

Religious History

Pre-Reformation

There was an Anglo-Saxon minster at Cheltenham (Celtanhom), said to be in Winchcombeshire, a division of the Mercian kingdom approximating to northern Gloucestershire, by 773 at the latest, as it was subject to an agreement made in 803 between the bishops of Worcester and Hereford at a synod held at Clofesho.¹ This established that the bishop of Worcester had continued to be in receipt of food-rent from Cheltenham minster for more than 30 years; henceforth the food-rent would be paid to Bishop Deneberht of Worcester on alternate years for his lifetime only.²

The Domesday Survey recorded that in 1066 one and a half hides of land belonging to the church were held by Regenbald, a major landowner and royal official. Two ploughteams belonged to the priests,³ the use of the plural suggesting that the church remained collegiate at this period. An antiquarian claim that a synod which assembled at Gloucester in 1086 made reference to a priory at Cheltenham and a ‘church with its chapels’ cannot be verified and is probably based on a misunderstanding.⁴

In 1133, in common with many other properties formerly belonging to Regenbald, Henry I granted ‘the church of the vill with its land, and one mill and the chapels and all things pertaining to the church’ to the newly-founded monastery of Cirencester.⁵ At a date between 1143 and 1155 Earl Roger of Hereford confirmed grants of the chapel of Arle and a virgate of land from his men to the church of Cheltenham.⁶ In the 1140s the canons of Cirencester were in dispute with the clerk of Up Hatherley concerning the tithes of assart of the church of Cheltenham.⁷ The chapel of Leckhampton was confirmed as belonging to the church of Cheltenham by the archbishop of Canterbury in 1162–4.⁸ A lengthy dispute between Reginald fitz Lambert, the priest of Cheltenham, and the canons of Cirencester over ownership of the vicarage was settled by the papal judge delegate between 1174 and 1186; Reginald was to hold the vicarage, paying an annual pension of 20s. to the canons, while recognising that the land held by his father, which he claimed as part of the vicarage, was held in lay fee from the canons for an annual payment of 10s.⁹ In 1195 Pope Celestine III confirmed that the church of Cheltenham, the chapel of Charlton Kings and the fourth portion of the church which Regenbald the priest held, should be appropriated to the use of the canons for the maintenance of

¹ Unidentified.

² Finberg, *Early Charters of the West Midlands*, 43, no. 52; *Cartularium Saxonicum* ed. Birch, I, 429–31, no. 309; *Hemingi Chartularium Ecclesie Wigorniensis*, 50–1.

³ TNA, E 31/2/1/6328; *Cirencester Cartulary*, I, 15.

⁴ Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, 86; cited in *Trans. BGAS*, 4 (1879–80), 54

⁵ *Cirencester Cartulary*, I, 21–4.

⁶ *Cirencester Cartulary*, I, 47–8.

⁷ *Cirencester Cartulary*, II, 375.

⁸ *Cirencester Cartulary*, II, 371.

⁹ *Eng. Episc. Acta* VII, Hereford, 1079–1234, no. 139; *Cirencester Cartulary*, II, 379–81.

hospitality and the support of infirm brethren.¹⁰ This grant was confirmed by Pope Innocent III in 1199.¹¹ There was some initial resistance to this grant from the bishop of Worcester,¹² but in 1216 or 1217 the bishop confirmed the appropriation of the church of Cheltenham to the abbot and convent of Cirencester, saving the support of two chaplains to serve the church, who were ‘to encourage works of charity and hospitality which flourish in the abbey’.¹³ This grant, and reservation of support for the chaplains, was later confirmed by Silvester, bishop of Worcester (1251–79).¹⁴

A valuation of ecclesiastical benefices of Cirencester abbey taken in 1254 recorded that the church of Cheltenham was worth 20 marks (£13 6s. 8d.) annually and its tithes 26s. 8d.¹⁵ A survey taken during the reign of Henry III noted that the appropriated church of Cheltenham had doubled its value to Cirencester abbey, to 40 marks annually.¹⁶ The papal taxation of 1291 valued the church of Cheltenham with its chapel at 36 marks (£24).¹⁷ This was the valuation used in 1341 and throughout the medieval period.¹⁸

The survey taken in the reign of Henry III noted that no vicar had been appointed to the church of Cheltenham by the abbot and convent of Cirencester.¹⁹ As Augustinian canons, provision for Cheltenham was often made from within their own number, but this was not always a success. In 1378 it was noted that ‘Brother Nicholas Fairford, your canon and custodian of the parish church of Cheltenham, on account of the infamy of his person has caused grave scandal in the parish of Cheltenham and in other places.’²⁰ The canons might hold more than one office concurrently; in 1511 John Blake was cellarer and almoner of the abbey, as well as custodian of Cheltenham parish church.²¹

There were two chapels within the parish church, a lady chapel and a chapel dedicated to St Katherine. Both chapels had chantries which were supported by endowments of land. A court roll from 1276 recorded the investment of a new chaplain to a chantry in the church of St Mary, presumably the chantry to St Mary (the lady chapel). Thomas Dure, chaplain, had held three messuages and one virgate of land with appurtenances in Cheltenham and Alstone for the

¹⁰ *Cirencester Cartulary*, I, 157.

¹¹ *Cirencester Cartulary*, I, 163-4.

¹² *Cirencester Cartulary*, II, 372-3.

¹³ *Eng. Episc. Acta* XXXIV, Worcester 1086–1216, no. 179.

¹⁴ *Cirencester Cartulary*, II, 367-9.

¹⁵ *Cirencester Cartulary*, II, 408-9.

¹⁶ TNA, SC 12/18/22.

¹⁷ *Tax. Eccl.*, 223b.

¹⁸ *Nonarum Inquisitiones*, 413; TNA, E 179/113/11.

¹⁹ TNA, SC 12/18/22.

²⁰ *Reg. Wakefield*, no. 843.

²¹ *Cal. Regs. of the Llanthony Priory 1457–1466, 1501–25*, 98.

performance of divine celebration daily in the parish church. The lord and community thereupon invested John le Wydewe, chaplain, with the holdings for his lifetime while he was fit and honest to perform the duties of the chantry. He could not make any alienation, waste or destruction of the property. Should John need to quit the chantry because of preferment or of his own free will, or if the community needed to remove him through suspension from ecclesiastical office, another chaplain would be appointed in the court of the liberty, and John would have no future recourse to the chantry.²²

In 1276 the St Mary's chantry lands were worth 4s. 4d. for the virgate of land and 2s. 6d. for two and a half burgages.²³ A burgage rental of the mid 15th century noted that either St Mary's altar or St Mary's chapel (or both) received a cumulative annual rent of 7s. 1½d. from three and a half burgages, and six parcels of burgages.²⁴ In 1476 Walter Frensch left 1 a. of land in 'Groton' in the parish of Cheltenham to be used 'for ever for the upkeep of the chapel for the service of St Mary in the church of Cheltenham'.²⁵ The ecclesiastical survey of 1535 valued the lands in Cheltenham attached to the St Mary service at 100s. annually.²⁶ The chantry survey of 1546 recorded that the Lady service was worth £5 5s. 5d. annually, of which £3 18s. 9¼d. was for a priest's stipend, 16s. 6d. for the rents resolute, and 10s. 1¾d. for the king's tithes. The service was said to have ornaments or chattels to the value of 13s. 5d.²⁷ The valuation of the service given in 1548 was a little higher: the endowments were yearly worth £6 10s. 8d., of which £4 was the stipend of the chantry priest, named in 1548 as Sir Thomas Ball, *alias* Bristowe, aged 54 years.²⁸

A mid-15th century burgage rental recorded that the custodians of the altar and chapel of St Katherine received 6s. 9d. from three and a half burgages, and two parcels of burgages.²⁹ The 1546 chantry survey recorded that the St Katherine service had an annual income of £7 9s. 2d., of which £6 14s. 3d. was for a priest's stipend, and 14s. 11d. was for the king's tithes. The service held ornaments or chattels to the value of 12s. 2d.³⁰ The 1548 valuations given for the St Katherine service were lower than those given in 1546. The endowments were valued at £6 16s. 10d., and the priest's stipend at £5.³¹ The chantry priest for St Katherine's in 1548 was Sir Edward Grove, then 60 years of age. He is mentioned in three contemporary wills: as a witness to the wills of Henry Tannar in 1537 and Thomas Drynkwater in 1540, and as a beneficiary and witness to the will of Andrew

²² DC, MR/GC1, m. 4.

²³ DC, MR/GC1, m. 4.

²⁴ TNA, SC 11/225.

²⁵ TNA, PROB 11/6/351. cf. Grotten Field in Naunton: Hodsdon, *Gazetteer*, 71.

²⁶ *Valor Eccl.*, II, 441.

²⁷ TNA, E 301/21, no. 26.

²⁸ TNA, E 301/22, no. 63.

²⁹ TNA, SC 11/225.

³⁰ TNA, E 301/21, no. 26.

³¹ TNA, E 301/22, no. 63.

Grevyll in 1535.³² Grove was the ‘gostly’ or ‘gostey’ father (father confessor) to both Andrew Grevyll and Henry Tannar.

In addition to these permanent chantries, there would have been temporary chantries such as that established by Thomas Drynkwater for a year in 1540.³³ In his will, William Greville (d. 1513) provided for the endowment of a messuage with appurtenances to twelve custodians to provide ‘the holy loaf every Sunday yearly for ever’.³⁴ In the 1548 chantry survey this endowment was reported as being ‘land for holy breaded [*sic*] gyvinge . . . to help and ease the poor people of the same parish in gyvinge of the holy bredde when it came to theirne turne.’³⁵ The church contains a memorial brass to William Greville, which was originally located in the chancel.³⁶

In 1428/9 Sir John Cornwall, then lord of the manor, made a gift of 5s. for two large candles to be used in the church.³⁷ William Lane (d. 1501) left 4*d.* to each of five reliquary lights in the church, suggesting five shrines.³⁸ These were presumably the five lights of the church to which Richard Osburne bequeathed 5s. in 1531,³⁹ and described as the ‘five principal lights’ by Andrew Grevyll in 1535.⁴⁰ Richard Osburne requested burial within the church before Our Lady, presumably an image or statue.⁴¹ Other than Our Lady and St Katherine, another of these shrines may have been to St Christopher; certainly Richard Machyn (d. 1509) desired to be buried within the church of Cheltenham before the image of St Christopher.⁴² The same Richard Machyn bequeathed a 7 lb candle to be made for burning before the image of St Erasmus.⁴³

³² Worcs. Archives, will of Andrew Grenyll (1535); *ibid.*, Henry Tanar (1537); *ibid.*, Thomas Drynkwater (1540).

³³ Worcs. Archives, will of Thomas Drynkwater (1540).

³⁴ TNA, PROB 11/17/151.

³⁵ TNA, E 301/22, no. 63.

³⁶ Davies, Gloucestershire Monumental Brasses, 113–15.

³⁷ TNA, SC 6/852/14.

³⁸ Worcs. Archives, will of William Lane (1501).

³⁹ Worcs. Archives, will of Richard Osburne (1531).

⁴⁰ Worcs. Archives, will of Andrew Grevyll (1535).

⁴¹ Worcs. Archives, will of Richard Osburne (1531).

⁴² TNA, PROB 11/16/389.

⁴³ TNA, PROB 11/16/389.

Thomas Dure, chaplain, died in 1276, and was replaced by John le Wydewe, chaplain⁴⁴ who was still chaplain there in 1305.⁴⁵ Hugh de Sandford, chaplain, was additionally mentioned in a court roll of 1276.⁴⁶ John Alexander of Alstone, chaplain, was named in the court roll for 1314/15.⁴⁷

Various chaplains are named in a Cheltenham court roll from the early 15th century. In 1400/1 the chaplains named in court proceedings were William Wittewelle, Thomas Best the younger, Walter Grene and Henry Hubart.⁴⁸ In 1432 one of the chaplains was John Norton.⁴⁹ A little later, c.1440, Thomas French was named as a chaplain holding a burgage belonging to the chapel of St Mary, from which two masses were kept.⁵⁰ The same survey mentioned lands formerly in the hands of John Norton, John Janyns and Richard Dier, chaplains. In 1476 when they were made executors of the will of Walter Frensche, the two chaplains in Cheltenham were Master Thomas Frensch and Master Henry Somer.⁵¹ The military survey of 1522 recorded that Richard Drake, chaplain, took a stipend of £6 13s. 4d.⁵² In 1548 Edward Grove was the chantry priest of St Katherine, and he had been in post since 1535 at least. Thomas Ball *alias* Bristowe was the chantry priest for Our Lady in 1548. In 1540 one Richard Eddy was named as a clerk.⁵³

Anglican Church

St Mary

Endowment and Patronage

When Cirencester abbey was dissolved in 1539 Cheltenham rectory reverted to the Crown and was let to farmers. The advowson of Cheltenham also passed to the Crown, which retained it until the end of the lease of the rectory in 1651.⁵⁴ By an agreement of 1629 Sir Baptist Hicks, Viscount Campden, and his successors, were to present to the curacy one of three of the nominees of Jesus College, Oxford, who were to be men of the college with at least a Master of Arts of two year's standing.⁵⁵

⁴⁴ DC, MR/GC1, m. 4.

