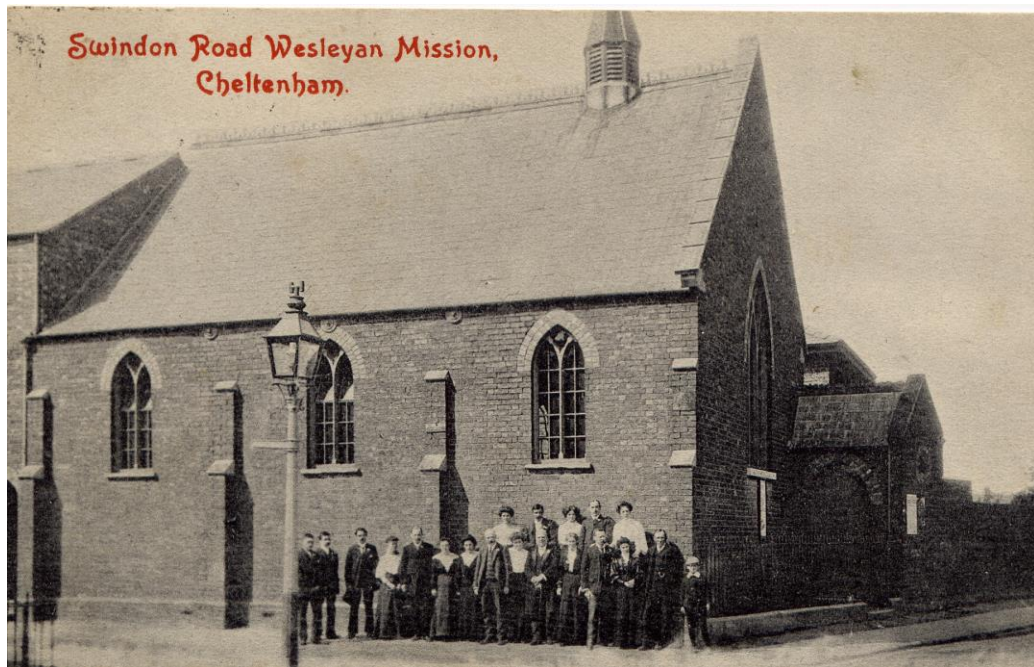


A CHRONOLOGY
OF
NONCONFORMITY
AND DISSENT
IN
CHELTENHAM



by members of Cheltenham Local History Society

Compiled by Jill Waller



*Cheltenham
Local History Society*

INTRODUCTION

Nonconformity and Dissent was selected as the theme of this year's Gloucestershire Rural Community Council's County Local History Afternoon, to be held on 6 October 2007 at Sir Thomas Rich's School, Longlevens, Gloucester. This book was compiled to accompany a display put on by Cheltenham Local History Society at this event.

The term Nonconformist dates from the Act of Uniformity in 1662 and is usually applied to a Protestant who is separated from the Anglican Church. Nonconformist meetings began in Cheltenham soon after the Act was passed and early records show that three prominent Cheltenham families led the way in Dissent: the Masons (Quakers), the Sturmeys (Unitarians) and the Ashmeads (Baptists and property owners). Other Non-Anglican congregations have been included in this Chronology (Hebrew Community, Roman Catholics); one of the reasons being that their presence caused some 'dissent' in the town. I have taken the liberty of including references to Church of England clergy in the section entitled 'Miscellaneous Dissent', where I have used the term 'dissent' here in its wider sense of 'discord'.

Dissenters were not always at odds with the Established Church of England, often working in harmony to the same ends. The Incumbent of Cheltenham Parish Church, Francis Close (1797-1882) played a dominant role in the religious life in Cheltenham for 30 years from 1826-56. Although he was intolerant of many denominations that held differing views from his own, the Nonconformists often worked closely with him in areas of mutual concern – Sabbath observance, opposition to the races, charitable relief for the poor, scriptural education, and many other concerns.

Much of the research for this book was reliant on secondary sources, and I would welcome any corrections or contributions that the reader feels should be included in any amended future edition. I apologise to any Nonconformist denomination that may have been omitted or poorly represented, but it is a huge topic to cover in one volume in limited time.

September 2007

Jill Waller

(revised June 2015 & August 2023)

Jill may be contacted via the Enquiries page on the CLHS website www.cheltlocalhistory.org.uk.
For general queries about Cheltenham Local History Society please email secretary@cheltlocalhistory.co.uk.

CONTRIBUTORS include the following Cheltenham Local History Society members:

Steven Blake, Vic Cole, Carolyn Greet, Michael Greet, Mike Grindley, Elaine Heasman,
Geoff North, Sue Rowbotham, Jill Waller.

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PART I - A CHRONOLOGY OF NONCONFORMITY AND DISSENT IN CHELTENHAM

BAPTISTS

- 1655 A Baptist congregation had been established in **Tewkesbury**, and included Cheltenham members. The **Tewkesbury** Baptists had their own premises and a membership of 120 by 1655, the earliest date from which records survive.
- 1690 The Cheltenham Baptists held their own meetings in a **converted malt house** in the town.
- 1697 **William Ballinger** had his house certified for **Anabaptist** meetings. Cheltenham was the first place in **Gloucestershire** to use the term '**Anabaptist**', meaning 'a second baptism'.
- 1698 At the Quarter Sessions **Joseph Ballinger** had his house certified for **Anabaptist** meetings. The malthouse was becoming overcrowded, judging from the number of similar applications for permission to hold meetings at this time.
- 1702 **Joseph Shearer's** home was registered for Baptist meetings.
- 1703 A small Baptist Chapel was opened on a plot of land in **Manchester Walk**, facing **St. James's Square (Knapp Road)** purchased from **George Forty** in **1700**. No Dissenting place of worship could be erected in a prominent position, conspicuous to the general public. Hence all Cheltenham's early chapels were built in back streets or what were then minor country lanes.
- Feb 1703 The small Baptist chapel on the north side of **Manchester Walk** was registered at the General Quarter Sessions at **Gloucester**. A tiny graveyard adjoined the meeting house. The first Trustees of the new chapel were **John Ashmead** of **Gloucester**, and **John** and **William Ballinger** of Cheltenham.
- 1710 The home of **Edward Nicholas** was registered as an **Anabaptist** meeting place, suggesting the new chapel was already becoming too small for the congregation.
- 1715 The Baptist congregation had grown and there were 200 Baptists in Cheltenham, with 150 at the parent church in **Tewkesbury**.
- Jun 1753 The Cheltenham Baptist congregation had continued to grow. The parent church in **Tewkesbury** granted them permission to form an independent church. It was known as the **Bethel Chapel** from this date, of the denomination of **Particular Baptists**, and an estate was granted for their use. This estate consisted of several small tenements and about half an acre of garden situated to the north of the **Bethel Chapel**. These houses and garden were let on long leases, and the rent they brought in was used for the benefit of the poor of the Baptist congregation.
- 30 Jul 1768 After a succession of visiting pastors, the **Bethel Chapel** acquired its first minister, the **Rev. Samuel Dunscombe**, a **Tiverton** man. Three local men were ordained as deacons at the same time – **John Potter, Senior**, **Francis Ingram** and **John Swinford**.
- 1785 Extensive repairs were carried out to the small **Bethel Chapel** in **Manchester Walk**. It was described as 'much improved, being new pewed, ceiled, and galleries in front, with the addition of a new Vestry and Baptistry'.
- Dec 1813 A member of the **Bethel** congregation was excluded for bad conduct, and the three deacons resigned, there being 'a very low state of religion in our congregation'.
- 1 Jan 1816 The foundation stone to the **Portland Chapel** in **North Place** was laid.
- 11 Aug 1816 The **Portland Chapel** in **North Place** opened. **Robert Capper**, of **Marle Hill**, built the **Portland Chapel** at his own expense for £6,000. The new chapel was heated by steam, the apparatus for which was also the gift of **Mr. Capper**. His first appointed minister was **Thomas Snow** who adopted **Strict Baptist** views. **Snow** even excluded **Capper** from taking Communion in his own chapel, by only giving Communion to those who had been baptised there.
- 1817 A Baptist, **Jeremy Bliss**, took over the chapel in **Meakings Passage** (site of **Pittville Street**). His doctrines were described by the *Cheltenham Chronicle* as 'a species of anythingarianism'.
- 17 Mar 1817 **Selkirk Villa, Prestbury Road**, the home of the **Rev. Thomas Snow**, was licensed for worship until **Snow** could provide a purpose-built chapel for his supporters.
- Jun 1817 The **Rev. Snow** bought a plot of land in **Grosvenor Street**, probably with finance provided by his new patron, a **Mrs. Wall** of **Lewes, Sussex**.
- 24 May 1818 **Thomas Snow** opened his new chapel (architect unknown) in **Grosvenor Street** where he could continue to espouse his **Strict Baptist** views.
- Feb 1820 The earlier Baptist Chapel at **St. James's Square** was demolished. In September it was replaced by a larger chapel on the same site, which opened as the **Bethel Chapel**, costing £1,450 to build. The original building of **1701** measured 38 ft x 20 ft, while its replacement measures 52 ft x 35 ft. There is a burial ground alongside the chapel.
- 13 Sep 1820 The newly rebuilt **Bethel Chapel** opened for divine worship.

- Autumn 1822 The **Rev. Thomas Snow** underwent another change of religious opinions, reverting back to **Anglicanism**. He dissolved the congregation, closed the chapel in **Grosvenor Street** and left Cheltenham. He gifted the chapel to the **Anglican Simeon Trustees**, patrons of the Parish Church. Unsuccessful attempts were made to license the chapel for **Anglican** worship over the next five years before the chapel was sold to the **Congregationalists**.
- 1824 The chapel in **Meakings Passage** was demolished to make way for **Pittville Street**.
- 16 Jun 1826 **Mr. Snow's Chapel**, situated in **The Terrace (Grosvenor Street)** was for sale by auction, described as 'nearly new, having been erected within the last six years'. (It was bought by the **Congregationalists**.)
- Sept 1835 The **Rev. James Smith**, with a large number of the congregation, withdrew from **Bethel Chapel** to meet for three months at the **Clarence Gallery, Clarence Street**.
- 1 Jan 1836 These seceders from **Bethel Chapel** bought the former **Barrett's Riding School** in **Regent Street** and fitted it out as a galleried chapel. It opened for divine worship as the **Salem Chapel**.
- 1830-40 Church members of **Salem** could be suspended for inappropriate behaviour, usually for a period of three months, or until repentance was shown. One member was suspended for deception, two others for marrying ungodly men, and two more girls were temporarily suspended for 'joining in a dance'. Members of **Salem Chapel** could be separated (*i.e.* excluded) for gross immorality or for embracing doctrines considered contrary to God's word. **Henry Webb**, a repentant Chartist, was restored to the church only to be excluded again with **Mary Harris** because they were re-baptised by the **Mormons**.
- 1838 **Harriet Adams** was separated from **Salem** for 'having apostatized' (*i.e.* abandoned the principles of the Baptist church) and joined the Socialists.
- Oct 1840 A member of **Salem Chapel**, **Charles Peacey**, was separated for being a member of the **Odd Fellows Lodge**.
- 1841 A division arose amongst the **Salem** congregation, following a dispute with the Sunday School, resulting in an offshoot. A large number (42 members) of the congregation resigned; they were the future **Cambray Baptists**, although it was to be some years before the move to **Cambray**.
- 10 Oct 1843 The Baptists who had seceded from the **Salem Chapel** formed themselves into **The Church of Christ** meeting temporarily in the **Baptist Tabernacle** in **Clare Street**, off the **Bath Road**.
- 7 Nov 1843 The **Rev. W.G. Lewis**, appointed pastor in February 1842, laid the foundation stone of the new **Salem Baptist Chapel, Clarence Parade**. The new building, to replace the **Salem Chapel** in **Regent Street**, was built next to the then Post Office on the corner of **Clarence Street**.
- 28 Apr 1844 The future **Cambray Baptists** established themselves in the **Ebenezer Chapel, King Street**, formerly occupied by the **Methodists**. They remained there until the congregation had grown so much that a new chapel was needed in **1852**.
- 6 Jun 1844 After only taking five months to build, the new Gothic style **Salem Baptist Chapel**, architect unknown, was consecrated in **Clarence Parade**, with the **Rev. W. Jay** preaching. The chapel, which included a fairly extensive range of buildings fronting onto **Crescent Place**, has since been converted into various bars and restaurants. It is said to have the tallest chapel doors in England.
- 1845 The former **Salem Baptist** chapel in **Regent Street** ceased being used for religious purposes and was sold for £600. It was used as Cheltenham's **Town Hall** until **1884**, and then as a warehouse for **Cavendish House**. The **Old Town Hall** was demolished in **1982** to make way for the **Regent Arcade**.
- 1845 The Baptists were using the old **Quaker Meeting House** in **Manchester Walk** (now part of **Clarence Street**) and had renamed it the **Zoar Chapel**. They leased the building until **1848**.
- Mar 1847 A meeting against the imposition of Church rates on Nonconformists was held in the vestry room at **Salem Chapel**, called by the **Rev. A. Morton Brown** and **Rev. W.G. Lewis**.
- Mar 1848 The minister of the **Bethel Chapel**, the **Rev. J. Blomfield**, failed to pay the church rate. A seizure was made for the payment, a looking-glass stated to be worth £1 5s, although the amount owing was only 8s.
- 1849 A schoolhouse near the Cheltenham **Gas Works** was either built or newly occupied by **Mr. Bailey**, a member of **Salem Baptist Church**, who lived in the area. It lay a little to the south of **Gas Green**, off **Gloucester Road**, with a yard backing onto **Alstone Terrace** (no longer extant). **Mr. Bailey** provided for the Day School teaching in the school and allowed **Salem Chapel** to use it for a Sunday School and Mission Services. On his death the **Salem Baptists** continued their Mission and Sunday School work, but no longer funded the day school.
- Jan 1849 A member of the Baptist church in **King Street** was expelled for scandalous conduct. Brother **S. Skimp** was imprisoned for 'hastily disposing of his stock in trade and furniture' and 'arranging to embark to a foreign land with property belonging to his creditors, thereby inflicting wound upon the cause of Christ'.

- Jan 1850 An action was brought by **John Dee**, a cabinetmaker, and the Trustees of **Salem Chapel (Samuel Attwood, Joseph Cormell, Samuel Fisher, etc.)**. **Dee** had bought property in **Clarence Street** in **1843** abutting the site afterwards bought for **Salem Chapel**. When the chapel was built, **Dee's** house was made use of as a party wall and he was claiming compensation. A bricklayer, **Samuel Kent**, gave evidence that he did the work on the orders of the late **Mr. John Whitmore**. After some deliberation, **Dee** dropped the suit.
- 30 Mar 1851 The **National Religious Census of England & Wales** revealed that the largest nonconformist congregation in Cheltenham was at **Salem Chapel**, with an average attendance of 1,100. **Bethel Chapel** had the third largest nonconformist congregation with 500 attending evening services.
- Aug 1852 An old thatched farm cottage in **Cambray Place** was bought for £700. It was demolished to make way for building the **Cambray Baptist Chapel**.
- Mar 1853 Operations commenced for the erection of the **Cambray Baptist Chapel**, designed by **Henry Dangerfield**, the Borough Surveyor. The site was cleared and building began in **August** that year.
- Nov 1853 An injunction was taken out halting the progress of the building of the **Cambray Baptist Chapel** because of a dispute over the building line at the front. **Henry Coles**, owner of the house to the south of the chapel, objected to the chapel frontage projecting beyond the line of his house.
- Jan 1854 Although forward of the correct building line, the **Cambray Baptist Chapel** was allowed to stay in the position in which building had begun, although the Trustees decided to take down the front of the partly-built chapel and rebuild it further back. They were unwilling to risk a costly court case. It meant extra land had to be purchased behind the original plot, but this did give the advantage of space for a schoolroom and access from **Rodney Road**.
- May 1854 The new chapel in **Cambray** began to make progress after projecting wings were taken down.
- 10 Apr 1855 Services took place on the opening of the **Cambray Baptist Chapel**. One of the preachers at the opening of this chapel was 20-year-old **Charles Haddon Spurgeon** who went on to become one of the most famous Victorian preachers in the country.
The first pastor of the **Cambray Baptist Chapel** was **James Smith**, the former preacher who had helped establish **Salem** in 1835, and his Deacon was **Thomas Sims** who had a **High Street** confectionery shop. The **Ebenezer Chapel, King Street**, was given up on the opening of the **Cambray** chapel, later to be used by the **Primitive Methodists**.
- May 1855 A visiting preacher broke his arm while descending the pulpit stairs at the **Salem Chapel, Clarence Parade**.
- 1864 Ownership of the **Albert Street Chapel (Russell Street/Baker Street area)** was transferred from the **Congregationalists** to Trustees connected with the **Salem Baptist Chapel**, who paid £150. Lately known as the **Baker Street Chapel**, to relate it to the **Baker Street School** behind, the new Trustees renamed it the **Gas Green Chapel**, commemorating the congregation's former home at the school at **Gas Green**. This school had been sold to the Cheltenham **Gas Co.** who needed to expand. The **Baker Street Mission School** behind the chapel was transferred to the **Gas Green School**, Trustees, supported by **William Nash Skillicorne**.
- 1865 The **Charlton Kings** Baptist congregation was formed.
- Feb 1869 The minister of the **Wellington Street Baptist Chapel** was presented with a dinner service.
- Jun 1870 The **Providence Baptist Chapel** was opened in **Naunton Parade** (now part of **Naunton Terrace**).
- Jun 1871 The **Rev. J. Flory** became pastor of **Bethel Chapel (Knapp Road/St. James's Square)**
1872 New Trustees of the **Baker Street Mission School** were appointed. They included **Robert Ormiston Paterson**, long-serving manager of the **Gas Co.**, and many were also involved with the neighbouring **Gas Green Chapel**.
- 1872 An organ, purchased from the **Corn Exchange** in Cheltenham, was installed in the **Cambray Baptist Chapel**.
- 1875 **Charlton Kings Baptist Church**, linked with **Cambray**, opened, with a schoolroom.
- Apr 1876 The **Rev. H.M. Barnett**, former curate of Charlton Kings, joined the Baptist church.
- 27 Mar 1878 The *Cheltenham Examiner* published a letter against popery from the **Rev. J. Flory**, minister of **Bethel Chapel**, written in response to a sermon by **Dr. Brown**.
- 1879 The foundation stone of **Pilley (formerly Zion) Baptist Church**, an offshoot of the **Salem Baptists**, was laid.
- 20 Mar 1880 **Charlotte Wollard**, of **2 Spa Buildings**, broke into the house of **Mr. George Cudlipp**, Baptist Minister, and stole a bottle of gin, a half-pint of port, a quantity of tea, two pence halfpenny and a pair of spectacles. In court later that week **Mr. Cudlipp** asked for the case to be dismissed – he had known the woman for a long time and believed it was ‘through her love of drink that she had committed the offence’.
- May 1880 The **Baptist Free Church** opened a chapel in **Regent Street**, near the corner of Ormond Place.

