

Chapels Trail

Find out more about the
area's rich nonconformist heritage





KEY TO SYMBOLS



Open for worship and other activities as advertised



Open as advertised



Access at other times limited to view from footpath or road



Access at all times limited to view from footpath or road, no access to the site



Bus service within walking distance



Railway station within walking distance



Public car park nearby



National Cycle Routes 41 and 410



NGR National Grid Reference number

CONTENTS

Page

Getting the most of this booklet 3

Introduction – what is nonconformity? 4

Why the chapels of South Gloucestershire are so important 5

Following the trail 6

Ride, drive or walk 7

***Tour 1 – The Old Dissent* 8**

The Awakening 10

The Anatomy of a Chapel 12

***Tour 2 - Chapels in the townscape – Chipping Sodbury* 14**

***Tour 3 - Chapels in the townscape – Thornbury* 15**

***Tour 4 - Chapels in the townscape – Kingswood* 16**

Chapels in the community 19

***Tour 5 – Chapels in the countryside* 20**

***Tour 6 – Chapels of the coalfield – Warmley Area* 22**

***Tour 7 – Chapels of the coalfield – Winterbourne Area* 23**

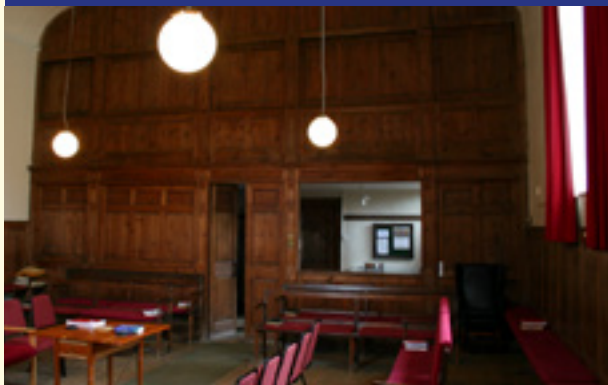
Tabernacles 24

The Future? 25

Index of places to see inside back cover, 26

Map of the trail inside back cover

Further information fold-out back cover



Interior of the Friends' Meeting House, Frenchay (see page 8)

Throughout South Gloucestershire are reminders of the people who over the course of the last four hundred years have upheld the principles of freedom of worship and freedom of conscience that have helped to shape our modern world.

Routes, themes and properties

Nonconformist churches and chapels have a substantial place in the built environment of our towns and our countryside, reflecting the contribution their churches made, and in many cases still make, to our social and economic life. This booklet is designed to give you a flavour of that rich heritage and explain why South Gloucestershire has such a special place in the history of the past four hundred years. Whether you live locally or have travelled many miles from home to explore the places you have heard of, this booklet is intended to help you find what is to be seen and experienced and encourage you to seek out more.

All the places mentioned are numbered, indexed and located on the fold-out map at the end of the booklet. Some find special mention in the text. Most places have been grouped so that you can pick and choose what you would like to see on a given occasion and save others for a future visit.

Most places are by the public roadside and best seen on foot or by bicycle. Many are near public bus routes so there are plenty of ways in which you can combine themes. If you do use your car, parking may be difficult or impossible outside many of the places mentioned so please be prepared to park nearby and make the final approach on foot.

Some of the sites are privately owned. Please respect the privacy of people living and working in these places and view them from a discreet distance, remaining on the public highway or footpath. Where there is access for worship or public viewing, check times of opening before you visit.

South Gloucestershire Council can take no responsibility for injury or damage during such visits.



Tyndale Baptist Chapel, Little Sodbury End

What is nonconformity

Nonconformity embraces all people who in conscience cannot conform to the Church of England. This is either a matter of choice or because people of their persuasion were ejected by the Church of England after attempting to reform it from within. By the mid 17th century there were already many groups like Baptists and Independents worshipping outside the Church of England although a wide spectrum of belief and practice was to be found within it. A radical process of reform had even begun to institute a Presbyterian form of governance and abolish the hierarchy of bishops.

In 1660 after the collapse of the Commonwealth and restoration of the monarchy, Charles II sought to end this state of dissension by compelling people to adhere to the beliefs and practices of the restored Church of England by a series of draconian new laws called the Clarendon Code. The hierarchy of bishops was restored and the clergy of the Church of England were required by the Act of Uniformity of 1662 to conform. Over a fifth did not and, as a result, were ejected. Many took part or the whole of their congregations with them. All who persisted in worship that did not conform to the new Book of Common Prayer were ‘nonconformist’, were barred from holding any meeting of more than five unrelated persons, from holding public office and were liable to persecution including imprisonment, the confiscation of their property and the destruction of their meeting houses. They were also compelled to pay tithes to support the clergy of the Church of England.

The Act of Toleration of 1689 ended the worst of the persecution and permitted the licensing of places of worship for many, but not all, conformists – but an honourable name had been acquired and was to survive. The battle for freedom of conscience was not finally won until the 1850s.

Why the chapels of South Gloucestershire are so important

By the eighteenth century Baptists, Independents, Presbyterians and Quakers (the Religious Society of Friends) were building meeting houses and chapels with increasing confidence and some individual people had acquired wealth and substance through their industry. The area of South Gloucestershire was rich in resources, particularly minerals like coal and metal ores, and was just outside the jurisdiction of the City and County of Bristol, then the second city and port in England. Over the next two hundred years, nonconformists took full advantage of these circumstances to invest in industrial and commercial expansion and recycled much of the wealth created back into the community particularly into education and chapel building. William Champion with his brass works and Handel Cossham and the exploitation of the deep coalfield are but two of many examples.