⁴⁵ DC, MR/GC1, m. 11d.

⁴⁶ DC, MR/GC1, m. 2.

⁴⁷ DC, MR/GC2.

⁴⁸ DC, MR/GC6.

⁴⁹ GA, D7661, Box 4/30.

⁵⁰ GA, D855/M68.

⁵¹ TNA, PROB 11/6/351.

⁵² Military Survey of Gloucestershire, 44.

⁵³ Worcs. Archives, will of Thomas Drynkwater (1530).

⁵⁴ GA, D855/M68, ff. 10, 18–18v.

⁵⁵ GA, D855/M68, f. 20v; D2025, Box 26, bundle 3.

There were no glebe lands belonging to the curate, and no residence for the minister.⁵⁶ In the late 16th and early 17th centuries the farmer let a tenement belonging to the rectory to the curate;⁵⁷ in 1609 the minister was also paid £10 annually by the farmer, who paid 26s. 8d. to the deacons.⁵⁸ When the parishioners complained of the small stipend allowed to the curate by the farmer, Elizabeth Baghot, the bishop of Gloucester and then the earl of Salisbury intervened.⁵⁹ Baghot agreed in 1610 to increase the stipend to £20 at first, with a promise to increase it again to £30 at a later date. The translation of the bishop and death of the earl probably meant that this agreement was never kept.⁶⁰ After the sale of the rectory to Sir Baptist Hicks in 1612, Baghot (who was still the farmer of the rectory) apparently agreed to give the small tithes of the parish to augment the curate's stipend, but again this promise seems never to have been fulfilled.⁶¹ In 1620 the curate's stipend was £15;⁶² although Sir Francis Bacon, the lessee, instructed Baghot to increase the stipend to £40, and to pay £10 to the deacon, he was disgraced shortly afterwards.⁶³

In 1622 Baghot's sons agreed to pay £55 a year for the next five years, rising thereafter to £80 a year, towards the maintenance of the two ministers of Cheltenham and Charlton Kings, at least one of whom was to be a Master of Arts.⁶⁴ An order of 1624 to pay £20 of this augmented stipend to the minister of Cheltenham, William Panton, and the residue to the minister of Charlton Kings, was cut short by Panton's death soon afterwards.⁶⁵ Between 1624 and 1627 the parishioners paid £12 10s. to each of the ministers to increase each stipend to £40.⁶⁶ In 1629 Sir Baptist Hicks, Viscount Campden, agreed to pay £80 a year to support the two ministers at Cheltenham and Charlton Kings.⁶⁷

During the 1640s the parishioners hoped that the minister's annual stipend of £40 might be supplemented by the Committee for Compounding. In 1646 the committee had apparently ordered that approximately half of the annual rent of the rectory, £37 16s., should be settled on the minister at Cheltenham while it remained sequestered.⁶⁸ In 1647 the parishioners petitioned the committee to give their minister a permanent augmentation of £40 when Alford compounded for his estate.⁶⁹ Alford complained in 1649 that he was unable to make a permanent settlement of £100 on the

⁵⁶ GDR/V5/73aT.

⁵⁷ TNA, E 134/35Eliz/East18; E 178/7025, f. 18.

⁵⁸ GA, D855/M68, f. 10.

⁵⁹ GA, D855/M68, f. 10.

⁶⁰ GA, D855/M68, ff. 10–10v.

⁶¹ GA, D855/M68, ff. 10–10v.

⁶² GA, D855/M68, f. 11.

⁶³ GA, D855/M68, f. 11.

⁶⁴ GA, D855/M68, ff. 11–11v, 13v–14v; TNA, C 3/372/14.

⁶⁵ GA, D855/M68, ff. 15–17.

⁶⁶ GA, D855/M68, f. 18.

⁶⁷ GA, D855/M68, f. 20v; D2025, Box 26, bundle 3.

⁶⁸ Cal. Cttee. for Compounding, II, 1009–10.

ministers of Cheltenham and Charlton Kings, because he only held the rectory for his life in the right of his deceased wife. With the expiry of the lease of the rectory in 1651, he petitioned to compound for the rectory. Finally, in 1653, he allowed an extra £50 annually to the minister, although as Alford died later in the same year it is doubtful whether the minister ever benefitted from the augmentation.⁷⁰

The impropriate rectory was purchased from the Earl of Essex by Joseph Pitt in 1799.⁷¹ The advowson remained the property of Jesus College, Oxford. In 1816 an Act of Parliament was obtained, enabling the exchange of the advowson of Cheltenham for that of Bagendon, which belonged to Pitt.⁷² Pitt nominated Charles Jervis to the living before selling the advowson to the evangelical Charles Simeon for £3,000 in the autumn of 1816.⁷³ Simeon transferred the advowson to trustees in 1817, subject to the life of the then incumbent, Charles Jervis.⁷⁴

The perpetual curate received a stipend of £40 a year from the impropriate rector.⁷⁵ This was supplemented in the later 18th century and early 19th century by subscriptions from visitors to the spa.⁷⁶ When the tithing of Cheltenham was inclosed in 1806, allotments were granted to the impropriate rector, Joseph Pitt, in lieu of tithes, two of which were charged with the payment of the curate's stipend in future.⁷⁷

The vestry agreed to pay the minister an extra £50 to perform afternoon sermons in 1818, in lieu of collections that had been made up until then.⁷⁸ As impropriator, Joseph Pitt had always received the Easter offerings, but had allowed surplice fees to the incumbent. The new trustees of the rectory conveyed all fees, offerings, oblations and obventions to the incumbent.⁷⁹ A three-year dispute between the minister, Charles Jervis, and the churchwardens over the right to collect fees for burials and erecting monuments was resolved in favour of Jervis in 1820.⁸⁰ The curate's stipend of £40 continued to be the only fixed income attached to the parish church, but the total income including

⁶⁹ Cal. Cttee. for Compounding, II, 1009–10.

⁷⁰ Cal. Cttee. for Compounding, II, 1009–10.

⁷¹ GA, D2025/Box 65/Bundle 2.

⁷² 56 Geo. III, c. 74; GA, D2025/Box 52/Bundle 1.

⁷³ Alan F. Munden, 'Evangelical in the Shadows: Charles Jervis of Cheltenham', *The Churchman* 92.2 (1982), pp. 142-50.

⁷⁴ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 20 July 1820.

⁷⁵ GA, P78/1 CW 3/4.

⁷⁶ Butler, *Cheltenham Guide* (1781), p. 16; Ruff, *History of Cheltenham* (1803), p. 30.

⁷⁷ GA, Q/RI 40.

⁷⁸ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 29 July 1818.

⁷⁹ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 20 July 1820.

⁸⁰ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 15 July 1817, 20 July 1820.

fees and dues was valued in 1835 as £700.⁸¹ In 1851 the fees were estimated at £350 a year, and the Easter offerings were said to be worth £500 a year, to which was added the ancient stipend of £40.⁸²

In 1868 the annual income of the rector of Cheltenham was £500.⁸³ Following the divisions of the parish in the 1860s, the income of the rector was reduced to £400 by 1874,⁸⁴ but this had risen to £800 a year by 1885.⁸⁵ A house in the Royal Crescent was purchased by the parish for use as a parsonage and vested in the ecclesiastical commissioners in 1859.⁸⁶

Religious Life

At the time of the Reformation, the church in Cheltenham was poorly served. The rectory was impropriated, first to Cirencester abbey and then to the Crown, and the parish curate, who had no fixed stipend, was poorly paid. The curate's service was supplemented by the two chantries in the parish church, dedicated to St Mary and St Katherine, which were also poor. Following the Dissolution, the parish church was probably staffed by former monks. The curate in 1540, Reginald Lane,⁸⁷ might possibly have been a former monk of Hailes abbey or a canon of Cirencester abbey.⁸⁸ The priest of St Mary's chantry in 1551, Thomas Ball, was a former monk of Tewkesbury.⁸⁹ The curate in 1551, Stephen Poole, a former chantry priest of Gloucester,⁹⁰ could repeat the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed, but not the Ten Commandments.⁹¹ The priest of St Katherine's chantry, Edward Grove, who also kept a school within the town, was probably the curate of Shurdington who in 1551 also did not know the Ten Commandments.⁹²

The limited evidence of extant wills from Cheltenham suggests the slow progress of the reformation in the town. In 1542 George Hurst, the tenant of the court house, left money for eight priests to perform at his funeral.⁹³ Hurst's will had been witnessed by John Ball, 'my holy father', the priest of

⁸¹ *Report into Ecclesiastical Revenues* (1835), [67], pp 408–9.

⁸² *The Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1851*, ed. Alan Munden, GRS, XXIX (2015), 321.

⁸³ *Crockford's Clerical Dictionary* (1868), p. 680.

⁸⁴ *Crockford's Clerical Dictionary* (1874), p. 60.

⁸⁵ *Crockford's Clerical Dictionary* (1885), p. 86.

⁸⁶ GA, P78/1 VE 2/6, p. 61.

⁸⁷ Hockaday Abs. cxlvii.

⁸⁸ It has been suggested that Lane should be equated with Richard Lane, a pensioned canon of Cirencester Abbey. Alternatively, Reginald Lane, a former monk of Hailes Abbey, was later chantry priest at Stone; G. Baskerville, 'The Dispossessed Religious of Gloucestershire', *Trans. BGAS*, 69 (1927), 65, 89, 94; Hart, *Cheltenham*, 55.

⁸⁹ Baskerville, 'Dispossessed Religious', 104.

⁹⁰ Baskerville, 'Dispossessed Religious', 105.

⁹¹ J. Gairdner, 'Bishop Hooper's Visitation of Gloucester', *EHR*, XIX (1904), 101, 105.

⁹² J. Gairdner, 'Bishop Hooper's Visitation of Gloucester', *EHR*, XIX (1904), 106.

⁹³ GA, GDR/wills 1542/5; Hockaday Abs. cxlvii.

the chantry of Our Lady, whose own will of 1545 desired his confessor, Thomas Augustine, and three other priests to officiate at his funeral.⁹⁴ The will of Joan Combe, made in 1544, instructed her executors to procure a priest to sing for her for half a year in the parish church,⁹⁵ and George Hurst's widow, Margaret, requested a priest to pray for her in the church for a quarter of a year in 1545.⁹⁶ However, another will of 1545, witnessed by the curate Henry Cam, made an unequivocally Protestant statement of faith.⁹⁷ Evidence given in a 1554 defamation case suggested that the English prayer book was in use in Cheltenham parish church c.1550–1.⁹⁸ In 1556 a Cheltenham man, John Cobberley, was burned at the stake in Salisbury with two others for heresy.⁹⁹ Cobberley, whom Foxe describes as 'somewhat learned', had travelled with John Maundrell to Keevil (Wilts.), where they were apprehended for disrupting the service.¹⁰⁰ At the end of Mary's reign, the former farmer of the rectory made his will with an openly Protestant statement of faith, witnessed by the 'priest' Robert Cokes.¹⁰¹ Thomas Champneys, the curate in 1561, married in the parish church in 1562.¹⁰²

There were private seats in the south aisle of the parish church in the early 16th century.¹⁰³ A gallery was built over the west door in 1628 at the expense of Anne Norwood.¹⁰⁴ An oak communion table was made in 1638. Another gallery was built in the church to accommodate the boys from Pate's Grammar School in 1680.¹⁰⁵ The king's arms were redrawn and hung from the west side of the steeple in 1695.¹⁰⁶

In 1638 the church goods included a silver and gilt cup, cover and dish, two flagons, a fine needlework carpet, vestments and cushions for the pulpit, a velvet pall, and two surplices. The church also contained a small library containing Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, the *Paraphrases* of Erasmus, Jewel's *Apology*, two books of homilies, and a book of canons, with two reading desks.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁴ GA, GDR/Wills/1545/134; Hockaday Abs. cxlvii.

⁹⁵ GA, GDR/Wills/1545/175; Hockaday Abs. cxlvii.

⁹⁶ GA, GDR/Wills/1545/226; Hockaday Abs. cxlvii;.

⁹⁷ GA, GDR/Wills/1545/374; Hockaday Abs. cxlvii.

⁹⁸ GA, GDR/10, pp. 23–27; Hockaday Abs. cxlvii.

⁹⁹ GA, D855/M1, p. 22. Foxe gives his name as William Coberley: John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* or TAMO (1583 edition) (HRI Online Publications, Sheffield, 2011), 1918 [1894]. Available from: <http://www.johnfoxe.org> [Accessed: 23 Apr. 2015]

¹⁰⁰ Foxe, TAMO, 1918 [1894]. Cobberley's wife Alice recanted, and she and her new husband were admitted to Cobberley's tenement in Westal in 1557: *ibid.*; GA, D855/M1, p. 81.

¹⁰¹ TNA, PROB 11/41/21; E 134/35ElizI/East18.

¹⁰² CCED, ID 45459; GA, P78/1 IN 1/1, p. 12.

¹⁰³ GA, GDR/B4/1/457.

¹⁰⁴ *Parsons's Notes*, 361.

¹⁰⁵ GA, P78/1 VE 2/5.

¹⁰⁶ GA, P78/1 VE 2/5.

