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Chippenham Roman Catholicism, Protestant Nonconformists and Other Religions

Roman Catholicism

Chippenham was not a centre for Roman Catholicism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1676 no Catholics were recorded in the parish, nor in the parish of Kellaways, then held in plurality with Chippenham.¹ By 1706 a single Catholic, Joane Procter, was resident in the parish.² There is no record of other Catholics resident or owning property in the parish in the early eighteenth century, although in 1717 properties owned by absentee Catholic landlords were registered in the Hundred of Chippenham. These properties, in the Forest of Pewsham, were owned by Elizabeth, Dowager Countess of Castlehaven, and by the Cary family of Torre Abbey, Torquay.³ No Catholics were recorded in Chippenham in the 1767 returns of papists.⁴

By 1780 the vicar, Thomas Weekes Dalby, reported that there were five papists in his parish, excepting French and Spanish prisoners on their parole.⁵ In 1783 he reported that there was one family of Catholics in the parish, relations of Lord Arundell. The family had a private chapel with a resident priest, surnamed Smith.⁶ The occupant of this house was described by Dalby as 'Mr Arundell'; he was Thomas Arundell, natural son of Thomas Arundell, second son of the fifth Baron of Wardour, who had inherited the lease of a house at Rowden Hill. The Revd John Smith, a secular Roman Catholic priest, was his chaplain, and also ministered to Catholics in Wootton Bassett.⁷ Thomas Arundell's house has been given as Bowden House in one source, but as Bowden Hill is in Lacock parish, this is in error.⁸

Despite the small numbers of Roman Catholics in North Wiltshire, Chippenham's burgesses opposed the perceived threat of Catholic emancipation with three petitions in the 1820s. In 1850 a public meeting was held objecting to the establishment of Roman Catholic bishoprics in England.⁹ In 1855 there were only ten Catholics resident in Chippenham, but the efforts of two recent converts,

¹ A. Whiteman (ed.), *The Compton Census of 1676* (1986), 128.

² WSA D1/9/1/2

³ WSA A1/310-311; J.A. Williams, *Catholic Recusancy in Wiltshire 1660-1791* (Catholic Record Society, 1968), 215-16.

⁴ E. S. Worrall (ed.), *Returns of Papists 1767*, vol. 2, Dioceses of England and Wales, except Chester (Catholic Record Society, 1989).

⁵ WSA D1/9/1/4.

⁶ *Wilts>Returns 1783*, (W.R.S. xxvii), 61-2.

⁷ WSA 2667/1/16/6, 2667/8/4, 2667/19/10; Williams, *Catholic Recusancy*, 117, 236; *Wilts>Returns 1783*, (W.R.S. xxvii), 244.

⁸ Williams, *Catholic Recusancy*, 117, 236.

⁹ J. and N. Coggles, *St Mary's Parish 1855-1998* (1998), 5-6, 7, 101-8.

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Richard Hungerford Pollen and Elizabeth Fellowes, were instrumental in establishing the first Roman Catholic church in Chippenham, St Mary's in St Mary's Place, which opened that year.¹⁰ In 1869 land was purchased on Station Hill,¹¹ but a lack of funds and concerns about the suitability of the site delayed construction of a new church,¹² although a presbytery was built on part of the site in 1901.¹³

The present church of St Mary's was opened on the Station Hill site in 1936.¹⁴ It was designed by Roberts and Willman of Taunton in the Gothic style, and built at a total cost of £2,192.¹⁵ The old church was used as a church hall and was refurbished in 1991.¹⁶ It was still in use as a hall in 2016.

In 2005 the Roman Catholic parish of Chippenham numbered around 3,000 adherents.¹⁷ By 2014 an average of 439 people each week attended Sunday Mass in St Mary's church.¹⁸

Two Roman Catholic religious orders, both female, have been resident in Chippenham. The Order of the Sisters of St Joseph of Annecy was resident in the town from 1866 to 1884, when the sisters moved to Malmesbury.¹⁹ The Sisters of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God came to Chippenham in 1937, and established a school on Rowden Hill.²⁰ The last sister left Chippenham in 2003.²¹

Mary Stapleton Bretherton of Lackham, by a codicil to her will in 1882, left £3,000 to be invested for the maintenance at Chippenham of a Roman Catholic priest.²² The charity trust fund still existed in 1998.²³ As the Stapleton Brethren fund, now augmented to just over £10,000, it was distributing

¹⁰ Coggles, *St Mary's Parish*, 10.

¹¹ Clifton Diocesan Archives, Chippenham Mission n.d., 1854-1863.