Not surprisingly nonconformists were passionate leaders in the fight for political and social reform. You will find many people mentioned in this booklet, like Elizabeth Fry and John Frederick Denison Maurice. Their energy and influence had a national and international impact and have earned them an entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

It was with the Awakening, the remarkable collaboration and subsequent quarrels between George Whitefield, John Wesley and John Cennick that played out in their mission to the colliers, that South Gloucestershire took centre stage.

George Whitefield depicted in the Whitfield Tabernacle Sunday School banner (now destroyed).*

** The name George Whitefield is spelt with an 'e' which is correct. However, Whitfield's Tabernacle should be spelt without an 'e'.*





Name stone of Upton Cheyney United Reformed Church

A choice of 7 themed tours is offered covering some 37 locations. They are designed to be enjoyed either in sequence or to stand alone. There are frequent bus services to places from which you can comfortably walk six of the tours. One tour is more extended and demands the use of a bicycle or car. In addition there are a further 9 sites key to the themes of the trail.

For the real enthusiast, at the end of this booklet there is an index of over 60 sites selected from four hundred or more to be found in the area. From this you can pick places to extend one of the tours in the booklet or create new tours of your own. The sites are listed in alphabetical order and each numbered entry cross-refers to the map and those pages where the site is referred to in the text. Unfortunately there is not space to give a description of each entry but you will be able to find out more from the local museum or library.

Frenchay Village Museum

Entrance B, Frenchay Hospital, BS16 1SZ – can be viewed in conjunction with the trail on page 9



Kingswood Heritage Museum

Tower Lane, Warmley, BS30 8XT – can be viewed in conjunction with the trail on page 22



Thornbury and District Museum

Chapel Street, BS35 2BJ – can be viewed in conjunction with the trails on pages 15 and 21



Yate and District Heritage Centre

Church Road, BS37 5BJ



See www.southglos.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/museums-and-galleries/museum-and-heritage-sites-to-visit/ for current opening times.

The New Room, Bristol

Broadmead, BS1 3JE – preserves John Wesley's chapel with a museum and extensive library devoted to Methodist history



Some of the chapels mentioned open for public viewing on special occasions such as Heritage Open Days and local festivities. Details of these, times of worship and other activities can be found either on the website of individual churches or the appropriate community website or advertised in the local press.



Name stone of the former Ebenezer Chapel, Rangeworthy. The text is 1 Samuel 7.12

Check times and stopping places of buses when planning your route – contact telephone numbers and web addresses are given on the back fold-out.

You will find Ordnance Survey maps helpful for finding more obscure locations and an invaluable aid in planning the detail of your tour. Landranger map 172, Bristol and Bath, covers the whole area or if you prefer a larger scale you will need Explorer maps 155 and 167. All three provide instructions on how to use the National Grid Reference to find our sites. The National Grid Reference for each site listed in this booklet is given in six-figure form, for example Mount Pleasant at Falfield is to be found at ST682926. Postcodes are also given but they are only approximate indicators of location.

It is possible to visit all the places mentioned by car but, because local roads are so busy, it is advisable to have a companion to do the navigating for you. All parts of the urban tours are within easy reach of a public car park. If you are able to do so the easiest way to get around is by bicycle.





The former Unitarian Chapel, Marshfield (the Old Meeting)

It is appropriate to start our tour in **Frenchay** – by the bus stop at the north end of Beckspool Road. Walk east up to the junction with Riverwood Road and you pass substantial houses either originally built for or owned by wealthy dissenters; on the right, Fromeshawe House, home of the prominent Unitarian, Onesiphorus Tyndall, and Riverwood, home of the Quaker, J.S.Fry, cousin of the prison reformer, Elizabeth Fry, and principal of the chocolate and cocoa manufacturers, J.S.Fry & Sons. Returning along the opposite side of the road is to be found the Manor House, built c.1736 for the wealthy Quaker merchant, Joseph Beck, and bought in 1800 by another prominent Quaker and zealous supporter of the anti-slavery movement, Philip Debell Tuckett. Malmains, demolished in the 1930s, was the home of the Harford family, Quaker bankers who entertained William Wilberforce and Hannah More here. Frenchay Lodge was owned by the Callowhills to whom the infant state of Pennsylvania was once mortgaged. The tulip trees native to that part of the USA are said to be reminders of this connection.

Further south is the **Friends Meeting House [17]**. The main part of the present building was completed in 1809 but was extended in 1814 by the addition of a new room for the Women's Meeting over the entry into the burial ground. The interior reflects the simplicity of the Friends approach to worship – plain lime-washed walls, benches round three sides of the elders' stand and a gallery fitted with sliding shutters to create a larger meeting room when required. The Friends had started meeting locally in 1654 and opened their first meeting house nearby in 1673. They endured violent persecution but in the eighteenth century became increasingly respected for their reformist views.