- Nov 1881 The cornerstone was laid for a new **Mission Hall** for **Salem Chapel** at **Pilley**.
- Jun 1882 The **Pilley Baptist Chapel** was opened and a service was held at the **Salem Chapel** to raise funds for it.
- 24 Jan 1883 The **Baptist Free Chapel** announced it was to commence ‘Sunday evenings for the people’ concerts at the **Town Hall, Regent Street**.
- Apr 1883 **Cranham Chapel** reopened as an out-station of **Cambray Baptist Chapel**.
- Jun 1883 A **Cambray Chapel** member, **Mrs. Emma Carter**, was buried in **Leckhampton** churchyard. Despite bad weather, her burial service was disallowed inside **St. Peter’s Church**.
- Apr 1884 The **Rev. J. Flory**, Minister of **Bethel Chapel**, living at **6 Northfield Terrace**, gave evidence when **George Jew**, of **Vine Cottage, Northfield Passage**, was summonsed for keeping a disorderly house. **Flory** said that for years past he had seen immoral conduct going on at **Vine Cottage**. Within the previous month he had seen girls in a front room of the house almost in a state of nudity. The room was not a bedroom – there was laughter in the court when the magistrate supposed that **Flory** had looked in to see! **George Jew** pleaded guilty to the charge.
- Aug 1886 **Mr. John Broom** was given a presentation, having been Deacon of **Bethel Chapel** for 50 years.
- Autumn 1887 Alterations were carried out at **Cambray Baptist Chapel**, including the replacement of the old pendant light by a Sugg’s ‘patent sunlight’ (900 candle power), and improvement in the ventilation, with redecoration of the chapel interior. While the work was undertaken the congregation met for worship in the **Presbyterian Church** (formerly **Cheltenham Chapel**) in **St. George’s Square**.
- Aug 1888 The **Rev. J. Flory** of **Bethel Chapel** chaired a meeting of the Ratepayers’ Protection Association.
- Oct 1892 **Salem Chapel**, in **Clarence Parade**, opened after a £1,000 refit, one of several in its history.
- 20 May 1894 Anniversary services at **Salem Sunday School** were interrupted by a family argument.
- Apr 1895 Electric light was connected at **Salem Chapel** following problems with its gas lighting.
- 8 Dec 1895 The Nonconformist churches of Cheltenham held a united service at **Salem Chapel**; the **Rev. A.C. Turberville** preached the sermon.
- May 1896 The **Nonconformist Council** met at **Salem Chapel** to consider the new **Education Bill**.
- 29 Jul 1896 **Cambray Baptist Chapel** underwent renovations, including the installation of electric pendant lights in place of the old gas-lamps, the lights of which were poor and gave off fumes. The old windows in the front of the chapel were replaced with new ones of coloured glass. New railings at the front of the chapel were installed.
- 30 May 1897 The Sunday School anniversary services at **Salem Chapel** were attended by contingents from **Pilley, Brockhampton, Gas Green** and **Bennington Hall**.
- Dec 1897 The first wedding to be celebrated at **Pilley Chapel** took place – **William Barrett** to **Emily Langston**.
- 23 Nov 1898 A memorial stone for a new lecture hall was laid at **Cambray Baptist Chapel** with the **Rev. Beynon Phillips** presiding.
- May 1899 The Cheltenham Baptist chapels protested at the production of Sunday newspapers.
- 26 Jul 1899 The **Rev. A.B. Phillips** presided over the formal opening of the new lecture room and hall at **Cambray Baptist Chapel**, to be called **Rodney Hall**. It was built on the site of **Essex Villa** and some old thatched cottages called **Essex Cottages** on land behind the chapel, between **Cambray Place** and **Rodney Road**.
- 1900 The **Baker Street Institute** was formed, founded by **Ed. J. Burrow**, the publisher, meeting in the old **Baker Street Mission Schools** on Sunday afternoons.
- Jun 1900 **Salem Chapel** hosted a campaign to stop public houses from opening on Sundays.
- 1901-1930 Cheltenham’s transport system was dominated by electric trams supplied by the **Cheltenham & District Light Railway Co**. Trams rumbled through **Cambray Place** on their way to **Leckhampton**, interrupting services in the **Cambray Baptist Chapel**. The noise could be reduced by watering the tramlines; the chapel caretaker was paid 6d per week to carry out this task every Sunday.
- 1902 Under the Education Act of 1902 the **Baker Street School** was reorganised and came under the authority of the local Education Committee. It consisted of a Girls’ Schoolroom and an Infants Department, and it accommodated 264 scholars.
- Sep 1903 A protest meeting against the **Education Bill** was held at the **Salem Chapel**.
- Apr 1905 The 50th anniversary of the opening of **Cambray Baptist Chapel** was celebrated.
- Sep 1906 **Thomas Whittard**, the ‘Grand old man of Cheltenham nonconformity’, attained his 85th birthday. He had been one of the Trustees of the **Baker Street Chapel** in the **1860s**, when his occupation was given as Professor of Mathematics. In 1906 he was still active with pastoral work in **Winchcombe**. The following year he celebrated his golden wedding anniversary.
- Nov 1906 The **Salem Institute** was set up.

- 31 Jul 1907 The **Baker Street Mission Schools** were forced to close on the opening of the new **Gloucester Road Council Schools**.
- Oct 1907 The **Cambray Baptist Church** opened an **Institute** at neighbouring **Essex Lodge** (now **Tailor's**) with a reading room and gymnasium. The building remained part of the Baptist church until **1914**.
- Nov 1909 At the **Salem Institute** 277 members 'met in harmony' to celebrate their third anniversary.
- Jan 1910 The supporters of **Lord Duncannon** (Conservative parliamentary candidate) disrupted a meeting of Free Churchmen at **Salem Chapel**, who were meeting to protest about recent measures.
- Apr 1910 The **Salem Institute** put on a concert at the **Town Hall** to support the conversion of **Baker Street School** to a **Men's Institute**.
- Sep 1910 The **Baker Street Institute** was opened.
- 28 Feb 1912 The organ in the **Cambray Baptist Chapel** was replaced with a larger, electric model. Although the caretaker no longer needed to 'blow' during services, he was kept busy issuing fourpenny tickets to amateur organists who wanted to practise on the new instrument – they were charged by the hour for the electricity.
- Jul 1912 The **Cambray Baptist Chapel** celebrated the first anniversary of the arrival of the **Rev. A. Weaver Evans**, who received the gift of a bicycle; his wife was given an easy chair.
- Jul 1913 A memorial service was held at **Salem Chapel** for **Jennie Beckingsale**, a Baptist missionary who had worked for 15 years in **Shensi, China**, and died there on **22 Jun 1913**.
- Sep 1913 The founder of the **Salem Institute**, publisher **E.J. Burrow**, was presented with an illuminated address on his resignation.
- 19 Oct 1914 Additional Trustees were appointed at **Baker Street**, all members of **Salem**, strengthening the links between **Gas Green Chapel** and **Salem Baptist Church**.
- 27 Oct 1921 The Trusteeship of **Gas Green Chapel** and the adjacent Cottage was transferred from **William Ward Whittard** (the heir of **Thomas Whittard**) to seven deacons of **Salem Baptist Church**, increasing the relationship between members of the two chapels.
- Spring 1929 A 17-day mission was held at **Cambray Baptist Church** during which 50 conversions were made. Open-air meetings took place in front of the church prior to the evening meetings.
- 17 Oct 1936 **Salem Baptist Chapel** celebrated its centenary.
- 11 May 1939 New Trustees for the **Baker Street Institute** premises were all **Salem Baptist Church** members, yet again increasing the ties between **Salem**, the **Baker Street Institute** and **Gas Green Chapel**.
- Jan 1941 £60 worth of damage was sustained by **Gas Green Chapel** by enemy action (during the bombing of the **Gas Works** and **Stoneville Street**). Windows were broken, most of the ceiling came down and holes appeared in the roof. **Salem Chapel** was asked to take a retiring collection to help meet the cost of repairs as no compensation would be available until after the war.
- Mar 1941 **Salem Chapel** took a retiring collection to cover the loss of revenue from not being able to hold evening services at **Gas Green Chapel** due to the bomb damage sustained in January.
- 3 Jul 1949 **Gas Green Chapel's** centenary week-long festival began.
- 1951 The **Bethel Chapel** in **St. James's Square** ceased to be used by the Baptists. It was subsequently used by the **Mormons** and is now the **Christadelphian Hall**.
- 1 Dec 1956 The foundation stone was laid to the **Hester's Way Baptist Church** in **Lechmere Road**, created and built by the **Salem** and **Cambray Baptists**.
- 1961 A sealed **Time Capsule** was placed under the renewed floorboards during renovation at **Gas Green Chapel**. It was hoped that the Capsule would remain untouched until some major event occurred, such as at any Millennium celebrations.
- Dec 1963 **Gas Green Chapel** was registered for the solemnizing of marriages.
- 14 May 1964 **Gas Green Baptist Church** formally became independent of **Salem Baptist Church**, able to appoint its own full-time minister.
- 11 Jul 1965 The **Gas Green Baptist Church** baptistry was completed and dedicated at a simple ceremony.
- 1966 In anticipation of appointing their own minister, the Deacons of **Gas Green Baptist Church** bought **49 Arle Road** as a **Manse** for him to live in.
- 23 Jul 1966 The **Gas Green Baptist Church** appointed its first minister.
- 2 Aug 1974 A visit by **Göttingen Baptist Church** youth, who were the guests of **Christ Church**, was followed by an immediate return visit to Cheltenham's twin town in **Germany**.
- 1975 To celebrate its centenary, **Charlton Kings Baptist Church** built a new hall, **The Carey Hall**.
- 30 Jul 1975 The **Christ Church** youth group made a return visit to the **Baptist Church** in **Göttingen**.
- 4 Aug 1977 The youth of **Christ Church** were once again the guests of **Göttingen Baptist Church**.
- 3 Aug 1978 The **Göttingen Baptist Church Youth Group** visited Cheltenham and stayed with hosts at **Christ Church**.
- Jun 1985 The Baptist church at **Charlton Kings** opened '**The Vine**' coffee and bookshop.
- Nov 1992 **The Vine** ecumenical tea-room and bookshop, **Charlton Kings**, reopened after refurbishment.

- 1993 **Cambray Baptist Chapel** commemorated 150 years. As part of the celebrations, the Sunday School re-enacted a Sunday School outing of **1907** to **Charlton Kings**.
- 10 Jan 1999 The **1961 Time Capsule** was recovered from beneath the floor of the **Gas Green Chapel** as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations. Members of the Church were invited to find items relevant to the life of **Gas Green** in 1999 to be included in another **Capsule** to be deposited beneath the Church floor at the end of the year.
- 24 Dec 1999 The old (**1961**) and new (**1999**) **Time Capsules** were placed beneath the floor of **Gas Green Chapel** during the Christmas Eve service.
- 2003 The hard wooden pews in the ground floor of the **Cambray Baptist Chapel** were replaced with comfortable padded chairs. Planning permission to improve the gallery seating has so far (2007) been refused.
- 2006-7 The **Cambray Baptist Chapel Football Club** won the **Cotswold Churches League**.
- Jul 2007 The organ in the **Cambray Baptist Church** was damaged when the roof leaked onto it during a period of torrential rain.

CHRISTIAN SCIENTISTS

- 27 Sep 1907 The first Sunday service was held by the **First Church of Christ, Scientist**, Cheltenham, in a private house in **Montpellier**. Services were later held in a house in **Lansdown Crescent**.
- 18 Apr 1909 The **First Church of Christ, Scientist**, Cheltenham, began holding services at **Pemberton House** in **Albion Street**.
- 12 Jul 1909 The **Christian Science Society** was established at **3 Cambray**.
- 1911 The first **Christian Science** public lecture was given at the **Town Hall**.
- Apr 1923 The **First Church of Christ, Scientist**, Cheltenham, purchased a large house in **Bayshill Road** and began building its first church.
- 1925 The first service was held at its new church in **Bayshill Road** of the **First Church of Christ, Scientist**, Cheltenham.
- 26 May 1967 The foundation stone was laid to a new church building of the **First Church of Christ, Scientist**, in **Bayshill Road**.
- 2 Mar 1969 The first service was held in the new church of the **First Church of Christ, Scientist**, in **Bayshill Road**.

CONGREGATIONALISTS / INDEPENDENTS

- 1813 Three students from a Congregational seminary at **Painswick** were sent to Cheltenham to carry out mission work. They were **Messrs. Clift, Richardson** and **Horlick** (the latter subsequently became a minister in the **Forest of Dean**).
- 1822 The **Rev. Thomas Snow** left Cheltenham, gifting his **Grosvenor Street Chapel** to the **Anglican Simeon Trustees**. They were unable to obtain consecration of the building from the Bishop of Gloucester as it was on copyhold land, rather than leasehold. The property was subsequently auctioned at the **Plough Hotel** and bought by **Mr. Lucy**, a Congregationalist, for £2,100. He sold it on at a loss to the **Rev. Jenkin Thomas** for £1,200.
- 1822 A Chapel was opened in **Upper Bath Street**. The **National Religious Census of England & Wales** revealed that it was being used by the Congregationalists in **1851**.
- May 1827 **Snow's Chapel, Grosvenor Street**, after five years of disuse, was sold for £1,300 to **Rev. John Burder**, of **Stroud**, and **Mr. Thomas Wilson**, of **London**. It was reopened as a Congregational chapel named '**Highbury**' after the London residence of **Mr. Wilson**, who had provided most of the money. It remained in use as a chapel until **1852**.
- 9 Aug 1827 The chapel in **Grosvenor Street** reopened for public worship as the **Highbury Chapel**, having undergone renovations by the builder **Richard Billings**.
- 18 Sep 1830 **Highbury Congregational Church** was formed with an initial membership of eight from the members of the **Highbury Chapel**.
- 1832 **Highbury Congregational Church** obtained its own pastor, **Mr. William Campbell**.
- c.1836-7 The **Cheltenham Tabernacle** opened in **Clare Street**, off **Bath Road** belonging to the **Independent** (Congregationalist) denomination.
- 22 Mar 1838 The first wedding took place at **Highbury Church** when **Mr. George Crux**, silk mercer of **Montpellier Avenue**, married **Miss Lydia Perry** of Essex.
- 28 Mar 1838 The **Cheltenham Tabernacle, Clare Street**, was to be sold at the **Exmouth Arms**, together with

‘the Dwelling House for the Minister, Outhouses & Offices’ and adjoining ‘School Room and Burying Ground’. (The chapel was still for sale in **November 1838**. After initial use by the **Congregationalists**, then the **Methodists**, it remained in use for religious purposes throughout the 19th century. Those using it included the **Salem Baptists**, the **Latter-Day Saints**, the **Cambray Baptists**, **St. Luke’s Church** (as a Mission Room) and the **Naunton Bible Class**. In the 20th century the old chapel was used commercially as the **Cotswold Pram Factory**. It has now been demolished.)

- 8 Jan 1843 The **Rev. Andrew Morton Brown** began his ministry at **Highbury Congregational Church**.
 c.1845 Opposition by Nonconformists to the imposition of Church Rates was discussed at Vestry meetings. At one of these, in which the **Highbury** deacons led the opposition, the *Cheltenham Chronicle* described the meeting as a rabble of ‘Whigs, Radicals, Chartists, Jews, Papists, Pseudo-Churchmen, Mormonites, Socialists, Unitarians and Anythingarians’.
- 24 Nov 1847 The **Baker Street Chapel**, with building land behind, was purchased at auction by the **Congregational Union** for £230. One of the Trustees was the highly influential Congregational minister, **Rev. Andrew Morton Brown**. As an activist in the cause of local social reform, he met much of the cost of purchasing this chapel out of his own pocket. It became one of the mission outposts of the **Highbury Congregational Chapel**, known as the **Albert Street Congregational Chapel**, and was extended onto the building land at the back.
- 1848 The **Rev. Andrew Morton Brown** helped to establish **Working Men’s Institutes**, with reading rooms, in **Bath Road, Tewkesbury Road** and the town centre.
- 1 Aug 1849 An advertisement appeared for a site on which to build a proposed new **Highbury Church**.
- 10 Apr 1850 It was announced that the **Rev. Andrew Morton Brown** was to be the minister of the new **Highbury Congregational Church**, which was to be built in **Winchcombe Street** on the site of the **Newman & Longbridge Stables**.
- 19 Aug 1850 The ceremony of ‘turning the first sod’ for the new **Highbury Church** was performed by the **Rev. Andrew Morton Brown**.
- 25 Sep 1850 The foundation stone was laid for the new **Highbury Church** was laid by **Mr. H.O. Wills** of **Bristol**. The church was designed by **Samuel Onley, jun.** in Gothic Revival style. It was to be the largest building of its kind in Gloucestershire, and it was also to be the ‘principal Congregational chapel in the county’.
- 1851 The **Cheltenham Chapel** in **St. George’s Square** was reorganized as a Congregational Chapel; it remained so until **1857** when the chapel closed.
- 8 Jun 1852 The new **Highbury Congregational Church** was opened and dedicated in **Winchcombe Street**. The vacated chapel in **Grosvenor Street** was converted to a schoolroom. (It was finally sold in 1929 and converted for commercial use.)
- 1854 The **Rev. Dr. Andrew Morton Brown** was chosen to be Chairman of the **Congregational Union of England & Wales**, aged 42, the youngest any minister had been selected for that honour.
- Jan 1855 The **Highbury Congregational Choral Society** was formed.
- 1855 The **Rev. Dr. Brown** intervened in the case of a Sunday School boy who was sentenced to six weeks’ imprisonment for stealing a ball of twine. The local press poured scorn on the **Doctor** for his attempts on behalf of the boy, and congratulated the Bench for not giving in. The Editor and Justices had to eat humble pie, however, when the **Doctor** had visited the Home Office within a week, resulting in the boy receiving the Queen’s free pardon and release home to his parents.
- May 1856 Special services were held at the new **Providence (Congregational) Chapel**, erected near **Hatherley Bridge**.
- 16 Aug 1856 The **Wesleyan Chapel** in **St. George’s Street** reopened after alterations and repairs.
- Oct 1856 A **British School** opened in the old **Highbury Chapel, Grosvenor Street**.
- 1857 The **Rev. Caleb Hobbs Winter**, pastor of the **Albert Street Chapel**, agreed to purchase land to the west of **Baker Street**, further behind the chapel, from **James Agg Gardner**. The following year **Winter** and others proposed to form the **Baker Street Mission School**.
- 1859 The **Highbury** Trustees agreed to the ‘absolute sale’ of the **Albert Street Chapel** to **Septimus Pruett**, Gentleman and solicitor of Cheltenham, for £230.
- 2 Feb 1859 The **Baker Street Mission Schools** (a British School by the beginning of the next century) opened with a public tea meeting. They had been built by **John Neale**.
- Jan 1864 The Congregationalist **Baker Street Schools** and **Chapel** had insufficient funds to pay off their debts, and therefore lost the services of their pastor, **Rev. Caleb Hobbs Winter**. **William Nash Skillicorne** accepted responsibility for the school, although it did not become wholly his until **1870**. By this time the chapel had been transferred to Trustees connected with the **Salem Baptist Chapel**.
- 15 Jan 1868 The **Rev. Dr. Andrew Morton Brown** received a presentation for his 25 years of ministry at