¹⁰⁷ GA, P78/1 VE 2/5.

Two more theological texts, and a new desk and chairs were left to this library by the deceased schoolmaster, Christopher Bayly, in 1654.¹⁰⁸

Ludovic Packer gave a third bell in 1603.¹⁰⁹ A bell dated 1674 also once hung outside the tower, in the former position of the medieval sanctus bell.¹¹⁰ The church was described as having a good ring of six bells in the late 17th century,¹¹¹ but they were recast into eight bells and suspended from a new frame in 1697.¹¹² The chimes were erected in the parish church in 1699, tuned at first to play the 113th psalm.¹¹³

In 1713 £14 was donated by parishioners to buy a new silver flagon for communion, when a new surplice was also purchased.¹¹⁴ A seat in or near the chancel was said in 1721 to have been long reserved for the use of churching women, and a new seat was then to be built in the south aisle for the same purpose.¹¹⁵ In 1744 the church possessed a silver flagon embossed with cherubim's heads, leaves, flowers, and a relief of the Last Supper, a silver cup and a chalice, two larges Bibles and two books of common prayer.¹¹⁶ A room over the north porch housed the parish charity school from 1729 until 1844.

The curate in 1561, Thomas Champneys, was recorded as being resident in the parish, but was considered to be of mediocre learning and did not preach.¹¹⁷ He married in the parish church in the following year,¹¹⁸ but had probably been instituted rector of North Stoke (Som.) by 1564.¹¹⁹ Despite the wealth of the rectory, the poverty of the church continued to be a problem at Cheltenham. Whilst the rectory was under farm, the lessee or his farmer was obliged to maintain two curates and two deacons to serve in Cheltenham and Charlton Kings, to provide the communion bread and wine, to keep the chancel in good repair, and to replace the straw and bell ropes when necessary.¹²⁰ In 1563 Thomas Higgs, the farmer of the rectory, was presented for the ruinous state of the chancel.¹²¹

¹⁰⁸ In 1675 they were revealed to be Richard Ward's *Theological Questions...upon the Gospel of... Matthew* (1646), and Dr John White's *Way to the True Church* (1st pub. 1608): GA, P78/1 VE 2/5.

¹⁰⁹ Rudder, *Glos.*, p. 337; Bliss and Sharp, *Church bells of Glos.*, p. 195.

¹¹⁰ J. H. Middleton, 'Notes on the Manor and Parish Church of Cheltenham', *Trans. BGAS*, 4 (1879–80), p. 59.

¹¹¹ Parsons's Notes, p. 361.

¹¹² GA, P78/1 VE 2/5.

¹¹³ GA, P78/1 VE 2/5.

¹¹⁴ GA, P78/1 VE 2/5.

¹¹⁵ GA, P78/1 VE 2/5.

¹¹⁶ GA, GDR/V5/73aT; *Glos. Ch. Plate*, pp. 38–39.

¹¹⁷ Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, Parker Library, MS 97, f. 110.

¹¹⁸ GA, P78/1 IN 1/1, p. 12.

¹¹⁹ *CCED*, ID 55985.

¹²⁰ GA, D855/M68, f. 10; TNA, C 3/372/14.

¹²¹ Hockaday Abs. cxlvii; GA, GDR/20, f. 39.

The poverty of the stipends led to the appointment of pluralists of low calibre. In 1567 Thomas Jones was the curate at both Cheltenham and the neighbouring parish of Swindon.¹²² In 1569 he was cited for marrying one couple without a licence or banns, and another couple on Shrove Tuesday.¹²³ Also in 1569 a woman was presented by the churchwardens for not attending church or receiving communion, although she claimed the reason for her absence was not religious but because she was housekeeping.¹²⁴ In the following year another curate, William Walsingham, was suspended until he was able to produce a licence to preach.¹²⁵ In 1572 the parish was admonished for not owning a Bible of the largest edition.¹²⁶ John Evans was curate in 1574, the year of his burial at Cheltenham,¹²⁷ and Richard Clough in 1576.¹²⁸ Thomas Higgs, presumably the lessee of the rectory, and his wife were presented in 1576 for not taking communion for two years, although they claimed that this was not for religious reasons ‘but because of controversies’, perhaps arising from payment of the stipend.¹²⁹ The curate Thomas Butterton was buried in 1590;¹³⁰ he was succeeded by William Panton, who served as the curate of Cheltenham until his death in 1624,¹³¹ a period which coincided with the parishioners’ long struggle to secure an improved stipend for their clergy from the farmers of the rectory. Although the parishioners declared in 1624 that Panton had served in Cheltenham ‘to the good liking of all the parishioners’, in the previous year they had complained that the cure had for a long time been ‘very insufficiently served’ by ‘ministers and deacons of smale learning . . . by reason of the meane stipends’.¹³²

The death of Panton enabled the parishioners to use the improved stipend to attract a scholar to the parish. John English, a fellow of Balliol College, Oxford, had recently graduated Bachelor of Divinity, being already BA and MA; he graduated Doctor of Divinity in 1630.¹³³ Sir Baptist Hicks objected to the appointment of English, Hicks believing that he should have the right of nomination following his purchase of the rectory. However, the advowson was retained by the Crown while the rectory was

¹²² *CCED*, ID 157472.

¹²³ GA, GDR/26, 6; Hockaday Abs. cxlvii.

¹²⁴ GA, GDR/26, 6; Hockaday Abs. cxlvii

¹²⁵ GA, GDR/26, 102; Hockaday Abs. cxlvii.

¹²⁶ GA, GDR/29, 142; Hockaday Abs. cxlvii.

¹²⁷ GA, P78/1 IN 1/1, p. 45.

¹²⁸ *CCED*, ID 147879; GA, P78/1 IN 1/1, p. 51. He was probably the curate called Richard buried in 1583, when no surname was recorded: *ibid.*, 67.

¹²⁹ Hockaday Abs. cxlvii; GA, GDR/40, f. 44v.

¹³⁰ GA, P78/1 IN 1/1, p. 91.

¹³¹ He was ordained in 1590, and recorded as curate in 1593: *CCED*, ID 159474. He was resident in the parish by 1586, and described as minister in 1588. He had probably served as the deacon to the curate Thomas Butterton, who was buried in 1590: GA, P78/1 IN 1/1, pp. 76, 85, 91. Panton was buried in 1624: *ibid.*, p. 206.

¹³² TNA, C 3/372/14; GA, D855/M68, f. 14.

¹³³ *Alumni Oxon.*, 1500–1715, II, p. 463.

under lease, and the presentation of English was confirmed.¹³⁴ He was already rector of Riseholm (Lincs.) when he arrived at Cheltenham, an office he held until 1632;¹³⁵ he was also vicar of Sherborne St John (Hants.) from 1631 and rector of Rudford from 1634.¹³⁶ John Higgs, one of the farmers of the rectory, died in 1625, and English married his widow by 1631, acquiring her right to half the revenues of the rectory.¹³⁷

Installed as a canon at Gloucester cathedral in 1634,¹³⁸ Dr English was a candidate for convocation in 1640.¹³⁹ He was apparently imprisoned for eighteen weeks c.1642–3, which was claimed to have been the cause of his wife's death in 1643.¹⁴⁰ As a pluralist, he was sequestered of his less valuable living at Cheltenham in 1646 by the Committee of Plundered Ministers after failing to appear before them.¹⁴¹ He was possibly still resident at the time of his death in the following year, when he was buried in the parish.¹⁴² Benjamin Bourne performed divine service on both Sabbath and lecture days c.1646,¹⁴³ and he was presumably the Benjamin Brown referred to the Westminster Assembly for the living at Cheltenham in 1647.¹⁴⁴ William Snow was presented to Cheltenham in 1648,¹⁴⁵ and he was paid part of the stipend later that year.¹⁴⁶

John Cooper, a former master of the Crypt School in Gloucester, was the curate in 1650, when he was described as 'an able preaching minister'.¹⁴⁷ The Trustees for the Maintenance of Ministers granted him an augmentation in 1651.¹⁴⁸ Cooper was a Socinian, perhaps through the influence of his predecessor at the Crypt School, the well-known Socinian John Biddle.¹⁴⁹ This probably explains the 'abuses from intemperate and riotous men' that Cooper suffered at the Restoration, when he

¹³⁴ GA, D855/M68, ff. 18–18v, 19v–20.

¹³⁵ TNA, E 331/Lincoln/5 (5 Jan. 1620); CCED, ID 93004.

¹³⁶ CCED, ID 93004.

¹³⁷ GA, GDR/B4/3/279, 281.

¹³⁸ *Fasti Eccles.*, 1541–1857, VIII, 56.

¹³⁹ *Memoirs of the Dutton Family*, 148. His candidature appears to have been unsuccessful: *Records of Convocation, VIII: Canterbury 1603–1700*, ed. Gerald Bray (Woodbridge, 2006).

¹⁴⁰ *Parsons's Notes*, 362; Matthews, *Walker Revised*, 172–73; monument to her in church, south aisle.

¹⁴¹ BL, Add. MS 15670, ff. 141, 183.

¹⁴² GA, P78/1 IN 1/2, p. 91.

¹⁴³ *Cal. Cttee. for Compounding*, II, 1009–10.

¹⁴⁴ BL, Add. MS, 15671, f. 222; Hockaday Abs. cxlvii.

¹⁴⁵ *Lords J.*, IX, 673.

¹⁴⁶ GA, D1949/A1.

¹⁴⁷ TNA, C 94/1, f. 29; Elrington, 'Survey, 1650', *Trans. BGAS*, 83 (1964), 92; A.G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised* (Oxford, 1934), 133.

¹⁴⁸ Lambeth Palace Library, COMM.Via/3, f. 126; GA, Hockaday Abs. cxlviii.

¹⁴⁹ *ODNB*, s.v. Biddle, John (1615/16–1662), schoolmaster and religious controversialist.

was ejected from the living at Cheltenham.¹⁵⁰ He was presented in 1661 for keeping an unlicensed alehouse in Charlton Kings,¹⁵¹ and he remained in the Cheltenham area until his death in 1665.¹⁵²

The appointment of Maurice Roberts, possibly in 1661, began a long period of Welsh-born graduates of the college at Cheltenham.¹⁵³ Thomas Farmer of Arle and his wife were presented to the quarter sessions in three separate years for not attending church, but it is not clear why they absented themselves.¹⁵⁴ Henry Maurice was the curate of Cheltenham from c.1669 to 1671, during which time he engaged in a controversy with ‘malapert Socinians’,¹⁵⁵ presumably followers of Cooper. Ralph Weld, a Wrexham (Denbighs.) man whose family were Presbyterian Parliamentarians during the civil war,¹⁵⁶ served as curate between 1675 and 1688, when he was presented to the rectory of Great Saxham (Suff.) in 1686.¹⁵⁷ In 1675 the church goods were little changed from before the civil war. There were service books for 30 January, 29 May, and 5 November. A new book of common prayer, new book of homilies, a book of prayers for Candlemas Day, and new surplices were purchased by 1677.¹⁵⁸ Kenrick Puleston served the cure at Cheltenham between 1688 and 1692, and was succeeded by Luke Williams, who officiated at Cheltenham for the next seventeen years.¹⁵⁹ Henry Mease was curate in 1710, and he was still in office in 1715, when he took the Oath of Allegiance.¹⁶⁰ Mease, who would later be appointed master of Pate’s Grammar School, was replaced as curate in 1716 first by Humphrey Floyd, and then in the same year by Peter Maurice.¹⁶¹

Dr Edmund Meyrick succeeded Revd George Stokes as curate in 1734,¹⁶² when the latter married Mary Michell. In 1744 the church possessed a silver flagon embossed with cherubs’ heads, leaves, flowers, and a relief of the Last Supper, a silver cup and a chalice, two large Bibles and two books of

¹⁵⁰ H.J. McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1951), 256.

¹⁵¹ GA, Q/Sib, f. 14.

¹⁵² *Calamy Revised*, 133. A note in the vestry minutes stating that ‘Rev John Cooper Minister of the Uniterian Conventicle of this place’ was buried in 1682 is a forgery: GA, P78/1 VE 2/5.

¹⁵³ GA, Hockaday Abs. cxlviii. The parish registers record the names of the parish clergy between the 1676 and 1804: GA, P78/1 IN 1/3–6.

¹⁵⁴ GA, Q/Sib/1, ff. 155, 164.

¹⁵⁵ *ODNB*, s.v. John Biddle; Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, IV (2nd ed., London, 1820), column 327; *Parsons’s Notes*, 363. Maurice subscribed to the Act on Uniformity in 1670; GA, GDR/208, p. 228; Hockaday Abs. cxlviii.

¹⁵⁶ A.N. Palmer, *The History of the Parish Church of Wrexham* (Wrexham, 1886), pp. 87, 130; *idem.*, *A History of the Older Nonconformity of Wrexham* (Wrexham, 1888), p. 7.

¹⁵⁷ GA, P78/1 IN 1/3, p. 64; *CCED*, ID 128726.

¹⁵⁸ GA, P78/1 VE 2/5.

¹⁵⁹ *CCED*, ID 167856; *Glos. N&Q*, VII (1878), 45; GA, P78/1 IN 1/4, p. 23.