Bear right up toward the common and on the right is **Frenchay Unitarian Chapel [18]** standing back in its own burial ground. The congregation, then Presbyterian by persuasion, dates from the 1620s. The chapel seems to have been built around 1690 and the bell-tower added later. The bell (sadly stolen) was recast in 1752 with the inscription 'When you hear me ringing come and praise the Lord'.

On top is the weather-vane presumed to commemorate the visit of Halley's comet in 1759. The interior was modernised in the 1980s but retains the pulpit, clock and some of the box-pew panelling from the reordering of the 1800s. It is dominated by the two Tuscan pillars supporting the roof – a common feature of nonconformist meeting houses of this date symbolising stability and strength, Jachin and Boaz, the two pillars before the Temple in Jerusalem.

Nearby Clarendon House was the home of Michael Maurice, minister here and father of John Frederick Denison Maurice, a leading theologian of his time and founder of the Christian Socialist movement.

It is a walk or cycle ride of about a mile to **Downend Baptist Church [13]**. Go down Frenchay Hill turning left at the bottom onto Frenchay Road. Straight on into Croomes Hill, left into Downend Road, right into Carpenters Shop Lane (cyclists dismount) and across into Salisbury Road. The gabled building at the heart of the present complex was erected in 1786 for a congregation that had been worshipping in the area since 1725. The enterprise was led by Dr Caleb Evans from the much older Baptist church of Broadmead in Bristol, whose turbulent early history from its founding in 1640 was so well recorded by Edward Terrell from Almondsbury. The essayist, John Foster, was one of the early pastors of Downend. The Sunday School building was added in 1862. The church fell on hard times in the late 19th century but was reformed and refitted. It has been refurbished and redeveloped again to fit it for the needs of a flourishing church of the 21st century.

The last example of a chapel of this date is two bus rides away – **The Old Meeting, Marshfield [39]**. It is tucked away behind the main frontage on the south side of High Street. It was completed in 1752 for a congregation of Presbyterian persuasion which had been meeting nearby since 1680 but who later inclined to Unitarianism. The dedication inscription was lengthy proclaiming that the chapel was built 'for promoting pure religion, the Glory of God, and the happiness of mankind, and also as a worth effect of that glorious national constitution by which we enjoy our Christian freedom and liberty of conscience.' The chapel closed in 1886. A small burial ground lies behind.

Friends Meeting House
Beckspool Road ST641779, BS16 1NT



Frenchay Chapel
Beckspool Road ST640776, BS16 1ND



Downend Baptist Church
Salisbury Road ST651765, BS16 5RA



Marshfield former Unitarian Chapel
High Street ST777737, SN14 8LT





Gathering on Hanham Mount on 23rd June 2003 to mark the tercentenary of John Wesley's birth

The wild remote wastes of Kingswood Forest had attracted open air meetings of persecuted nonconformists from early days. Scattered squatter settlements had grown up over much of the area between Cromhall, Bitton and Bristol, particularly as the demand for coal grew from the 16th century and with them a thin scatter of meeting houses of the Old Dissent. By the 1730s the Church of England was organisationally unable to do anything to serve the growing population (it was not until 1756 that the new parish of St George was established and 1820-50 before resources could be created for churches at Kingswood, Fishponds, Frenchay, Hanham and Two Mile Hill).

Using Bristol as his base, it was the charismatic evangelist, George Whitefield, who held the first of what became frequent open air meetings throughout the area at Rose Green on 17th February 1739. Anxious that the impetus should not be lost and determined to continue his planned mission to Georgia, Whitefield invited a reluctant John Wesley from London to Bristol to continue the ministry. Wesley, arriving on 31st March, 'could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields' but on 2nd April took up the task upon Whitefield's departure for America.

Hanham Mount [20] was a particularly favoured site for these open air gatherings. Although now swallowed in suburban housing, the site is preserved to commemorate the work of Whitefield and Wesley and still occasionally used for open air services. A railed stand for a preacher has been installed where it commands the hillside and views right across the Avon Valley.

A visit to the New Room and its museum in Bristol is highly recommended. It was founded by Wesley in 1739 for the followers of Whitefield and survives largely as rebuilt in 1748.

Hanham Mount

Mount Hill Road, public open space
ST647728, BS15 8FX



The New Room

Horsefair, Bristol ST589734, BS1 3JE





The Colliers' School and Chapel before remodelling in 1895

Whitefield's last task before his departure to America was to lay the foundation stone of a free school for colliers' children. Wesley was not satisfied with the colliers' choice of site and on 14th May 1739 'at last pitched upon one between the London and Bath roads, not far from that called Two Mile Hill.' Here he purchased the land and built the **Colliers' School [24]** consisting of a large schoolroom with four smaller rooms at either end partly to serve as lodgings and partly set aside for an adult school. John Cennick was recommended as its first headmaster by Whitefield. It is possible that Wesley had fitted the main schoolroom with galleries and a pulpit because when Whitefield returned in March 1741, he accused Wesley of 'perverting his design' for the school. He also arrived in the midst of a fundamental disagreement between Cennick and Wesley on the doctrine of predestination. Whitefield conceded the school to Wesley. Cennick with his followers were ejected from the Kingswood Society, splitting Methodism into Calvinists and Wesleyans at about the same time that Methodists were firmly refused communion by the Church of England.

