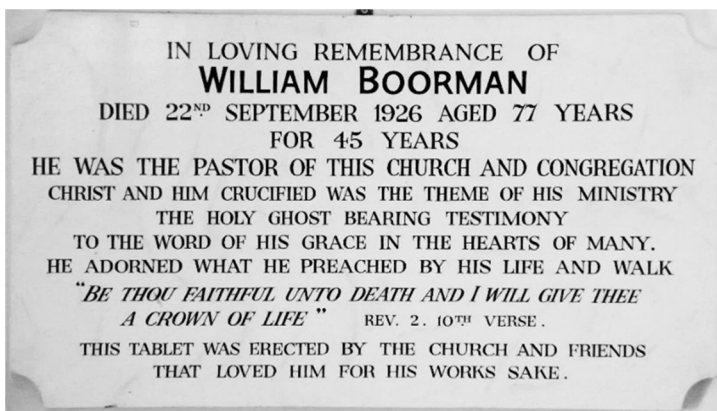
*In Loving Memory*  
of  
**WILLIAM BOORMAN,**  
AGED 77 YEARS.  
(For 45 years Pastor of Lamberhurst Baptist Church)  
*Entered into Rest September 22nd, 1926.*  
" TO DIE IS GAIN."

*The interior of William Boorman's memorial card*

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<sup>25</sup> *Kent and Sussex Courier*, Friday 11 June 1920 Friday p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> *Sevenoaks Chronicle and Kentish Advertiser*, Friday 1 October 1926, p. 16.



*William Boorman's memorial plaque in Lamberhurst Chapel*



*Nutlands, the Boorman's home, in 2016*



## *Biography*

Together William and Eliza had fourteen children, nine sons and five daughters, some of whom predeceased him. Two of their children emigrated to South Africa. Their eldest son, George, accompanied Lord Roberts to South Africa, serving in the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) in the South Africa War, and remained in South Africa when the war ended. Another son, Lincoln, also served in the RASC as a baker for 18 years, most of which he was stationed in Gibraltar. He also served in the South African War, but was invalided home and finally out of the Service, dying at the age of 40, in 1914.<sup>27</sup>

Of the death of his son Alfred on 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1894, aged 6 years, William writes in one of the letters in this book:

As long as memory lasts, I cannot forget the Sunday in Flimwell Old Chapel. The words were, "Be still, and know that I am God." The first hymn in the afternoon was,

Let me, thou sovereign Lord of all,  
Low at thy footstool humbly fall, etc.

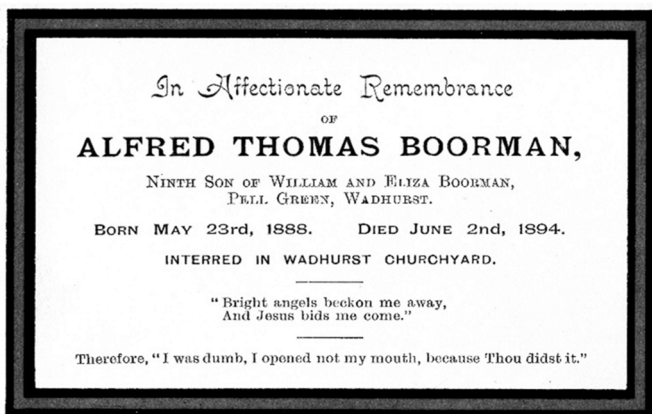
and when it came to the verse,

When and wherever thou shalt smite,  
Teach me to own thy sovereign right,  
And underneath the heaviest load,  
Be still and know that thou art God.

How it fell upon my spirit! My dear little boy died that week, on the Saturday morning about 2 o'clock, and when Mother said to me, "Alfred is gone," I burst out, "Bless the Lord, oh my soul," and the next morning I was enabled to preach from the words, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." How I have seen since that he was "taken from the evil."

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<sup>27</sup> *Kent and Sussex Courier*, Friday 11 June 1920 p. 2.