- Cheltenham.
- Oct 1868 The **Rev. Brewin Grant**, a Congregational Church minister, lectured on Irish Church policy accompanied by a symbolic squaring up to an imaginary opponent and other ‘histrionics’. The *Cheltenham Free Press* misspelled his name as ‘**Mr. Brewing Rant**’.
- Mar 1870 The **Rev. Dr. Brown** conducted a burial service for a child, following refusal by the vicar as the child was not baptised.
- Jan 1871 The **Rev. Dr. A.M. Brown** invited the local police to a meat tea at the **Congregational Church**.
- Jun 1871 The annual celebration of the establishment of **Prestbury Chapel** (Congregational) took place.
- Jun 1871 The **Rev. Dr. Brown** preached an open-air sermon in **Clarence Street**.
- Nov 1871 The **Rev. Dr. Brown** presided at an anti-smoking meeting at **Highbury School**.
- 7 Jan 1872 The **Rev. Dr. Brown** preached on the local murderer **F. Jones** whom he had attended in prison.
- 3 Jul 1872 The old **Highbury Chapel, Grosvenor Street**, was used for schools in connection with the **Winchcombe Street** church.
- Mar 1873 The Cabmen and Wheelchairmen of the town presented a worktable to **Mrs. Morton Brown** at the **Congregational Church**. They were given an annual treat at the Church.
- 6 Aug 1873 The *Cheltenham Examiner* reported that **Mr. Bannister**, a former town Congregational minister, was ill used by his drunken wife.
- Sep 1875 The *Cheltenham Examiner* printed a full report of the harvest home services at the **Prestbury** (Congregational) **Chapel**.
- Nov 1876 **Mary Witts** was banned from **Oxenton National School** for playing the harmonium in a Congregational chapel.
- May 1876 Criticism of Baptists by the **Rev. Dr. Morton Brown** sparks off correspondence in the press.
- 1878 The **Highbury Literary Society** was formed.
- 6 Mar 1878 The *Cheltenham Examiner* printed a long letter from the **Rev. Dr. A. Morton Brown** refuting the view that **Roman Catholics** have full freedom to read the Bible.
- 17 Jul 1879 The **Rev. Dr. A. Morton Brown** died, aged 68 years, while ‘resting’ at **Bridport**. He had been pastor of **the Congregational Church** in Cheltenham for 36 years. A public funeral took place and sermons preached in his memory at most of Cheltenham’s Nonconformist churches.
- Feb 1880 A reading of *A Christmas Carol* was performed at the **Highbury Mutual Improvement Class** to raise money for the **Tay Bridge** disaster.
- Jul 1880 A fine monument was erected in **Cheltenham Cemetery** to the late **Rev. Dr. Morton Brown**. It was made by **Martyn & Emms** and surrounded by railings made by **R.E. & C. Marshall**.
- Jan 1883 The **Highbury** (Congregational) and **Salem** (Baptist) **Literary Societies** enacted a parliamentary sitting at the Congregational church.
- 7 Mar 1883 There was a large attendance at the **Highbury Literary Society** to hear an address by **Mr. Dale** on the **channel tunnel scheme**.
- 18 Nov 1883 Cheltenham’s nonconformist churches united for a service at **Highbury Congregational Church** to commemorate **Martin Luther**.
- May 1884 The **Highbury Cricket Club** held a fundraising entertainment at the **Grosvenor Street** school.
- Apr 1885 Eight stained glass windows were installed in **Highbury Chapel** in memory of **Rev. Dr. Brown**.
- Dec 1886 The **Highbury Congregational Church** distributed Christmas dinner for the poor.
- 31 Mar 1895 The **Prestbury Congregational Church** became a branch of Cheltenham’s **Highbury Congregational Church**.
- Apr 1896 Boys were charged with stealing property from the **Prestbury Congregational Chapel**.
- Aug 1903 Teas were held to celebrate the completion of the **Prestbury Congregational Chapel** Sunday School extension.
- Jul 1906 **Mrs. Steel** provided land for the new **Sunday School** building at the **Providence Chapel** in **Hatherley**.
- May 1907 The **Free Church Council** held a conference of village workers at the **Highbury Lecture Hall** to consider the best method of conducting Free Church services in the villages.
- Feb 1910 Gale damage occurred at the **Highbury Congregational Church** in **Winchcombe Street**.
- 1929 The old **Highbury Chapel** building in **Grosvenor Street** ceased being used as a schoolroom. It is now a youth centre.
- Feb 1932 The **Highbury Congregational Church** in **Winchcombe Street** closed.
- Apr 1932 The **Highbury Church** in **Winchcombe Street** was demolished to make way for the **Gaumont Palace Cinema**, lately the **Odeon Cinema**. The site has since been redeveloped as **Regent Place**.
- 26 Oct 1932 **Highbury Congregational Church** opened in **Priory Terrace**, replacing the former **Winchcombe Street** church.
- 29 Jul 1966 A youth party from the **First Congregational Church** of **Burlington, Vermont, USA**, visited on an **exchange** with the **Cheltenham Congregational Church**.



Salem Chapel in Clarence Parade had only recently been erected when George Rowe produced his *Illustrated Cheltenham Guide* in 1845.



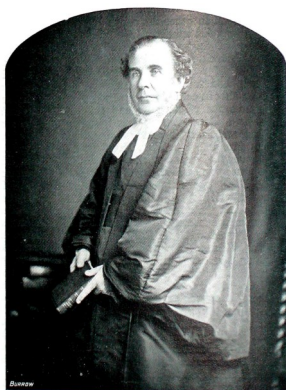
A postcard view c1900 of Cambray Baptist Church in Cambray Place, built 1853-5 with around 1,000 seatings.



Photographed 8th September 2007, Salem Chapel now houses a bar and restaurant.



Rev. Beynon Phillips, Minister of Cambray Baptist Church 1895-1908 and responsible for much of the renovation work. He also started a Literary Society and introduced and edited a monthly Church Magazine. *Photograph courtesy of David Young.*



Rev. Andrew Morton Brown, MA, LLD, Minister of Highbury Congregational Church 1843-1879. His funeral at Cheltenham Cemetery attracted the largest number of people assembled for such an occasion in the town's history at that time.



The 'new' Highbury Congregational Church opened 26th October 1932 in Priory Terrace replacing the former Wincombe Street church [on the site of the now redundant Odeon cinema].

COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON'S CONNEXION

- 17 Apr 1739 **George Whitefield** first visited Cheltenham, a 'poor, straggling hamlet with a few thatched cottages', and preached to a crowd of 2,000 on the **Plough** bowling green.
- 1767 **Lady Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon**, visited Cheltenham as part of a tour into Gloucestershire. At this time Cheltenham was already well supplied with 'Gospel ministers' as a result of the exertions of **Lady Huntingdon** and **Lord Dartmouth**, the latter having a residence in the town. **Lord Dartmouth's** chaplain, **Mr. Downing**, had used the parish church pulpit a few times, but the rector and churchwardens refused to admit him again when they saw the size of the crowds he attracted. Instead **Mr. Downing** preached twice a week at **Lord Dartmouth's** Cheltenham residence.
- 1767 A large crowd gathered at the parish church to hear **George Whitefield** preach. Finding the church door closed, **Whitefield** stood on a tombstone to preach. The reactions among the crowd ranged from silent tears to 'piercing cries' and many were overcome with fainting. The next day hundreds crowded round the residence of **Lord Dartmouth** to hear **Whitefield** preach again.
- 1767 On the third day of **Whitefield's** visit to Cheltenham, **Charles Wesley** visited the town and contributed to the public preaching, which received a gradually calmer response.
- 17 Jul 1767 **Samuel Wells**, headmaster of a private boys school, opened his house whenever the pulpit of the church could not be obtained. One of his pupils, **Thomas Trinder**, first heard one of **Lady Huntingdon's** preachers, **Mr. Madan**, on this date at **Mr. Wells'** house. Inspired by this, **Trinder** went on to become a deacon of the **Baptist** church at **Northampton**.
- 3 Nov 1767 **George Whitefield** wrote to **Mr. Madan** to congratulate him on being able to arrange to use the parish church for a weekday sermon, and on his being given the prospect of 'the barren wilderness (*i.e.* Cheltenham) being turned to a fruitful field'. **Madan** was supported in Cheltenham by **Lord Apsley**, to whom he was chaplain, who was visiting Cheltenham.
- 1767 **Mr. Madan** wrote to **Mr. Wesley** to say he had been in Cheltenham to 'drink the waters, and have preached every Sunday' at **Lord and Lady Dartmouth's** house. 'The poor people of the place are very desirous to hear.' **Madan** told **Wesley** that the **Quakers** and **Baptists** made up a large part of the congregation.
- 1769 **George Whitefield** had what he described as a 'golden season' at Cheltenham.
- 1781 Students from **Lady Huntingdon's** college at **Trevecca** who were working in Cheltenham at around this time were **Matthew** and **Mark Wilks**, **Messrs. Boddily**, **Richardson**, **Honeywell**, **Shenstone** and **Brewer**.
- Sep 1781 It was proposed to open a chapel in Cheltenham belonging to Lady Huntingdon's Connexion.
- 10 Feb 1782 **Lady Huntingdon** withdrew her interest in a chapel for Cheltenham owing to the non-compliance of one of her **Methodist** students in the town, a **Mr. Shenstone**. He then established a small **Baptist** congregation instead, taking with him many of the original **Methodist** congregation. The only places of worship in Cheltenham (3,000 inhabitants) at this time, apart from the parish church and a **Quaker** congregation, were reputedly **Shenstone's** small **Baptist** flock and a smaller **Wesleyan Methodist** congregation.
- 27 Jun 1819 **Robert Capper**, 'proverbial for his benevolence', presented his **Portland Chapel**, built in **North Place** in 1816, to the Trustees of Lady Huntingdon's Connexion after his first minister, **Thomas Snow**, had proved too high-handed with his **Strict Baptist** views. It reopened for public worship on this date.
- 1820 The first **British School** in Cheltenham was opened in the Sunday Schoolroom under the **North Place Chapel**.
- 10 Apr 1840 The **Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel** in **North Place** (the **Portland Chapel**) was registered for the solemnizing of marriages.
- 1843 **Lee's Guide to Cheltenham** stated that the doctrine preached at the **Portland Chapel** was high **Calvinism**, and that 300 children attended the Sunday School. There were branch schools at this time in **Stanhope Street** and **Woodmancote**.
- 21 Jul 1847 A suspended **Church of Scotland** clergyman, **John St. John Elliot Haddo**, was charged with vagrancy. The disgrace of his three-year suspension, which was for post-dating a marriage, to prevent the disgrace of an illegitimate birth, had caused him to turn to vagrancy. **Haddo** also said that his father had officiated at the Cheltenham **Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel** some 24 years before (1823).
- 30 Mar 1851 The **National Religious Census of England & Wales** revealed that the average evening congregation at the **Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel** was 700.

- Aug 1865 Among other alterations, a porch was added to the **North Place** chapel. A new organ by **Mr. Henry Williams** was installed. The chapel became known as **Lady Huntingdon's Chapel** instead of the '**North Place Church**'.
- Aug 1881 The **Countess of Huntingdon's Church** Sunday School treat included a cricket match against **Highbury**.
- Jun 1889 **J.T. Agg Gardner, MP**, presented a petition from the **North Place Church** in favour of closing public houses on Sundays throughout England.
- Oct 1892 A **Pleasant Sunday Afternoons Society** for Cheltenham was started at the **North Place Church**, attended by 200 enthusiasts.
- Jan 1893 The **Pleasant Sunday Afternoons Men's and Women's Societies** at the **North Place Church** gave a treat to 400 poor children in the town.
- Oct 1893 The first lecture of the **Pleasant Sunday Afternoons Society's Ambulance Class** was held in the **North Place Church**.
- Jan 1894 The **North Place Church** hosted dinners and entertainment for 400 boys and 350 girls. The following week a meat tea was given to 250 elderly people, a treat organised by the **Pleasant Sunday Afternoons Society**.
- Feb 1894 The **1st Cheltenham Company Boys' Brigade** was publicly enrolled at the **North Place Church** schoolroom.
- Jan 1895 The **Pleasant Sunday Afternoons Society** of the **North Place Church**, arranged treats for around 2,000 old and young poor of the town.
- May 1899 A resolution was passed at the **North Place Church** protesting at the sale of newspapers on Sundays.

ELIM PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

- 6 Jun 1943 **Pentecostal witness** was introduced to Cheltenham when services were conducted at the **Old Manse Hall, Oxford Passage** (off **St. Margaret's Road**).
- 1948 The **Elim Pentecostal Fellowship** moved to new premises in **Winchcombe Street**.
- 1962 **Elim Pentecostal Church** moved again to **117 St. George's Road**.
- 19 Jul 1968 The foundation stone was laid to a new **Elim Pentecostal Church** in **St. George's Road**.
- 19 Oct 1968 The dedication and opening took place of the **Elim Pentecostal Church** and the offices of its **national headquarters**.

HEBREW COMMUNITY

- 1749 Mention is made in the *London Gazette* of **Moses Myer**, a pedlar of Cheltenham. At this time it is unlikely that he was a resident and was probably a traveller.
- Jun-Aug 1814 The *Cheltenham Chronicle* carried an advertisement for **Emmanuel & Levy**, Foreign & toy Warehouse, opening a branch at **83 High Street**. Jewish traders and professionals had begun to take advantage of the business advantages to be found in the growing spa town of Cheltenham. Jewish professional men also began to appear from the turn of the 18th century, such as **Mr. Abraham**, optician.
- 1823 A permanent Jewish congregation was established in Cheltenham by this date, by **Elias Myers, Lewis Isaacs** and **Isaiah Alex**. Members met in a rented upper-floor room **St. George's Place**, near the junction with **Manchester Walk** (now **Clarence Street**), belonging to **Mary Boodle**.
- 1824 Land was purchased in **Elm Street** for use as a burial ground.
- Dec 1834 A plot of land near **St. James's Square** was bought from **Mr. John Packwood** for £110, on which to build a synagogue.
- 25 Jul 1837 The building of a synagogue for Cheltenham was begun, opposite the **Infant School** in **St. James's Square**. The **New Synagogue** of **Leadenhall Street, London**, donated much of the furniture, which dated from **1761**. It also supplied the two large decorative prayer panels, probably made for the **Great Synagogue, London**, on the accession of **George II** in **1727**. Due to the donations from London, the Cheltenham **Synagogue** contains the oldest Ashkenazi Synagogue furniture still extant in the UK.
- 14 May 1839 The **Cheltenham Synagogue**, designed by **W.H. Knight** and built by **Mr. Hastings**, was consecrated. It cost between £1,400 and £1,500 to build.
- 30 Mar 1851 The **National Religious Census of England & Wales** revealed that the **Cheltenham Synagogue** had an average Saturday morning congregation of 20 Jews.

- 1865 **Sir Francis Goldsmidt** subscribed to the **Cheltenham Synagogue** until his death in 1878.
- 1874 Repairs had to be carried out to the **Synagogue**, adding to financial difficulties already being faced because of the small size of the congregation.
- 9 Sep 1882 A religious census showed that there were only eight men and six women at the morning service.
- 1892/3 Extensive work had to be carried out at the **Burial Ground** in **Elm Street**.
- 1894 By this date there were no local Hebrew families in the town, most of the congregation consisting of boys from **Corinth House**, the Jewish Boarding House at **Cheltenham College**. which existed until **1922**.
- Mar 1903 Because of an insufficient congregation, the temporary closure of the **Synagogue** was agreed with the proviso that it be opened on special occasions, for example when Jewish boys from **Cheltenham College** made up the congregation for festivals.
- 6 Mar 1914 The **Synagogue** reopened briefly but was forced to close within weeks when promised subscriptions from Jewish families, who had settled in the area, failed to materialise. The same year **Daniel Leopold Lipson** assumed the three offices connected with the **Synagogue**.
- 1922 The Jewish **Cheltenham College** Boarding House, **Corinth House**, was to become an ordinary **College** Boarding House. The Housemaster, **Mr. Daniel Lipson** decided to set up a private boarding school at the house on **Bath Road**, and the following year renamed it **Corinth College**.
- 1935 **Corinth College** was forced to close due to dwindling numbers and **Daniel Lipson** turned to politics.
- 1935-37 Cheltenham's most prominent Jewish inhabitant, **Daniel Lipson**, was **Mayor** of Cheltenham.
- 1937-50 **Daniel Lipson** was **Independent MP** for the Borough of Cheltenham.
- 1945 Over 250 Jewish servicemen arrived in the town and they were accommodated around the town at the expense of the Cheltenham Jewish congregation.
- 10 Feb 1946 The first congregational meeting of the **Independent Cheltenham Synagogue** was held. It was formed from the old congregation after a period of difficulty in securing a permanent Minister.
- 1951 An amendment to the Laws & Constitution of the Cheltenham Hebrew Congregation enabled all women members and wives of members to vote.
- 1953 **Daniel Lipson** was made an **Honorary Freeman** of the town. He had resigned from the Cheltenham Hebrew congregation by this time.
- 22 Sep 1957 A newly installed stained glass window was consecrated, a token of appreciation of the generosity of **Mr. Fletcher** to the Cheltenham Hebrew Community.
- 14 Apr 1963 **Daniel Lipson** died at his home, **103, Bath Road**.
- May 1966 The **Israeli Consul General** visited the Cheltenham Congregation.
- Jun 1966 The contract was awarded to fill in the **Synagogue** window on the other side of the Ark, to match the **Fletcher Memorial** window.