¹⁶⁰ *CCED*, ID 53085; GA, Q/SO/4/3.

¹⁶¹ *CCED*, ID 150616 ; GA, P78/1 IN 1/4, pp. 48, 50.

¹⁶² *Alumni Oxon.*, 1715–1886, III, 949.

common prayer.¹⁶³ The church goods belonging to the parish in 1755 included a silver cup with a cover for the communion, a gilt dish, and a silver flagon.¹⁶⁴ Religion in Cheltenham was said to be at a very low ebb in the decade after 1763, with only a small congregation attending the parish church and superstitious beliefs rife among the population.¹⁶⁵ Hugh Hughes was perpetual curate between 1778 and 1789. In 1781 daily prayers and a weekly Sunday lecture were maintained by subscriptions and donations respectively.¹⁶⁶ In 1797 it was agreed that the minister would appoint one churchwarden, with the other to be chosen by the vestry.¹⁶⁷ Henry Foulkes was curate from 1799 until he became Principal of Jesus College.¹⁶⁸

The presence of a singing gallery in 1791 indicates that services at Cheltenham were accompanied by music by that year,¹⁶⁹ when a parishioner offered to install an organ at his own expense.¹⁷⁰ Whether this offer was taken up is unclear, but the vestry determined that the erection of an organ was highly desirable in 1807.¹⁷¹ An organ had still not been installed by 1810, when the vestry resolved to erect one by voluntary subscription.¹⁷² It was determined in 1811 to place this in the singing gallery.¹⁷³ The organist was awarded a salary of £50 in 1813,¹⁷⁴ increased to £70 in 1818 after the adoption of evening services, when he was also to assist with the choir.¹⁷⁵

The purchase of the advowson by Joseph Pitt in 1816 ended the long run of fellows of Jesus College serving the cure at Cheltenham, when he presented Charles Jervis, already Rector of Luddenham (Kent), to the benefice.¹⁷⁶ Cheltenham would become famous as a centre for evangelical Anglicanism later in the century, but the theology of Jervis was said soon after his appointment to have caused many of the congregation in Cheltenham to desert the parish in favour of neighbouring churches instead.¹⁷⁷ With the rapid growth of the town in the early 19th century the parish church was rendered unable to accommodate the numbers who wished to attend the church. Evening services

¹⁶³ GA, GDR/V5/73aT; *Glos. Ch. Plate*, 38–39.

¹⁶⁴ GA, P78/1 VE 2/1, 26 Nov. 1755.

¹⁶⁵ GA, D729/1.

¹⁶⁶ Butler, *Cheltenham Guide* (1781), p. 16.

¹⁶⁷ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 1797.

¹⁶⁸ *Alumni Oxon.*, 1715–1886, II, 484.

¹⁶⁹ GA, P78/1 VE 2/1, 20 Apr. 1791.

¹⁷⁰ GA, P78/1 VE 2/1, 19 Oct. 1791.

¹⁷¹ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 21 Apr. 1807.

¹⁷² GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 24 Apr. 1810.

¹⁷³ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 26 Mar. 1811.

¹⁷⁴ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 26 July 1813.

¹⁷⁵ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 24 Mar. 1818.

¹⁷⁶ *CCED*, No. 67170; *Alumni Oxon.*, 1715–1886, II, p. 752.

¹⁷⁷ GA, D2025/Box 5/Bundle 8.

were introduced by Jervis in 1817 to accommodate those who could not find a seat at the morning or afternoon services, and the Wednesday morning service was also replaced by an evening service.¹⁷⁸ An assistant curate, John Davies, was appointed to assist in the parish in 1817, and was still officiating at the parish church in 1823. He was also officiating as the curate at Brimpsfield by 1819.¹⁷⁹ Davis took many of the baptisms, marriages and funerals within the parish, and also preached the afternoon sermon each week within the parish church.¹⁸⁰

Jervis was instrumental in the erection of Holy Trinity as a chapel of ease for the parish, where he appointed Francis Close as his curate in 1824. As curate of Holy Trinity Close was also required to officiate at some services in the parish church. In 1825 there were three services every Sunday, as well as morning services twice a week and on all saints' days.¹⁸¹ Later in 1825 the minister agreed to give the Wednesday evening service without remuneration.¹⁸² An elaborate and ornamented silver-gilt communion service was acquired by the parish by subscription in 1825, comprising a chalice, paten and flagon. The earlier plate belonging to the church may have been dispensed with at this time.¹⁸³ In 1825 Edward Hatch was appointed as the vestry's churchwarden¹⁸⁴; he served in the post for 20 years, with a sidesman being appointed to assist him in 1844.¹⁸⁵ An increase in vestry business of the vestry led to the appointment of a parish clerk with a salary of £35 in 1827.¹⁸⁶

Jervis died in 1826, and Simeon nominated Close to succeed him at the parish church. Close, an Evangelical Cambridge graduate, would have an instrumental impact upon the character of Cheltenham during the thirty years of his incumbency at the parish church.¹⁸⁷ During his tenure Close was associated with four of the six new churches erected to serve the town's growing population. His appointment of evangelicals to serve in those four churches cemented Cheltenham's reputation as an evangelical stronghold. His exertions proved divisive; he attracted large congregations to his church but Tennyson described Cheltenham in 1845 as a 'polka-parson-worshiping place', labelling Close its Pope, whilst another contemporary described his reign in Cheltenham as 'the Close season'.¹⁸⁸ Close found himself frequently in conflict with the sizable Dissenting population in

¹⁷⁸ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 24 Sep. 1817.

¹⁷⁹ CCED, ID 143428.

¹⁸⁰ George Bonner, *Statement of Facts and Copies and Extracts from Letters, in Reference to the Refusal of the Hon. And Rt. Rev. Henry Ryder, D.D. (late Lord Bishop of Gloucester, now of Lichfield and Coventry) to License the Rev. Geo. Bonner, LL.B, As Assistant Minister of Trinity Church, Cheltenham* (Cheltenham, 1824),

¹⁸¹ Williams, *New Guide to Cheltenham* (1825), pp. 13–14.

¹⁸² GA, P78/1 VE 2/3, 15 Dec. 1825.

¹⁸³ J.T. Evans, *Church Plate of Gloucestershire* (Bristol, 1906), p. 38. All Saint's church, built in c. 1866, was in possession of Elizabethan plate in 1906; *ibid.* p. 40.

¹⁸⁴ GA, P78/1 VE 2/3, *passim*.

¹⁸⁵ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 9 Aug. 1844.

¹⁸⁶ GA, P78/1 VE 2/3, 22 Mar. 1827.

¹⁸⁷ ODNB, No. 5703.

¹⁸⁸ W.E. Adams, *Memoirs of a Social Atom* (1903), I, pp. 11, 23.

Cheltenham, especially during the 1830s, who used the open nature of the vestry to resist supporting any element of worship in the parish church through the payment of church rates that was not required by law. He was also believed to have been behind the arrest and imprisonment of George Holyoake for blasphemy in 1842.¹⁸⁹ Through his authority, the Cheltenham races were discontinued while he was resident, and he also prevented the rebuilding of the theatre after it burnt down.¹⁹⁰ Close took a particular interest in education within the town, founding a number of district National Schools, including the first infant schools in the town, overseeing the revival of the old charity school and latterly the grammar school, and was the chairman of the directors of Cheltenham College. In 1847 he founded a Church of England Training School to instruct new teachers. Close left Cheltenham in 1856, when he was appointed Dean of Carlisle Cathedral.¹⁹¹

Francis Close reported that there were 1,350 communicants belonging to the established church in Cheltenham in 1835.¹⁹² In 1836 Simeon described Cheltenham as ‘almost a heaven upon earth’, lauding its full and capacious churches, its numerous schools, and its laborious and energetic ministers.¹⁹³ The ancient parish of Cheltenham was divided into three, with the creation of ecclesiastical district of St Peter’s in 1845, and St Paul’s in 1846.¹⁹⁴ Together, the two new districts comprised the poorest neighbourhoods of the town, at the western end of the high street. Despite the creation of new churches, the parish church remained popular during the tenure of Close. In 1847 Joseph Leech described the congregation as so large ‘it seemed as though they were piled on each other’s heads’, and Close described the church as ‘always full and crowded’ in his return to the 1851 religious census. At that time, a combined total of 4,720 were reported to have attended three Sunday services,¹⁹⁵ the largest congregation in the county.¹⁹⁶

During the tenure of Francis Close the provision of churches and schools within the town had been greatly extended and Cheltenham had become a leading centre of evangelical Anglicanism.¹⁹⁷ Following his departure the parish encountered difficulties in attracting a successor, due to the lack of provision of a residence for the incumbent. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners made a grant of £600 towards the project, and a house in the Royal Crescent was purchased for £1,600 in 1859.¹⁹⁸ In the meantime, Revd – later Dr – Edward Walker had become incumbent of Cheltenham in 1857.¹⁹⁹ At

¹⁸⁹ Adams, *Memoirs*, 15–17; Bishopsgate Institute, Holyoake/3/1.

¹⁹⁰ Adams, *Memoirs*, 12.

¹⁹¹ *Fasti Eccl. 1541–1857: XI, Carlisle, Chester, Durham, Manchester, Ripon, and Sodor and Man Dioceses*, p. 18.

¹⁹² *The British Magazine and Monthly Register*, 1 Oct. 1835, pp. 471–72.

¹⁹³ William Carus, *Memoirs of the Life of Charles Simeon* (1847), p. 783.

¹⁹⁴ *London Gazette*, 28 Oct. 1845, pp. 3225–28; 1 Sep. 1846, pp. 3146–47; Youngs, *Admin. Units*, II, p. 169.

¹⁹⁵ Munden, *Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1851*, p. 321.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 29.

¹⁹⁷ *ODNB*, No. 5703.

¹⁹⁸ GA, P78/1 IN 3/1; Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, p. 638.

¹⁹⁹ *Crockford’s Clerical Dictionary* (1868), p. 680.

his instigation, the inappropriate rectory was purchased by the parish in 1862, when Walker was inducted as the first modern rector of Cheltenham.²⁰⁰ An evangelical, like Close, he held the benefice until his death in 1872.²⁰¹ Services were held in the parish church five times a week in 1858: three times on Sundays and once each on Wednesdays and Fridays, and communion was celebrated on the first Sunday of every month. There was also a weekly lecture on Wednesdays.²⁰²

Walker was succeeded in 1872 by Canon Charles Dent Bell,²⁰³ another pronounced evangelical, who held the rectory until 1895.²⁰⁴ During his tenure the parish church was restored and the church of St Matthews was built. Bell was followed as rector by Edmund Lally Roxby.²⁰⁵ Francis Fawcett was appointed rector and rural dean of Cheltenham in 1907.²⁰⁶

In 2013 St Mary's officially became a minster.²⁰⁷

Church Buildings

The size of the medieval parish church possibly reflects Cheltenham's former status as an Anglo-Saxon minster, and in acknowledgement of this it has been known since 2013 as Cheltenham Minster.²⁰⁸ It is a cruciform building of limestone ashlar under a stone slate roof, with central tower and spire, and preserves fabric from the 12th to the 15th century and later.²⁰⁹ The medieval chancel's misalignment with the nave and transepts has led to the suggestion that it overlies an earlier, pre-conquest, structure, but this has not been substantiated.²¹⁰ The earliest surviving work, of c.1200 or slightly earlier, includes buttresses and a weathered string course at the west end, the lower stage of the tower and one crossing arch. Rather later are Early English lancet windows in the tower, and a piscina. A sanctus bell of this period survives. The crossing arches to the transepts are also 13th century, implying that the church was cruciform by this date. Most of the medieval fabric, however, including the upper stages of the tower, the broach spire, the four-bay clerestoried nave arcades, the transepts and three-bay chancel, are in mid- to late-14th century Decorated style, although the two-storeyed north porch was added during the 15th century. Much of this later medieval architecture is of a very high order of craftsmanship, notably the window tracery, hood moulds and foliate capitals, perhaps influenced by Gloucester abbey. Particular features of this

²⁰⁰ GA, P78/1 VE 2/6, pp. 71–76.

²⁰¹ *Alumni Oxon.* 1715–1886, IV, p. 1483.

²⁰² GA, P78 VE 2/6, p. 13.

²⁰³ *Crockford's Clerical Dictionary* (1874), p. 60.

²⁰⁴ *The Churchman*, XIII (1898), p. 168.

²⁰⁵ *Crockford's Clerical Dictionary* (1898), p. 1175.

²⁰⁶ *Crockford's Clerical Dictionary* (1908), p. 482.

²⁰⁷ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 4 Feb. 2013.

²⁰⁸ BBC News, 3 Feb. 2013 [<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-21314630>].

²⁰⁹ NHLE, No. 1386792; Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, 229–31.

²¹⁰ Sawyer in T. Overbury, 'The Parish Church, Cheltenham', *Trans. BGAS*, 46 (1924), 92. Such deflections are in fact commonplace.

building campaign are an ornate rose window in the north transept and a large and elaborate second piscina in the chancel. Late medieval also is a churchyard cross of three steps, south of the church.