¹² Clifton Diocesan Archives, Chippenham Mission n.d., 1854-1863; Chippenham Mission n.d., 1875-1917.

¹³ Clifton Diocesan Archives, Chippenham Mission 1900-1902. Papers concerning the new presbytery.

¹⁴ *Wiltshire Gazette*, 5 Mar. 1936, 12.

¹⁵ Clifton Diocesan Archives, 'The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Chippenham': architectural report on the church, (2015).

¹⁶ Coggles, *St Mary's Parish*, 29, 41.

¹⁷ *Clifton Catholic News*, issue 111, July 2005, 6.

¹⁸ *Clifton Diocese Directory 2016* (Bristol: Clifton Diocese [2015]), 89.

¹⁹ Coggles, *St Mary's Parish*, 18-20, 80.

²⁰ Coggles, *St Mary's Parish*, 80-1. See section on Education above/below.

²¹ *Clifton Catholic News*, issue 86, June 2003, 9.

²² *Endowed Charities, 1908*, 44-5; Clifton Diocesan Archives, Chippenham Mission 1884-1914: Papers concerning the Bretherton legacy.

²³ Coggles, *St Mary's Parish*, 20.

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£186 annually by 2016, although it was not among the charities registered with the Charity Commissioners.²⁴

Protestant Nonconformity

Early records of nonconformity in the town are found in 1605 and 1607, when two weavers from Chippenham are recorded in the banns of marriage from a separatist church in Amsterdam. These may have been followers of the separatist preacher Thomas White, who was active in Wiltshire.²⁵

Dissatisfaction with the Established Church, if not outright nonconformity, is suggested by the churchwardens' presentments from 1662, which reported that a number of Chippenham parishioners absented themselves from divine service, and some had not brought their children to be baptised.²⁶ In 1674 Henry Stephens and Ralph Gale were presented by the churchwardens as 'sectaries' (dissenters) for disturbing the church service, and were among four men who refused to pay the church rate towards repairing the church.²⁷ In 1676 the parish of Chippenham recorded 134 Protestant nonconformists, a figure which probably included the chapelry of Tytherton Lucas.²⁸ The parish of Kellaways, then held in plurality with Chippenham, recorded two Protestant nonconformists.²⁹

A local tradition that the seventeenth-century religious radical Lodowick Muggleton was born in Chippenham has been disproved.³⁰

A burial ground for nonconformists was established along Wood Lane, probably in the first half of the nineteenth century. It is not shown on Powell's map of 1784, but was in existence by 1840 when it was proposed that the parish church negotiate for burial spaces there to ease the overcrowding in St Andrew's churchyard.³¹ A small mortuary chapel had been built by 1886.³² The burial ground later

²⁴ Inf. from Revd Canon Dr Anthony Harding, Clifton Diocesan Archives, 14 March 2016; <http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/registerhomepage.aspx> (accessed 27 Jan. 2016).

²⁵ *VCH Wilts* iii, 100; W.T. Whitely, 'English in Amsterdam about the time of John Smyth', *Baptist Quarterly*, 1.8 (October 1923), 368-372.

²⁶ WSA D1/54/1/1.

²⁷ WSA D1/54/6/1.

²⁸ Whiteman (ed.), *Compton Census*, 128.

²⁹ Whiteman (ed.), *Compton Census*, 128.

³⁰ K. S. Taylor, 'Lodowick Muggleton – Native of Chippenham?', *WANHM* 97 (2004), 99-105.

³¹ WSA 811/48.

³² OS Map 1:2500, sheet Wilts xxvi.2 (1886 edn).

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closed, and part was lost to later development,³³ while the chapel has been demolished. What remains survives as open space along Wood Lane.

Presbyterians and Independents

A Presbyterian congregation is known to have been meeting in the town in 1669, with Henry Stubbs, previously ejected from Wells (Som.) and Dursley (Glos.) as its preacher.³⁴ In 1672, under the short-lived Declaration of Indulgence for dissenters, a licence was applied for the house of Benjamin Flower to be used as a meeting place.³⁵ By 1690 Flower was preaching once a month at Chippenham,³⁶ and in 1692 his house in the town was registered as a meeting place for Presbyterians,³⁷ although it is not known where this was located, or for how long it was used. In 1701 a new meeting house was erected at the backside of the Bell Inn.³⁸ By c. 1715 Chippenham Presbyterians had a congregation of 250 'hearers' (who were not necessarily full members), under their preacher Lawrence Maes. Although seven hearers were said to be worth at least £500 each, the congregation still received a grant of £4 annually from the Presbyterian Fund.³⁹