LATTER-DAY SAINTS (MORMONS)

- 1830 The **Book of Mormon** was published in America.
- 1830s The Latter-Day Saints became established in Cheltenham.
- Nov 1840 The Latter-Day Saints visited the **Social Institution** in **St. George's Place** (in the former **Sadler's Wells Puppet Theatre** building.)
- 1841 The **Book of Mormon** was published in England for the first time.
- 18 May 1841 A Latter-Day Saints preacher, **Tharoe Curtis**, brought a charge against temperance lecturer **Mr. Cluer** for disturbing the Latter-Day Saints at worship. The intolerance of the time is reflected in the press reports, which were hardly impartial. **Curtis** was described in the *Cheltenham Chronicle*, as 'an insignificant little fellow' who complained that **Cluer** had interrupted their 'religious *mitting*' (perhaps suggesting that **Curtis** had an American accent) by asking contentious questions. The *Chronicle* then reported with some glee that the 'tables turned' and the 'Mormonites defeated'. A policeman gave evidence that **Curtis** was heard to say that the Bible was not a true book. The magistrate, **Mr. Capper**, then promptly dismissed **Curtis's** charge and bailed him to appear on a charge of blasphemy.
- 19 May 1841 **Mr. Curtis**, a Mormonite preacher, was convicted of blasphemy and bound over to appear at the sessions. The same evening he took part in a discussion at the **Temperance Hall** with **Mr. Cluer**, temperance lecturer, before a large audience. After three hours, despite the *Cheltenham Chronicle's* claim that **Mr. Curtis's** arguments were 'scattered to the winds', the discussion was adjourned to be continued at the **Assembly Rooms** later that week.
- Dec 1841 Disturbances occurred at meetings of the Latter-Day Saints held in the **Mechanics Institute**.
- Apr 1842 **Edmund Hathaway** was fined 10s with expenses for using threatening language towards

- Stephen Pope**, who had been employed to keep the boys from disturbing the Mormonites at worship the previous Sunday.
- 1843 The Latter-Day Saints held their services in the **Tabernacle Chapel in Clare Street**.
- Aug 1845 **William Stanbury**, a leading ‘Saint amongst the Mormons’, was sentenced to 10 years transportation for robbing his employers, **Messrs. Martin & Co.**, jewellers. When he was apprehended, a document of ‘leave & license’ was found in his pocket, ‘allowing’ him to live with another man’s wife – he and **James Vaughan** were agreeing that he should live with **James’s** wife **Amelia Vaughan**.
- 27 Jun 1849 An editorial in the *Cheltenham Examiner* attacked the Mormons for leaving their religious tracts with the poor.
- 30 Mar 1851 The **National Religious Census of England & Wales** revealed that the Mormons in Cheltenham, with a membership of 230 converts, had a morning congregation of 150, an afternoon congregation of 300 and 500 worshippers in the evening.
- Jul 1854 Windows were broken by stones thrown at the Church of the Latter-Day Saints in **Clare Place**.
- 6 Sep 1854 **George Thatcher**, ‘one of the roughest order of preachers’, of **15 Townsend Street**, a cloth worker, applied for a licence to preach under certain Acts of Parliament. **Thatcher** was a member of the Latter Day Saints. He declared he was a **Protestant Dissenter**, but the Chairman of the Bench told him ‘your doctrines are very peculiar. Come back on Monday.’ At this time there had been correspondence in the *Cheltenham Examiner* making unfavourable revelations about the practices and doctrines of the Mormonites and condemning Mormonism as an evil doctrine.
- 29 Nov 1854 Mormon dissenting preachers named in the *Cheltenham Examiner* were **William Underwood**, **Henry Hobbs** and **Frederick Turner**.
- 1855 Cheltenham-born **Mrs. Henrietta Polydore** emigrated from Cheltenham to America, taking her daughter with her. She was the estranged wife of **Henry Polydore**, a Roman Catholic who was the Uncle of the poet **Christina G. Rossetti**, who lived in the town for much of his life. **Mrs. Polydore** had become a Mormon, as had many of her family who followed her out to America. Her sister **Jane Elizabeth Mayer**, became one of the six concurrent wives of the Mormon **Samuel Whitney Richards** and bore him one of his 29 children. He had been president of the **British Mission** of the Mormons. (One of **Samuel’s** concurrent wives, **Mary Ann Parker**, was the niece of the woman he had married first, **Mary Haskin Parker**.)
- Mar 1855 A member of the congregation was **assaulted** on leaving the **Latter Day Saints Chapel in Clare Street**.
- Mar 1857 The **Clare Street** chapel was still being used by the Latter-Day Saints, and members of the congregation were baptised in the **River Chelt**.
- May 1857 Intolerance of the Latter-Day Saints continued in the town when they were banned from worshipping outside their temple in **Clare Street**.
- 6 Jun 1860 The **Clare Street Chapel** was for sale having been vacated by the Latter-Day Saints.
- 1951 The Latter-Day Saints began using the old **Bethel Chapel in Knapp Road** for services.
- 12 Dec 1964 The Church of Latter-Day Saints opened their church in **Thirlestaine Road**, giving up the use of the old **Bethel Chapel** to the **Christadelphians**.
- 5 Dec 1966 The Church of Latter-Day Saints church at **Thirlestaine Road** was dedicated.

METHODISTS

- 17 Apr 1739 **George Whitefield**, one of the founders of the Methodist movement, first arrived in Cheltenham, describing it as a ‘poor straggling hamlet with a few thatched cottages’. He was refused permission to use the parish church and instead preached on a bowling green at the **Plough**. The crowd of nearly 2,000 from the surrounding area was said to be ‘one of the largest audiences that ever assembled there’.
- 8 May 1744 **John Wesley** preached in Cheltenham for the first time, recording in his Journal that he spoke to ‘a company who seemed to understand just as much of the matter as if I had been talking Greek’. This was the first of several visits to Cheltenham.
- 1764 The Methodists no longer needed to meet in private houses when they obtained permission to use a redundant chapel in **Albion Street**, formerly **Mr. Millet’s Presbyterian** chapel. The schoolmaster **Mr. Samuel Wells**, who had earlier opened his school for Methodist Services, had appealed to the Trustees of the chapel for permission to occupy it in the interests of Methodism. **Mr. Wells** was himself a preacher of some ability, and a friend of both **Wesley** and **Whitefield**. After using this chapel for some years, the Methodists moved to occupy a chapel in **Meakings Passage**, (site of **Pittville Street**).

- 17 Mar 1766 **John Wesley** preached in Cheltenham, nearly 22 years after his first visit. He wrote that ‘the House would not hold half the people’, and so he preached outdoors to a willing crowd, despite cold weather.
- 10 Oct 1766 **John Wesley** preached in Cheltenham. It was too cold to be outdoors so he preached in **Millet’s** old chapel. He recorded in his journal, ‘Afterwards I examined the little society, and found the greater part of them lively believers, and quite free from the bigotry which is common among the Churchmen, and still more among Dissenters’.
- 1767 Methodism was permanently established in Cheltenham when **George Whitefield**, a native of **Gloucester**, was sent by the **Countess of Huntingdon** to ‘spread the evangelical Truths of the Gospel’. Initially **Lord Dartmouth** opened his residence for preaching.
- 16 Mar 1768 Although aware of the disapproval of the Rector of Cheltenham and the **Rev. Samuel Dunscombe**, Baptist minister at **Bethel Chapel**, **John Wesley** preached again at Cheltenham. He described Cheltenham as a quiet, comfortable place.
- 1 Aug 1771 **John Wesley** rode to Cheltenham and preached near the **market place** (opposite present Boot’s corner) to a ‘large and quiet congregation’. One of his converts during his visits was a **Miss Newman**, who kept a bookshop in the town. Her conversion led her to be very careful which books she allowed on her shelves. Plays and novels were henceforth banished!
- 1774 **Samuel Wells**, the Cheltenham schoolmaster, had become one of **Wesley’s** recognised preachers and was one of two travelling preachers in the recently formed **Gloucestershire Circuit**.
- 4 Aug 1774 **John Wesley** recorded in his journal, ‘I went to Cheltenham. As it was the high season for drinking the waters, the town was full of gentry; so I preached near the **market place** in the evening, to the largest congregation I have ever seen there. Some of the footmen at first made a little disturbance, but I turned to them, and they stood reprov’d.’
- 1780 **Samuel Wells**, Methodist preacher and ex-schoolmaster, died. His obituary described him as ‘a sensible, honest, upright man, who put forth all his strength in every part of his work. He was particularly zealous in observing discipline and in exhorting believers to go on to perfection’. In contrast, the President of **Corpus Christi College**, writing on behalf of the **Grammar School**, said of **Wells** that he was a dissenter and ‘a violent Methodist’, and not understanding Greek or Latin had to employ someone to teach these subjects for him. (**Wells** had set up his school in Cheltenham in direct opposition to **Pate’s Grammar School**.)
- 17 Mar 1784 **John Wesley**, then aged 81 years, paid his last visit to Cheltenham after an absence of 13 years. He recorded in his journal, ‘I preached at noon to half a houseful of hearers, most of them cold and dead enough’.
- Apr 1811 **Oliver Watts**, ironmonger and later bookseller, bought a piece of land on the west side of **King Street**, formerly part of the garden of the **Bull Inn**, on which to build a Methodist chapel. He was one of the leading local Methodist preachers. The Methodist community had outgrown the chapel in **Meakings Passage** (site of **Pittville Street**).
- 22 Sep 1812 The foundation stone for the new chapel in **King Street** was laid. The first minister of the **Wesleyan Methodist** congregation, **Oliver Watts**, used to announce, after the benediction, that a supply of provisions had been received, “which the Brethren might obtain on coming to **128 High Street**.”
- 15 Sep 1813 **Ebenezer Chapel** in **King Street** opened, built by **Charles Williams** at a cost of £2,424. Unfortunately the total subscriptions raised by **Oliver Watts** were insufficient and the chapel had to be mortgaged to finance its completion. The debt was not fully paid off until **1840**. At this time the newly formed Cheltenham Circuit had 13 preaching places in the Cheltenham area.
- 1824 A **Wesleyan Methodist** chapel opened in the **Golden Valley**. It was subsequently a **Baptist** chapel.
- 21 Oct 1827 Sermons were preached at the **Ebenezer Chapel** on behalf of the **Wesleyan Missions** by ministers from **Worcester** and **Bath**. At the Annual Meeting two days later ministers attended from **Stroud**, **Gloucester** and **Evesham**, and a sermon was preached by a **Liverpool** minister.
- 1828 An outdoor ‘preaching place’ was established by the Methodist **Rev. J. Newstead**, to serve the growing **Southtown**, an artisan area around **Bath Road** and **Great Norwood Street**, which began to be developed from **1820**. The new congregation started to meet in a house in **St. Philip’s Street**, and preaching was often carried out from the front step. As interest grew, a disused **blacksmith’s shop** was hired in **Upper Bath Street**, accommodating up to 100 people.
- 5 Oct 1829 **Oliver Watts’ Theological Literature & Circulating Library** opened in the **High Street**.
- Jun-Jul 1830 A small chapel, the **Bethesda Schoolroom**, was built in **Great Norwood Street** in only six weeks. It was to replace the previous venues in the area – a cottage in **St. Philip’s Street** and a blacksmith’s shop in **Upper Bath Street**.
- 1832 Methodist preaching services were established in **Leckhampton**, at the house of **Mr. Long**.

- 1834 Open-air Methodist services were started in the neighbourhood of **Jersey Street**.
- 1835 Methodist services were started at **Prestbury** and **Alstone**.
- 6 Mar 1836 A licence was issued by the **Bishop of Gloucester's Registrar** permitting services to be held in a room in **Union Street** and where a Methodist Sunday School was started under **Mr. H. Lane**.
- 1838 The **Wesleyan Methodist Chapel** opened in **Church Street, Charlton Kings**.
- 15 Sep 1838 A licence was granted for the use of the house of Methodist **Robert Onion**, in **Prestbury**, for worship.
- 1839 Having moved to the **Promenade, Watts' Library** became known as the **Imperial Library**.
- 2 Oct 1839 The foundation stone of a new **Wesleyan Methodist** chapel was laid in **St. George's Street**, to replace the chapel in **King Street**. The ceremony was also a celebration of the centenary of Methodism in Cheltenham. The chapel was built on a plot of land donated by **Mr. Jonathan Lea**.
- c.1840 The **Bethany Chapel** opened in **Regent Street**, built for the **Wesleyan Methodist Association**. They occupied it until the building of the **Royal Well Chapel** in **1865**. It later became known as the **Regent Chapel** and was used by the **Plymouth Brethren** in the 20th century.
- Apr 1840 The **Ebenezer Chapel** in **King Street** was advertised for sale, prior to the **Wesleyan Methodists** removal to **St. George's Street**.
- 20 May 1840 It was announced that, after repairs, the **Tabernacle** in **Clare Street** would be occupied by the **Wesleyan Methodist Association**.
- 21 Aug 1840 The new Wesleyan chapel was opened in **St. George's Street**, architect unknown. (Now flats)
- 25 Nov 1840 The **Ebenezer Chapel, King Street**, had remained unsold and a sale by auction was advertised.
- 1841-47 A chapel in **Somers Town (Russell Street/Baker Street area)** was in use for six years by the **Primitive Methodists**, possibly a satellite of a **Wiltshire** mission. (See *Miscellaneous*)
- 1842 A **Wesleyan Methodist Chapel** was erected in **Cudnal Street, Charlton Kings**.
- 1 May 1844 The **King Street Chapel** reopened after renovation.
- 30 Apr 1845 Tenders were invited for building a new Wesleyan Methodist chapel in **Great Norwood Street**.
- 13 Aug 1845 The foundation stone was laid for the new chapel in **Great Norwood Street**, a little to the north of the **1830** chapel. When the new **Bethesda Chapel** opened the following year, the original **1830** chapel was demolished. Its site is now occupied by an old school (**St. James's Primary School**) which has been converted for residential use.
- 16 Jan 1846 The **Bethesda Schoolroom** in **Great Norwood Street** (see *Miscellaneous* 1830) was replaced by the Methodist **Bethesda Chapel**. **William Moody Bell**, whose family established a long-lived surgical supply business in Cheltenham, was one of the Trustees of this Chapel, and was described as one of the 'pillars of the Wesley society'.
- 1847 **Wesleyan Methodist** services began in **Arle** in **Mr. Wicksey's** cottage.
- 1850 A **Bethany Branch Chapel** was opened in **Bath Road**.
- 1852 A cottage in **Stanhope Street** appeared on the **Wesleyan Methodist** plan for services.
- Mar 1852 The foundation stone was laid for a **Wesleyan Methodist Chapel** in **Charlton Kings**.
- Aug 1852 The new minister of the **Bethany Chapel, Regent Street**, (**Wesleyan Methodist**), the **Rev. J.M. Howie**, preached and presided over a celebratory tea.
- Jun 1854 The **Wesleyan Reform Party** opened a chapel in **Mount Pleasant**, off **Winchcombe Street**.
- Nov 1855 Sermons were preached on behalf of the Sabbath School at the **Bethany Chapel, Regent Street**.
- Jan 1856 The **Total Abstiners** held a dinner at the **Mount Pleasant Chapel**, one of several over 70 years.
- 13 Apr 1857 A 'lady preacher', **Mrs. Cullis**, occupied the pulpit at **Bethany Chapel, Regent Street**, preaching for three-quarters of an hour to a crowded and attentive audience.
- Sep 1858 The **Ebenezer Chapel, King Street**, reopened as a free place of worship.
- Oct 1859 After renovation, the **King Street Chapel** reopened for the use of the **Primitive Methodists**.
- Nov 1859 A **Methodist New Connexion** home mission started worshipping in the **Zoar Chapel**, the original **Quaker** building in **Manchester Walk** (now **Clarence Street**), which had been vacated by the **Baptists**.
- 1860 A Chapel-keeper's house was built at the **Wesleyan Chapel** in **St. George's Street**.
- 1864 The membership of the **Golden Valley Chapel** had fallen off and it was sold off, with the proceeds going towards a new chapel in **Swindon Road**. It was eventually demolished, although another **Wesleyan chapel** was built out at the **Golden Valley** at a later date.
- 20 Nov 1864 A **Wesleyan chapel** was opened in **Swindon Road**, the result of expansion of the work carried out in **Stanhope Street**. (In the 20th century it was used as a **Salvation Army Mission Hall**.)
- 24 Jun 1864 The foundation stone of the **Royal Well United Free Church** (**Wesleyan Methodist Association**) was laid at **Bayshill** in **St. George's Road**. It was designed by a local architect, **Charles Martin Müller** of **Ormond Terrace**, and was probably one of his earliest works.
- Mar 1866 The **Royal Well Free Methodist Chapel, St. George's Road**, (**Wesleyan Methodist Association**) was opened for worship, superseding the **Bethany Chapel** in **Regent Street**.



Cheltenham Chapel, situated behind the bowling green in St. George's Square, photographed in the 1960s in a dilapidated state by the late Steve Stokes, architect and former Cheltenham Local History Society member.



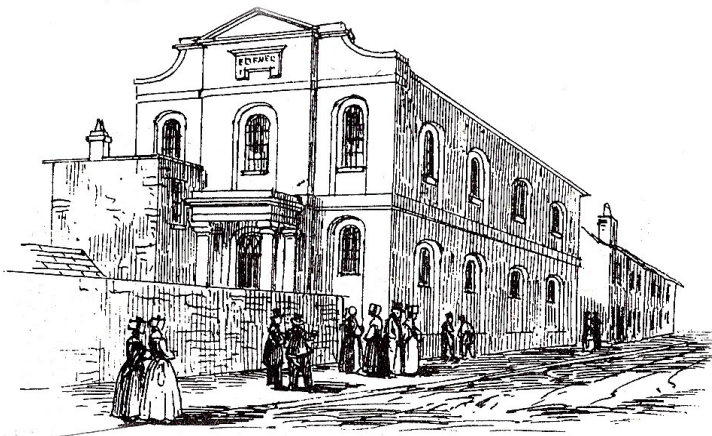
George Whitefield, on his first visit to Cheltenham in 1739, preached to a crowd of 2,000 on the Plough Bowling Green. In 1767 he preached to another large crowd standing on a tombstone outside the Parish Church. He later talked of 'the barren wilderness [Cheltenham] being turned to a fruitful field'. Again in Cheltenham in 1769 he had what he described as a 'golden season'.