No trace survives on site of the school/chapel. It continued in use as a free school until either 1793 or 1803. It was demolished in 1919. Wesley proceeded with his plans to establish a fee-paying school – **Kingswood School [28]** – on adjacent land. This four-storey building opened in 1748 but was sold in 1851 when the school moved to its present location in Lansdown near Bath. The purchaser, Russell Scott, invited Mary Carpenter, the Unitarian philanthropist, to join him in setting up a reformatory school on the lines pioneered in Germany. This served young offenders until 1984 by which time none of Wesley's buildings were left. The school now houses the Kingswood Foundation.

Colliers' School *site only ST643734*

Kingswood School *site only ST642733*

Kingswood Foundation
former Reformatory



Britannia Road ST641735, BS15 8DB



Upton Cheyney United Reformed Church

Upton Cheyney United Reformed Church [53] was built in 1834 for an Independent congregation that had been meeting locally for some years, originally inspired by the preaching of John Cennick. Its exterior is designed in a restrained Classical style in dressed Bath stone with an ogival roofed porch and offset door, so necessary on this exposed hillside. An extra leaf has been added to the door to allow room to swing coffins into the church.

Inside it is a typical 19th-century chapel of this size: two blocks of pitch-pine pews, grained and varnished, on either side of the single aisle, a raised area or rostrum across most of the end facing the entrance door with its white painted turned balustrade and in the centre, the pulpit for preaching the Word. Behind is an arched panel bearing the painted text, 'O Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness.' There is also a harmonium, a piano and a hymn board. The only modern comforts are the electric lighting and portable gas heaters.

It was common for large chapels to have galleries on three sides and a rostrum large enough to take a choir. Baptist churches are also equipped with a large tank for adult baptism by total immersion. This is normally kept boarded over to provide space for the communion table.





The interior of the school room

The roofline extends back to include a school room on the ground floor and a lodging room above.

The School Room still has its teacher's lectern, its desks, each fitted with a bench and hole to take the ceramic inkwells, its easel and its clock, all dating from the late 19th century.



This room also served for other social functions and meetings.

Behind the chapel is the burial ground where can be found the grave of William Clark who was instrumental in building the chapel in this place. The collieries in the Golden Valley have long gone but this now peaceful pastoral spot is still used for burials.

**Upton Cheyney United
Reformed Church**

Wick Lane ST693701, BS30 6NL



TOUR 2



Chipping Sodbury former Friends Meeting House

Start at the east end of High Street, walk west and turn right into Brook Street. Tucked away on the brow of the hill is the former **Friends Meeting House [9]** now converted into a private dwelling. The shell hood over the door bears the date 1692 and is likely to be the date of this charming building. Is this the earliest surviving nonconformist meeting house in South Gloucestershire?

The Baptists have been established in the town since 1656, almost as long as the Friends. On the south side of High Street is their church hall which served as the main church between 1965 and 1991 when the new **Baptist Church [7]** was opened on the site behind. Just round the corner in Hounds Lane is the former **Baptist Church [6]**, a rather grand building of 1819 set in its own burial ground.

Down an alley on the north side of Broad Street is **St Lawrence Roman Catholic Church [8]**. It should be no surprise that Roman Catholics were caught in the same legislation that defined nonconformists. Although founded here in 1838, this church is in just the situation that many early urban nonconformist churches occupied – accessed through an entry on the main street frontage and located in an outbuilding running back from the main block.

Former Friends Meeting House



Brook Street ST726824

Chipping Sodbury Baptist Church



High Street ST727821, BS37 6AH

Former Baptist Church



Hounds Lane ST727821, BS37 6AH

Former Baptist Church



Broad Street ST728822

St Lawrence RC Church



Broad Street ST728822

TOUR 3



Thornbury Methodist Church

Start in the High Street at the **Methodist Church [49]**. This is a good example of the spikey Gothic revival style of architecture for a late 19th-century church. The present building replaced **Wesley Chapel [48]** (turn south down High Street and left into Chapel Street to what is now Cossham Hall). This was built in 1789. John Wesley himself preached here in 1789 and 1790. The chapel was extended in 1835 but eventually still proved to be too small. In 1888 Handel Cossham purchased the building and presented it to the town for community use.

Handel Cossham was born in Thornbury in 1830 and became a member of the Congregational, now **United Reformed Church [50]**, which stands further down Chapel Street. Cossham made his fortune by predicting and exploiting the deep coal seams in the Kingswood coalfield and used his wealth liberally to found chapels and other works of community benefit in the area of South Gloucestershire, eg. Cossham Hospital. The present United Reformed Church is a fine building opened in 1826 for a congregation that had been worshipping in the area since 1662.

In Gillingstool, across Rock Street and the Bath Road car park, is the **Baptist Church [47]**. The chapel building of 1828 stands in its own burial ground with a suite of new buildings attached to the rear to provide modern facilities for the church.

Thornbury Methodist Church

High Street ST635902, BS35 2AQ



Cossham Hall

Chapel Street ST636897, BS35 2BJ



Thornbury United Reformed Church

Chapel Street ST637899, BS35 2AT



Thornbury Baptist Church

Gillingstool ST640900, BS35 2EG



TOUR 4



Whitfield Tabernacle in the 1980s

A relatively short walk along Regent Street and Two Mile Hill encompasses the history of the Awakening after the breach between Whitefield and Wesley. Start in Park Road.