The history of Presbyterianism in Chippenham in the years after 1715 is obscure. The 1701 meeting house is believed to have become Methodist by 1784, and to have been demolished in 1811.⁴⁰ This does not necessarily indicate a decline in the Presbyterian interest as in 1773 the town had a Presbyterian congregation with a minister,⁴¹ and in 1783 the vicar of Chippenham reported that the Presbyterians had a preacher, Salter, who was licensed according to the law.⁴² The preaching of Calvinist Methodists in the 1760s has been credited as instrumental in founding a number of nonconformist churches in Wiltshire and East Somerset, not only Methodist,⁴³ and if a congregation was not founded in Chippenham, the evangelism may have invigorated and inspired an existing Presbyterian congregation.

³³ Ruth Marshall, *Chippenham Memories* (2005), 80.

³⁴ G.L. Turner (ed.), *Original Records of Early Nonconformity Under Persecution and Indulgence*, vol. I (1911), 107; *Calamy Revised*, ed. A.G. Matthews, 468-9; Carl B. Estabrook, "Stubbes, Henry (1605/6-1678)", *ODNB*. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/> (accessed 3 October 2016).

³⁵ Turner (ed.), *Original Records*, vol. II (1911), 1056.

³⁶ A. Gordon, *Freedom After Ejection* (1917), 123.

³⁷ *Wilts Meeting House Certs* (W.R.S. 40), 4.

³⁸ *Wilts Meeting House Certs* (W.R.S. 40), 11.

³⁹ Dr Williams's Lib. MS 38.4.

⁴⁰ *VCH Wilts* iii, 107.

⁴¹ *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, vol. 5 (1911-12), 375.

⁴² *Wilts>Returns 1783*, (W.R.S. xxvii), 62.

⁴³ A. Antrobus, *History of the Wilts. and East Somerset Congregational Union* (1947), 14-15.

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A new meeting house was built in Emery Lane, off St Mary Street, in 1770.⁴⁴ The leading Calvinist Methodist George Whitefield was a trustee, and tradition has it that the building opened for public worship on the day of Whitefield's death.⁴⁵ It was not a Methodist church, but joined the Congregational movement, being among the founding members of the Association of Wilts. and East Somerset Congregational Churches in 1797, and remaining in membership when it was reorganised as the Wilts. and East Somerset Congregational Union in 1841.⁴⁶

The meeting house was rebuilt in 1826.⁴⁷ It was registered as a new meeting house in January 1828, by which time it was known as the Tabernacle, and was described as an Independent church.⁴⁸ On Census Sunday in 1851 it recorded an attendance of 260 persons at the morning service, 71 at the afternoon service, and 350 at the evening service, with 160 Sunday School scholars at the morning service and 170 scholars at the afternoon service.⁴⁹ In 1889 the interior was extensively altered⁵⁰ and further renovations followed in 1904-5.⁵¹ In 1912 89 persons were recorded as being in membership.⁵²

The congregation joined the United Reformed Church (URC) in 1972. The cost of maintaining the historic building eventually proved beyond the resources of the congregation, and the Tabernacle URC church closed in March 2016.⁵³

Baptists

Records of early Baptists in Chippenham are sparse, although group of Anabaptists was meeting in the town in 1669.⁵⁴ The late eighteenth-century history of Chippenham Baptists is unclear. A Baptist congregation, with a minister, was meeting in the town in 1773.⁵⁵ A Baptist church was apparently founded in 1788, according to a list of Baptist churches published in 1827, but a list published in 1798 had made no mention of it.⁵⁶ What is known is that in c.1790 Particular Baptists in the town

⁴⁴ TNA, HO 129/253, 48.

⁴⁵ D. E. Evans, *Tabernacle Congregational Church Chippenham* (1970).

⁴⁶ Antrobus, *History of the Wilts. and East Somerset Congregational Union*, 17-18, 25.

⁴⁷ TNA, HO 129/253, 48.

⁴⁸ *Wilts Meeting House Certs* (W.R.S. 40), 28, 116; Pevsner, *Wiltshire*, 169.

⁴⁹ TNA, HO 129/253, 48.

⁵⁰ C. Stell, *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses in South-West England* (Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, 1991), 217.

⁵¹ WSA 4332/2, f. 1r.

⁵² WSA 4332/2, f. 12v.

⁵³ Inf. from Revd Sarah Simpson, URC minister for the North Wilts Pastorate, 18 Feb. 2016.

⁵⁴ Turner (ed.), *Original Records*, vol. 1, 107.

