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# Cheltenham Catholic Apostolic Church

by Richard Barton

## Background: The Catholic Apostolic Church and its architecture

From: JOHN BOWKER “Catholic Apostolic Church” (The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions Encyclopedia.com (August 11, 2020))

‘This millennialist denomination, notable for its liturgy and aristocratic tone, derived from meetings held from 1826 at Albury Park, the Surrey home of the London banker and Tory politician, Henry Drummond (1786–1860). Their intention was to explore the implications of biblical prophecy. Among those attending was Edward Irving, minister of Regent Square Scottish Church, London, then at the peak of his wayward genius, but increasingly suspect for his views on the human nature of Christ and further isolated when speaking in tongues broke out among his people in 1831.

Excluded from Regent Square in 1832, and from the Church of Scotland in 1833, Irving established a congregation in Newman Street. This became the first Holy Catholic Apostolic Church, but Irving was not its leader for, though its adherents were popularly known as ‘Irvingites’, he was not held to possess apostolic gifts.

Liberal support by Drummond, the new body developed a hierarchy of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors, with deacons to superintend material needs. Its remarkable liturgy drew on Church of Scotland, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox elements, aptly reflected in the architecture of its main London church, Christ the King, Gordon Square (1854), which remains, though unfinished, one of Britain’s finest expressions of the gothic revival. Since only apostles could ordain, the Church, which claimed 6,000 members in 30 congregations in 1851, lost its impetus after the last apostle’s death in 1901.

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/catholic-apostolic-church>

Writing in 1987, Kenneth Powell considered the Church's commitment to art and architecture in an appreciation of their Maida Avenue Church which overlooks the Grand Union Canal in Little Venice:

*'The "charismatic" religion associated with Irving had a strong appeal to those who were tired of Georgian rationalism. In particular, it appealed to a group of Evangelical laymen who had gathered around the banker, and sometime Member of Parliament, Henry Drummond (1786-1860). Convicted of their duty to prepare the way of Christ, Drummond and his companions declared themselves to be "Apostles", each with a duty to preach the new dispensation to a region of the world. John Cardale was recognised as the first Apostle in 1832 and a year later he ordained Irving as an "Angel" or bishop of the Church.*

*The publication in 1851 of Henry Drummond's 'Principles of Ecclesiastical Buildings and Ornaments' provided a manual for fitting out Catholic Apostolic churches according to a strict symbolism. Seven lamps symbolised the sevenfold eldership. Two standing lamps, flanking the altar symbolised the roles of Apostle and Prophet – candles were proscribed as "unscriptural". A central hanging lamp before the Tabernacle was always to have a glass of golden hue. The rites of the Church had a sombre magnificence which avoided the "histrionic mummeries" of Rome ...*



Catholic Apostolic Church, Gordon Square, London

*At the end of 1853 a cathedral-style church was opened in Gordon Square, Bloomsbury. Designed by Raphael Brandon, it was the largest church built since the Reformation. The Apostles accepted the Gothic Revival eagerly ...*

*The Rev. Desmond Morse-Boycott wrote of the Catholic Apostolic Church: “they awaited the Lord ... and He tarried. They await him still”. By the early 1890s, most of the Apostles had died. The new Maida Avenue church (in London) was to be a symbol of continuing faith, and a limited competition for its design was held. Pearson got the job.’*

(Country Life, 3rd September 1987, Kenneth Powell, ‘Uncompromised by Change’)



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Built in 1839 for the Catholic Apostolic Church in Bristol to the designs of Richard Shackleton Pope. The unfinished building was sold to the Roman Catholics in 1843.

## Catholic Apostolic Church in Cheltenham

Some years before his death, Brian Torode was researching the history of the Catholic Apostolic Church in Cheltenham. He was in communication with His Beatitude Patriarch Seraphim who informed him that addresses and lectures were held in the town during the years 1874 and 1875.

According to the 1872 Catholic Apostolic Church Address Book the congregation held meetings at York Rooms near High Street. The Deacon at that time was Benjamin Cam Norton of Gainsborough House, Bath Road. He was a well-known painter of horses who had presumably been drawn to the town by the race course.

Benjamin came from Guildford where his father had a barber's shop. Benjamin was baptised at Albury on 4th May 1834, son of John and Katharine Norton. They must have been very early members of the 'One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church' there. In 1860 he and Eliza Nowill were married at the Catholic Apostolic Church in Sheffield. Their daughter Lucy was born in Sheffield and their son George Clarence, who was born in Cheltenham, was baptised in Stroud Parish Church on 5th February 1864.