On 9th June 1741, George Whitefield wrote to John Cennick instructing him to build a room for their followers ‘not too large or too handsome.’ The result was the **Whitfield Tabernacle [30]**. The original building still stands though terribly vandalised. It was altered and extended in 1802 and 1830. The north front of this, the last chapel of the Awakening in this area, gives a good idea of the appearance of these buildings. Although long stripped of its furnishings, it ranks with the New Room in Bristol in its significance. After Whitefield’s death in 1770, the society moved from Calvinism to Congregationalism, and, as it grew it found the premises too small and so built a new church. The Tabernacle remained in use as both a Sunday School and until 1905 a day school of the British School movement.

The New Tabernacle, Whitfield Congregational later **United Reformed Church [31]**, was commissioned in Early English style from Henry Masters of Bristol. It opened in 1852 on land adjoining the burial ground and at the end of a driveway from Regent Street. The church closed in 1983 and stands bricked up and derelict. For a short while there were plans to refurbish the old Tabernacle but after a period of temporary use of the Moravian Church, in 1992 the two congregations decided to amalgamate. There have been a number of schemes to repair the old Tabernacle which is on Historic England’s at risk register and it is to be hoped one will be agreed soon.



United Church, formerly the Moravian Church, Kingswood

With the creation of the **United Church, Kingswood** (Moravian/ Whitfield United Reformed Church) [26] at the Moravian Church further west off Regent Street, the wheel has turned full circle. In December 1775, John Cennick resigned from the Calvinist Methodists to join the Church of the United Brethren, better known as the Moravians. For a while Cennick's followers contended ownership of the Tabernacle but quickly moved to established their own chapel and burial ground on the present site. This was consecrated in 1758. The present church was designed and built in 1856-1857 by Foster & Wood of Bristol, just north of the original chapel which was then demolished.

The Moravians, following the practice of their mother church at Herrnhut in Saxony, tended to found settlements with the chapel as the focal point. Cennick's settlement at East Tytherton in Wiltshire is a good example. It is doubtful whether such a settlement was planned or built at Kingswood beyond the 'single sisters' house' for their education and industry. It opened in 1792 and the infant school in 1838. Note that the graveyard contains markers brought here when the Bristol Moravian Church and burial ground were cleared in the 1970s.

Whitfield Tabernacle
Park Road ST649739, BS15 8HR



**Former Whitfield
Congregational Church**
Regent Street ST648739, BS15 8HR



United Church, Kingswood
Regent Street ST649738, BS15 8HU





Kingswood Methodist Church

Walk west along Regent Street and turn left into Blackhorse Road.

Here stands the former **Wesley Chapel [29]** the magnificent mother church of the Wesleyan Methodist Circuit and successor to the Colliers' School and Chapel. It rises in the greenery of its own extensive burial ground. The main school building of the 1850s remains empty but reasonably intact. It was with great reluctance but under irresistible pressure that the Kingswood Society agreed to build and open this grand structure in 1844. The church closed in 1978 when the Methodists decided to combine at Zion. Until recently a burnt out shell, it is now being converted to flats.

Back to the main road and further west at the beginning of Two Mile Hill is **Kingswood Methodist Church [25]**, formerly Zion United Methodist Free Church, built in 1854 as the mother church of its own circuit to outshine the magnificence of Wesley Chapel. It and similar rival 'twin' chapels were built between 1850 and 1870 as a result of a disastrous quarrel at the Methodist Conference of 1849. The two branches were not reunited until 1932 and the two Kingswood congregations until 1978. Such lavish building by the United Methodist Church was due to the patronage of local industrialists like the boot-makers the Flooks and the colliery owners the Brains.

Further west again is the third huge chapel, now **Bourne Christian Centre [4]**. It was built in 1873 as Bourne Chapel, named after Hugh Bourne, one of the founders of the primitive Methodist movement. Their first chapel of 1841 still stands further west down the hill and is now used as the **Salvation Army Corps Hall [27]**.

Former Kingswood Wesley Chapel

Blackhorse Road ST644738, BS15 8DZ



Kingswood Methodist Church

Two Mile Hill ST644739, BS15 1JR



Bourne Christian Centre

Two Mile Hill ST642739, BS15 8BE



Salvation Army Corps Hall

Two Mile Hill ST641738, BS15 1AD





Banners high on the former Whit walk in Kingswood

From the very beginning chapels and meeting houses were the focal point of the social lives of their communities, not solely places of worship. Any chapel has numerous regular meetings and many share their facilities with the wider community.

Education is a particular concern which in modern times often means hosting pre-school activities. It was not until the Education Act of 1870 that a nation-wide network of School Boards was created to levy rates to provide schools and to

compel children under the age of 13 years to attend. Nonconformists understood that the ability to read, write and interpret the Bible was the core to providing a basic education. From the 17th century, free day classes for adult study and for children's education were an essential part of chapel life. Some of these day schools for children, such as that at **Whitfield**



Tabernacle [30], became affiliated to the non-sectarian British and Foreign Schools Society which had been founded in 1814. These are different from Sunday Schools – a concept credited to Robert Raikes of Gloucester in 1750 – which blossomed in the late 18th century.