⁵⁵ *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, vol. 5 (1911-12), 375.

⁵⁶ W. Doel, *Twenty Golden Candlesticks* (2005), 222-6.

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published a declaration of their faith.⁵⁷ It is therefore certain that there was at least one Baptist church in late eighteenth-century Chippenham, but its dates remain uncertain, and it is unclear if there was any connection between Chippenham's eighteenth-century Baptists and the nineteenth-century congregations.

A Strict Baptist congregation was founded in 1804 when the Revd John Paul Porter of Bath baptised five people in the Avon and later preached to a gathering said to be of 3,000 people.⁵⁸ It was this congregation that registered a meeting house in St Mary Street in 1804.⁵⁹ In 1810 the congregation moved to a chapel in a lane off the High Street.⁶⁰ The chapel, in Gutter Lane, now Chapel Lane, is sometimes dated to 1804,⁶¹ but this is more accurately the foundation date for the congregation, rather than the building. In the returns for Census Sunday in 1851 the building was dated to 1810.⁶² A modern listing suggests c. 1834, with a late nineteenth century extension,⁶³ but there is no known documentary evidence for the chapel having been built as late as c. 1834. In 1851 the congregation averaged 130 at the morning service, 82 in the afternoon, and 160 at the evening service, including Sunday School scholars at the morning and afternoon services.⁶⁴

Ebenezer Chapel, a Particular Baptist chapel, was built in 1832. It is not certain where this was situated. By 1851 the congregation was in a declining way, with an average attendance of only twenty persons at each service, owing to the dampness of the building.⁶⁵ It had ceased to be a place of worship by 1877.⁶⁶

A Baptist chapel was founded in Bath Road sometime after the religious census of 1851; it is known to have been there by 1871.⁶⁷ Little is known of the Bath Road congregation. In town directories for the 1870s it is described as a 'Christian Church' rather than Baptist.⁶⁸ It closed in 1877, in what appear to have been controversial circumstances.⁶⁹

⁵⁷ WSA 1769/68.

⁵⁸ P. Cater, *Memoirs of the Life and Character of the Late Rev. John Paul Porter* (1834), 100-1.

⁵⁹ *Wilts Meeting House Certs* (W.R.S. 40), 59.

⁶⁰ *Wilts Meeting House Certs* (W.R.S. 40), 67.

⁶¹ Stell, *Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels*, 217.

⁶² TNA, HO 129/253, 49.

⁶³ <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1268156> (accessed 3 Oct. 2016).

⁶⁴ TNA, HO 129/253, 49.

⁶⁵ TNA, HO 129/253, 52.

⁶⁶ *Spinke's Illustrated Penny Chippenham Almanac and Directory* (1877).

⁶⁷ C.S. Hall and D.C. Sparkes, 'The Journal of W. J. Acomb', *Baptist Quarterly* 25.3 (July 1973), 115-43.

⁶⁸ *Spinke's Illustrated Penny Chippenham Almanac and Directory* (1877 and 1878).

⁶⁹ WSA 1418/13.

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In 1854 an appeal was launched to build a new Baptist church on the corner of New Road and Station Hill; the estimated cost, including the land, was £1,200. The lack of spiritual provision for the growing population of Chippenham was cited as the reason for the new church; there was no mention of any existing Baptist congregations in the town. The plans included space for future expansion, including a schoolroom.⁷⁰ The new chapel was opened in 1856.⁷¹

By 1871 there were three Baptist churches in Chippenham; the chapel of 1810 in Chapel Lane, the church on the corner of New Road and Station Hill, and the Bath Road chapel.⁷² A survey of Baptist churches in 1889 listed only the 1810 chapel and the Station Hill church as remaining in Chippenham.⁷³ Another congregation, which may have split from Station Hill, was meeting in New Road by 1891 under the Revd H. B. Bardwell, minister of Station Hill from 1875-90. It continued until 1915 or later.⁷⁴ The Station Hill church was still existence in 2016, while the 1804 Strict Baptist congregation had become the independent and self-governing Old Baptist Chapel.

Quakers

Quakerism established itself strongly in Chippenham.⁷⁵ In 1656 George Fox travelled from Bristol to Marlborough, where he preached under the protection of Edward Stokes, a magistrate from Tytherton Lucas, though he does not appear to have preached in Chippenham itself.⁷⁶ However, a meeting was certainly established by January 1661, when soldiers pulled down the wall surrounding the Quaker's burial ground,⁷⁷ and a meeting was recorded in the conventicle returns of 1669.⁷⁸ Chippenham Friends were persecuted in the immediate aftermath of the passing of the Conventicle Act of 1670, and at one time Friends had to meet on the highway when they were kept from using their usual meeting place.⁷⁹

⁷⁰ WSA 1112/139.