Bishop Adam de Orleton of Worcester visited the church in October 1328.²¹¹ It was the location for ordinations carried out by Bishop Henry Wakefield of Worcester in 1385.²¹² In 1395–6 the lord of the manor of Cheltenham made a gift of 6s. 8d. to the church of Cheltenham for making a *clasto* (? cloister).²¹³ The church was of a sufficient size to accommodate a visitation of the clergy and people of the deanery of Winchcombe in 1407.²¹⁴ In 1501 William Lane left 6s. 8d. to the repair of the church, on the south side,²¹⁵ and in 1509 Richard Machyn left 10 marks for the costs of the middle aisle of the church.²¹⁶ A brass memorial to William Greville, justice of common pleas, who died in 1513, and to his family, survives in the chancel.²¹⁷

Consent was given by the vestry for the erection of a north gallery in 1760.²¹⁸ The expanding population of Cheltenham, and the increasing number of houses let out to fashionable visitors during the season, was putting pressure upon the limited space within the parish church. Several of the town's principal inhabitants petitioned the Bishop for a faculty to build a new gallery over the north aisle in 1775.²¹⁹ Permission was given in 1780 to erect a gallery over the south aisle, adjacent to the south gallery.²²⁰ The south gallery was extended to the west end of the church in 1786.²²¹ In the following year, alterations were made to the chancel to create extra seating to accommodate the nobility and gentry that frequented the spa.²²² The north gallery and the gallery over the north aisle were both extended in 1791, when reference was also made to a singing gallery and a new belfry gallery.²²³ The singing gallery was perhaps the western gallery, which in 1806 contained a singing desk and seats for the singers.²²⁴ An antique altarpiece was donated by the Dean and Chapter

²¹¹ Reg. Orleton (Worc.), 328.

²¹² Reg. Wakefield, no. 910.

²¹³ TNA, SC 6/852/1, m. 4.

²¹⁴ Reg. Sede Vacante, 390.

²¹⁵ Worcs. Archives, will of William Lane (1501).

²¹⁶ TNA, PROB 11/16/389.

²¹⁷ Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, p. 231.

²¹⁸ GA, P78/1 VE 2/1, 26 Dec. 1760.

²¹⁹ GA, P78/1 VE 2/1, 28 Jan. 1775, 10 Mar. 1775; P78/1 CW 3/2.

²²⁰ GA, P78/1 VE 2/1, 2 May 1780.

²²¹ GA, P78/1 VE 2/1, June 1786.

²²² GA, P78/1 VE 2/1, 13 June 1787.

²²³ GA, P78/1 VE 2/1, 20 Apr. 1791, 27 Sep. 1791.

²²⁴ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 27 May 1806.

of Gloucester and erected in 1808.²²⁵ The church was ordered to be re-pewed in 1808.²²⁶ The belfry gallery was considered a nuisance in 1809,²²⁷ but an order to remove it and replace it with one that had no communication with the body of the church was revoked in 1811.²²⁸ The 17th-century gallery erected by Ann Norwood was removed in 1813 in order to make more room for pews in the nave.²²⁹ In 1817 the belfry, long and upper galleries were all ordered to be removed, to be replaced by a new gallery. The organ was to be moved to where the belfry had been, and a new ringing loft was to be constructed on one floor higher than previously, accessed through stairs outside on the north side of the church.²³⁰ The south door was ordered to be closed up in 1822, and a new door was to be inserted near to the site of the font.²³¹ In 1826 it was thought expedient that the parish should provide a pew to better accommodate the resident and visiting clergy in the parish.²³² The seats in the parish church had for centuries been treated as private property, and a number of these were rented by the owners. During the visitation of 1848 the bishop ruled that this practice was illegal, and the churchwardens consequently redistributed the seats. The vestry complained that more consideration should have been given to long-standing occupants of the pews, who might have expended large sums of money on their sittings. Opponents of church rates proposed that the ancient pews should be removed and replaced with uniform open seats.²³³

The churchyard was purchased from the improper rector, Joseph Pitt, in 1812, when adjacent land was also purchased from him to serve as an extension of the churchyard.²³⁴ Despite this, the rapidly increasing population of the town put too much pressure upon the ancient churchyard, and the vestry was instructed in 1830 to provide a new burial ground for the parish.²³⁵ A site was purchased on the south side of the high street near the western end of the town in 1830,²³⁶ and a new funerary chapel was consecrated on the site in 1831.²³⁷

In 1821 it was determined that one of the bells was cracked, and that the others required recasting or replacing. A proposal was made to increase the number of bells from eight to ten,²³⁸ but a year

²²⁵ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 29 Mar. 1808; Williams, *New Guide to Cheltenham* (1825), p. 12.

²²⁶ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 24 May 1808.

²²⁷ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 20 Sep. 1809.

²²⁸ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 26 Mar. 1811.

²²⁹ Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, p. 173.

²³⁰ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 15 Oct. 1816, 4 Feb. 1817.

²³¹ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 8 May 1822.

²³² GA, P78/1 VE 2/3, 21 Dec. 1826.

²³³ GA, P78/1 VE 2/3, 25 Apr. 1848.

²³⁴ GA, P78/1 CW 3/4.

²³⁵ GA, P78/1 VE 2/3, 9 July 1829, 12 Nov. 1829, 11 Mar. 1830.

²³⁶ GA, P78/1 VE 2/3, 9 July 1829, 12 Nov. 1829, 11 Mar. 1830.

²³⁷ GA, P78/1 VE 2/3, 8 Sep. 1831.

later the vestry resolved to retain a peal of eight bells.²³⁹ Despite a resolution only to replace two broken bells, in 1823 John Rudhall of Gloucester was contracted to recast all eight bells, for a sum of £344.²⁴⁰ There was a tuneable set chimes in 1781, which played every three hours.²⁴¹ New chimes were set up in 1805, tuned to play psalms 104 and 113, and the Evening Hymn.²⁴² These were apparently in need of repair in 1824,²⁴³ but an order to mend them was rescinded,²⁴⁴ and instead a bell was purchased to strike the hour in 1826.²⁴⁵

A significant concern for the majority of Edward Walker's tenure was the state of the parish church, where maintenance of the ancient fabric had been long neglected in favour of alterations to the interior as the parish struggled to accommodate the rapidly expanding population of the town.²⁴⁶ The removal of pews in order to examine the floor and the consequent reduction of seating was presumably the immediate cause of a number of suits being served concerning the occupation of pews within the church. As a result, the churchwardens were forced to expend a large sum in legal fees, and to require the presence of police at the church on several successive Sundays in order to prevent a breach of the peace.²⁴⁷ During restoration work within the church in 1859, it was discovered that the crypt was crumbling, and the church was immediately closed.²⁴⁸ The improvement commissioners were empowered by an order in council to concrete the vaults and flooring of the church, and the walls were also strengthened, but the churchwardens encountered resistance to the plan to remove the pews and galleries. The owners of private seats within the church, who were concerned to maintain proprietary rights over any new seating installed after the restoration, prevented the churchwardens from obtaining a faculty for the removal of the galleries and reorganisation of the seating within the church. The churchwardens were left with no other choice than to renovate the existing seating, although they objected strongly to the inadequacy of these arrangements, especially for the poor.²⁴⁹ The church was finally reopened in 1861.²⁵⁰

During the two years that the parish church was closed, the congregation was accommodated in a temporary iron church in Clarence Street, and this continued to be used for regular worship after the

²³⁸ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 8 Nov. 1821.

²³⁹ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 7 Nov. 1822.

²⁴⁰ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 3 July 1823, 19 July 1823.

²⁴¹ Butler, *Cheltenham Guide* (1781), p. 14.

²⁴² GA, P78/1 VE 2/2, 20 Aug. 1805.

²⁴³ GA, P78/1 VE 2/3, 10 Jan. 1824.

²⁴⁴ GA, P78/1 VE 2/3, 3 June 1824.

²⁴⁵ GA, P78/1 VE 2/3, 4 Jan. 1826.

²⁴⁶ GA, P78 VE 2/3; P78 VE 2/6; *NHLE*, No. 1386792.

²⁴⁷ GA, P78/1 VE 2/6, pp. 44–46.

²⁴⁸ GA, P78 VE 2/6, pp. 34–35.

²⁴⁹ GA, P78/1 VE 2/6, pp. 52–55.

²⁵⁰ GA, P78/1 VE 2/6, p. 60.

parish church was reopened. The parish returned to the question of restoring and enlarging the parish church again in 1863.²⁵¹ An architectural competition was launched to enlarge the parish church to a capacity of 2,000 people, with only the medieval tower and spire to be preserved. However, despite a large number of entrants, the project was unpopular within the town and the parish failed to raise sufficient funds to finance the scheme. In 1864 there were four services a week in the parish church, twice on Sundays and once each on Wednesdays and Fridays, and four services at the temporary church, three on Sundays and another on Wednesdays.²⁵²

In 1871 the removal of the organ and organ loft in the parish church exposed a number of rotting timbers which necessitated more work. At the same time, the gallery which had obscured the west window was removed, greatly improving the interior of the church. Another gallery which had some time previously been erected in the south transept with the intention of moving the organ there was removed, and it was determined that the organ should instead be re-erected in the north transept.²⁵³ A new survey was undertaken in 1873, which resulted in a recommendation that the parish church be restored, and the temporary church be replaced with a permanent stone building. The parish church was reopened in 1877, after two years of restoration work, including the removal of the many galleries in the nave and aisles.

New Parishes

The rapid expansion of the town's population in the early 19th century left the parish church wholly inadequate to accommodate more than a small fraction of the parishioners. Whilst the population grew from over 8,000 in 1811, to over 13,000 in 1821, the parish church could only accommodate 1,200 worshippers.²⁵⁴ Four new churches were built in the town in the decade between 1822 and 1832 to accommodate Cheltenham's rapidly expanding population.

Holy Trinity church was built on Portland Street as a chapel of ease for St Mary's and consecrated in 1823.²⁵⁵ It was licensed for burials but not baptisms or marriages. It had been proposed to raise the funds for the new church with a government grant, to be matched by an equal sum from the trustees of the rectory.²⁵⁶ When this proved impossible, an effort was made to erect the church through public subscriptions, but when this proved insufficient Lord Sherborne completed the church at his own expense. Consequently, the greater part of the church became the private property of Lord Sherborne, with the remaining shares held by the other subscribers. The interior consisted of three aisles, over which were two galleries.²⁵⁷ Pews within the church could be rented by the week, month or year, and the curate's salary was provided for by the appropriation of several

²⁵¹ GA, P78/1 VE 2/6, 7 Apr. 1863.

²⁵² GA, P78/1 VE 2/6, 31 Mar. 1864.

²⁵³ GA, P78/1 VE 2/6, 11 Apr. 1871.

²⁵⁴ Census, 1811, 1821; *Accounts of the population of certain benefices or parishes, with the capacity of their churches and chapels*, 1818 (004), p. 16.

²⁵⁵ NHLE, No. 1387583.

²⁵⁶ Williams, *New Guide to Cheltenham* (1825), p. 14.

²⁵⁷ Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, p. 446.

pews to him, with a small ground rent on the remaining pews.²⁵⁸ George Bonner was appointed the first curate of Holy Trinity in the summer of 1823, with a stipend of £150 plus another £30 from the rents of the pews.²⁵⁹ However, a protracted dispute arose between Bonner and the Bishop of Gloucester, who refused to licence Bonner unless he consented to officiate at both the parish church and Holy Trinity.²⁶⁰ Apparently at this time there were two sermons a week preached at Holy Trinity.²⁶¹ When no resolution was found, Jervis nominated Francis Close as curate of Holy Trinity, on the same stipend, and Close readily agreed to the Bishop's stipulations. After Close succeeded Jervis at the parish church, he was replaced first by Thomas Truebody Thomason, another evangelical close to Simeon,²⁶² and then by John Browne at Holy Trinity,²⁶³ who held the benefice until his death in 1857.²⁶⁴ The benefice was valued at £330 in 1835,²⁶⁵ and approximately £305 in 1851 when there were two services each Sunday with a combined average attendance of c. 1,900 people.²⁶⁶ In 1898 Holy Trinity was assigned an ecclesiastical district and became a parish church in its own right.²⁶⁷

St John's church was built in Berkeley Street in 1828 and consecrated as a chapel of ease to the parish church in 1829, with a capacity of 900 people.²⁶⁸ An application to the church Building Commissioners for a grant towards the costs of building the church was not supported.²⁶⁹ Its construction was instead undertaken at the expense largely of the minister, William Spencer Phillips. Shortly afterwards, Phillips sold a moiety of his interest in the church to Revd William Morgan Kinsey, on whom also devolved a share of the clerical duties.²⁷⁰ From 1832, Phillips was also vicar of Defynnog (Brecon) and perpetual curate of Ystradvellty (Brecon), and he was later appointed to a benefice on the Isle of Wight.²⁷¹ Kinsey was also rector of Rotherfield Grays (Oxon.) from 1843 until his death in 1851.²⁷² As at Holy Trinity, the pews within the church were considered private property,

²⁵⁸ Davies, *Stranger's Guide to Cheltenham* (1832), pp. 84–85.

²⁵⁹ Bonner, *Statement of Facts*, 6–7.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, *passim*.

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp. 8, 19.