The Chapel was opened in 1809 by the Rev. Rowland Hill. Funds are currently being raised by the Friends of Jenner Gardens to restore and improve the adjoining burial ground and surrounding area.



The Cheltenham Synagogue in Synagogue Lane, designed by the architect W H Knight, was consecrated 14th May 1839. Much of its furnishings date from 1761, having been donated by the New Synagogue of Leadenhall Street, London.



The Ebenezer Chapel in King Street, taken from George Rowe's *Illustrated Cheltenham Guide*, and said by Rowe to be 'now [1845] in the occupation of a section of the Baptists, with the Rev. D Denham as its pastor'. The chapel was the first to be built for the Wesleyan Methodists in Cheltenham and opened in 1813. The building is now in residential use.

- 5 Aug 1866 The **King Street Chapel** entertained a **female** preacher from **Dymock**.
1867 The **Bethesda Chapel** in **Great Norwood Street** was enlarged. The same year the **Wesleyan chapel** in **Charlton Kings** was closed.
- 13 Nov 1871 New **Wesleyan** schools in connection with **Bethesda Chapel, Great Norwood Street**, opened.
Nov 1874 The foundation stone for a new **Primitive Methodist** chapel was laid at **Ryeworth, Charlton Kings**.
Aug 1876 **Ryeworth (Primitive Methodist) Chapel, Charlton Kings**, opened.
11 Oct 1876 A school was opened at the **Ryeworth Chapel** – 50 children attended.
1881 Mission workers from **Bethesda Methodist Church** began open-air services on **Lansdown** railway bridge, **St. Mark's**.
Dec 1885 A free Christmas meal was given to 140 poor children at the **King Street Chapel**.
Oct 1890 The foundation stone was laid for a **Wesleyan chapel** on **Gloucester Road**, near **Lansdown Station**.
- 14 May 1891 The first **St. Mark's Wesleyan Chapel** was opened on **Gloucester Road**.
Oct 1902 The funeral took place of **William Moody Bell**, a well-known local tradesman and Methodist.
23 Aug 1906 The **Wesleyan Chapel** in **Gloucester Road** was registered for solemnizing marriages.
Apr 1910 A new **St. Mark's Methodist Chapel** was planned for **Gloucester Road**.
5 Apr 1911 A memorial stone for the new **St. Mark's Wesleyan Chapel** in **Gloucester Road** was laid. The building stands opposite the earlier chapel. The old chapel has now been converted for commercial use.
- 15 Nov 1911 **St. Mark's Methodist Church** officially opened in **Gloucester Road**.
1934 The **Primitive Methodists** ceased using the **King Street Chapel**.
30 Jun 1936 The **Royal Well Methodist Chapel, St. George's Road**, closed for worship and was converted to a garage.
- 22 May 1938 A **Wesleyan bi-centenary** open-air service was held in the Parish churchyard.
10 Aug 1940 A new **Methodist Hall** and **Sunday School** opened at **Whaddon**.
1965 The former **Royal Well Methodist Chapel, St. George's Road**, was demolished.
1971 The **Wesleyan Methodist Chapel** in **St. George's Street** ceased being used by the Methodists. After some years as a warehouse, it has now been converted into flats.
- 1 Nov 1981 **St. Mark's Methodist Church** in **Gloucester Road** held a commemorative service at the Lamp (junction of **Queen's Road** and **Gloucester Road**) to celebrate a century of Methodism in the **St. Mark's District**.
- 11 Jan 1989 Methodists at **St. Matthew's Church** ceased sharing the church with **Anglicans** and moved to **Bethesda** in **Great Norwood Street**.

MISCELLANEOUS DISSENT

- 1378 The **Bishop of Worcester** dismissed **Nicholas Fairforde**, the keeper of Cheltenham parish church, following his scandalous conduct.
- 1541 **Reinaldus Lane** became the first incumbent and curate of the Parish Church after the dissolution of the monasteries.
- 1551 The Vicar of **Prestbury, William Elkens**, embezzled money that was due to the freemen of the village.
- 1563 The villagers of **Prestbury** protested to the **Church Court** at **Gloucester** that their vicar 'held ye services at inconvenient times'.
- 1610 The **Bishop of Gloucester** tried unsuccessfully to persuade **Mrs. Elizabeth Baghott** to meet her obligations and pay reasonable **stipends** to the ministers of Charlton Kings and Cheltenham. **Sir Francis Bacon**, lessee of the Cheltenham rectory, had sublet it to her; despite its annual income of £400, she paid the two ministers only £10 annually and the lay deacons less than £2 each.
- 1622 **Mrs. Elizabeth Baghott** died and her sons, **John** and **Thomas Higgs**, still refused to honour their obligations regarding the rectory of Cheltenham. Ironically her daughter **Anne Higgs** showed more interest, bequeathing ornaments to the church including a green carpet for the communion table bordered with 'needlework of myne owne workinge, and to be trymed with silke frynge'.
- 1625 A lawsuit finally compelled **John** and **Thomas Higgs** to pay reasonable stipends.
- 1633 The Curate's annual **stipend**, which was still only £10 and described as 'a scandal to the Church of God', was increased to £40.
- 1643 The minister of Cheltenham, **John English DD** was imprisoned by the **Puritans** for 18 weeks, during the intolerance that occurred during the Civil War. A monument in the parish church records that this caused the death of his wife, **Jane**.

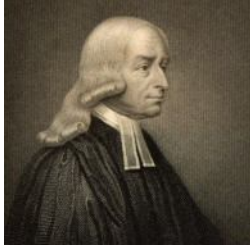
- 1646 **John English** was sequestered from his office and died the following year.
- 1676 **Archbishop Sheldon's** religious census recorded **97** Nonconformists in the town, most of whom were probably **Anabaptists** and **Quakers**.
- 1716 **Mr. Welles** of **Prestbury**, clergyman and magistrate, recorded in his diary, '**Mary Careless** committed to quarter sessions for saying twice "**King George** was a **Papist Dog**". **Mary Hill** likewise committed for saying, "No, he was a **Presbyterian**".'
- 5 Jul 1808 The **Rev. Rowland Hill**, a leading Nonconformist preacher, laid the foundation stone of **Cheltenham Chapel** in **St. George's Square**, designed by **Edward Smith**, before a crowd of about 3,000 people.
- 2 Aug 1809 The **Cheltenham Chapel** was opened for public worship by the **Rev. Rowland Hill**, who preached in the morning, and **Rev. William Jay** of **Bath**. The deed of enrolment required that the minister could be of any denomination, both Anglican and Nonconformist, as long as he was a regularly ordained clergyman.
- Jul 1810 The Trustees of **Cheltenham Chapel** bought a piece of land to the east of the chapel for use as a Burial Ground. One of the Trustees was **Benjamin Wells**, on whose land the Chapel had been built. It is possible he donated the land for the purpose.
- 1813 The congregation of **Cheltenham Chapel, St. George's Square**, settled under the 33-year-long ministry of the **Rev. J. Brown**. The services here were conducted on the plan of **Lady Huntingdon's chapels**, although it did not belong to that Connexion.
- 1820 A Cheltenham resident was fined £20 for allowing a **prayer meeting** to be held in his home without a licence from the Bishop. As he was unable to pay, his household goods were sold and he was sent to prison until the balance could be paid. All those who attended the prayer meeting were fined five shillings each.
- 1830 Approximately 1,200 children from Nonconformist Cheltenham schools moved in procession through the town after a service at **Cheltenham Chapel**.
- Jun 1830 The foundation stone was laid for a small building in **Great Norwood Street**, initially called the **Bethesda Schoolroom**. In the late 1820s the Church of England, Quakers and other Nonconformists had agreed to build a shared meeting room in this area south of the town. It was called a schoolroom as the Quakers would only contribute towards a school, not a chapel.
- 29 Mar 1832 The **Rev. Nathaniel Paul**, described as 'a man of colour', lectured at **Highbury Chapel** to raise money to support the cause of helping so-called 'free' black families to emigrate from the more oppressive states of the U.S., to escape the degradation they still suffered. The following night he lectured in the **St. James's Square Infant Schoolroom**.
- 1832 The *Stranger's Guide to Cheltenham* stated that 'few towns of equal extent in the Kingdom possess so many churches and chapels, or can boast so efficient and devoted a body of clergy, both in and out of the Establishment'.
- 1833 Statistics show that 1,137 children attended Nonconformist Sunday Schools and 1,035 attended Anglican Sunday Schools.
- c.1836 A chapel was planned and built at the heart of **Somers Town**, the area around **Russell Street/Albert Street/Baker Street**, on a piece of land formerly called **Townsend Piece**.
- 1837 The new chapel at **Somers Town** was transferred, via Cheltenham Manor Court, to **James Morish**, dissenting minister, for the use of **John Bubb** at a cost of £160.
- 1841 The chapel at **Somers Town (Russell Street/Albert Street/Baker Street)** was transferred to **Primitive Methodist** Trustees for £205 (£160 to **John Bubb** and £45 to **James Morish**), who had moved to Derby by this time. The new Trustees were from **Wiltshire**, suggesting that the chapel may have been a satellite of a **Primitive Methodist** mission in **Wiltshire**.
- 25 Aug 1842 The *Cheltenham Chronicle* commented on the 'staying power' of the **Rev. J. Brown** of **Cheltenham Chapel**, who was to preach a sermon celebrating his **30th** year in the town. 'How different to the other Dissenting Chapels! Scarcely a minister in the whole town can be found ... besides **Mr. Brown**, who has been located here more than *three years*.'
- c.1845 There was increasing agitation amongst Nonconformists against the imposition of **Church Rates**. This led to an attack by the **Rev. Francis Close**, in the Parish Church, likening the objecting Nonconformists to 'rooks and jackdaws and ill-omened birds of many a wing which hover around the towers of our venerable church, screaming and hooting with curses and vulgar noise, while at the same time they nestle in the ivy that hangs upon her grey and time-worn battlements'.
- 6 Mar 1846 The **Rev. J. Brown** died aged 66, having been minister of **Cheltenham Chapel** for 33 years.
- 24 Nov 1847 The **Protestant Dissenter's** chapel near **Tewkesbury Road (Russell Street/Baker Street)** was sold by auction – after only six years it was no longer required by the **Primitive Methodists**. It was sold to the Trustees of the **Congregational Union** for £230.
- 22 Jan 1850 The funeral took place of a **Rehabite** at the **New Burial Ground**, exciting much curiosity. The

- procession consisted of 60 members, followed by a ‘vast concourse of spectators who crowded the spacious burying ground’.
- 30 Mar 1851 The **National Religious Census of England & Wales** took place. Returns were made from 18 or 19 **non-Anglican** places of worship plus the **Roman Catholics, Jews and Mormons**.
- 22 Apr 1851 The **Rev. F. Close**, Incumbent of Cheltenham, recommended that the Churchwardens tried to raise the amount of Church rate required by **voluntary contributions**; he was grieved by the fact that proceedings had recently been taken against a number of Dissenters for non-payment of **Church Rates**. His suggestion was taken up two months later, and a compromise reached whereby the ratepayers would only pay for the maintenance of the church fabric, churchyard, clock, etc., and any expenses connected with worship would be raised by voluntary contribution.
- Sep 1852 The **Rev. F. Close** had himself paid £80 for the repair of the Parish Church organ. A meeting of Dissenters was held at the **Old Wells Music Hall** (site of present **Princess Hall, Cheltenham Ladies’ College**) to raise the amount to reimburse **Close** as an acknowledgement of his conciliatory behaviour in the abandonment of Church Rates.
- Aug 1853 A man named **Julius Henry Gilegan**, who claimed to be a ‘**prophet**’ and was ‘guilty of the most blasphemous and revolting conduct’, caused a great deal of disturbance in the town. He was ultimately taken in by the police and committed to **Gloucester gaol** for six months, in default of sureties for his good behaviour.
- Sep/Oct 1857 Meetings were held to discuss the future of **Cheltenham Chapel, St. George’s Square**, as no meetings had been held there for six months.
- Dec 1857 A meeting about the future of the **Cheltenham Chapel** found in favour of the formation of a **Presbyterian** congregation there. The conversion took place a few weeks later.
- Jan 1863 The **Plymouth Brethren** began building a new chapel.
- Dec 1869 A **Free Church** was opened at the old chapel, **Wellington Street**, by **Rev. C.P. McCarthy**.
- Apr 1874 The vicar of **Prestbury**, the **Rev. John Edwards**, was charged with **ritualism**.
- 1876 After use by, among others, the **Methodists** and then the **Latter-Day Saints**, the **Clare Street** chapel was in use as the **St. Luke’s Mission Room** by this date.
- Jan 1881 The vicar of **Prestbury**, the **Rev. John Baghot de la Bere** (formerly **Edwards**) appealed against his **sentence of Deprivation** for practising **ritualism**. Letters of support and sympathy written by members of the congregation appeared in the local press.
- Jul 1882 **Messrs. Chatters & Channon’s** design was selected for a new **United Sunday School** in **Bennington Street**.
- 13 Sep 1882 A memorial stone was laid at the opening of the **United Sunday School** in **Bennington Street**.
- Jan 1883 A new hall, known as **Bennington Hall**, was opened for the **United Sunday School** in **Bennington Street**.
- Apr 1883 The places of worship in Cheltenham at this time consisted of 15 Anglican, at least 20 Nonconformist chapels, 1 Roman Catholic and a Jewish Synagogue.
- 25 Nov 1883 Nonconformist Sunday School Teachers of the town held a united gathering at the **Bennington Street** schoolrooms.
- May 1884 The **Town Hall, Regent Street**, was sold by **W.H. Horsley**. It had been used as a riding school, the **Salem Chapel** and as the **Town Hall**.
- 21 Nov 1884 The **Poor Sisters of Nazareth** arrived in Cheltenham and lived at **10 St. James’s Square**.
- 1886 The **Poor Sisters of Nazareth** ran a soup kitchen for the poor.
- 1886 The **Cheltenham Chapel** in **St. George’s Square** was used as a Sunday School.
- 20 Oct 1886 A letter appeared in the *Cheltenham Examiner* reporting that Nonconformist parents were having to send their children to Cheltenham schools as the **Prestbury National Day School** was refusing to admit them.
- Jun 1887 For the first time Nonconformist ministers took part in devotions at St. Matthew’s for **Queen Victoria’s Jubilee** service.
- Aug 1887 There was a scandal when the Captain eloped with a member of the **Church Army**.
- 27 Dec 1887 The **Poor Sisters of Nazareth** moved to **1 Sandford Place**, in **Bath Road** (opposite **Cheltenham College**).
- 1898 No. **13 Portland Street** became the **Portland Tabernacle**. It began life as **Seymour Hall** in 1818, the private residence of **Robert Hughes**, a local landowner who had founded the Cheltenham **Masonic Lodge** that year. The building was probably designed by **George Allen Underwood**, a prolific Cheltenham Regency architect. By **1891** it had been fitted out as a place of worship and became known as **Handel Hall**. In the 20th century the **Portland Tabernacle** became the **Portland Street Church of Christ**. It was demolished c.1979-80 to make way for the Northern Relief Road. In the late **1990s** the **Millennium Restaurant** was built on the site, itself replaced by a block of flats in **2005**.

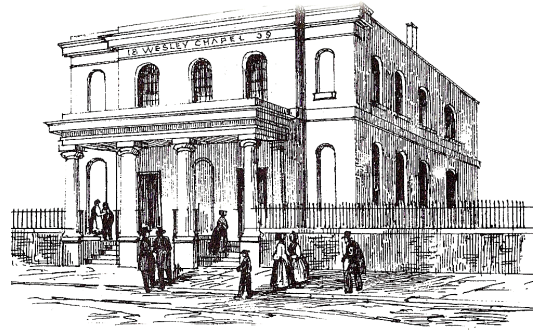
- Jul 1893 Representatives from the evangelical Nonconformist churches created the **Cheltenham Nonconformist Council**.
- 25 Dec 1895 The Christmas Day issue of the *Cheltenham Examiner* reported that **Samuel Spillan**, a former local Nonconformist pastor, had died destitute and mentally ill in **Cardiff**.
- Aug 1900 A **Catholic Apostolic Church** opened in **Grosvenor Street**. (It is now **Mallam's**, auctioneer.)
- 26 Jun 1901 **Cleeve Hill** inter-denominational church opened.
- Dec 1902 To convince **J.T. Agg Gardner** that the new **Education Bill** was a bad idea, 900 Free Church members signed a petition.
- 1903 A **Passive Resistance Union** was formed. Poor-rate defaulters, or **Passive Resisters**, failed to pay the portion of their rates levied for 'sectarian education'. This was a protest against the new Education Act, and many appeared in court. They had the support of the local Nonconformist clergy, who did not see why Nonconformists should have to pay for Anglican church schools. **Passive Resisters** had their goods seized by bailiffs and auctioned off. They appeared in court in Cheltenham over 40 times, well into the 1920s.
- Sep 1903 The **Protestant Alliance** gave a lecture at the **Bennington Hall** attacking the **Jesuits**.
- Sep 1903 The **Rev. B. Beckerlegge**, a Nonconformist clergyman, offered **passive resistance** to the education portion of the poor rate.
- 1 Jun 1904 **Nazareth House** held its first outdoor procession to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption.
- May 1905 The Free Churches held torchlight processions to reach the non-church-going portion of the community. They proceeded from two parts of the town, converging at the **Victoria Rooms**, off the **High Street**, where 'disgraceful scenes' occurred.
- 10 May 1905 Letters in the *Cheltenham Examiner* commented on aspects of the Free Churches' night-time attempt to woo pub-goers to consider religion.
- Sep 1905 The **Free Churches Federation** held a week-long convention in the town.
- 4 Sep 1905 The goods of 43 **passive resisters** were confiscated for 'withholding portions of the poor-rate levied for purposes, as they allege, of sectarian education'.
- Mar 1906 An action brought by builder **R.W. Jackson**, involving **St. Peter's Mission Hall**, was heard in the County Court.
- Apr 1906 A neighbour of **St. Peter's Mission Hall** brought a complaint about trespass to the County Court.
- Jan 1908 Free Church ministers protested that the practice of blacking out betting news in the newspapers at the public library had been discontinued.
- 8 Jan 1922 The annual **exchange of pulpits** by the ministers of the local **Free Churches** took place.
- 27 Jan 1922 **Passive resisters** to the education rates appeared before the Cheltenham Court for the 40th time.
- 3 Jun 1927 The **Spiritualist Church** in **Bennington Street** opened by **Mr. Henry Bubb, JP**, of **Ullenwood**, President. A dedication took place the same evening.
- 16 Apr 1962 There was protest at the cancellation of the annual Good Friday religious film and service held at the **Gaumont Cinema**.
- 12 Apr 1963 Over 1,000 from many Christian denominations took part in a silent procession of Witness to commemorate Good Friday.
- 31 Oct 1964 It was announced that **The Poor Sisters of Nazareth Home** for elderly & orphans was to move the following year to **Springfield House, London Road** in **Charlton Kings**.
- 1965 The former **Bethel Chapel of 1820** in **Knapp Road** became the **Christadelphian Hall**. This congregation had formerly met in the **Corn Exchange**, off the **High Street**, and then in their own Meeting Room in the **Rotunda** at **Montpellier**.
- 27 Mar 1970 Cheltenham young Christians carried a wooden cross and placards in a silent demonstration against **Good Friday shopping**.
- 7 Oct 1980 Concern by the leaders of the established **churches** in Cheltenham about the **Moonie's sect** led to 33 of Cheltenham's churches being issued with a **warning leaflet**.
- 23 Jan 1993 A special conference was held in Cheltenham opposing the **ordination of women**.
- 5 Apr 1996 The *Gloucestershire Echo* reminded a coven of **white witches** from **Charlton Kings** to worship a lunar eclipse when they had forgotten the date.
- 10 Jun 2000 Over 14,000 people attended the Christian millennium celebration **Pentecost 2000** at **Prestbury Park** – the largest gathering of its kind ever held in Gloucestershire at that time.