By the late 19th century, the Temperance Movement, which by 1840 had come to mean total abstinence from alcohol, was strong in most nonconformist chapels. Most chapels had their temperance societies for adults and after 1847 their Band of Hope for children.

Many chapel organisations had their own separate banners which used to be paraded on occasions such as the Kingswood Whit Walk. Sadly they are now rarely seen.

TOUR 5



Bethesda, Hawkesbury Upton

This trail follows parts of national cycle routes 410 and 41. It crosses South Gloucestershire from east to west and is mostly downhill. Both routes are clearly way-marked. The trail takes you to a number of chapels that are typical of this area in their scale and style.

Start at Hawkesbury Upton. The village still has two chapels but the parish church is 1km away at the bottom of the hill. **Bethesda Chapel [22]** was founded to serve an Independent congregation in 1844. It stands in its own burial ground entered through a pretty wrought-iron lantern arch. The **Methodist Church [23]** was originally built by the Primitive Methodists in 1860. These two persuasions together with the Baptists had great success in founding churches among the rural communities in South Gloucestershire.

Take the Wickwar road which shortly joins cycle route 410. Follow the route down the steep escarpment of the Cotswolds and across the broken country to Wickwar. In the centre divert from the cycle route to follow the B4060 (to Chipping Sodbury) up into the High Street. On the left is **Wickwar Congregational Church [62]** built according to the stone set in the gable in 1817 and restored in 1919.





Oldbury-on-Severn former Methodist Church

Rejoin cycle route 410 to cross the northern tip of the South Gloucestershire and North Somerset Coalfield. Follow the route through Cromhall to Townwell and **Cromhall Chapel [12]**. This is an example of a simple early 19th century Independent chapel with chapel and minister's house under one roof-line and set in its own burial ground.

Divert off cycle route 410 to go to Tytherington. Just under the railway bridge is **Tytherington Baptist Church [52]** a modest building of 1884 in stone and brick.

From here it is quickest to take the direct road up over the ridge across the A38 and down to the centre of Thornbury. Here you can enjoy the trail round the town chapels (see page 15).

Cycle routes 410 and 41 will take you to **Oldbury-on-Severn** where the **Methodist chapel [40]** has been recently converted into a house.

**Hawkesbury Upton
Bethesda**

Park Street ST781869, GL9 1BA



**Hawkesbury Upton
Methodist Church**

Hyde Park Row ST780870, GL9 1BB



**Wickwar Congregational
Church**

High Street ST725885, GL12 8NP



Cromhall Chapel

Townwell ST698908, GL12 8AQ



**Tytherington Baptist
Church**

Itchington Road ST668880, GL12 8Q



**Oldbury-on-Severn former
Methodist Church**

Chapel Road ST610925, BS35 1QA



TOUR 6



Ebenezer, former Bridgegate Methodist Church

Two relatively long walks are suggested to give a flavour of the area and its chapels – one around Warmley and the second around Winterbourne. Start at Bridgegate Common with **Ebenezer [3]**, originally built for the Wesleyan Methodists in 1810 and purchased by the United Free Methodists in 1855. Now converted to a holiday let. A walk down Bath Road, bearing right into Poplar Road and right again into Mill Lane brings you to **Mill Lane Independent Methodist Church [55]** established here in 1899 by a breakaway temperance group. At the top of the rise is the former **Wesleyan Chapel [57]** of 1833 now converted into housing. A little further north in Tower Road is another **Ebenezer [56]** until recently Warmley Tower United Church, a grand Italianate church built for the Free Methodists in 1868. Along past the brass works of the Quaker William Champion and to the end of Tower Road and bearing right across into Chapel Road brings you to **Warmley Congregational Church [54]** built in 1846. The London Road takes you over the railway and past the site of Crown Colliery back to the start.

Diversions to two other chapels can be made. **Cock Road Methodist Church [11]** occupies the former school building of 1859 and is just up the road from one of the last remaining colliery Cornish engine houses. **Made-for-Ever Methodist Church [35]** built in 1896 takes its name from an unsuccessful attempt to mine coal nearby.

Ebenezer

*Bridgegate Methodist Church ST682732,
BS35 5NA*



**Mill Lane Independent
Methodist Church**

Mill Lane ST670724, BS30 8BQ



Former Wesleyan Chapel

Tower Road South ST668724, BS30



Former Warmley Tower United

Tower Road South ST699727, BS30 2XL



**Warmley Congregational
Church**

Chapel Road ST699727, BS15 4NH



Cock Road Methodist Church

Cock Road ST655727, BS15 9SQ



**Made-for-Ever Methodist
Church**

Anchor Road ST662744, BS15 4RG



TOUR 7



Whiteshill Evangelical Church, formerly White's Hill Congregational Church 1816

Coalpit Heath was one of the areas of primitive coal mining and further down the lane was the complex of Frog Lane Colliery, the last traditional deep pit to work the coalfield. Our trail takes the higher ground to the west starting just opposite the windmill in Frampton Cotterell at **Zion United Church [16]**, a Gothic structure in the Decorated style built for the Congregationalists in 1873. From here follow Woodend Road down to its junction with Park Lane and bear left across to Harris Barton and follow the footpath across Nightingale's Bridge up to and turn left into Watley's End Road. Here is **Ebenezer [58]**, a former United Methodist Church of 1868 built to rival Salem nearby at the other end of the turning next left, Factory Road (named after a hat factory which once worked here). The foundation stone of **Salem Methodist Church [59]** was laid by John Wesley himself in 1787.