*Memorial card for Alfred Boorman*

When they marked their golden wedding anniversary in 1920, the Boormans had 20 grandchildren. Mrs Boorman survived her husband by a few years, passing away on Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> August, 1929.<sup>28</sup>

Her youngest daughter, Gertrude, wrote her obituary in *The Christian's Pathway*.

Our beloved mother, Eliza Boorman, entered into rest on Aug. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1929, after being confined to her bedroom nine weeks, during which time she was able to sit by the window. Her health had been failing for some time, and it was very evident to all around that she was nearing the end, and often she passed the remark that soon she would have done with all here below. It was not often that mother spoke of anything personal concerning soul matters, but now and then something would drop from her lips about the service, or a special hymn that was

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<sup>28</sup> *Kent and Sussex Courier*, Friday 16 August 1929 p. 2. Also: *The Christian's Pathway* (1930) p. 21.

*Biography*



*Mrs Eliza Boorman*

sung. She was always willing to do what she could for the little Cause at Lamberhurst where our dear father laboured so many years, and it often meant great sacrifice to her when we were all young, being a large family; but even after our dear father was taken home, her chief pleasure was to entertain the Lord's servants, and to minister to their comfort. The day before

*Life and Letters of William Boorman*

mother was taken home I asked her if she knew how very ill she was, when she replied, "Yes, and I want to go home." I said, "Then you are not afraid, Mother," she then said, "No, I'm not afraid, I will be at rest and peace." Mother was always glad when the minister (either for Pell Green or Lamberhurst) went up to read and speak in prayer, and Mr Billenness, of Eastbourne, spoke afterwards of having sweet liberty and a savour resting on his spirit, while reading to mother the latter part of Isaiah 33., when he felt he would see her face no more. Mother was laid to rest in the same grave as our father on Aug. 14th, by Mr C. Sawyer, of Mayfield. In his remarks he said it might be spoken truthfully of our mother, "She hath done what she could"; also he felt that the servants of God had lost a real friend. We have lost one of the best of mothers, but we sorrow not as those without hope.<sup>29</sup>



*Gertrude Boorman, probably with her grandfather, Thomas, c.1897*

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<sup>29</sup> *The Christian's Pathway* (1930) Supplement p. 21.

# LETTERS

[1]

To Mrs Thunder, Pell Green

Pell Green,

Tuesday, October 1881

Dear Friend,

The time is drawing on for the reopening of our chapel.<sup>30</sup> I wrote to Mr Taverner last evening (in order, as far as lieth in me, to prevent mistakes) and said you would expect him at P[*addock*] Wood Station, also no doubt Mrs Thunder has communicated with him concerning the journey &c.

Friend Fullbrook has made arrangement for the fly<sup>31</sup> to meet at your house. I do not know if you had a bill, so I have enclosed you one.

Dear friend, it is my earnest desire and prayer that the Lord would arise for our help in more sense than one. Lamberhurst is a dark place indeed. I do not know what the Lord will do. I trust there are a few people that his hand is being put to then work. It is the Lord's work, not man's. Salvation is of the Lord, not of men.

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<sup>30</sup> Lamberhurst Chapel was closed during 1881 for refurbishments. Re-opening services were held on Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> November, 1881, when Mr William Taverner, the pastor at Bethel Chapel, Rye, and member at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, preached at 2.30 and 6.30 p.m. Tea served between the services cost 6 pence per person.

<sup>31</sup> A type of horse-drawn vehicle.

What a poor thing I feel myself to be in such an important work! The jawbone of an ass was a very unsightly instrument. Not much polish save that of nature; nothing artificial about it, yet a great work was done by it. I can only fall as clay in the hands of the Potter. Do with me as seemeth good in thy sight, O Lord.

I came to Lamberhurst first with the words, "Be still and know that I am God." Oh that grace may be given to watch and wait for him; not with carnal ease, nor with the zeal of the Pharisee, but to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

With Christian love to yourself, Mr and Mrs Kemp, &c.