⁷¹ *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 8 May 1856; *Trowbridge Advertiser*, 10 May 1856.

⁷² Hall and Sparkes, 'The Journal of W. J. Acomb', 115-43.

⁷³ Doel, *Twenty Golden Candlesticks*, 224-6.

⁷⁴ *Spinke's Illustrated Penny Chippenham Almanac and Directory* (1892 and 1915).

⁷⁵ A full account of early Quakerism in North Wiltshire can be found in K. S. Taylor, 'Society, Schism and Sufferings: The First 70 Years of Quakerism in Wiltshire' (Univ. of the West of England PhD thesis, 2006).

⁷⁶ G. Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. J. Nickalls, (Religious Society of Friends, 1997), 273.

⁷⁷ WSA 1699/17, 4-5.

⁷⁸ Turner (ed.), *Original Records*, vol. 1, 107.

⁷⁹ WSA 1699/17, 21-2, 25.

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Despite the persecution a meeting house was settled in 1670 on premises on the High Street given to Friends by Thomas Neate on a thousand year lease.⁸⁰ After the Act of Toleration in 1689 it was registered as a meeting place in 1690.⁸¹ The meeting house was rebuilt in 1733-4.⁸²

Chippenham Particular (local) Meeting was a constituent of Chippenham Monthly Meeting, with the Particular Meetings of Brinkworth, Corsham, Kington, Lea and Slaughterford.⁸³ The earliest known minute book dates from 1669, though in 1678 a schism within the meeting led to the minute book being snatched by Nathaniel Coleman, a Quaker from Sutton Benger. A separatist meeting was established in the area, and, despite attempts to recover it, the Chippenham book was not returned until 1705.⁸⁴ The dispute was part of a wider controversy within the Quaker movement, the Wilkinson-Story schism.⁸⁵

Although after the Act of Toleration Quakers had liberty of worship in their registered meeting places, Friends continued to be prosecuted for non-payment of tithes, church rates and other dues to the Established Church which, on principle, they refused to pay. William Goodship of Chippenham was gaoled in 1693 for refusing to pay a tax imposed on preachers. Another Chippenham Friend was released from gaol in 1696 following several years' imprisonment for non-payment of church rate.⁸⁶

By the beginning of the nineteenth century Chippenham Friends reported that Sunday meetings were generally well-attended, but attendance was thin at the weekday meetings.⁸⁷ This suggested a declining attendance, and the meeting was eventually discontinued in 1812.⁸⁸ The Quakers kept the building for several years, and in 1822 agreed to the former meeting house being used as a school room for the education of women of any religious persuasion.⁸⁹ The building was eventually sold in 1834, when the Primitive Methodists purchased it for £180.⁹⁰

⁸⁰ WSA 2269/44.

⁸¹ *Wilts Meeting House Certs* (W.R.S. 40), 3.

⁸² WSA 1699/81.

⁸³ WSA 1699/79.

⁸⁴ WSA 1699/79.

⁸⁵ W.C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (2nd edn, 1979), 317, 480-1; Taylor, 'Society, Schism and Sufferings'.

⁸⁶ WSA 1699/17, 59, 64-5.

⁸⁷ WSA 854/88.

⁸⁸ Inf. from Friends House Library, 18 Dec. 2015.

⁸⁹ WSA 854/40. See 'Education' above.

⁹⁰ WSA 2269/44.

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It is not known where the 1661 burial ground was situated, but according to an 1870 record of property a burial ground had been established in 1700 on the Calne Road; the last interment being in 1812.⁹¹ This ground was situated on the opposite side of the road to the Pack Horse public house on what is now the London Road.⁹² The land was sold in 1927 for £50, and later developed.⁹³

A Quaker meeting was re-established in Chippenham in 1935. This closed in 1962, but another meeting opened in the town in 1987.⁹⁴ This met in a number of venues, until restoration of the former Primitive Methodist chapel on the Causeway in 2002 as The Cause music and arts centre revealed the existence of rooms believed to be the meeting rooms of the old Quaker meeting house that had been sold to the Primitive Methodists in 1834. Chippenham Friends began to hold meetings for worship in that part of the building later that year, and were continuing to meet there in 2016.⁹⁵