I have found Benjamin Cam Norton in the 1881 census at 7 Park Place, Cheltenham. He was described as a forty-six-year-old portrait and animal painter, born in Guildford. His wife Eliza was born in Sheffield. Benjamin's mother, Katharine Rebecka was living with them in 1881 too. The Nortons had moved to Cambridgeshire by 1891 and on 1st January 1900 Benjamin Cam Norton died at Cotswold Villa, in the racing town of Newmarket.

Returning to 1872, the York Rooms were probably in the York Hotel near to York Passage. This pedestrian passage, now anonymous, led north from High Street to Grosvenor Terrace. Named after the adjacent York Hotel, one of the principal inns in the coaching era and its site is now occupied by no. 85 High Street. Coincidentally, there is a tradition that the Roman Catholic community was using the York Hotel in the early 1800s before they built their first church.

Norman May's Guide to Cheltenham of 1883/4, quoting from the Cheltenham Examiner Newspaper for 1882, gives a summary of attendance at worship in local churches on 5th February of that year:

Catholic Apostolic: 1 place of worship; 100 sittings; 13 present in morning, 21 in the evening.  
Total: 34.

By this time, it is likely that the congregation had moved to 'a dingy building' which occupied the site of their new church in Grosvenor Street.

The new church was opened in 1900 and was built to the design of Herbert Norman of Wolverhampton.

Cheltenham Borough Council Planning Application for 1899:

No. 1249: The Deacons of the Catholic Apostolic Church applied to build a Church in Grosvenor Street, Cheltenham

CBR/C5/6/2/2/4....CBR/C5/6/1/1/3

From the local newspapers:

*'Opening of a New Church – For the accommodation of the Catholic Apostolic Church, a new church has been erected in Grosvenor-street, on the site of the dingy-looking building in which the members of this communion formerly worshipped. The new erection is red brick and stone, and is of somewhat plain appearance, both externally and internally. It will accommodate about two hundred worshippers. Services were conducted in it for the first time on Sunday last.'* (Cheltenham Examiner 8th August 1900)

*'The New Catholic Apostolic Church – As an addition to our notes of last week on the new Catholic Apostolic Church in Grosvenor-street, it may be stated that the front elevation is of a pleasing character, and is built of pressed brick and Bath stone, in the Tudor-Gothic style, with a large five-light tracery window, below which is a small four-light window. The windows are filled with plain cathedral oblong leaded glass, and provided with wrought-iron stanchon bars. The chancel floor is of red tiles, and the ceiling is formed with moulded panels, with bosses at the intersection of the ribs. The roof in the nave is of timber and plaster, and has four principals, resting upon carved stone corbels. The interior walls are finished in plaster, and prepared to receive decoration of good character. The sitting accommodation is for 120. The building was opened on August 3rd by special celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the service being conducted by the ministers of the Bath Church, of which this is a "dependency." Mr. Herbert Norman, of Northampton, was the architect, and Messrs. Collins and Godfrey the builders.'* (15th August 1900)

The Church in Bath, built in Guinea Lane, in 1841, was designed in a Norman revival style by the City architect, George Phillips Manners (1789 – 1866). However, this building fell out of use and was sold in 1950 to the Roman Catholics for use as a church hall. According to the 1872, 1896 and 1938 Catholic Apostolic Church Address Books, the Bath congregation was worshipping in this attractive church building, adjoining no. 20 Vineyards.

It would appear that the 'mother church' in Bath may have resulted from the activity of the convert Anglican priest, Arthur Charles Whalley (1802-1880). In 1842, as a widower of this address, he had married his wife, Anna Georgina Audain, who lived next door. In 1851 they were living at 8 Claremont Place and he was described as a forty-eight-year-old *'Priest of the Catholic Apostolic Church – Graduate of Oxford University – Pembroke College B.A.'* Ten years later they were at 9 Cleveland Place West and Arthur was then listed as *'Bishop of the Catholic Apostolic Church, having formerly been a Clergyman of the Church of England.'* Strangely, the 1864/5 Post Office Trade Directory still lists him amongst the Anglican clergy and living at 4 Richmond Hill. The 1871 census has Arthur, a *'clergyman of the Catholic Apostolic*