²⁶² CCED, ID 19978; Carus, *Life of Simeon*, p. 783.

²⁶³ Davies, *Stranger's Guide to Cheltenham* (1832), p. 85.

²⁶⁴ *Alumni Cantab.*; CCED, ID 9579.

²⁶⁵ *Report into Ecclesiastical Revenues* (1835), [67], pp 408–9.

²⁶⁶ Munden, *The Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1851*, p. 322.

²⁶⁷ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 10 Dec. 1898.

²⁶⁸ Davies, *Stranger's Guide to Cheltenham* (1832), p. 85.

²⁶⁹ *List of the number of applications made to the commissioners under the Church Building Act, 1829* (330).

²⁷⁰ Davies, *Stranger's Guide to Cheltenham* (1832), pp. 85–86.

²⁷¹ CCED, ID 21157.

²⁷² CCED, ID 34820.

and could be rented for short or long periods.²⁷³ The benefice was valued at £250 in 1835.²⁷⁴ The ecclesiastical parish of St John was formed in 1866.²⁷⁵ St John's was extended in the 1870s to provide additional free seats.²⁷⁶

St James' church was consecrated in 1830 to serve the affluent neighbourhood around Suffolk Square.²⁷⁷ Money for building the church was raised through the sale of shares, with the shareholders allocating the revenues from 400 seats for the payment of the curate's salary and the maintenance of the church.²⁷⁸ The total capacity was 1,400.²⁷⁹ George Bonner, whose short-lived stay at Holy Trinity in 1823 had ended in controversy, was appointed the first curate in 1830, where he served until his death ten years later.²⁸⁰ Francis Duncan Gilby was incumbent between 1843 and 1857.²⁸¹ In 1851 there were two services each Sunday, which attracted a total attendance of 2,400, including c. 400 Sunday School children.²⁸² The benefice was valued at £250 in 1835,²⁸³ and still in 1851.²⁸⁴ St James became an ecclesiastical parish in 1916.²⁸⁵

The three churches erected during the 1820s had been built through the efforts of private benefactors, supported by the sale of pews, ensuring that they were only accessible to the wealthy. Anxious to prevent the poor of the town being drawn into the nonconformist chapels, Close promoted a scheme to build a new church to accommodate them. A plot of land north of Rutland Street was provided by Joseph Pitt, and St Paul's was consecrated in 1831.²⁸⁶ The total cost of the church amounted to £6,871, of which £3,250 was raised by public subscriptions, and the remainder provided by a grant from the Church Building Commissioners. Of the 1,850 seats within the church, 1,230 were free, and the church was consequently also referred to as the Free Church.²⁸⁷ The first incumbent, Revd Sir Henry Thompson, 3rd Bart. of Virkees, served the cure at St Paul's without

²⁷³ Davies, *Stranger's Guide to Cheltenham* (1832), p. 86.

²⁷⁴ *Report into Ecclesiastical Revenues* (1835), [67], pp 408–9.

²⁷⁵ *Cheltenham Looker-On*, 2 Jun. 1866.

²⁷⁶ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 26 Jan. 1929.

²⁷⁷ *NHLE*, No. 1387994.

²⁷⁸ Davies, *Stranger's Guide to Cheltenham* (1832), pp. 86–87.

²⁷⁹ Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, p. 447.

²⁸⁰ *CCED*, ID 236816.

²⁸¹ *CCED*, ID 52637.

²⁸² Munden, *Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1851*, p. 322.

²⁸³ *Report into Ecclesiastical Revenues* (1835), [67], pp. 408–9.

²⁸⁴ Munden, *Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire*, p. 322.

²⁸⁵ *London Gazette*, 6 June 1916.

²⁸⁶ Davies, *Stranger's Guide to Cheltenham* (1832), p. 88.

²⁸⁷ *Return by His Majesty's Commissioners for Building New churches, 1837* (437), pp. 10–11.

remuneration for the first two years of its history.²⁸⁸ Thompson also donated the organ, and his mother donated the clock.²⁸⁹ In 1833 he was succeeded by Thomas Page.²⁹⁰ The benefice was valued at £140 in 1835.²⁹¹ It was established in 1838 that the congregation of the parish church was also responsible for the maintenance of St Paul's.²⁹² The church was renovated between 1904 and 1906, including the installation of a movable font and the insertion of the dramatic east window. In 1917 the vestry was extended and the north chapel built.²⁹³ Faced with a significant shortfall in income the parish vestry reconstituted itself in 1924 as a parish church council and streamlined its organisation. Six sub-committees were established, for general purposes, the day schools, the Sunday schools, the parish hall, the sick and needy, and finance, with the full parish council meeting every second month.²⁹⁴ A meeting of the whole parish continued to be held each year at Easter.

Christ Church was consecrated as a chapelry to serve the district of Lansdown in 1840,²⁹⁵ and had an estimated capacity of 2,000. The church was built through the sale of shares, and the living was intended to devolve upon the incumbent 40 years after the church was built.²⁹⁶ The first perpetual curate at Christ Church was Archibald Boyd, an eloquent Irishman who attracted large congregations.²⁹⁷ During his incumbency he campaigned for the creation of a public library in Cheltenham, and he was created a canon of Gloucester Cathedral in 1857. The stipend of the curate in 1851 when the congregation over two services was 2,260 was £285, to which were added pew rents of £150 to £200.²⁹⁸ Boyd departed Cheltenham in 1859 and was replaced by J. Fenn.²⁹⁹ The district chapelry of Christ Church was formed in 1865 and became a parish on the death of the incumbent of St Mary's.³⁰⁰ In 1880 patronage of the church passed to the Simeon Trustees.³⁰¹

A congregation used the infant school room in Waterloo Place between the years of 1844 and 1849,³⁰² when the new church of St Peter on Tewkesbury Road was consecrated in 1849 to serve the

²⁸⁸ CCED, ID 40729.

²⁸⁹ Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, p. 448.

²⁹⁰ CCED, ID 18754.

²⁹¹ *Report into Ecclesiastical Revenues* (1835), [67], pp. 408–9.

²⁹² GA, P78/1 VE 2/3, 9 Aug. 1838.

²⁹³ English Heritage, Listed Building no. 1387184.

²⁹⁴ GA, P78/10 VE 2/5, 5 Feb. 1924.

²⁹⁵ Davies, *View of Cheltenham* (1843), 214; NHLE, No. 1103838.

²⁹⁶ Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, p. 449.

²⁹⁷ Adams, *Memoirs of a Social Atom*,

²⁹⁸ Munden, *Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1851*, p. 323.

²⁹⁹ Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, p. 449.

³⁰⁰ *London Gazette*, 4 Apr. 1865.

³⁰¹ Munden, *Anglican Clergy of Cheltenham* (forthcoming).

³⁰² Munden, *Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1851*, p. 323.

newly created ecclesiastical district of that name,³⁰³ with a capacity of 1,050.³⁰⁴ The church was built with the aid of a £2,000 grant by the Church Extension Fund, and the right of nomination was given to five trustees who included the incumbents of St Mary's and Holy Trinity.³⁰⁵ The church was endowed with a £100 a year by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, to rise to £150 once the new church was consecrated.³⁰⁶ To this was added £50 from the Church Extension Fund, a £60 bequest of Jane Cook, and piece of land on Swindon Road.³⁰⁷ The first incumbent, William Hodgson, had been the assistant curate of St Paul's at its opening, and served at St Peter's until 1866.³⁰⁸

Despite the provision of six new churches during the first half of the century, a parliamentary survey of 1851 found that the total accommodation at the town's Anglican churches could still only accommodate less than a quarter of the population.³⁰⁹ The provision of churches continued as the town expanded.

The National Schoolroom had been consecrated as a place of worship to serve the growing district around the Bath Road in 1843.³¹⁰ St Luke's church was subsequently built to provide better accommodation and consecrated in 1854.³¹¹ Located near Cheltenham College, it was intended to also serve as a chapel for the school. With galleries in both transepts and at the west end it was intended to provide seating for 1,040, of which half were free.³¹² Around 100 additional seats were provided by the new chancel, consecrated in 1866.³¹³

St Mark's parish was formed in 1860-2 to serve the south-west for the town and the church was consecrated in 1866. It could accommodate a total of 517, of which 267 seats were free.³¹⁴ In 1884 the new incumbent E.T. Griffiths initiated an afternoon service in a cottage in Hester's Way for those living at a distance from the church and a dedicated building was acquired the following year.³¹⁵ This subsequently became the St Silas Mission Church.³¹⁶

³⁰³ Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, 451; *NHLE*, No. 1388006.

³⁰⁴ Munden, *Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1851*, p. 323.

³⁰⁵ *London Gazette*, 28 Oct. 1845, p. 3226.

³⁰⁶ *London Gazette*, 28 Oct. 1845, p. 3226.

³⁰⁷ *London Gazette*, 28 Oct. 1845, p. 3226; Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, p. 451.

³⁰⁸ *CCED*, ID 154331.

³⁰⁹ *The thirty-first annual report of Her Majesty's Commissioners for Building New Churches, 1851* (611), p. 13.

³¹⁰ *Wilts & Gloucestershire Standard*, 14 Mar. 1843.

³¹¹ *NHLE*, No. 1387880; *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 14 Nov. 1854.

³¹² Lambeth Palace Library, Incorporated Church Building Society, ICBS 4318.

³¹³ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 9 Jan. 1866.

³¹⁴ *NHLE*, No. 1386790; Lambeth Palace Library, Incorporated Church Building Society, ICBS 5599.

³¹⁵ *St Marks Parish Magazine*, July 1890.

³¹⁶ GA P78/14.

After the reopening of St Marys, work began to replace the temporary church on a new site on Clarence Street, formerly the site of the Great House, which had been donated to the parish by James Agg-Gardner. The foundation stone was laid in 1877 and the new church of St Matthew was consecrated on 17 April 1879.³¹⁷

All Saints was built in 1868 to provide extra accommodation to the population north of the high street, and is noteworthy for having been built for high church Tractarian services during a period when the town was still dominated by evangelicalism.³¹⁸ The vicar C. M. Moore was replaced c. 1885 by George L. H. Gardiner, appointed an Honorary Canon of Gloucester in 1906, who would preside over the parish until 1911.³¹⁹ By the end of the century there were three clergymen working with the parish, and over 1,000 parishioners celebrated Holy Communion on Easter Sunday in 1893.³²⁰ Services in the church were accompanied by a choir and an orchestra as well as an organ, and the construction c. 1898 of an apse in the south side of the chancel facilitated daily services.³²¹ Having been built to accommodate a High Church congregation in a town long dominated by the Evangelical wing of the Church of England, in 1899 the vicar was pleased to announce that they were now enjoying much more cordial relations with the congregation of the parish church thanks to the disposition of the then rector. In relation to concerns expressed in the diocese about the revival of medieval practices in some parishes, he declared himself happy that nothing about services in the parish ‘could fairly be described as Romanising’.³²² However, in 1906 the church was one of eight in the diocese identified as extremely Anglo-Catholic.³²³ While the church served wealthy residents of Pittville, there was also a well-attended mission room in Sherborne Place by the 1890s, and a new parish Institute and gymnasium were opened adjacent to the parish school at the end of the century.³²⁴ By 1906 the capacity of the mission room had increased to 250 and it was seen effectively as a separate church within the parish. In the same year a second mission room was opened in Whaddon Lane.³²⁵ Following the resignation of Revd George Gardiner as vicar, Revd P. M. C. Johnstone served as vicar until 1946.³²⁶

St Stephen’s was begun in 1873, initially to serve as a chapel of ease to Christchurch, serving the large population of Tivoli.³²⁷ Consisting at first only of the chancel and north transept, construction

³¹⁷ NHLE, No. 1386868.

³¹⁸ NHLE, No. 1386679.

³¹⁹ GA, P78/2 VE 2/1.

³²⁰ GA, P78/2 VE 2/1.

³²¹ GA, P78/2 VE 2/1.

³²² GA, P78/2 VE 2/1.

³²³ *Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline* (1906), 6517-6521.

³²⁴ GA, P78/2 VE 2/1.

³²⁵ GA, P78/2 VE 2/1; *Gloucestershire Echo*, 15 Apr. 1909.

³²⁶ GA, P78/2 VE 2/1.

³²⁷ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 30 Dec. 1873.

was begun on the rest of the church when it became apparent that this was insufficient. Consecrated in 1883, the church sat 650 people.³²⁸ St Stephen's was designated a particular district in the following year, and construction on the church was completed by 1892.³²⁹

A mission room was founded in Clare Street by the vicar of St Luke's in the 1860s, supplemented by a larger mission room in Naunton Terrace in 1872.³³⁰ The site was later used for the founding of Emmanuel Church as a chapel of ease to St Luke's church, initially housed in an iron structure in Naunton Parade. The church was destroyed by fire in 1916.³³¹ Emmanuel was taken from the parish of St Luke's and established as a distinct district in 1922, when Rev. Herbert Daniel Peel was appointed perpetual curate.³³² A planned Gothic church was deemed too expensive and a simpler design was finally constructed in Fairfield Parade off the Leckhampton Road in 1937.³³³

In 1935 permission was granted for the iron mission church of All Saints in Whaddon Lane to be replaced by a new church on the Whaddon Farm estate.³³⁴ The new church was dedicated as St Michael's Mission Church in 1937³³⁵ and became the parish church of St Michael, Lynworth in 1952.³³⁶ A modern church on a hexagonal plan was built in 1966, when the parish name was altered to St Michael, Cheltenham.³³⁷ The church has been shared with the Methodists since 1996.³³⁸

The development of the Hester's Way area led to the opening of St Barnabas church on Orchard Way as a mission church to St Mark's in 1946.³³⁹ Post-war development led to the opening of further mission churches at St Aidan's on Princess Elizabeth Way³⁴⁰, St George's Gloucester Road and St Thomas on the Alma estate, although the latter two closed in the 1960s when the town's westward expansion was less than anticipated.³⁴¹ In 1986 St Mark's church hall in Rowanfield Road became home to the Rowanfield Fellowship, which was later renamed Emmanuel Church.³⁴² A reorganisation

³²⁸ Blake, *Cheltenham's Churches and Chapels*, p. 39.