MORMONS – See LATTER-DAY SAINTS

QUAKERS – See SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



John Wesley visited Cheltenham several times between 1744 and 1784, making various references to the town in his Journal.



Wesley Chapel in St. George's Street, built to replace the 'outgrown' nearby Ebenezer Chapel, opened in 1840. George Rowe writes, 'it is calculated to hold about 1,000 persons, and is fitted with an organ and large galleries and neatly pewed throughout. The Wesleyans are the most numerous body of Dissenters in Cheltenham'.



This group posed for a photograph to be circulated on a postcard with the printed inscription: 'Season's Greetings from Officers of the Cheltenham "Rescue Tent" (Juvenile Section) I. O. Rechabites. Date not known.



Methodist Church - Oxford & Gloucestershire District. First May Synod under Methodist Union. Public Luncheon, Town Hall, Cheltenham May 1933.



The *Cheltenham Chronicle and Gloucestershire Graphic* of Saturday May 28, 1927 printed this photograph of the new Spiritualist Church in Bennington Street, to be opened on the following Friday by Mr Henry Bubb. The *Graphic* of June 11 reported the opening event. Mr Bubb, wearing a silk hat, is pictured in the centre of the group with his daughter next to him.

PRESBYTERIAN & UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

- c. 1723 **Mr. Millet**, a Presbyterian, built a chapel in **Albion Street**, opposite the present **Pate's Almshouses**. Following his death, it closed but was adopted by the **Methodists** in **1764**. Some sources suggest it was the chapel built in 1662 for the **Unitarians**.
- c.1730 The **Old Chapel** in **Meakings Passage** was built (site of **Pittville Street**), possibly for a Presbyterian congregation.
- 1825 The **Albion Street** chapel built by **Mr. Millet** was demolished. Its site was later occupied by the **Mechanics Institute**. A writer of **1850** recalled that the building had been of 'very antiquated appearance, containing a gallery, ornamented with curious old oak carvings, and capable of holding 150-200 persons'.
- Jan 1858 The **Cheltenham Chapel** in **St. George's Square** was converted to a Presbyterian church. It had last been used by the **Congregationalists**, from **1851-7**.
- Jan 1860 The Presbyterian Church, based at the **Cheltenham Chapel**, held its annual party in **St. George's Hall** in the **High Street (No. 250)**.
- Feb 1861 A new schoolroom was opened at the Presbyterian Church, **Cheltenham Chapel**.
- 1877 The **Walker Memorial Church (Whaddon Road)** was built and opened at the expense of the **Rev. James Walker**, a minister of the **Church of Scotland**. Services were held there until **Walker's** death in **1911**. It was later known as the **Cheltenham Evangelical Free Church**. It was demolished in the late **1980s**, to be replaced by a new church behind the present flats.
- 29 Sep 1885 The foundation stone of the new Presbyterian church in **Fauconberg Road** was laid (**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church**).
- May 1886 The opening ceremony of **St. Andrew's Church** took place. It was designed in Gothic style by **Thomas Arnold**.
- Nov 1890 The old Presbyterian Church, the former **Cheltenham Chapel** in **St. George's Square**, was re-named **Central Hall**. Among other uses, Temperance meetings were held there and it was used as a Sunday School until **1895** when the **Salvation Army** purchased it.
- Oct 1895 The memorial stone of a new lecture hall at **St. Andrew's Church** was laid by **Mr. Charles Wilson**.
- Jun 1908 The Golden Jubilee was celebrated of the Cheltenham **Presbyterian Church**. It began in **Cheltenham Chapel** before moving to the purpose-built **St. Andrew's Church** where it was flourishing under the **Rev. Harvey Jellie**.
- 10 Sep 1960 The foundation stone was laid to **Warden Hill United Reformed Church (St. Christopher's)** in **Salisbury Avenue**.
- 15 Jul 1961 **St. Christopher's Church** was opened when an altar was consecrated at the multi-purpose community hall in **Salisbury Avenue**.

ROMAN CATHOLICS

The Roman Catholics take the understandable view that it was the Anglican Church that was nonconformist, not they themselves, yet it was that very Anglican Church which repressed its Roman Catholic fellow-Christians for hundreds of years.

- 24 Mar 1556 **John Coberley**, of Cheltenham, was burned at the stake in **Salisbury**, martyred with two Wiltshire men, **John Maundrell** and **John Spicer**. They had been arrested while speaking out against the popery practised in the parish church of **Keevil**, Wilts. (During the reign of the Roman Catholic Queen Mary the former Latin service was briefly restored.) The men refused to revoke, with **Maundrell** stating that 'wooden images were good to roast a shoulder of mutton, but evil in the church'. It was noted that **John Coberley** took a particularly long time to die, his body still moving after the flesh had shrunk from his bones. His wife **Alice** recanted and was allowed to return home.
- 17 Apr 1556 A Cheltenham Manor Court roll entry states that **John Coberley**, who held a messuage and 13 acres of land in **Westal**, 'was lately attained and burnt for divers heresies and false opinions ... where he forfeited his lands to the Lady of the Manor, the Queen'. A note in the margin states that there was no forfeiture in such a case, and his widow, **Alice**, carried the lands to her second husband, **Robert Ible**.
- 1676 Only four Roman Catholics were recorded in Cheltenham by **Archbishop Sheldon** in his religious census.
- 1773 A Census reveals that there were only 210 Roman Catholics living in the whole of

- Gloucestershire, served by four resident chaplains who were attached to the families at **Hartpury Court, Beckford Hall, Horton Court** and **Hatherop Castle**.
- 1795 **St. Peter's Catholic Chapel** opened in **Gloucester**; a Gloucester priest would travel to Cheltenham during the summer months to celebrate Mass.
- 1796 Permission was sought for the **Abbé Duchemin** to shrive a Cheltenham couple who were shortly to be married as 'he constantly attends Cheltenham every week to teach French'.
- Apr 1799 **Abbé Duchemin** was unable to celebrate a Mass at **Gloucester** for 200 Irish soldiers billeted there because 'he was engaged at present' at Cheltenham.
- 15 Jul 1799 Application was made to the Justices for a room in **North Street** to be used as a temporary Roman Catholic chapel. The application was signed by **Rene Godelier**, 'officiating French Priest for the season at Cheltenham'.
- c.1800 Visitors to Cheltenham included many Roman Catholics, particularly of the Irish aristocracy and those who hoped to serve them. **Mr. Godelier** was requested to attend Cheltenham as **Abbé Duchemin** was unwilling to travel on horseback – apparently since Christmas he had twice been thrown from his horse and felt in danger of being killed, although he had recovered from the cuts and bruises.
- 1801 From at least this date Mass was celebrated at Cheltenham by the **Abbé Duchemin**.
- 1802 The **Rev. John Jones** served Cheltenham as visiting Missioner from **Gloucester**. His income was £17, out of which he had to find five guineas for a room, half a guinea for a woman to sweep it, and the further expense of buying a meal at an inn when he was not invited to take refreshment by any of his congregation.
- 1803 **Lord Stourton** stayed in Cheltenham for three months, inviting the **Rev. Jones** to celebrate Mass twice a week at his residence, for which he received a reasonable stipend.
- Jan 1804 The **Rev. John Jones** left Cheltenham, the only Catholics residing in the town at the time being **Lady Southwell**, her sister, the **Berington** family, the **Lamberts** and six ladies, together with their Catholic servants.
- Feb 1804 The **Abbé Duchemin** was finally appointed a Missioner at **Gloucester**, and he agreed that, on a temporary basis, he would celebrate early Mass in the city before setting off for Cheltenham at ten o'clock.
- Apr 1804 The **Abbé Duchemin** had difficulty either hiring or borrowing a horse and so had to run on foot to Cheltenham, where he arrived to celebrate Mass tired, dishevelled and late.
- Dec 1804 By this time the only Catholic family left in Cheltenham were the **Beringtons**, and the **Abbé Duchemin** had only collected £42.12.0d, even though **Mrs. Berington** had personally taken it upon herself to stand at the door with a plate so no one could escape without making a donation. At the Mass room the seats and altar were twice confiscated by the landlord in lieu of the rent which had not been paid by other hirers of the room.
- May 1805 **Don James Calderbank O.B.S.**, from Bath, was appointed as **Benedictine Missioner** to Cheltenham..
- Sep 1805 **Don James Calderbank O.B.S.** withdrew from Cheltenham after only a few months, probably as he was unable to find any wealthy patrons, and the town reverted back to the **Gloucester** connection with **Abbé Duchemin** resuming his duties.
- Oct 1807 The **Rev. Nicholas Alexander Cesar Robin**, a French language teacher, settled in Cheltenham. Having been a secular priest of the Diocese of **Laon**, **Abbé Cesar** began saying Mass in the town, and was even allowed to use the Town Hall for a year. He had established a good relationship with the leading inhabitants of Cheltenham through teaching French to their children. At some point he moved from **133 High Street** to **Weaver's Hotel** in Cheltenham.
- 15 Oct 1809 **Dom. John Augustine Birdsall**, who had been the Assistant Missioner at **Bath**, arrived in Cheltenham to initiate a **Benedictine mission**. Despite a difficult transition period for **Abbé Cesar**, who lost his income and the position of Missioner, the two managed to sustain a good friendship. At the time there was still no proper resident Catholic congregation, no dedicated chapel and no wealthy patron.
- 19 Nov 1809 **Father Birdsall** celebrated his first public Mass in Cheltenham in a large room at **Weavers Hotel**. The room continued to be used until a new chapel was opened.
- 13 Dec 1809 The first brick was laid for the new **Roman Catholic Chapel**. **Father Birdsall** used his own money to build a chapel in **Somerset Place** (corner of **St. James's Square** opposite the **Bethel Baptist Chapel**), celebrating Mass at the **York Hotel** during its construction.
- 19 Nov 1809 **Abbé Robin** handed over the Catholic mission to the **Rev. Birdsall** who held his first mass in **Weaver's Hotel**.
- 3 Jun 1810 The **Roman Catholic Chapel** opened, measuring 53 ft by 36 ft. Costing £1,224, it was built of plain red brick and stood on the site of the present **St. Gregory's Church** spire.

- 24 Sep 1811 **Abbé Robin** died at Cheltenham, aged 60 years. He was buried in the parish churchyard where a stone was erected by subscription amongst his former pupils.
- 1813 Members of the French royal family worshipped at the **Roman Catholic Chapel** during their visits to Cheltenham. The **Duke and Duchess of Angouleme**, niece and nephew of the **King of France**, with their entourage, frequented the chapel during a six-week stay. Although the French King visited them in Cheltenham, he had a private chaplain and so did not attend the chapel.
- 1814 **Father Birdsall** had the **Chapel House** built between the **Roman Catholic Chapel** and **Tangent Alley** (the alleyway down the side of the existing **Old Priory**). The frontage of the house was remodelled in **1881** and it was demolished in **1965** apart from the façade, which was incorporated into the present building.
- 1822 **Elizabeth Wilks** was received into the Roman Catholic church at the age of 79 years. Two of her daughters became Catholics, one of whom was the mother of **George Arthur Williams**, the owner of **Williams' Library** from **1815**. **Williams** was perhaps the most influential resident Catholic in Cheltenham during the middle years of the 19th century.
- 1825 An extension costing £500 was added to the **Roman Catholic Chapel in Somerset Place**.
- Apr 1827 **Father Birdsall** opened a charity school adjoining the Roman Catholic Chapel.
- 1828 Parents of Roman Catholic scholars were threatened in the press, by the Evangelicals, with 'various losses' if they continued to send their children to the Roman Catholic Schools. A branch National School was set up directly opposite the **Roman Catholic Chapel**, before being moved to the **High Street**, but then the **Infant School** was set up nearby in **St. James's Square**.
- 1828 A public debate, the '**Cheltenham Discussion**', took place at the **Riding School** between members of the **Reformation Society** and a number of Catholic theologians. The meeting quickly ended in disarray during discussion of the first subject. The Catholic party stormed out and much was written and said about the matter on both sides for years to come.
- 1829 Under the rule of Francis Close, the evangelical Curate of **St. Mary's parish church**, there was opposition to the **Catholic Emancipation Bill**, with a threat to the **Roman Catholic Chapel**. **Father Birdsall** described a contemporary placard which called for 'all true Protestants' to meet and demolish the 'heap of Rubbish that stands in this town near the **Baptist Chapel** ... and drive Popery out of Town'. The moment passed without incident, although **Francis Close** continued to show a certain antagonism towards Roman Catholics.
- 1836 **Father Birdsall** left Cheltenham, after 27 years, to establish a small monastery at **Broadway**. He died the following year after a severe and lingering illness.
- 1839 **Francis Close**, Curate of Cheltenham, preached a sermon against the Roman Catholic Church annually on **5 November** from 1839 until 1854.
- Dec 1842 An inquest found that **John Coldwell** died 'from destitution' in the **Roman Catholic Chapel**.
- 1850 The Roman Catholic population of Cheltenham was estimated at a thousand.
- 5 Nov 1850 The **Town Commissioners** summoned a public meeting about the restoration of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales, Roman Catholic Bishops having been appointed.
- 11 Nov 1850 A second public meeting, known as '**The Great Meeting**' took place at the **Town Hall, Regent Street**, when a protest was recorded against the Pope of Rome, and a riot occurred outside the **Catholic Chapel**. The following spoke out against these 'the **anti-Catholic riots**': the chairman of the **Unitarian Congregation, W.P. Price, Esq., J.P.**, the **Rev. Glassbrook** at the **Catholic Chapel**, the **Rev. Kennedy** at the **Highbury Chapel**, the **Rev. Bromby** at **St Paul's**, the **Rev. Lewis** at **Salem Chapel**.
- 21 Nov 1850 An attempt to **burn effigies** of the Pope and Cardinals was stopped by the police, acting under the orders of the magistrates. The effigies were exhibited in the shop of **Mr. Hardwick**, tailor, and several tons of coal and loads of faggots had been provided for the burning. A crowd attacked the **Roman Catholic Chapel** that evening, attempting to set it on fire and tearing up the iron railings in front of it. The mob broke open the premises of several Roman Catholic tradesmen, and took away their shutters and the books out of their shops to help make the bonfire. Several hundred special constables were sworn in the next day to assist the police force in preventing a recurrence of the outrage.
- 27 Nov 1850 It was reported that the **Roman Catholic Chapel** had been damaged by a mob. This anti-Catholic behaviour was condemned by **Rev. Kennedy** of the **Highbury Chapel**, **Rev. Lewis** of **Salem Chapel**, and **W.P. Price Esq., JP**, chairman of the **Unitarian Congregation**.
- Dec 1850 The Cheltenham **anti-papal address**, with 4,000 signatures, was presented to the Queen by **Sir George Grey**, who stated in a letter to **Mr. Grenville Berkeley** that 'her Majesty was pleased to receive the same very graciously'.
- 25 Dec 1850 A list of the new anti-Catholic publications by the **Rev. Francis Close**, Curate of Cheltenham parish church, was published in the *Cheltenham Examiner*.