From yours in the truth,

Wm. Boorman

[Source: Manuscript in the possession of the editor.]

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[2]

To Mrs Thunder, Pell Green

Pell Green,

Tuesday, October 1881

Dear Friend,

In answer to yours of this morning. I wish to give you the liberty of bringing what friends you may have as I have no others on the way. I think Mr Fullbrook has given the man to understand there would be a friend or two as well as Mr Taverner. But, Dv., I hope to see Fullbrook on Wednesday afternoon (tomorrow). I will ask him (as he has spoken to the man) the particulars, and if it is not

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agreeable I will write to the man myself, so that I hope you may rest comfortable concerning the matter.

How can two walk together expect they be agreed, or ride together, or worship together? The disciples of old were of one heart, of one soul. Unity is strength and that is what we want at Lamberhurst. For we are a weak and feeble folk so that discord would be the worst thing we could well have.

I am glad to hear you found yourself repaid for your visit, and if the Lord permit, you may be favoured yet again. I am often amazed at the condescension of the Lord to teach and lead such as unworthy wretch as me in the footsteps of the flock. I often repeat in heart:

Indulgent God, how kind,  
Are all thy ways to me! etc.

If ever there was a poor soul who hated electing love and sovereign grace, it was me. But I do hope he has subdued my enmity and pride so that I can now say with Jonah, "Salvation is of the Lord." A feeling sense of which will drive doubt and discontentment away and cause a rebellious sinner to be as submissive as a lamb. But these things are only viewed by faith and walked in by faith, so that as our faith rises our unbelief sinks, our rebellion gives way, so that whatsoever is not of faith is sin. The warfare is between faith and unbelief; between sin and holiness; between rebellion and resignation; between love and hatred; between hope and fear. Hoping the dear Lord will bring us safely through is the prayer of yours in hope of eternal life,

Wm. Boorman

[Source: Manuscript in the possession of the editor.]

*Overleaf: Facsimiles of letters 1 and 2.*

Pell Green  
Tuesday

Mrs Thunder

Dear Friend

The time is drawing near for the reopening of our Chapel, I wrote to Mr Lawrence last evening (in order as far as lieth in me to prevent mistakes) and said you would expect him at P Wood Station also no doubt. Mr Thunder had communicated with him concerning the journey &c. Friend Fullbrook has made arrangement for the fly to meet at your house, I do know if you have a bill so I have enclosed you one



Dear friend

It is my earnest desire  
and prayer that the Lord  
would arise for our help  
in more senses than one  
Lambert is a dark  
place indeed, I do not  
know what the Lord will do  
I trust. There are a few proofs  
that His Hand is being put  
to the work, it is the Lords  
work not mans, Salvation  
is of the Lord not of man  
What a poor thing I feel  
myself to be in such an  
important work, The  
jaw bone of an ass was  
a very unsightly instrument  
not much polish save  
that of nature nothing  
artificial about it yet  
a great work was done by it

I can only fall as clay  
in the hands of the Potter  
do with me as seemeth good  
in thy sight O Lord. I came  
to Lambethurst first with the  
Words, Be still and know  
that I am God. Oh that  
Grace may be given to  
Watch and wait for Him  
not with carnal ease  
nor with the zeal of the  
Pharisee. But to contend  
earnestly for the faith  
once delivered to the  
saints

With Christian Love to  
yourself Mr & Mrs K. &c  
from yours in the truth  
Wm. Burroughs

Bell Green  
Tuesday

Mrs. Thunder

Dear Friend

I am answer to yours of this morning. I wish to give you the liberty of bringing what friends you may have, as I have no others on the way. I think Fullbrook has given the man to understand there would be a friend or two as well as Mr. J. But, D. I, I hope to see Fullbrook on Wednesday afternoon (tomorrow) I will ask him (as he has spoken to the man) the particulars, and if it is most agreeable I will write to the man myself so that I hope you may rest comfortable concerning the matter. How can two walk together except they be agreed or ride together, or worship together the disciples of old, were of one heart.