³²⁹ *NHLE*, No. 1387915.

³³⁰ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 7 Jan. 1873. The site in Clare Street was still shown as a mission room on the 1894-5 map.

³³¹ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 4 Mar. 1916

³³² GA, P78/7 IN 4/3; *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 11 Nov. 1922.

³³³ *NHLE*, No. 1390513; *Gloucestershire Echo*, 12 Oct. 1936; Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, p. 233.

³³⁴ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 30 Nov. 1935.

³³⁵ *Gloucester Journal*, 25 Dec. 1937.

³³⁶ GA, P78/17/IN/3/1.

³³⁷ Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, p. 236; GA, P78/17/IN/3/1.

³³⁸ Church leaflet (2009).

³³⁹ GA, P78/16.

³⁴⁰ GA, P78/15.

³⁴¹ *Cheltenham Spa Official Guide* [undated, c. 1960]; GA Parish Register Guide, Cheltenham.

of the parish from 2003 led to the closure of Emmanuel, which was badly burnt in 2006.³⁴³ In 2015 the churches of St Aidan and St Silas were merged on a new site in Coronation Square.³⁴⁴ To the south of the town St Christopher's was built to serve the Warden Hill development as a daughter church of SS Philip & James, Leckhampton, opening in 1961.³⁴⁵ In 2010 St Christopher's united in a Local Ecumenical Partnership with the Warden Hill Congregational church.³⁴⁶

St John's fell into a poor state of repair during the Second World War.³⁴⁷ In 1964, it was decided to combine the parishes of St Luke and St John and to close St John's church. Memorials and other church furniture were removed from St John's to St Luke's and the church was demolished in 1967.³⁴⁸ In the 1970s Holy Trinity was threatened with closure, but attendance improved under retired missionary Canon Lawrence Totty. In 2014 1,500 people worshipped there on a regular basis.³⁴⁹ In 1972 St James's Suffolk Square was united with SS Philip and James, Leckhampton³⁵⁰ and the church building was converted into a community centre for the joint parish.³⁵¹ By 2008 the former church had been converted into a restaurant.³⁵² By 2005 the congregation at St Peter's had dwindled to an unsustainable level and the church closed in October 2008.³⁵³

Roman Catholicism

There were said to be four papists in Cheltenham in 1676.³⁵⁴ Three women from Cheltenham were cited as papists at the quarter sessions in the early 18th century.³⁵⁵ A Catholic congregation was established in the years after the French Revolution in a room of the York Hotel by the emigré Abbé Alexandre Caesar, and he was given permission to use the public room above the new market hall in 1809.³⁵⁶ Shortly before his death in 1811, a Benedictine chapel was erected in Somerset Place, where Caesar was succeeded by Father J. Birdsall.³⁵⁷ This chapel continued in use until the erection of St

³⁴² GA, P78/8/IN/1/43.

³⁴³ *Western Daily Press*, 13 Jul. 2006.

³⁴⁴ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 18 Apr. 2015.

³⁴⁵ GA, P198/2/CW/3/1.

³⁴⁶ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 16 Mar. 2010.

³⁴⁷ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 1 Aug. 1947.

³⁴⁸ GA P78/7; Blake, *Cheltenham's Churches and Chapels*, p. 19.

³⁴⁹ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 7 Aug. 2014.

³⁵⁰ GA, P78/5 VE 2/7.

³⁵¹ Blake, *Cheltenham's Churches and Chapels*, p. 18.

³⁵² *Western Daily Press*, 16 Aug. 2008.

³⁵³ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 4 Oct. 2008.

³⁵⁴ *Compton Census*, 538.

³⁵⁵ GA, Q/SO/4, p. 515.

³⁵⁶ GA, CBR A1/1/2, 25 May 1809.

Gregory's on the same site, opened in 1857.³⁵⁸ In 1851, there were four services on a Sunday, attracting a combined total of 1,450 people. However, the Catholic population was said to fluctuate between 800 and 1,000 over the year.³⁵⁹

A second Catholic church, St Thomas More's, was built in Hester's Way in the 1960s.³⁶⁰ In 2009 St Thomas More's, which could seat 650 but had a congregation of only 150-200, was closed for an extended period of essential maintenance.³⁶¹

Protestant Nonconformity

Two men, Henry Hathway and Ralph Ireland, were presented to the consistory court in 1575 for refusing to attend church because the curate would not use leavened bread.³⁶² They were ordered by the Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes to take Communion at Easter, but appeared later in the year because they had refused.³⁶³ Hathway and his wife were included in a list of recusants compiled by Bishop Cheney in 1577.³⁶⁴

There is evidence of nonconformity within the town during the 17th century. Two Cheltenham men were amongst delegates who attended a Baptist conference at Worcester in 1656.³⁶⁵ Following the Restoration, there were apparently Socinians in the parish, presumably through the influence of the former curate, John Cooper, a Socinian, who remained in the parish after his ejection.³⁶⁶ Thomas Farmer of Arle and his wife were presented in 1667 and again in 1668 for not attending church.³⁶⁷ There were said to be 97 nonconformists in Cheltenham in 1676.³⁶⁸

In 1670 Quakers from Cheltenham attended monthly meetings at Stoke Orchard, and preparatory meetings alternated each month between the homes of Quakers within Cheltenham, Stoke Orchard,

³⁵⁷ Munden, *Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1851*, p. 328.

³⁵⁸ *NHLE*, No. 1387870.

³⁵⁹ Munden, *Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1851*, p. 328.

³⁶⁰ Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, p. 239.

³⁶¹ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 25 Feb. 2011.

³⁶² GA, GDR/31, p. 434.

³⁶³ GA, GDR/35, pp. 64, 69, 74; F.D. Price, 'The Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes for the Dioceses of Bristol and Gloucester, 1574', *Trans. BGAS*, 59 (1937), 177; *Commission for Eccl. Causes within the Dioceses of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1574*, ed. F.D. Price, BGAS Records Section, X (1972), p. 77.

³⁶⁴ TNA, SP 12/118 (32); R.H. Clutterbuck, 'State Papers respecting Bishop Cheney, and the Recusants of the Diocese of Gloucester', *Trans. BGAS*, 5 (1880–1), p. 234.

³⁶⁵ GA D4944/2/1 f. 8v.

³⁶⁶ McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England*, pp. 256–61.

³⁶⁷ GA, Q/Sib, ff. 155, 164. This may have been the same Thomas Farmer, then of Leckhampton, who was presented for non-attendance in 1664: GA, Q/Sib, f. 132.

³⁶⁸ *Compton Census*, 538.

Tewkesbury and Tuffley.³⁶⁹ George Fox attended meetings in Cheltenham and the area in 1678.³⁷⁰ Several Cheltenham Quaker men and women were imprisoned at Gloucester in 1684 for attending conventicles and refusing to swear when indicted at the assizes.³⁷¹ Two more Quaker women were imprisoned in the following year. The son of a Quaker was buried in the parish churchyard in 1690.³⁷² A Quaker was excused swearing fealty on admittance to a tenement in 1695.³⁷³ A Quaker meeting house at Cheltenham, which had probably existed before toleration in 1689, was certified in 1690, and a 'new-built' house was certified for the Quakers in 1703.³⁷⁴ The land in Bayshill where the first chalybeate spring was discovered was owned by Quakers and their daughter Elizabeth Skillicorne was buried in the Quaker burial ground in 1779.³⁷⁵

Cheltenham Baptists probably attended services at Tewkesbury initially.³⁷⁶ From 1690 Baptists meetings may have been convened in the town itself,³⁷⁷ and the Baptists registered three different houses in Cheltenham for their meetings between 1697 and 1710.³⁷⁸ The last was presumably the new built conventicle or meeting house on the south side of the town referred to in 1711.³⁷⁹ In 1753 21 members of the Tewkesbury Baptist church left to formally constitute the Baptist church in Cheltenham.³⁸⁰ At the same time property near the town was transferred from the Tewkesbury congregation to the congregation in Cheltenham, which from this time was known as Bethel.³⁸¹ Samuel Dunscombe, the Baptist minister at Cheltenham for 20 years from 1768, was described as 'one of the best of men' whose talents as a preacher were not great but whose piety and goodness were said to be beyond praise.³⁸²

Independents in Cheltenham may also have had to travel for worship in the 17th century, perhaps attending nearby meetings in Bishops Cleeve.³⁸³ Two private houses were licensed as meeting

³⁶⁹ GA, D1340/A1/M1, 28 Dec. 1670; D1340/B2/M1.

³⁷⁰ George Fox, *Journal*, ed. W. Armistead (London, 1803), II, p. 213

³⁷¹ GA, D1340/A1/A2.

³⁷² GA, P78/1 IN 1/3, p. 76.

³⁷³ Hodsdon, *Manor Court Books*, p. 39.

³⁷⁴ GA, Q/SO/4, pp. 520–22.

³⁷⁵ Memorial tablet to Henry Skilicorne in parish church.

³⁷⁶ GA, D4944/2/1, f. 8v.

³⁷⁷ W.W., 'History of the Baptist Church at Cheltenham', *Baptist Magazine for 1818*, X (1818), p. 378.

³⁷⁸ GA, Q/SO/4, pp. 520–22.

³⁷⁹ Hodsdon, *Manor Court Books*, p. 119.

³⁸⁰ GA, D4944/2/1.

³⁸¹ S. Pierce, *Cambray Baptist Church, 1843-1993: 150 Years* (1993), p. 11.

³⁸² GA, D729/1; T.D. Whelan ed., *Baptist Autographs in the John Rylands Library of Manchester 1741-1845* (2009), p. 377.

³⁸³ G. Lyon Turner, *Original Records of Nonconformity*, p. 321.

houses for Independents in 1726 and 1729.³⁸⁴ A Presbyterian chapel, later called the Old Chapel, was erected behind the Bull inn in 1730 or 1731.³⁸⁵ A survey of 1735 found 128 nonconformists in Cheltenham, of whom 40 were Presbyterians, 30 were Independents, 30 were Quakers, 20 were Baptists, and eight were ‘Sabbatarians’.³⁸⁶ No new chapels were built in Cheltenham between 1730 and 1808, when the non-denominational Cheltenham Chapel was erected in St George’s Square.³⁸⁷ John Brown, minister of the Countess of Huntingdon’s chapel at Ebley, was appointed permanent minister in 1813 and remained until his death in 1846.³⁸⁸ The chapel initially attracted a large and varied congregation, but this declined as new churches and chapels were opened.

There is evidence to suggest that there may have been Methodists present in the town before the middle of the eighteenth century. William Seward corresponded with a ‘religious society’ in Cheltenham in 1739,³⁸⁹ and George Whitefield preached to a crowd of approximately 2,000 people in the town in the same year.³⁹⁰ Although Cheltenham would become famous in the 19th century as a bastion of Evangelicalism, the early efforts of Methodist preachers in the town may not have been well received. When John Wesley preached in the town for the first time, in 1744, he complained that the crowd were so uninspired by his sermon it was ‘as if I had been talking Greek’.³⁹¹ By 1784 Wesley had made 5 further visits to the town. From 1764 the Wesleyan Methodists occupied a chapel in Albion Street, opposite Pates’ almshouses, moving subsequently to the Old Chapel.³⁹² By 1811 the congregation had outgrown the Old Chapel and the new Ebenezer Chapel was built on a site in King Street, opening in 1813.³⁹³ From 1828 the Albion Street chapel was occupied by an Independent congregation.³⁹⁴ From 1830 there was also a small Methodist chapel in Great Norwood Street, which was replaced by a larger building seating 390 in 1845.³⁹⁵

In 1816 Thomas Snow, a Wiltshire vicar who had seceded from the Church of England over the issue of infant baptism, arrived in Cheltenham to continue his ministry.³⁹⁶ He initially officiated at the

³⁸⁴ GA, GDR/279a, p. 151.

³⁸⁵ Hodsdon, *Court Books*, 223; GA, GDR/279a, p. 239.

³⁸⁶ Benson’s Survey, p. 94.

³⁸⁷ Steven T. Blake, *Cheltenham’s Churches and Chapels, A.D. 773-1883*, pp. 5-6.

³⁸⁸ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 12 Mar. 1846; *The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon* vol. 1 (1839), p. 440.