- 25 Dec 1850 The Roman Catholic priest **Rev. E. Glassbrook** sought compensation for mob damage to his chapel windows.
- May 1854 The foundations were begun for a new church (**St. Gregory's**) in the garden of the **Roman Catholic Chapel** in **St. James's Square**. It was designed by **Charles Hansom** of **Clifton**.
- 5 Nov 1854 The **Rev. Francis Close** withdrew his usual anti-Catholic November sermon.
- 10 Jan 1855 The building committee for the **Roman Catholic Church of St. Gregory the Great** gave a dinner to the workmen.
- 29 Sep 1855 A meeting was held to commemorate the completion of the **Roman Catholic Church**.
- May 1857 The Roman Catholic school, established for the children of poor Catholics, moved to **St. Paul's Street North** from the **St. Gregory's** site, opening with a new master and mistress.
- 26 May 1857 The large, new church, dedicated to **St. Gregory**, and designed in Decorated Gothic style by **Charles Hansom** of **Clifton**, was opened with a sermon by **Cardinal Wiseman**.
- 19 Oct 1859 The builder **John Acock** was contracted to build the spire for **St. Gregory's RC Church**. The foundations were laid and details of the measurements given in the press.
- 7 Dec 1859 The foundation stone for **St. Gregory's Church** spire was officially laid.
- May 1860 The **Rev. George Roberts**, minister of **St John's Church**, refuted allegations that he had **seceded to Rome**.
- Jul 1861 Having completed the foundations, **Mr. Acock** was to commence building the spire of **St. Gregory's Church**.
- Dec 1864 The spire of **St. Gregory's Church** was completed.
- Aug 1865 The ornamentation of **St. Gregory's Church** was nearing completion.
- Oct 1867 A court case concerning extra work done on **St. Gregory's Church** was brought – **John Acock v. the Roman Catholic Church (Rev. Cottam)**.
- 6 Feb 1872 **Sir Thomas Phillips**, famed as a collector of books and manuscripts, died. A clause in his Will stated that 'no Roman Catholic shall enter **Thirlestaine House**', nor any member of the **Halliwell** family. (His eldest daughter **Henrietta** had eloped with **James Orchard Halliwell**.)
- Apr 1872 Correspondence in the *Cheltenham Examiner* by **Edward Healy Thompson**, a prominent Roman Catholic resident, attacked sensational **anti-Roman Catholic** meetings held in the **Town Hall**.
- Jun 1873 **Edward Healy Thompson** wrote a final reply in defence of Roman Catholicism.
- Jul 1873 The **Church Association** held a meeting at the **Town Hall** to **protest** about **Romish practices**.
- Sep 1873 The **Rev. Angus**, former curate at **Prestbury**, converted to Roman Catholicism.
- 9 Nov 1875 A bazaar was held in the **Assembly Rooms** in aid of the completion of **St. Gregory's Church**.
- 10 Nov 1875 **Canon Bell** publicly expressed a wish that the Church of England should not be surpassed by the spire of **St. Gregory's Church**, which was 41 ft higher than the spire of the Parish Church.
- 24 Nov 1875 The **Rev. H. Wilkins** of the **Baptist Church** disassociated himself from the protest against **St. Gregory's**.
- Apr 1876 The connection of **St. Gregory's** spire with the body of the church, by building a nave, was begun.
- Sep 1876 The ecclesiastical sculptor, **R.L. Boulton** worked on improvements to **St. Gregory's Church**.
- 5 Nov 1876 **St. Gregory's Church** reopened after improvements. Its completion was celebrated by a thanksgiving service.
- Nov 1877 **St. Gregory's Church** was consecrated as building was finally completed after nearly 20 years.
- 24 Sep 1879 The **Convent of St. Gregory** opened in a cottage near the **Catholic School** in **St. Paul's Street North**.
- Oct 1881 The spire of **St. Gregory's Church** was damaged in a gale. A vane was replaced the following January.
- Nov 1881 A new presbytery was opened at **St. Gregory's Roman Catholic Church**.
- 17 May 1882 **Canon Bell** was attacked by **Edward Thompson** and the **Rev. R. Wilkinson** for his comments on Irish Catholics.
- Dec 1883 A pinnacle of **St. Gregory's Church** was blown down during a great gale.
- Apr 1884 A loss made on a building contract with **St. Gregory's Church** contributed to the bankruptcy of builder **David Wingate**.
- Dec 1884 **Father Roach** was savagely attacked by a lunatic inside **St. Gregory's Church**.
- 1885 The **Convent of St. Gregory** built its new home opposite the **Catholic School** in **St. Paul's Street North**.
- 14 Aug 1887 A new east window was inaugurated at **St. Gregory's Church**.
- May 1894 **John Murphy**, a printer, was charged with stealing candles from **St. Gregory's Church**.
- Jun 1894 A ceremony was held to bless a statue of St. Peter, made by sculptor **A.B. Wall** of Cheltenham and mounted on a pedestal designed by **Pugin**.
- Dec 1895 A Roman Catholic chapel was opened in **Mill Lane, Prestbury**.

- Dec 1896 The **Board of Guardians** disputed a claim that they had stipulated no Roman Catholic nurses were to be employed by them.
- Apr 1901 On the accession of the King, a protest meeting was held in **Rodney Hall** against a Catholic attempt to deny the certainty of protestant accession.
- Jul 1901 The **Rev. James Maconechy**, a former Church of England vicar, was received into the Cheltenham Roman Catholic church.
- 11 Nov 1903 Although opened in **1827**, the managers of **St. Gregory's School** held their first official meeting.
- Jan 1905 A Roman Catholic interment took place for the local sculptor **R.L. Boulton**.
- 5 Jun 1921 A **Corpus Christi** procession went from **St. Gregory's** to the **Ursuline Convent School for Girls at Fullwood Park** where 2,000 people attended.
- 1927 The **Catholic Women's League** was formed in the parish of **St. Gregory's**.
- 24 Sep 1929 The Golden Jubilee of **St. Paul's Convent** was celebrated.
- 30 Jun 1930 The Roman Catholic community held their annual **Corpus Christi** procession at the **Ursuline Convent in Fullwood Park**.
- 1 Aug 1935 The **Convent of St. Gregory** closed.
- 2 Nov 1935 The **Bishop of Clifton** laid the foundation stone to **St. Gregory's RC School**.
- Oct 1936 **St. Gregory's Catholic School** opened in **Knapp Road**, the children moving from their old school in **St. Paul's Street North**.
- 1 Nov 1936 The **Bishop of Clifton** blessed the newly completed **St. Gregory's Catholic** elementary school.
- 1939 A **convent school** run by **The Sisters of La Sainte Union** was established at **Charlton Park**.
- Jan 1941 **St. Gregory's Roman Catholic School** provided meals for over 100 pupils, possibly the first school meals in town.
- 1946 A new **Roman Catholic** parish was formed in **Charlton Kings**.
- 1954 **St. Gregory's Catholic School** leased the former **Parish School** in **Devonshire Street** for the following 30 years.
- 11 Feb 1956 The foundation stone was laid to the new **Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary Church** at **Charlton Kings**.
- 29 Jun 1957 The new Catholic Church of **Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary** was officially opened by the **Bishop of Clifton**, thus creating a new parish from the eastern part of the existing parish of **St. Gregory's**.
- 1958 **Whitefriars Catholic (Carmelite Order)** boarding school was opened at Battledown.
- 3 Jun 1958 **Mass** was said for the first time at the **Women's Institute Hall, Prestbury**.
- 20 Jun 1961 Work began on the new **St. Benedict's Roman Catholic Secondary School** in **Arle Road**.
- Nov 1962 Work on **St. Benedict's Roman Catholic Secondary School** was completed.
- 30 May 1963 The new **St. Benedict's School** was blessed by the **Bishop of Clifton**.
- 19 Mar 1966 The foundation stone was laid to **St. Thomas More Roman Catholic Church** in **Princess Elizabeth Way**, designed by **Peter Falconer & Partners**.
- 19 Dec 1966 The first service was held at **St. Thomas More Roman Catholic Church**.
- 2 Dec 1975 A newly installed altar was re-consecrated at **St. Gregory's Roman Catholic Church**.
- 4 Jul 1977 Work began on **St. Margaret's Roman Catholic Hall** in **Coniston Road, Hatherley**.
- 6 Nov 1977 The **Bishop of Clifton** conducted a special High Mass at **St. Gregory's Church** to celebrate its centenary.
- 15 Oct 1982 The Roman Catholic church of **Sacred Hearts** was dedicated.
- 1987 **Whitefriars School** became independent of the **Carmelite Order** and merged with **La Sainte Union Convent School** to form **St. Edward's School, Charlton Kings**.
- 11 May 1995 A Roman Catholic priest at **Sacred Hearts, Charlton Kings**, caused outrage by asking the congregation to pray for **Adolf Hitler**.
- 10 Sep 1984 **St. Gregory's Catholic School's** 147-year-old annexe (the former **Parish School** in **Devonshire Street**) was described by the head teacher as unfit for educational use. (It has now been converted for residential use.)
- 20 Jun 2000 **St. Gregory's Catholic School** swapped its four-acre playing field for an all-weather sports ground nearer to the school, making way for the development in the **St. James's Square** and **Market Street** area.

SALVATION ARMY

- 1878/9 Two women were sent to Cheltenham from London in response to a request for the Salvation Army to visit the town. One of the women, **Sister Atkinson** from **Gateshead**, reported on the visit.

- 23 Mar 1879 The first meeting of the **Cheltenham Corps** took place with the two London Sisters. By the end of that year the **Cheltenham Corps** had 89 members. The **Theatre Royal, Royal Well**, (site of the **Ladies' College Princess Hall**), was hired for Sunday use and the **North Ward Hall, High Street**, on weeknights.
- 14 May 1879 **George Leedham**, known as '**Hallelujah George**', who had replaced the first two London Sisters in Cheltenham, was summoned for causing an obstruction in the public street. He had been seen in **Grove Street** at 7.00 p.m. surrounded by a large crowd, 'some of whom were singing, some squabbling'. The crowd around him were cursing and swearing as he preached, and the Police Sergeant, who witnessed the disturbance, had to struggle to reach the middle of the crowd.
- Late 1879 The Salvation Army regularly hired the **Colosseum**, a building that had opened as a 'permanent' circus building many years before, in the **Bath Road**. The first Salvation Army meeting held here was so popular that hundreds had to be turned away.
- 26 Apr 1880 A letter to London reported that the soldiers of the Salvation Army in Cheltenham had suffered from a mob, having mud, stones and clods of grass flung at them.
- Feb 1882 The *Cheltenham Examiner* carried out a **Census of Sunday worship** in all Cheltenham's Churches and Chapels. At the Salvation Army meetings 2,198 people attended the service on a wet Sunday, the largest congregation assembled in any one place of worship in Cheltenham at both services that day. On a dry Sunday the largest congregation again attended the Salvation Army meetings, with an evening total of 1,138. The Salvation Army had met in two halls – the **Colosseum** and the **People's Hall** (the original name of a Mission Room in **Rutland Street**).
- 2 Aug 1882 **Dean Francis Close** entered a 'warm debate' against the Salvation Army. He criticised their publications saying that 'the teaching of these is the subversion of our social system and tends directly to the uprooting of every Christian Church. Some of these writers and speakers are really like maniacs casting out fire and dirt; should this monstrous system prevail the consequences are truly appalling'.
- Oct 1882 The Salvation Army took on the yearly tenancy of the **Colosseum** in **Bath Road**, adapting the building for its own use.
- Dec 1882 **General William Booth**, founder of the Salvation Army, made his first visit to Cheltenham, holding four meetings at the **Colosseum**.
- Jun 1884 The first Salvation Army wedding in Cheltenham took place.
- 1885 **Mrs. Catherine Booth**, the wife of the **General**, came to the **Corn Hall**, off the **High Street**.
- Feb 1885 **Mr. Booth** attracted a large audience to his Salvation Army lecture on 'Aggressive Christianity'.
- Sep 1888 **Miss Stirling**, a former local Salvationist, was imprisoned in **Switzerland** for 'heresy' in promoting the cause of the Salvation Army.
- Jun 1895 The Salvation Army bought the **Cheltenham Chapel** in **St. George's Square**. They needed a new home as the interior of the **Colosseum** had considerably deteriorated.
- Nov 1896 **General Booth** addressed a congregation at **Salem Baptist Chapel**.
- Jun 1901 **Colonel Whatmore** gave a lecture to celebrate the anniversary of the Salvation Army citadel in **St. George's Square**.
- 24 Sep 1902 A stone-laying ceremony took place at the Salvation Army **Bath Road** site where a new citadel was being erected on the site of the old circus building, which the Army had managed to purchase. Two halls were built on the site, the smaller of the two being built for children to use, with classrooms attached.
- Apr 1903 **Colonel Whitmore** of **Bristol** opened the new **Salvation Army Citadel** in **Bath Road**.
- Nov 1905 **Major Dimmer** opened a new **Salvation Army** hall in **Upper Bath Street**.
- 17 Dec 1905 **General Booth** visited Cheltenham as the guest of the Mayor, preaching at the **Town Hall**.
- 9 Feb 1907 The Salvation Army ran a free meal & soup kitchen in **New Street**. Later they ran a soup kitchen under the Salvation Army '**Goodwill**' section at **Victoria House, 54 Tewkesbury Road**, until the area was cleared under the rebuilding schemes of the 1920-30s. The kitchen moved to **Swindon Road** and became the Salvation Army's **Community Centre**.
- 18 Sep 1907 It was announced that **Commissioner Booth-Tucker**, an old Cheltonian, was to take charge of the Salvation Army in **India**.
- 16 Jul 1908 The *Cheltenham Examiner* reported on the fourth and probably final visit to Cheltenham by **General Booth**.
- Jun 1931 The **River Chelt** overflowed its banks, causing considerable damage to the **Citadel**.
- 22 Dec 1934 **General Evangeline Booth**, youngest daughter of **General Booth** and first woman General, visited Cheltenham on her way to Cardiff from London.
- 5 Jul 1936 **General Evangeline Booth's** Salvation Army motorcade from **Land's End** to **John o'Groats** stopped at the **Winter Garden** to address a large crowd.
- Nov 1941 A soup kitchen run by the Salvation Army was opened in **New Street**.

- 1945 **Charlton Court** on the **London Road** became a **girls' reformatory** run by the Salvation Army for the Home Office. It closed in **1971**.
- Sep 1964 A fire broke out in the kitchen of the **Senior Hall** at the **Citadel** in **Bath Road**, causing serious damage.
- 1979 The Cheltenham **Citadel** of the **Salvation Army** celebrated its centenary.
- May 1979 Another flood at the **Citadel** contributed to the deterioration of the **Senior Hall**.
- 7 Feb 1989 A new **Salvation Army Citadel** opened in **Bath Road**, replacing the earlier building. While the work was carried out, the Salvationists met in various places including **St. Luke's Church Hall**.

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)

- 1658 A Quaker community existed in Cheltenham, linked to the Society of Friends at **Stoke Orchard**.
- 1670 Cheltenham was one of 23 **Preparative Meetings** of Quakers nationally.
- 1678 **George Fox** addressed 'a large gathering' in Cheltenham.
- Nov 1682 **Margaret Hopcott**, widow of Cheltenham, granted part of her garden in **Grove Street** for the use of the Society of Friends. Initially this was probably used as a Meeting Place as well as a burial ground, until a more permanent Meeting House was opened in **Manchester Place** in **1703**. Over 150 Quakers were buried at **Grove Street**, from **1682** to **1870**. The Burial Ground was converted into a small park in the 1880s, set up by the Kyrle Society for the neighbouring poor, before becoming a builder's yard in **1922**. It has latterly been occupied by a fencing contractor.
- 1684 A number of Cheltenham Friends were fined or imprisoned for attending Quaker services, including **Elizabeth Sandford** who had allowed her property to be used for Meeting for Worship. She was sent to prison and was punished 'in the flesh, oft times severely'.
- 1686 **Margaret Surman** of **Tredington** married **William Mason**, a hosier of Cheltenham. They were both Quakers and their daughter **Elizabeth** married **Capt. Henry Skillicorne**, a retired naval captain and adventurer who established Cheltenham's first Spa and Pump Room.
- 1689 **Elizabeth Sandford** was free to make over some of her land to Trustees for the use of Quakers.
- 27 Oct 1701 **Elizabeth Sandford** granted 'a piece of garden land' to Trustees on which to build a **Quaker Meeting House**. The Trustees were **William Mason**, **John Pumfry** and **John Drewett**. (It was on **William Mason's** land that the first Cheltenham spa was discovered, and his daughter **Elizabeth** married **Henry Skillicorne**, the first developer of the spa.) The Trustees were admitted to the land as tenants, but the usual oath was respited 'because they are Quakers'.
- 29 Sep 1703 The new **Friends' Meeting House** was licensed at the Michaelmas Quarter Session. It was situated in **Manchester Place**, in the vicinity of the old **Shaftesbury Hall** site, now **Chelsea Square**.
- 1757-8 The first **Friends' Meeting House** was extensively rebuilt on the same site.
- Jun 1766 **Sarah Champion**, a Quaker from **Bristol** who visited Cheltenham several times between **1766** and **1795**, described the Cheltenham **Friends Meeting House** in her journal: '... pleasantly situated in a lane about a quarter of a mile from the town. There is a pretty court before the door, on one side of which were three tenements for the poor belonging to the Society – on the other, a very neat garden. This garden was in possession of an old man near ninety, who with his daughter inhabited one of these tenements. They kept it exceedingly neat and raised flowers in it for sale.'
- 14 Apr 1779 **Mrs. Elizabeth Skillicorne** was buried in the **Quaker Burial Ground** in **Grove Street**.
- 13 Sep 1814 A number of Established Church Clergymen and Dissenting ministers attended a meeting at the **Town Hall** to form the first **Auxiliary Bible Society** in Cheltenham. One of the two members of the Society of Friends at that meeting was **Dr. Pope**, Physician to **George III**.
- Dec 1836 A second, more substantial **Meeting House** was opened adjacent to the first. Its façade can still be seen in **Clarence Street**; the building is now used as a health and fitness centre. When the Friends had moved into their new Meeting House, their earlier one was bought by **Captain Beaven**. It was leased by the **Unitarians** until they in turn built themselves a new chapel near **Royal Well**.
- 1845 **Johnson's** Cheltenham Guide mentions that the first **Friends Meeting House** was being used by **Baptists** as the **Zoar Chapel**.
- 5 Jul 1848 The first **Society of Friends Meeting House** in **Manchester Walk** was 'to let' again, together with the gallery, forms and fixtures.
- 30 Mar 1851 The **National Religious Census of England & Wales** revealed that the Quakers had a morning congregation of 21 people and nine in the afternoon.
- Jun 1858 A fugitive slave from America gave a lecture at the **Friends Meeting House**.
- 1902 **North House** in **Portland Street** was purchased by the Society of Friends. The house was resold

but the grounds retained on which to build the **Portland Street Meeting House**, which served the Friends for the next 80 years.

- c.1917 The **Friends Meeting House** of 1836, after being occupied by several different denominations, ceased being used as a chapel. After a period as **St. Paul's College Adult Education Centre**, it has been used for commercial purposes.
- 1983 Work on the Cheltenham **northern relief road** commenced, causing the Cheltenham Quakers to seek another home as their Edwardian Meeting House in **Portland Street** had to be demolished. For just over a year the Meeting was accommodated temporarily in part of **Shaftesbury Hall**, the location of its Victorian Meeting House.
- Feb 1985 The present **Friends Meeting House** in **Warwick Place** opened. (As the County Council had compulsorily purchased the **Portland Street** building, it was responsible for the cost of replacement when this new site in **Warwick Place** became available.)