Methodism

Early Methodist ministry in the Chippenham area was characterised by the efforts of John Cennick and George Whitefield. John Wesley passed through Chippenham on several occasions on his way to Bath and Bristol, but does not appear to have evangelised in the town.⁹⁶ John Cennick, initially a follower of Wesley but later of Whitefield, began preaching in the Chippenham area from 1740, sometimes in the company of Welsh evangelist Howell Harris. Despite opposition, his preaching resulted in the establishment of meeting houses in Brinkworth in 1741 and East Tytherton in 1743, but in 1745 Cennick left his mission work with Whitefield to join the Moravian church. The congregation at East Tytherton became Moravian.⁹⁷ George Whitefield preached in Chippenham and the surrounding villages in 1743, and again in 1769.⁹⁸

In 1783 there was a Methodist congregation in Chippenham, with one Moore as their teacher, though the vicar of Chippenham was unable to say if he was licensed or not.⁹⁹ Powell's 1784 map of Chippenham shows a Methodist meeting house, possibly a former Presbyterian meeting house. This was demolished in 1811.¹⁰⁰ A house in the Causeway was registered as a Methodist meeting place in

⁹¹ WSA 1699/106, 78.

⁹² OS Map 1:2500, sheet Wilts xx.14 (1886 edn).

⁹³ WSA 1699/107, 78a.

⁹⁴ Inf. from Friends House Library, 18 Dec. 2015.

⁹⁵ http://www.chippenhamchurches.org.uk/main/html/coming_home.htm (accessed 18 Feb. 2016).

⁹⁶ *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley* (1827), vol. i. 342; vol. ii. 22, 263; vol. iv. 8, 318.

⁹⁷ P. Gentry and P. Taylor, *Bold as a Lion* (2007), 37-40, 46, 62. For Brinkworth see *VCH Wilts* xiv, 24. For East Tytherton see below, 'Outer Chippenham' and 'Environs'.

⁹⁸ L. Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield* (1877), vol. II, 61-2, 76-7, 560.

⁹⁹ *Wilts>Returns 1783*, (W.R.S. xxvii), 62.

¹⁰⁰ *VCH Wilts* iii, 107.

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1801 and another house in the town in 1811.¹⁰¹ They were probably superseded by the new Wesleyan Methodist chapel that opened on the Causeway in 1812.¹⁰²

Primitive Methodists evangelised the area around Chippenham in the mid-1820s, but these missionary endeavours did not prove fruitful, and it was not until a fresh missionary initiative in the early 1830s that Primitive Methodism became established in Chippenham.¹⁰³ A dwelling house was registered as a meeting place in 1833, and by 1834 the Primitive Methodist congregation was sufficiently well-established for it to be able to purchase the former Friends Meeting House on the Causeway.¹⁰⁴

By 1851 there were two Methodist chapels on the Causeway; the Wesleyan Methodist chapel of 1812, and the Primitive Methodist chapel purchased in 1834. On Census Sunday that year the Wesleyans recorded 118 persons and 102 Sunday School scholars attending the morning service, while 300 persons attended the evening service.¹⁰⁵ The Primitive Methodists recorded 96 people as attending the morning service, 194 at the afternoon service, and 207 at the evening service. The morning service was also attended by 85 Sunday School scholars, and 96 scholars also attended the afternoon service.¹⁰⁶

The latter half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth saw an expansion of Methodism in the town as chapels were built, or rebuilt. A Primitive Methodist chapel opened in Lowden in 1855. The congregation moved to a new and larger church on Sheldon Road in 1901.¹⁰⁷ By 2010 the former chapel at Lowden, by then known as Chequers Yard, had been used as commercial premises for many years.¹⁰⁸ The Primitive Methodist chapel on the Causeway was rebuilt in 1896.¹⁰⁹ A small temporary chapel was established by Wesleyans in the Woodlands area of Chippenham by 1903,¹¹⁰ but was sold to raise funds for a new church that opened at Monkton Hill in April 1909.¹¹¹

¹⁰¹ *Wilts Meeting House Certs* (W.R.S. 40), 57, 69.

¹⁰² WSA 1907/16; TNA, HO/129/253, 51.

¹⁰³ W.C. Tonks, *Victory in the Villages* (1907), 32, 50.

¹⁰⁴ WSA 2269/44; *Wilts Meeting House Certs* (W.R.S. 40), 132, 136, 137.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, HO/129/253, 51.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, HO/129/253, 50.

¹⁰⁷ WSA 1769/68; C.R. Stevens, *A Short History of 50 Years' Work and Service in Connection with the Lowden Primitive Methodist Sunday School and Church* (1907).

