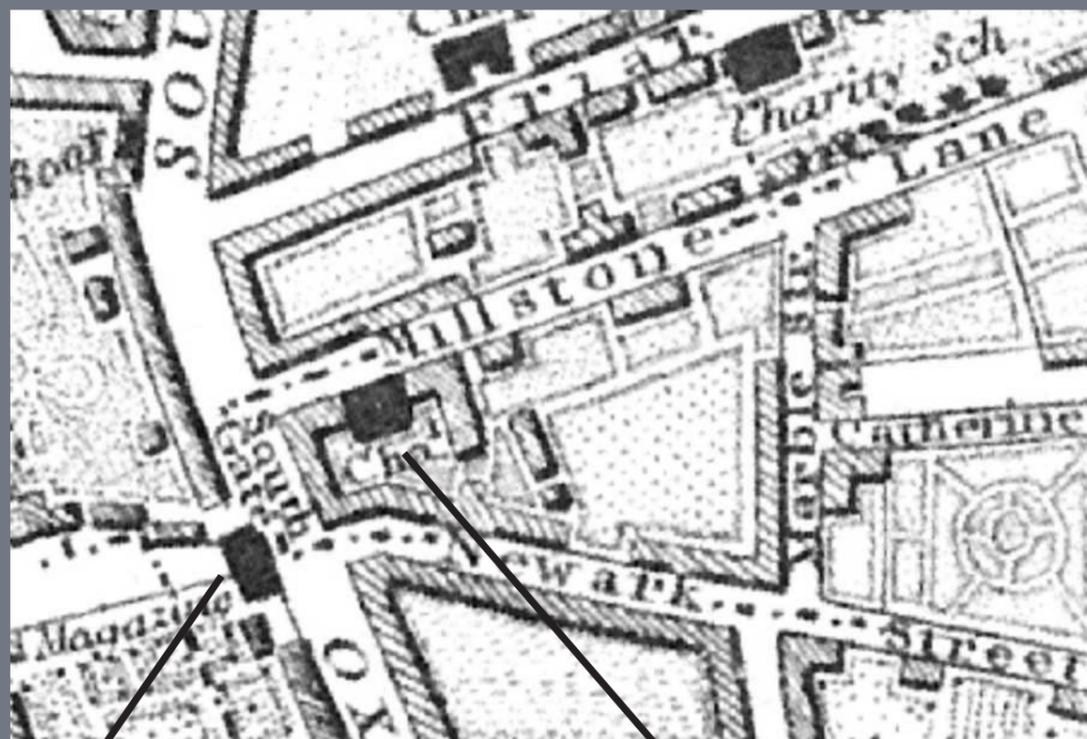


A Dragoon and Enthusiast

JOHN BRANDON

John Brandon is mentioned in John Wesley's Journal as being the leader of a small Society of Methodists in Leicester, which had formed after Wesley's first visit in 1753. John Brandon was a dragoon (a light cavalryman) possibly from a local militia, and when Wesley returned by his invitation on 14 April 1757, it was to a big gathering of people eager to hear him in a



Site of the Magazine Gateway into the area of the Newarke. This 15th century building came to be used as a weapons and gunpowder store by the local militia, and the area alongside was used as a drill yard.

Site of the Old Barn, possibly a medieval barn of the Greyfriars (Franciscans). Thanks to the generosity of Mr Lewis, the Methodists met there and later built a chapel on the same site, shown on this map of 1828.



This picture shows a dragoon of the 1740s shows the kind of uniform and equipment that John Brandon might have worn



chapel in Bishop Street, but his encouragement and leadership were significant in the formation of the first Leicester Methodist society.

The Magazine Gateway, seen in this picture from between the wars, shows additional buildings that have now gone, and which would have enclosed the drill yard used by the militia. It is just over the road from the first meeting place of the earliest Methodist meetings, so John Brandon was able to bring along large numbers of his fellow soldiers.

building called the Old Barn on Millstone Lane. These included 40-50 soldiers, no doubt encouraged by John Brandon to attend. It seems that soon afterwards John Brandon felt the call to give up soldiering to become a travelling preacher. John Wesley mentions him in his Journal as preaching by 1 December 1757 and the Wesleyan Methodist magazine of Feb 1834 notes that the "Markfield and Leicester Societies united in their contributions to secure his liberty", which suggests that they might have bought him out of active service. Afterwards he was said to be active in preaching in the Ashby area in Leicestershire and was known to have been stationed in Colchester in 1765. He was back in Leicester by 1766. We don't know exactly when he died and it is likely he did not live to see the new