



The Baptists first started to meet in Rutland in the 1650's, following the upheaval to practices of worship that arose during the Civil War. In Oakham, a local preacher called Samuel Oates stirred controversy in 1646 for the *"gathering together of unlawful, and disorderly assemblies and dispensing of unsound doctrine unto the people"*. Oates lived at 29 Melton Road, opposite the present Baptist Church, and so this part of the town has a long history of being associated with non-conformist worship.

The first documented mention of a Baptist meeting in Oakham dates from 1651, when they were worshipping with a group centred at Burley-on-the-Hill. This meeting was still in existence in 1715 in spite of persecution from the town. From 1766 a meeting was held at a private house in Oakham and births of children from the group began to be formally recorded as Baptists. This meeting included William Smith, who would later become the first minister of Oakham Baptist Church.

A Particular Baptist group from Morcott relocated to Oakham in 1770 and the private meeting house was judged too small. The congregation established a Chapel on the High Street in 1771. On the 5th November 1772, 22 people made a solemn covenant to form a Baptist congregation. This was not without controversy, as worship outside of the Anglican communion was not always tolerated. Purchasing land to construct the Chapel in 1771 was made difficult due to this social stigma, and a private agreement was eventually made to buy a group of old cottages and an orchard.

The building was enlarged in 1830 and the 1836 Oakham Enclosure Map shows the Baptist Chapel within its present site on Melton Lane. A few years after this the burial ground was formally closed for burials in 1857, subject to the terms of the 1853 Burial Act. In 1870 the Chapel was thoroughly restored at a cost of £500.

In 1894, a two-storey brick extension was added to the rear of the building to house the schoolrooms.



The rear of the church today, showing the 1894 extension