It is a walk of about a mile down Cloisters Road, Hicks Common Road and Station Road to Winterbourne Down Methodist Church [63], another chapel in the Decorated style, built in 1878. Follow Camp View, then turn right, left and right again into Worrells Lane down across the Frome and up to White's Hill Common and **Whiteshill Evangelical Church [60]**. It proudly proclaims it was built in 1816.

Zion United Church

*Woodend Road, Frampton Cotterell
ST967813, BS36 2HY*



Former Ebenezer United Methodist Church

Watley's End Road ST659814, BS36 1QQ



Salem Methodist Church

*Factory Road, Watley's End ST658811,
BS36 1QL*



Winterbourne Down Methodist Church

Down Road ST651797, BS36 1BN



White's Hill Evangelical Church

Bristol Road ST645793, BS16 1SD





Former Swineford Congregational Church

The idea of the Tabernacle, in Biblical terms a moveable structure, an 'itinerant temple' in which to keep the tablets of the Law, was a powerful one. Whitefield was concerned that the Kingswood Tabernacle be 'not too large or not too handsome lest we need to move our tents'. Some churches deliberately built their chapels of temporary materials, particularly either of timber or later of timber and corrugated iron. Should a more permanent structure be required then the tabernacle could be moved to an entirely new site to further a new mission.

George Pocock of Bristol was instrumental in founding the Tent Methodist movement which flourished between 1814 and 1832. Tent preaching visited places such as Almondsbury, Iron Acton, Milbury Heath, Rangeworthy, Frampton Cotterell, Wickwar and Dursley. The present **Hanham United Reformed Church [21]**, the Hanham Tabernacle, was originally built for the Tent Methodists in 1829 and purchased by an Independent congregation 10 years later.

The invention of corrugated iron coincided with the evangelical revival of the late 19th century. Few of these tin tabernacles are left. **Swineford Congregational Church [46]** of the late 1880s is now a nursery school but is the most substantial example to have survived in the area.

A number of more permanent missions of this period can also be found, such as the former **Longwell Green Mission [34]**, now **Mustard Tree Community Church**, built in 1904 for the Christian Brethren.

Hanham United Reformed Church

Tabernacle Road ST640725, BS15 8DU



Former Swineford Congregational Church

Bath Road ST692689, BS30 6LN



Longwell Green Mustard Tree Community Church

Watsons Road ST658712, BS30 9DW





Hanham Baptist Church (1907, rebuilt 1959, next to the site of the 1714 meeting house. The porch is a recent addition)

We hope that you have enjoyed the trail and have found something of the spirit of the early nonconformists in the buildings they commissioned and the churches they founded.

New churches are still being built and old ones close. Sometimes the old ones will find new uses, perhaps still providing a home to a church of another persuasion, particularly some of the newer Christian movements and some of the older world religions. **Bourne Chapel [4]** once the pride of the Primitive Methodists saw life as the home of Fantasie Foundations, a manufactory of ladies' corsetry, before its present lease of life as **Bourne Christian Centre**.

It is not often realised that many individual chapels are in the hands of trustees and for many nonconformists the autonomy and independent decisions of a church community are paramount.

However ultimately decisions have to be made by the community at large whether buildings which are important to our common heritage are to be cared for and particular effort made to find new uses for them. There are several examples in this trail where new homes have been made in old chapels and one example, the former **Longwell Green Free Methodist Church [33]**, converted to a café, but Whitfield Tabernacle, sad in its vandalised state, remains a significant problem desperately requiring a solution.