UNITARIANS

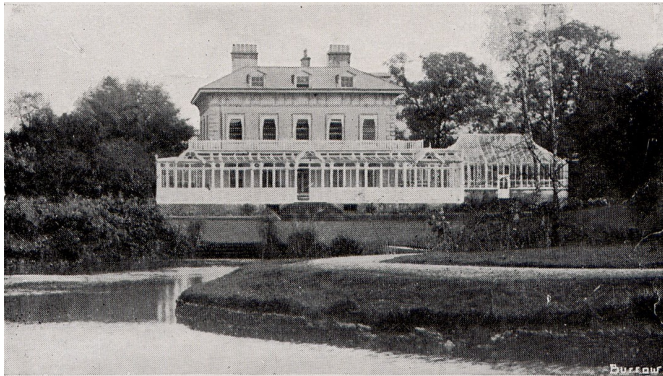
- 1662 The **Rev. John Cooper** was dismissed as perpetual curate of Cheltenham parish church for espousing Unitarian beliefs. He was immediately elected minister of the Unitarian congregation in Cheltenham, serving in that capacity until his death in **1682**. **Cooper** was also ejected from the headship of the **Crypt Grammar School, Gloucester**, as was **John Biddle**, his predecessor as minister of the Cheltenham Unitarian congregation.
- 1662 A Unitarian Chapel was reputedly built in **Albion Street**. The Unitarians are also said to have used **Mr. Millet's** chapel, built in **Albion Street** c.1723 – probably one and the same building, built at the later date, with the Unitarians using a secular building prior to this.
- c.1790 The **Albion Street** chapel opposite **Pate's Almshouses**, closed as a Unitarian chapel following the death of the minister, the **Rev. John Welles**. It was said to have been 'of great antiquity, furnished with a gallery, the pulpit and sitting ornamented with curious carving'.
- Aug 1832 Unitarianism was revived in Cheltenham when **Thomas Furber**, a Unitarian tradesman who had recently settled in Cheltenham from **Bath**, established a congregation. Initially meetings were held in private rooms, usually his own house.
- Mar 1835 The **Mechanics Institute** in **Albion Street**, built on the site of **Mr. Millet's** chapel, was rented by the Unitarians for Sunday services.
- Jun 1837 The Unitarian congregation occupied the old **Quaker Meeting House** in **Manchester Walk** (later **Clarence Street**), leased from its new owner **Captain Beaven**. There was a Sunday School attached.
- May 1841 The Unitarians decided to erect their own chapel.
- Feb 1842 A plot of land on the **Bayshill Estate** was bought from **Mr. Edwin Wilks** for £277 10s.
- Jul 1842 The foundation stone of the new **Unitarian Chapel** was laid near the entrance to **Old Well Walk** in what is now known as **Chapel Walk**.
- 5 April 1844 The new brick-built **Unitarian Chapel**, with a vestry, schoolroom and burial ground, opened on Good Friday in **Chapel Walk, Bayshill**, when 'an efficient choir performed some appropriate compositions of the great masters'. The chapel was designed by London architect **H.R. Abraham** and built for £1,500. It was the first Anglo-Norman style building in Cheltenham. The chapel is now used as an auction room, and the congregation worships in the former schoolroom at the rear.
- May 1844 The **Unitarian Chapel** was licensed for marriages pursuant to the Registration Act.
- 1847-51 The **Rev. Henry Solly** was minister of the **Unitarian Chapel**. The Unitarian congregation consisted of no more than 100 people and were part of the radical element in Cheltenham against **Francis Close**, the Incumbent of Cheltenham. In **Solly's** opinion '**Francis Close** was the most earnest, bigoted, devout and bitter opponent of heresy in every form'.
- 30 Mar 1851 The **National Religious Census of England & Wales** revealed that the Unitarians had a congregation of 60 adults in the morning and 35 in the evening of the Census Day.
- Aug 1854 The **Rev. John Gow**, the new Unitarian pastor, gave an address at the reopened chapel.
- Jan 1857 The Town Commissioners requested, unsuccessfully, that burials should be prevented at the **Unitarian Chapel**.
- 6 Mar 1874 A new school and lecture-room was opened at **Bayshill** behind the **Unitarian Church** on the site of their old burial ground.
- Sep 1875 A memorial tablet was placed in the **Unitarian Church, Bayshill**, in memory of **Thomas Furber**, the founder of the local Unitarian congregation.
- Sep 1886 **James Broom**, the caretaker of the **Bayshill Unitarian Chapel**, committed suicide.



St. Andrew's Presbyterian [now United Reformed] Church, designed in Gothic style by Thomas Arnold, opened in 1885. This postcard view c1900 shows the church very much as it is today, at the heart of a thriving community close to the Ladies College and the shopping area of Montpellier.



The impressive west entrance to St. Gregory the Great Roman Catholic Church situated in Clarence Street and built 1854-7 to replace an earlier chapel on the same site.



The Ursuline Convent School in Fullwood Park, on the site of today's University of Gloucestershire.



Former entrance to the Quaker Burial Ground in Grove Street. Despite the date of 1700 on the plaque, it was opened in 1682. Although still consecrated ground, the site is now occupied by a fencing contractor.



The Unitarian Chapel in Chapel Walk Bayhill, designed by London architect H R Abraham, was completed in 1844 and included a vestry, schoolroom and burial ground. Today the chapel itself is in use as an auction room and the congregation meets for worship in the former schoolroom to the rear of the building.



A GOOD WORK IN CHELTENHAM
Salvation Army free meal and soup kitchen in New Street.
[As reported in the *Cheltenham Chronicle and Gloucestershire Graphic*, February 9, 1907.]

PART II – A CHRONOLOGY OF NON-ANGLICAN PLACES OF WORSHIP IN CHELTENHAM

Albion Street Chapel or Chapels (includes Mr. Millet's Presbyterian Chapel):

1662-1790 Unitarian (used one or more sites in Albion Street)
 c.1723 Presbyterian
 1764 Methodist
 1825 Presbyterian Chapel demolished

Baptist Chapel, Regent Street, (near corner of Ormond Place):

1880 Baptist Free Church

Bethany Chapel, (Regent Chapel), Regent Street:

c.1840-1865 Wesleyan Association Methodist
 20th century Plymouth Brethren

Bethel Chapel (Christadelphian Hall), Knapp Road:

1703-1951 Baptist (Rebuilt 1820, same site)
 After 1951 Latterday Saints
 Up to 2007 Christadelphian Hall

Bethesda Chapel, Great Norwood Street:

1830-2007 Wesleyan Methodist

Cambray Baptist Church, Cambray Place:

1855 Baptist

Cheltenham Chapel, St. George's Square:

1809- Any denomination, Countess of Huntingdon's principles
 1851-57 Congregationalist
 1858-86 Presbyterian
 Autumn 1887 Cambray Baptist (temporary)
 1895 Salvation Army
 Up to 2007 Commercial use

Clare Street Tabernacle, (Clare Street Chapel), off Bath Road (now demolished):

1836-8 Congregationalist
 1840 Wesleyan Methodist
 1843 Baptist
 1843-c.1860 Latter-Day Saints

Ebenezer Chapel, (King Street Chapel), King Street:

1813-40 Wesleyan Methodist
 1844-1855 Baptist
 1859-1934 Primitive Methodist
 2007 Residential use

Friends Meeting House (Old), (Zoar Chapel), Manchester Place, (Clarence Street):

1703-1836 Society of Friends
 1837-44 Unitarian
 c.1845-48 Baptist
 1859 Methodist New Connexion

Friends Meeting House (Second), Manchester Place, (Clarence Street):

1836-1902 Society of Friends
 1902-17 Still in use as a chapel
 1917-2007 Converted for educational and then commercial use

Friends Meeting House (New), Warwick Place:

1985-present day Society of Friends

Gas Green Chapel (Albert Street Chapel, Baker Street Chapel, Russell Street Chapel), Russell Street:

c.1836-1841 Dissenting minister
1841-47 Primitive Methodist
1847-64 Congregationalist
1864-present day Baptist

Grosvenor Street Chapel, (Highbury Chapel):

1818-22 Strict Baptist
1827-1852 Congregationalist
1852-1929 Used as schoolroom
After 1929 Converted for commercial use

Highbury Congregational Church, Winchcombe Street, site lately Odeon Cinema, now Regent Place:

1852-1932 Congregationalist
1932 Demolished to make way for the Gaumont Picture Palace

Highbury Congregational Church, Priory Terrace

1932-present day Congregationalist

Meakings Passage Chapel, site of Pittville Street:

c.1730 Possible building date, possibly Presbyterian
Late 1700s-1813 Methodist
1817 Baptist
1824 Demolished

North Place Chapel, (Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion; Portland Chapel), North Place:

1816 Strict Baptist
1819 Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion
1998 Chapel Rock Gym
2003 Chapel Spa

Pilley Chapel, (Zion Chapel), Pilley Lane, Leckhampton:

1882 Baptist

Portland Tabernacle, (Handel Hall), Portland Street:

Pre-1891 Private house, Seymour Hall
1891 Free place of worship as Handel Hall
1898 Tabernacle
By 1907 Church of Christ
1980 Demolished to make way for Northern Relief Road

Providence Chapel, Naunton Parade:

1870-present day Baptist

Regent Street Chapel, (Old Town Hall, Salem Chapel), site of Regent Arcade car park:

1836-1845 Baptist
1845 Used as Town Hall until 1884, then Cavendish House warehouse
1982 Demolished to make way for Regent Arcade

Royal Well Methodist Chapel:

1866-1936 Wesleyan Methodist Association
1936 Converted for commercial use – a garage
1965 Demolished

St. Andrew's United Reformed Church, Fauconberg Road:

1885-present day Presbyterian

St. Gregory's Roman Catholic Church, St. James's Square:

1810-1855 Roman Catholic Chapel on the site
1855-present day Roman Catholic Church of St. Gregory the Great

St. Mark's Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Gloucester Road:

1881 Wesleyan Methodist – open-air services, railway bridge
1891-1911 First Wesleyan Methodist Chapel
1911-2007 Second chapel, opposite the first

Salem Baptist Chapel, Clarence Parade:

1844 Baptist
c.1998 Converted to Bars/Restaurants
2007 Salem Congregation moved to new chapel, **St. George's Road**

Salvation Army Citadel, Bath Road:

1879 Hired **Colosseum** on same site
1882 Bought and converted **Colosseum**
1903-89 Two purpose-built halls replaced **Colosseum** as Citadel
1989-present day Modern Salvation Army Citadel

Swindon Road Chapel, Swindon Road

1864 Wesleyan Methodist
c.1930 Salvation Army Community Centre
c.2000 Converted to residential

Synagogue, Synagogue Lane:

1839-present day Cheltenham Synagogue

Walker Memorial Church, Whaddon:

1877 Presbyterian
20th century Evangelical Free Church

Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, St. George's Street:

1840-1971 Wesleyan Methodists
1971 Converted for commercial use, now residential

Unitarian Chapel, Chapel Walk, (Royal Well):

1844 Unitarian Chapel
2007 Former Schoolroom now used as Chapel, original Chapel now in commercial use

Zion Chapel – see **Pilley Church**

Zoar Chapel – see **Friends Meeting House (Old)**

GLOSSARY

ANABAPTIST – One of a Protestant sect of German origin (1521) rejecting infant baptism and seeking establishment of a Christian communism.

BAPTIST – A member of a Christian sect which approves only of baptizing by immersion, and that only of persons who profess their faith in Christ, *i.e.* adults rather than infants.

CALVINISM – the Christian doctrines as interpreted by the French protestant religious reformer, John Calvin (1509-1564), and as adopted by the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches.

CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH – a body formed in England about 1835, having an elaborate, symbolic ritual and a complex ecclesiastical hierarchy, and emphasizing the existence in the present day of miracles and prophecy, and the imminent second coming of Christ.

CHRISTADELPHIAN – A member of a small religious sect, founded in the U.S., which believes that only the righteous will achieve eternal life, the wicked and sinners will be utterly destroyed, and which bases its teaching and practice on literal interpretation of the Bible.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE – A religion based on spiritual or divine healing with rejection of orthodox medicine, founded in 1866 by Mary Baker Eddy.

CONGREGATIONALISM – A form of church government in which each congregation is independent in the management of its own affairs (also called **Independency**).

COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON'S CONNEXION – A **Methodist** sect, of **Calvinistic** views, founded by **Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon** in the 18th century. She appointed the noted **Methodist** preacher, **George Whitefield**, as her chaplain in **1751** and his popularity led to the establishment of a number of **Connexion** chapels, which catered for the socially better-off.

DISSENT – to break away from an established church and adopt new religious beliefs and practices. **Dissenter** – someone, especially a Protestant, who refuses to conform to the established church, a **Nonconformist**.

FREE CHURCH – that branch of the Presbyterians in Scotland which left the Established Church in the Disruption of 1843; the small minority of that group who refused to combine with the United Presbyterians in the **United Free Church**; in England, a Nonconformist church generally.

INDEPENDENTS – See **CONGREGATIONALISM**.

JEWS – Jews arrived in England in large numbers at the time of William the Conqueror, although they were regarded as second-class citizens. They were not allowed to trade or engage in agriculture. But they were useful to the Crown or lords because they were able to lend money at a time when usury was forbidden to Christians. Many Jews were massacred in 1189-90 and they were expelled in 1290 when their use to the Crown was minimal. Cromwell, despite opposition from Church and City, readmitted them in 1655. They were not granted political equality until the middle of the 19th century.

LATTER-DAY SAINTS – Popularly known as the **Mormons**. Members of a religious sect with headquarters since 1847 in Salt Lake City, Utah, polygamous till 1890, calling itself *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith whose *Book of Mormon* was given out as translated from the golden plates of *Mormon*, a prophet. The Mormons often aroused great hostility. A feature of the Church is its encouragement of members to discover their ancestors so that they might be posthumously admitted to membership.

LUTHERAN – Relating to Martin Luther, the great German Protestant reformer (1483-1546), or to his doctrines.

METHODIST – A member of the Methodist Church, a nonconformist denomination founded on John Wesley's doctrines, 1738. A follower of John and Charles Wesley, a name given first to a group of students at Oxford 'for the regularity of their lives as well as studies'. The Wesley brothers and **George Whitefield** (1714-1770)

travelled throughout Britain and in the USA, preaching in churches and chapels, private houses and in the open air.

The **Wesleys'** message was that salvation was possible for every believer, and that communion with God did not need the intervention of a priest; whereas **George Whitefield** offered hope of salvation only to a predestined elect (*i.e.* those chosen by God). The Methodists did not break from the Church of England until **1784**.

Primitive Methodist – A member of a religious body (Primitive Methodist Connection) founded in 1808, united with the Wesleyan Methodists and United Methodists in 1932.

MORMON – See **LATTER-DAY SAINTS**.

NONCONFORMIST – A person who refused to conform to the Act of Uniformity in 1662 which made the Book of Common Prayer the only legal form of worship in England; usually applied in England to a Protestant separated from the Church of England.

For refusing to conform, over 2,000 clergymen, about 20% of the entire body of ministers, were ejected from their livings. Many of the rejected clergy were employed as private chaplains by gentry families and were thus able to preach to small congregations, for many of their patrons were the JPs who were supposed to prosecute them.

The term was applied to groups of widely different beliefs – e.g. **Quakers, Anabaptists, Presbyterians, Independents (Congregationalists)** and **Baptists**. After toleration, (the Toleration Act of 1689 allowed Nonconformists to worship in public), many groups gradually abandoned their Calvinistic beliefs and some turned to **Unitarianism**. The Church of Scotland retained its **Presbyterian** beliefs & organization.

Nonconformity was particularly associated with the Liberal Party and with the early Labour Party.

PENTECOSTAL – relating to any of the several fundamentalist Christian groups placing great emphasis on the spiritual powers of the Holy Spirit.

PLYMOUTH BRETHREN – A religious sect founded in Dublin c.1825, out of a reaction against High Church principles and against dead formalism associated with unevangelical doctrine (its first congregation was established at Plymouth in 1831). It has no formal creed or ministers; each local church is autonomous.

PRESBYTERIAN – of or belonging to any Protestant Church with a system of government by elders or presbyters, rather than bishops. The majority of **Puritans** adopted this creed. After the Restoration (of the monarchy, 1660), the Presbyterians became the most respectable Nonconformist group, with an educated ministry and a prosperous membership.

United Presbyterian Church – a religious body formed by the union of the Secession and Relief Churches in 1847, included in the **United Free Church** from 1900, and (except a minority) in the Church of Scotland from 1929.

PURITANS – A general term for dissenting believers whose activities in the 16th century formed the essence of what would become the **Presbyterians**, the **Independents** (or **Congregationalists**) and the **Baptists**.

QUAKERS – The Religious Society of Friends, founded by George Fox (1624-91). Nickname (not adopted by themselves, and earlier applied to another sect) given them by Justice Bennet at Derby, because Fox told them to *quake* at the word of the Lord. Quakers rejected formal church services and the sacraments (including baptism), paid ministers, and the authority of the scriptures, and emphasized instead the 'inner voice of God speaking to the soul'.

RECHABITE – A descendant of **Jonadab**, son of **Rechab**, who did not drink wine or dwell in houses (Jer 35. 6-7); a total abstainer from intoxicating drinks, *esp* a member of the order so named; a tent-dweller.

ROMAN CATHOLIC – recognizing the spiritual supremacy of the Pope or Bishop of Rome.

SALVATION ARMY – A world-wide Christian organization for the spread of religion among the poor, founded by William Booth in 1865. (**Church Army** – a similar Church of England organization.) From the beginning the Army gave equal status to its women workers; all Salvationists are expected to be total abstainers, and officers are expected to be non-smokers. Much of the Army's work has been among the most seriously deprived section of the community, and it is justly renowned for its provision of hostels for the homeless.

SPIRITUALISM – the doctrine that spirit has a real existence apart from matter.

TABERNACLE – Name given to their chapels by the **Calvanistic Methodists** (after a temporary chapel erected for George **Whitefield** in Moorfields, London, in 1741).

UNITARIAN – someone who asserts the unity of the Godhead as opposed to the Trinity, ascribes divinity to God the father only, and who believes that each congregation should have independent authority; someone who believes in the unity of God, in freedom of, and tolerance of the differences in, religious beliefs, etc. a member of the particular body holding such doctrines.

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH – Founded in 1972 as a successor to/upon the amalgamation of the Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Supplied by Elaine Heasman and Geoff North.

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Cambray Baptist Church, Cambray Place c1900
Rev. Beynon Phillips, Minister of Cambray Church 1895-1908
Rev. Andrew Morton Brown, Minister of Highbury Congregational Church 1843-1879
Highbury Congregational Church, Priory Terrace c1932
- Page 19 George Whitefield
Cheltenham Chapel, St. George's Square c1960
Cheltenham Synagogue, Synagogue Lane 2007
Ebenezer Chapel, King Street c1840
- Page 24 John Wesley
Wesley Chapel, St. George's Street c1840
Independent Order of Rechabites
Methodist Church – Oxford & Gloucestershire District Synod. Town Hall 1933
Spiritualist Church, Bennington Street 1927
Opening ceremony of Spiritualist Church, Bennington Street 1927
- Page 33 Montpellier Street, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church c1900
West entrance St. Gregory the Great Roman Catholic Church 2007
The Ursuline Convent School, Fullwood Park
Quaker Burial Ground entrance, Grove Street 2007
Unitarian Chapel, Bayshill – plaque 2007
Salvation Army soup kitchen, New Street 1907