of our Soul, Unity is Strength, and  
That is what we want at Lambert  
for we are a weak and feeble folk.  
So That discord would be the worst  
thing we could well have, Am  
glad to hear you found yourself  
repaid for your visit, and if the  
Lord permit you may be favoured  
yet again. I am often amazed  
at the condescension of the Lord to  
teach and lead such an unworthy  
wretch as me in the footsteps of  
the flock. I often repeat in heart  
Indulgent God how kind are all  
Thy ways to me &c  
If ever there was a poor soul who  
hated collecting Love and Sovereign  
Grace, it was me, But I do  
hope He has subdued my enmity  
and pride so that I can now  
say with Jonah

"Salvation is of the Lord"  
A feeling sense of which  
will drive doubt and discontent  
away and cause a rebellious  
sinner, to be as submissive  
as a lamb, But these things  
are only viewed by faith and  
walked in by faith so that  
as our faith rises our unbelief  
sinks our rebellion gives way  
so that whatsoever is not of  
faith is sin. The wayfare  
is between faith and unbelief  
between sin and holiness  
between rebellion and resignation  
between love and hatred  
between hope and fear  
Trusting the dear Lord will  
bring us safely through is the  
prayer of yours in hope  
of Eternal Life  
Wm Brown

[3]

To Andrew J. Baxter, editor of *The Gospel Advocate*<sup>32</sup>

Pell Green, Wadhurst

December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1890

Dear Sir,

It is now fourteen or fifteen years since I first purchased *The Gospel Advocate*, and have been a reader of it ever since. And now one more year has nearly passed away, and we remain yet alive, whilst many of the Lord's dear people are taken home; they being taken from the evil to come. With them the strife, the conflict, the battle is over; their days of mourning are ended. Their sun had often been eclipsed, but "their sun shall no more go down." *We* are still in the trial. In taking a view of the past twenty-three years since the Lord first appeared for me, I must say it has been a succession of trials and deliverances, sunshine and shadow, days and nights, colds and heats – sometimes ardently following after the Lord and for a deeper knowledge of his Son, then growing cold, languid and stupid. Oh how foolishly we reckon when first brought into life. I thought all my troubles were gone, and I hoped gone for ever, since the Lord had put away the burden of my sin, so that it was joy and peace in believing. But soon the season changed, and the Lord powerfully applied the words, "I will try thee as gold." I have known something of providential trials. We have had fourteen children, eleven are alive, and ten of

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<sup>32</sup> Mr Baxter was pastor of the Independent churches at Nottingham, then later Cavendish Place, Eastbourne. He edited *The Gospel Advocate* between 1869 and 1905.

*Letters*

them gather round my table; then to add to this, a very weak and sickly body, yet I trust I can enter into the language of Hart –

Afflictions make us see,  
What else would 'scape our sight,  
How very foul and dim are we,  
And God how pure and bright.

It is an easy thing to talk of trusting in God and confiding in his promises, when no trouble, no trial, no distress, attend us; but to come into trial with all the attendant evils of a corrupt nature, tempting devil, temporal circumstances almost crushing, and feel one cannot get near to God, from a sense that one's own sins have separated, and iniquities have hid his face – this is heavy work. Yet again and again have I proved him to be the lifter up of mine head. Not long since the word was made so precious, “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things;” also, “The Lord is their inheritance.” How sharply he tries the faith which he gives, yet it is sweet when there is a welling up (springing up) in one's soul. Thou hast said, Lord, this is thy word, it is thy promise. How sweet the words last evening (as I was walking home from preaching, nearly three miles in snow), “Blessed is she that believed, for *there shall be a performance,*” &c. What could a poor creature like me do without that covenant, ordered in all things and sure? Here's a foundation, the oath and promise, the faithfulness of the Three-in-One and One-in-Three. The Elohim, Shaddai, the Almighty, the Eternal God. Yea, “The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” Pardon this scribble.

From yours sincerely,

William Boorman

[Source: *The Gospel Advocate* (1891) pp. 23-24.]