³⁸⁹ W. Seward, *Journal of a Voyage from Savannah to Philadelphia and from Philadelphia to England* (London, 1740), p. 58.

³⁹⁰ G. Whitefield, *The Two First Parts of his Life With his Journals* (London, 1756), p. 166.

³⁹¹ T. Jackson, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley* 4 vols (1903), vol. 1, p. 437.

³⁹² Blake, *Cheltenham’s Churches and Chapels*, p. 4.

³⁹³ Blake, *Cheltenham’s Churches and Chapels*, p. 8; Verey and Brooks, *Glos.* II, pp. 239-40.

³⁹⁴ Munden, *Religious Census*, p. 323.

³⁹⁵ Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, p. 239.

³⁹⁶ Grayson Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals* (2001), pp. 128-30.

Portland Chapel, which had been built by the lawyer Robert Capper of Marle Hill House, although a new chapel was quickly built for his use in Grosvenor Street.³⁹⁷ When Snow subsequently returned to the Church of England, the building was sold to trustees for Independent or Congregationalist use and became known as the Highbury Chapel.³⁹⁸ The Portland Chapel was transferred to trustees of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion in 1819.³⁹⁹

A new Quaker meeting house was built in 1835-6 close to the earlier building.⁴⁰⁰ It could seat 100, although on the day of the 1851 census no more than a quarter of these were required.⁴⁰¹ The old Friends' Meeting House was used by Unitarians until 1844, when it was converted to a private dwelling.⁴⁰² In 1835 James Smith, minister at the Bethel Chapel withdrew with a substantial portion of the congregation and formed a new chapel in a former riding school.⁴⁰³ The existing Bethel chapel became Particular Baptist.⁴⁰⁴ A further Baptist congregation occupied the Salem Chapel on Clarence Parade, built in 1843-4,⁴⁰⁵ while another small Baptist congregation met in the Providence Room, Bath Terrace.⁴⁰⁶ By 1838 there was a Primitive Methodist mission on Russell Street.⁴⁰⁷ In 1840 the Wesleyans moved from King Street to a newly erected chapel in St George's Street, while the Ebenezer Chapel was sold to Smith's Baptist congregation.⁴⁰⁸ The Bayshill Unitarian Chapel, built in the Anglo-Norman style, opened 1844.⁴⁰⁹ From around 1849 a branch of the Salem Baptists met in an old school building near Gas Green.⁴¹⁰

In the 1851 religious census there were 19 Protestant non-conformist places of worship recorded, of which 6 were Methodist, 4 Baptist and 4 Independent or Congregational with the remainder composed of the Quakers, Mormons, Unitarians, Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and Gospel Town and Village Missionary Brethren. In all the number of seats available to non-conformist

³⁹⁷ Davies, *A View of Cheltenham*, 141; Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, p. 241.

³⁹⁸ Davies, *Stranger's Guide*, p. 117.

³⁹⁹ *Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon* vol. 1, p. 440.

⁴⁰⁰ Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, p. 240.

⁴⁰¹ Munden, , *Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1851*, p. 328.

⁴⁰² T. Askwith & J. Drummond, *Cheltenham Quakers and Their Meeting Houses* (1995), p. 10.

⁴⁰³ Lee, *New Guide to Cheltenham* (2nd edn.), p. 149.

⁴⁰⁴ Munden, *Religious Census*, pp. 325.

⁴⁰⁵ *Gloucester Journal*, 18 Nov. 1843; Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, p. 241.

⁴⁰⁶ Munden, *Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1851*, pp. 325-6.

⁴⁰⁷ Historic England Listed Buildings, no. 1387818.

⁴⁰⁸ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 26 Nov. 1840; A. Jones, *Dissenters' Meeting-House Certificates and Registrations* (2018), p. 56.

⁴⁰⁹ Historic England 1386788; Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, p. 562.

⁴¹⁰ C.B. Dymock & K.J. Birch, *The Gas Green Story* (1999).

worshippers was 92% of those available in the Anglican churches.⁴¹¹ The Tabernacle of the Latter Day Saints was in Clare Street in 1851.⁴¹² The congregation of Highbury Chapel under its minister Andrew Morton Brown LLD (1812-79), having outgrown its building, moved to Winchcombe Street in 1852.⁴¹³ In 1855 the Baptists moved from the Ebenezer chapel to Cambray Place.⁴¹⁴ The Primitive Methodists subsequently occupied the Ebenezer chapel until 1934⁴¹⁵, while their former Russell Street chapel became the Gas Street Baptist chapel.⁴¹⁶ The Swindon Road Methodist congregation built a new chapel that could seat 150 in 1864.⁴¹⁷ The former Cheltenham chapel became St Andrew's Presbyterian church in 1859, which moved to a new, larger building on Montpellier Street in 1886.⁴¹⁸ A small iron Scottish Presbyterian church was erected in Selkirk Parade in 1884.⁴¹⁹ In 1870 the Providence Room Baptist congregation opened a chapel in Naunton Parade, seating 300.⁴²⁰

The westward extension of the town led to the opening of the St Mark's Methodist chapel, which had 150 sittings, on the Gloucester Road in 1891.⁴²¹ This was replaced by a larger church on the opposite side of the road in 1911.⁴²² This church was badly damaged by fire in June 1944 and was closed for repairs until the spring of 1949.⁴²³ Meetings of the Church of Christ were held in Cheltenham from the late 1880s.⁴²⁴ In 1897 they acquired a building in Portland Street, which became the Portland Tabernacle and remained in use until the early 1960s.⁴²⁵ In 1897 there were Salvation Army Barracks in the High Street.⁴²⁶ By 1914 they were in Bath Road, Upper Bath Road and Granville Street.⁴²⁷ Christian Science meetings were being advertised in Cheltenham from 1909 and

⁴¹¹ Munden, *Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1851*, pp. 321-30.

⁴¹² GA, D2025/3/3.

⁴¹³ Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, p. 457.

⁴¹⁴ Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, p. 239; Munden, *Religious Census*, p. 327.

⁴¹⁵ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 19 Oct. 1859; *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 7 Apr. 1934.

⁴¹⁶ Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, p. 240.

⁴¹⁷ GA, D3418/2/7.

⁴¹⁸ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 19 Jan. 1859; *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 15 May 1886.

⁴¹⁹ *Kelly's 1897*, pp. 62-3.

⁴²⁰ *Baptist Handbook for 1896* (1895), p. 216.

⁴²¹ *Kelly's Guide, 1897*, p. 63.

⁴²² Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, pp. 240-1.

⁴²³ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 12 Jun. 1944; *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 9 Apr. 1949.

⁴²⁴ GA, D3906.

⁴²⁵ Oliver Bradbury, 'The Portland Tabernacle, about 1965', *CLHS* 14, 1998, p. 32; *London Gazette*, 11 Aug. 1964, p. 6820.

⁴²⁶ *Kelly's, 1897*, p. 63.

⁴²⁷ *Kelly's 1914*, p. 71.

in the 1920s a church was opened in Bayshill Road.⁴²⁸ A new church was constructed on the same site in 1967.⁴²⁹

In 1902 the existing Quaker meeting house, being too large and dilapidated, was sold to St Paul's Training College. A new red-brick meeting house was built on Portland Street and opened in May 1903.⁴³⁰ The size of the Quaker community continued to shrink, having only 14 members in 1920 and just two members attending one Sunday meeting in 1936. In the post-war period the situation improved with several families joining the meeting. The meeting house was also used by Seventh Day Adventists.⁴³¹ This meeting house, being in the path of the northern relief road, was compulsorily purchased in the 1980s and a new one was constructed in Warwick Place, opening in February 1985.⁴³²

In 1932 the Highbury Congregational chapel was demolished to make way for a cinema and a new church was built in Priory Walk.⁴³³ In 1951 the Baptists closed the Bethel Chapel on Knapp Road, which was subsequently used by the Mormons and is currently the Christadelphian Hall.⁴³⁴ The Church of Latter Day Saints had moved to Thirlestaine Road by the spring of 1965.⁴³⁵

The building of a new Methodist church in Mersey Road, Whaddon began in 1939.⁴³⁶ The opening service was held in August 1940.⁴³⁷ In 1996 the Whaddon Methodist church was burnt down in a suspected arson attack.⁴³⁸ Since that time the congregation has shared the Anglican church of St Michael.⁴³⁹ The Wesleyan chapel in St George's Street closed in 1971 and the congregation subsequently shared St Matthew's Anglican church, but this arrangement broke down irretrievably in 1989 when they joined the Bethesda church.⁴⁴⁰

As the town expanded south in the late 1950s, the Highbury Congregational Church raised funds for the building of a church in Warden Hill, where the foundation stone was laid in September 1960.⁴⁴¹

⁴²⁸ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 17 Jul. 1909 & 26 Jun. 1926.

⁴²⁹ Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, p. 239.

⁴³⁰ Askwith & Drummond, *Cheltenham Quakers*, p. 11.

⁴³¹ Askwith & Drummond, *Cheltenham Quakers*, pp. 13-4.

⁴³² Askwith & Drummond, *Cheltenham Quakers*, pp. 15-6; Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, p. 240.

⁴³³ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 24 Feb. 1932 & 27 Oct. 1932; Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, p. 240.

⁴³⁴ *Cheltenham Spa Official Guide* (undated, early 1960s), p. 48; Historic England Listed Buildings, no. 1245531.

⁴³⁵ *London Gazette*, 9 Mar. 1965, p. 2421.

⁴³⁶ *Gloucestershire Chronicle & Graphic*, 15 Sep. 1939.

⁴³⁷ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 5 Aug. 1940.

⁴³⁸ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 20 Feb. 2016.

⁴³⁹ See above.

⁴⁴⁰ GA, D3418/2/13.

The Warden Hill Congregational Church joined the United Reformed Church in 1971 and in 2010 united with St Christopher's.⁴⁴²

The Hesters Way Baptist church was founded in 1957 as a joint partnership of the Cambray and Salem Baptists.⁴⁴³ The Gas Street Baptists became an independent church in 1964.⁴⁴⁴ In 2011 the building was in a dilapidated state, requiring the congregation to move out until it could be repaired.⁴⁴⁵ The Salem Baptists moved to a new church in St George's Road in 2000.⁴⁴⁶ In 1964 the Swindon Road Methodist chapel was sold to the Salvation Army.⁴⁴⁷ The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion church closed in 1976.⁴⁴⁸ In 2018 the Unitarian church in Chapel Walk was occupied by an auction company, while the Unitarians met in their former church hall.⁴⁴⁹

Non-Christian Faiths

Despite the presence of a small Jewish community in the town from the early nineteenth century, the religious history of Cheltenham is overwhelmingly Christian. In the 2011 census over 95% of those declaring a religious affiliation were Christian, while around 1.5% were Muslim and 1.3% Hindu.⁴⁵⁰

Jewish traders were present in Cheltenham by 1814⁴⁵¹ and a synagogue was established in a rented upper room in Manchester Walk by 1826.⁴⁵² The site for a Jewish burial ground in Elm Street was acquired in 1824 and remains in use.⁴⁵³ A new synagogue was opened in St James' Square in 1839,⁴⁵⁴ with a capacity for 85 people.⁴⁵⁵ In 1851 there was one service every Saturday, attended by 20 people.⁴⁵⁶ Between 1850 and 1891 the community was represented at the Board of Deputies of

⁴⁴¹ GA, D8273/3/3.

⁴⁴² GA, D6026/36.

⁴⁴³ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 3 Jun. 1957.

⁴⁴⁴ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 10 May 2008.

⁴⁴⁵ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 1 Jun. 2011.

⁴⁴⁶ Verey & Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2*, p. 240.

⁴⁴⁷ *London Gazette*, 20 Mar. 1964, p. 2562.

⁴⁴⁸ *Gloucestershire Family History Society Journal*, 22 (Autumn 1984), p. 26.

⁴⁴⁹ <https://www.cheltenhamandgloucesterunitarians.org.uk/>

⁴⁵⁰ ONS, *Census 2011*, Table KS209EW.

⁴⁵¹ Brian Torode, *The Hebrew Community of Cheltenham* (1989), p. 19

⁴⁵² Torode, *Hebrew Community of Cheltenham*, p. 22.

⁴⁵³ Torode, *Hebrew Community of Cheltenham*, pp. 54-6.

⁴⁵⁴ *NHLE*, No. 1387877; GA D3883.

⁴⁵⁵ Munden, *Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1851*, p. 329.

⁴⁵⁶ Munden, *Religious Census of Bristol and Gloucestershire, 1851*, p. 329.

British Jews⁴⁵⁷, but thereafter the Jewish presence in the town consisted almost entirely of students at Cheltenham College and services ceased to be held.⁴⁵⁸ An influx of Jewish refugees, evacuees and service personnel during World War II led to the reopening of the synagogue, which has since continued in use.⁴⁵⁹ The census data for the Cheltenham area in 2011 included 160 people who identified themselves as Jewish.⁴⁶⁰

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⁴⁵⁷ Torode, *Hebrew Community of Cheltenham*, p. 66.

⁴⁵⁸ Torode, *Hebrew Community of Cheltenham*, p. 49.

⁴⁵⁹ Torode, *Hebrew Community of Cheltenham*, pp. 52-3.

⁴⁶⁰ ONS, *Census 2011*, Table KS209EW.