*Church', living once again at 20 Vineyards with his wife, daughter and two servants. The 1872 Catholic Apostolic Church address book listed Bishop (Angel) Whalley as living at 20 Vineyards. Dr Tim Grass has written, 'Whalley was called by prophecy as a deacon of the church in London on 30 June 1835, i.e. at the start of the period of prayer preceding the separation of the apostles on 14 July. On 29 December he was called as angel of the church at Dumfries, and ordained as such on 15 January 1836. It seems that by c.1870, he also had responsibility for the church at Frome, which may have been placed under Bath due to a shortage of ministers. At his death he was angel of the church in Bristol.*

*It may be significance that there was a scutch of Anglican priests around Bath and NE Somerset who joined the CAC during the early 1830s (and a couple of Baptist ministers); I think the origins of Bath may owe quite a bit to some of the apostles, notably Armstrong and Perceval. Later on, Cardale was involved, I think.'*

According to the 1896 church address book, Bath had an Angel named Charles Stephen Fowle (1824-1908), a retired Major-General in the Bengal Staff Corps. He was then living at St. Stephen's Lodge, Lansdown, Bath, and was responsible for the congregation in Cheltenham as well.

Charles was born at Cerne in Dorset, a son of the Reverend Fulwar William Fowle (1791-1876) and his wife, Emily, nee Hallett (1789-1899). Charles was serving in Barrackpore in Bengal when he married his wife, Emily Allen (1836-1927) on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1865 and they had a daughter, Frances, born at Meerut in the following year, and a son, William who died shortly after his birth at Peshawur in 1870. In 1881 the Fowle Family was in Bath, living at 22 Park Street, Walcot, but they later settled at St Stephen's Lodge where Charles died. He was buried on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1908 at St Swithin, Walcot, by the Anglican Archdeacon of Bath. There are more members and ministers of the Catholic Apostolic Church buried in Bath.



Exterior



Interior

The 1896 Catholic Apostolic Church address book, lists the deacon at Cheltenham as being W. Jones who lived at 2 Neville Villas. Looking at the census returns William Jones was living at 8 Selkirk Parade Cheltenham in 1891. He was described as a Librarian, aged 31, and born in Leeds.



*Deacon William Jones*

William Jones was actually born on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1860 and baptised at a nonconformist church in Leeds on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1860. His father, William Saville Jones, who died in 1881, was a Glass and China Dealer and the young William was brought up in Potter Newton. At the time of the



1881 census William was working as an Assistant Librarian in Leeds and by 1891 he was the Librarian at Cheltenham.

William had married Margaret Phy(i)llis Brewster (1865-1936) in London in 1894. Margaret was the daughter of Edwin Frederick Brewster (1819-1887), an Angel (Bishop) of the Catholic Apostolic Congregation in White Notley. He lived at White Notley Hall where the congregation had a meeting room.

By the time of the 1901 census, William and Margaret were living at 1 Eldon Villas, Hales Road, Cheltenham. In 1911 he was described as the Borough Librarian and Curator and living still at 1 Eldon Villas with Margaret and their children, William Saville Jones, Charles Lambert Jones, Margaret Dorothea Jones and Cicely Grace Jones. Their two sons were killed during the First World War.

Their son, William Saville Jones, was born in 1895:



*(Lieutenant William Saville Jones, Northumberland Fuseliers 4th Batallion, died 27-05-1918. Deacon William and his wife lived in Sheffield Ribbledin 6, Elmore Road. He is commemorated in Soissons France)*

Their son, Charles Lambert Jones, was born in 1896:



*(Lieutenant Charles Lambert Jones Gloucestershire Regiment 10th Battallion died 15-06-1916. Maroc British Cemetery Grenay France memorial I.A.12. Inscription: HARK, MY SOUL! IT IS THE LORD. Deacon William and his wife lived in Sheffield Ribbledin 6, Elmore Road.)*

Deacon William Jones died On 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1936 at Nether Edge Hospital Sheffield. Probate Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Margaret Phillis Jones widow and Bertram Brewster of no occupation. His effects were valued at £747. 7s. 11d.