¹⁰⁸ Wilts CC planning application N/10/00297/FUL (28 Jan. 2010)

<http://planning.wiltshire.gov.uk/Northgate/Planning/Explorer/Home.aspx> (accessed 9 Sept. 2016).

¹⁰⁹ WSA 3083/179.

¹¹⁰ *Spinke's Illustrated Penny Chippenham Almanac and Directory* (1904).

¹¹¹ *100 Not Out! Central Methodist Church Chippenham, 1909-2009*.

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The 1812 Causeway building was made redundant by the Monkton Hill church, and became home to the Spinke's printing works.¹¹² By 2016 it had been converted to private residences.

At the time of a 1993 report on Methodism in Chippenham there were three Methodist churches in the town; the town centre churches at Monkton Hill and the Causeway, and a third church along Sheldon Road. The report recommended retaining the church at Sheldon Road to serve the new housing developments to the west of the town, and one church in the town centre to serve the eastern part of the town.¹¹³ As a result the former Primitive Methodist chapel on the Causeway closed in 1996, and the congregation merged with that at Monkton Hill to become the Central Methodist Church.¹¹⁴ The Causeway building remained vacant before being put on the market in 2000, and in 2002 became The Cause music and arts centre.¹¹⁵

Salvation Army

The first attempt to establish a Salvation Army corps was made when the Army held a meeting in the town in December 1881.¹¹⁶ A corps was established despite disruptions to its meetings and occasional violence from the townsfolk.¹¹⁷ It had several meeting places in the town, including premises under the railway viaduct, and the Temperance Hall in Foghamshire, before moving to a purpose-built Citadel Hall in Bath Street in 1903.¹¹⁸ The building eventually proved unsuitable, being cramped and prone to flooding. In 1970 the corps purchased the Co-op Hall in Foghamshire, moving there the following year.¹¹⁹ It was meeting there in 2016. The former meeting place of Citadel Hall had by 2016 been converted into retail premises on the ground floor and a hall for hire on the first floor.

Other churches

Alongside the major nonconformist denominations, other churches have established themselves in Chippenham. The Plymouth Brethren were meeting in the town by 1885, with a meeting house in Cook Street. The Brethren were still meeting there in 1913, though by 1933 they had a meeting room in Station Hill. They were still meeting in Station Hill in 1952, though there is no trace of the

¹¹² WSA 2053/22; J. Orbach, Pevsner *Wiltshire* revision (typescript, 2015).

¹¹³ WSA 3083/31.

¹¹⁴ *100 Not Out! Central Methodist Church Chippenham, 1909-2009*.

¹¹⁵ <http://thecausemusicandarts.com/history-of-the-building/> (accessed 18 Feb. 2016).

¹¹⁶ *War Cry*, 19 Jan. 1882, 3; 6 Jan. 1883, 2.

¹¹⁷ Souvenir Programme for Opening Weekend of the New Chippenham Citadel, 3rd and 4th April 1971.

¹¹⁸ *All the World*, Feb. 1908, 107-10; *War Cry*, 1 Aug. 1981, 6.

¹¹⁹ Chippenham Salvation Army Corps History book, 1938-1974, entries for 11 July 1968, 14-15 March 1970, 28 March 1971; *War Cry*, 1 Aug. 1981, 6.

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Brethren in the town directory for 1957.¹²⁰ However, in 1966 Chippenham Brethren registered a charity, the Down Trust, to further the religious practices of the Brethren and to provide meeting houses¹²¹ and in 1969 built a new hall along Goldney Avenue.¹²² By 2008 the Brethren were meeting here and in two smaller halls at Hill Corner Road and Cocklebury Road. The Goldney Road facilities had become unsuitable, and the Brethren applied for planning permission for a Gospel Hall on a former picnic site at Kington Langley.¹²³ In 2015 they moved from their meeting house in Goldney Avenue to the new premises.¹²⁴

The Ladyfield Evangelical Church traces its history back to the Hopgoods, a Plymouth Brethren family who moved from London to Chippenham during World War Two. The family are credited with establishing a small Brethren congregation in Chippenham, at one time meeting over a baker's shop at the bottom of Station Hill.¹²⁵ As the town directory gives a Brethren congregation as meeting in Station Hill in 1933, it is possible that the family initially joined existing Brethren in the town. The meeting was struck off as a recognised Brethren congregation for admitting persons of other religious persuasions to communion, and it continued instead as an independent fellowship. Its missionary activity in Chippenham centred on the new housing estate in the Ladyfield area of Chippenham, and in 1954 it secured a site at the junction of Hungerdown Lane and Ladyfield Road. A prefabricated church building was opened in 1957. A flat-roofed extension was added in 1973 and a new church building in 1996. The old church and flat-roofed extension were replaced by new facilities in 2009.¹²⁶ It is affiliated to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC).¹²⁷

The Emmanuel Church congregation dates from 2005. It originally met in the hall at Hardenhuish School, but moved into a church building on Goldney Avenue at the end of April 2015, when it was vacated by the Plymouth Brethren.¹²⁸ Like Ladyfield, Emmanuel is affiliated to FIEC.¹²⁹

¹²⁰ *Spinke's Illustrated Penny Chippenham Almanac and Directory* (1886 and 1913); *Directory of Chippenham and District* (1933); *Directory of Chippenham* (1953 and 1957).