There was a third deacon at Cheltenham according to the Church Address Book of 1919. His name was George Pewtress Woodward and he was born on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1862. His father, George Woodward senior, came from Bath and he was working as a Music Seller and living at Promenade Villas at the time that his twin sons, George and Frank were baptised at St Mary's Parish Church. His wife, Elizabeth Mary Pewtress (1827-1903) came from London and in 1881 she and her husband were living with their family at Pemberton Villa in St Luke's Parish. George senior was again described as a Music Dealer, George junior was listed as an Artist and Frank was described as Music (Mechanical).



*George Woodward (1817-1905) and Elizabeth Mary nee Pewtress (1827-1903)*

Ten years later George Pewtress Woodward and his wife, Sarah Louisa, were living at 15 Oakfield Grove, Clifton, Bristol, where they were pursuing various artistic endeavours. The 1901 census finds George back in Cheltenham and working as a Photographer at 27 Winchcombe Street, Later the couple lived at Hewlett House, 17 Hewlett Street. George Pewtress Woodward died on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1940 in Cheltenham, his effects were valued at £132 6s 6d, and Sarah Louisa died in 1941, aged 80 years.

Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1940, Gloucestershire Echo, 'Mr. G. P. Woodward, Death of Well-known Cheltenham Photographer':

*'The death has taken place suddenly at his home in 12 Royal Crescent, Cheltenham, of Mr. George Pewtress Woodward, a well-known Cheltenham photographer. Mr Woodward came from a Cheltenham family of artists and musicians, and was himself a very clever pen-and-ink draughtsman. Educated locally, he learned his art first in Bath and then in Paris. He was 77 years of age and had lived in Cheltenham almost all his life.'*

Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1940, Gloucestershire Echo, 'Mr. G. P. Woodward':

*'The funeral took place at Cheltenham Cemetery to-day of Mr. George Pewtress Woodward, formerly a well-known photographer and artist, whose death took place on Saturday at his home, Hewlett House, Hewlett-road, at the age of 77. The simple service was conducted by the Rev. C. H. Lancaster, (vicar of St. John's).*

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> February 1940, Gloucestershire Echo, Letter to the Editor, 'Mr. G. P. Woodward':

*'Sir, - Through the columns of your paper I should like to pay a tribute to George Pewtress Woodward. He was a very dear friend, and so I think I am qualified to speak of him.*

*In your paper of Tuesday, February 27, I see that he is described as a pen-and-ink draughtsman. In reality he was far more than this, both in oil paintings and water-colours he was an artist of the highest order.*

*His favourite theme was the sky. This is no easy subject, and yet his pictures were living representations and so delicately touched that they show all the beauty and ever-changing glory of the sky and cloud. He also excelled with portraits in oils, and several late businessmen of Cheltenham have their portraits painted by this little-known artist.*

*He did not learn art – he was born an artist as the delicacy of his work shows. He only went to Paris to perfect this great gift.*

*A Friend, Cheltenham'*

Interestingly, the National Archives Collection lists a 'Photograph, head and shoulders, of the Reverend Gordon Fairbairn' who was probably the minister of Cambray Baptist Church in Cheltenham. The copyright author and owner of work was George Pewtress Woodward, The

Studio, 27 Winchcombe Street, Cheltenham (Form completed: 13 March 1902. Registration stamp: 1902 March 14).

In 1933 the Local Education Authority wanted to open a woodwork and handiwork centre in Cheltenham. They acquired All Saints' Church House in Grosvenor Street, a building which had been the Catholic Apostolic Church. The Trustees had decided to close it in 1922 when it was handed over to All Saints at a nominal rent on a long lease. The closure was the result of diminished congregations and lack of Catholic Apostolic Priests or Deacons, in the west of England, to secure the continuance of the Church. The trustees were consulted and gave their consent for the building to be used as a woodwork and handicraft centre.

**CHELtenham** (*under Bristol*). † monthly.  
(D) G. P. WOODWARD, Hewlett House, Hewlett Street.  
**CHEPSTOW** (*under Bristol*) \*

Adressbuch 1946

**CHELtenham** (*under Bristol*). † monthly.  
**CHEPSTOW** (*under Bristol*) \*

Adressbuch 1951

Telephone: BUCkhurst 3069.  
**CHELtenham** (*under Bristol*). †  
**CHEPSTOW** (*under Bristol*) \*

Cheltenham was listed in the Catholic Apostolic Church address books until as late as 1951 and in 1946 it refers to the monthly meeting there.



Sanctuary area

Richard Barton (September 2020)

I would like to thank all those who have helped me to produce this brief article.