¹²¹ <http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/showcharity/registerofcharities/RegisterHomePage.aspx> (accessed 7 Sept. 2016).

¹²² Wilts CC planning application N/08/00631/FUL (14 Mar. 2008)
<http://planning.wiltshire.gov.uk/Northgate/Planning/Explorer/Home.aspx> (accessed 9 Sept. 2016).

¹²³ Wilts CC planning application N/08/00631/FUL (14 Mar. 2008)
<http://planning.wiltshire.gov.uk/Northgate/Planning/Explorer/Home.aspx> (accessed 9 Sept. 2016).

¹²⁴ Inf. from Karen Macallister, Administrator, Emmanuel Church. 4 March 2016.

¹²⁵ *Directory of Chippenham and District* (1933); *Directory of Chippenham* (1953); Ladyfield Evangelical Church, *A Work of God in the Ladyfield Area of Chippenham* (2009).

¹²⁶ Ladyfield Evangelical Church, *A Work of God*.

¹²⁷ http://www.chippenhamchurches.org.uk/main/html/the_churches.htm (accessed 26 May 2016).

¹²⁸ Inf. from Karen Macallister, Administrator, Emmanuel Church. 4 March 2016.

¹²⁹ http://www.chippenhamchurches.org.uk/main/html/the_churches.htm (accessed 26 May 2016).

Several other churches were meeting in Chippenham by 2016. The Chippenham Christian Fellowship church, an Elim Pentecostal Church, had been at its Wood Lane premises for over 20 years.¹³⁰ The Lowden Community Church, a New Testament Church of God, met in the former St Peter's church.¹³¹ The Redeemed Christian Church of God was meeting in the Rotary Hall along Station Hill.¹³² The evangelical Trinity Chippenham church, begun in 2014, was meeting on Sunday afternoons at the Olympiad leisure centre.¹³³ Jehovah's Witnesses were meeting in their hall in London Road.¹³⁴ Two churches not meeting in the town itself were affiliated to the umbrella organisation Chippenham Churches Together; the evangelical and charismatic Dayspring Church meeting in Lansdowne Hall in Derry Hill, and the Moravian Church in East Tytherton.¹³⁵

Other religions

Historically, there is little evidence for non-Christian faiths in Chippenham. In thirteenth-century Wiltshire there were Jewish communities in Marlborough and Wilton, and possibly at Salisbury and Chippenham. The evidence for Chippenham appears to be that, during the reign of Edward I, Salomon, a Chippenham Jew, was accused of theft, but fled before he could be apprehended.¹³⁶

In 2016, of the major world religions other than Christianity, only Buddhists and Muslims were meeting in Chippenham. Buddhist teachers from Bristol were holding meditation classes at The Cause.¹³⁷ Muslims were meeting for Friday prayers in the Rotary Club on Station Hill.¹³⁸

¹³⁰ <http://www.chippenhamchristianfellowship.co.uk/> (accessed 18 Feb. 2016).

¹³¹ <http://www.chippenhamchurches.org.uk/> (accessed 18 Feb. 2016).

¹³² <http://www.rccgchippenham.org.uk/> (accessed 18 Feb. 2016).

¹³³ <http://trinitychippenham.org/who/> (accessed 7 September 2016).

¹³⁴ <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/meetings/> (accessed 7 September 2016).

¹³⁵ <http://www.dayspring.org.uk/>; <http://www.chippenhamchurches.org.uk/> (both accessed 18 Feb. 2016).

¹³⁶ *Crown Pleas of the Wiltshire Eyre 1268* (W.R.S. 65), lxxxii; Goldney, *Records of Chippenham*, xix.

¹³⁷ <http://www.meditationinbristol.org/meditation-classes/meditation-classes-in-chippenham/> (accessed 30 Aug. 2016).

¹³⁸ <http://www.islamicfinder.org/world/view-place/54368> (accessed 30 Aug. 2016).