Hanham Baptist Church

High Street ST646721, BS15 3QY



Longwell Green Chapel Coffee Shop, former Free Methodist Church

Bath Road ST658710, BS30 9DD



INDEX OF PLACES TO SEE

Dates indicate earliest building to be seen

Page

1	Aust Evangelical (former Methodist), 1896 (ST574891; BS35 4AY)	
2	Bitton former Methodist, 1859 (ST681697; BS30 6HQ)	
3	Bridgegate former Methodist, 1810 (ST682732; BS30 5NA)	22
4	Bourne Christian Centre, 1873 (ST642739; BS15 8BE)	18, 25
5	Charfield former United Reformed, 1851 (ST726925; GL12 8SR)	
6	Chipping Sodbury former Baptist, 1819 (ST727821; BS37 6AH)	14
7	Chipping Sodbury Baptist, 1991 (ST727821; BS37 6AH)	14
8	Chipping Sodbury St Laurence Roman Catholic, 1838 (ST728822)	14
9	Chipping Sodbury former Society of Friends, 1692 (ST726824)	14
10	Codrington Baptist, 1894 (ST724791; GL37 6RY)	
11	Cock Road Methodist, 1859 (ST655727; BS15 9SQ)	22
12	Cromhall, 1819 (ST698908; GL12 8AQ)	21
13	Downend Baptist, 1786 (ST651765; BS16 5RA)	9
14	Easter Compton Methodist, 1869 (ST572826; BS35 5RE)	
15	Falfield former Mount Pleasant Congregational, 1843 (ST682926; GL12 8DW)	
16	Frampton Cotterell Zion United, 1873 (ST967813; BS36 2HY)	23
17	Frenchay Society of Friends, 1809 (ST641779; BS16 1NT)	3, 8
18	Frenchay Unitarian, by 1740 (ST640776; BS16 1ND)	8
19	Hanham Baptist, 1959 (ST646721; BS15 3QY)	25
20	Hanham Mount (ST647728; BS15 8FX)	10
21	Hanham United Reformed, 1829 (ST640725; BS15 8DU)	24
22	Hawkesbury Upton Bethesda, 1844 (ST781769; GL9 1BA)	20
23	Hawkesbury Upton Methodist, 1860 (ST780870; GL9 1BB)	20
24	Kingswood Colliers' School (ST643734 – site)	11
25	Kingswood Methodist, 1854 (ST644739; BS15 1JR)	18
26	Kingswood Moravian now United, 1857 (ST649738; BS15 8HU)	17
27	Kingswood Salvation Army, 1841 (ST641738; BS15 1AD)	18
28	Kingswood School (ST642733)	11
29	Kingswood former Wesley, 1843 (ST644738; BS15 8DZ)	18
30	Kingswood Whitfield Tabernacle, 1741 (ST649739; BS15 8HR)	5, 16, 25
31	Kingswood former United Reformed, 1853 (ST648739; BS15 8HR)	16
32	Little Sodbury End Tyndale Baptist, 1890 (ST746838; BS37 6QE)	4
33	Longwell Green former Free Methodist, 1856 (ST658710; BS30 9DD)	25
34	Longwell Green Mustard Tree Community Church, 1902 (ST658712; BS30 9DW)	24
35	Made-for-Ever Methodist, 1896 (ST662744; BS15 4RG)	22
36	Mangotsfield former Primitive Methodist, 1857 (ST665761; BS16 9DE)	

INDEX OF PLACES TO SEE

Dates indicate earliest building to be seen

Page

37	Mangotsfield and Castle Green United Reformed, 1835 (ST665762; BS16 9EP)	
38	Marshfield Chapel (ST775738; SN14 8LT)	
39	Marshfield former Unitarian, 1752 (ST777737; SN14 8LT)	9
40	Oldbury-on-Severn former Methodist, 1835 (ST610925; BS35 1QA)	21
41	Olveston Methodist, 1820 (ST601872; BS35 4DR)	
42	Rangeworthy former Ebenezer, 1874 (ST690854; BS37 7LS)	7
43	Shortwood Methodist, 1876 (ST675759; BS16 9NH)	
44	Staple Hill Independent Methodist, 1892 (ST649758; BS16 4QG)	
45	Staple Hill Methodist, 1874 (ST649760; BS16 5HQ)	2
46	Swineford, former Congregational, c.1887 (ST692689; BS30 6LN)	24
47	Thornbury Baptist, 1828 (ST640900; BS35 2EG)	15
48	Thornbury Cossham Hall, 1789 (ST636897; BS35 2BJ)	15
49	Thornbury Methodist, 1878 (ST635902; BS35 2AQ)	15
50	Thornbury United Reformed, 1826 (ST637899; BS35 2AT)	15
51	Tockington Methodist, 1897 (ST609866; BS32 4NJ)	
52	Tytherington Baptist, 1884 (ST668880; GL12 8QE)	21
53	Upton Cheyney United Reformed, 1834 (ST693701; BS30 6NL)	6, 12, 13
54	Warmley Congregational, 1846 (ST669737; BS15 4NH)	22
55	Warmley Mill Lane Independent Methodist, 1899 (ST670724; BS30 8BQ)	22
56	Warmley former Tower United, 1858 (ST699727; BS30 2XL)	22
57	Warmley former Wesley, 1833 (ST668724; BS30 8BH)	22
58	Watley's End former Ebenezer, 1868 (ST659814; BS36 1QQ)	23
59	Watley's End Salem Methodist, 1787 (ST658811; BS36 1QL)	23
60	Whiteshill Evangelical, 1816 (ST645793; BS16 1SD)	23
61	Wick United Reformed, 1837 (ST707726; BS30 5PN)	
62	Wickwar Congregational, 1817 (ST725885; GL12 8NP)	20
63	Winterbourne Down Methodist, 1878 (SST651797; BS36 1BN)	23
64	Yate Engine Common former Baptist, 1909 (ST699840; BS35 1QA)	
M1	Frenchay Village Museum (BS16 1SZ)	6
M2	Kingswood Heritage Museum (BS30 8XT)	6
M3	Thornbury and District Museum (BS35 2BJ)	6
M4	Yate and District Heritage Centre (BS37 5BJ)	6
NR	The New Room, Broadmead, Bristol (BS1 3JE)	10

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1



2



3



4



5



1 Kingswood Methodist Church - page 18

2 Halley's Comet, Frenchay Unitarian Chapel - page 8

3 Frenchay Unitarian Chapel - page 8

4 The pulpit, Frenchay Unitarian Chapel - page 8

5 Entrance to former White's Hill Day School - page 23

FURTHER INFORMATION

Every effort has been made to ensure that information given in this booklet is correct at time of going to press, but you are advised to check details such as opening hours, bus services and so on before setting out.

The project team selected 64 from over 400 chapel sites in South Gloucestershire. Once you have tried our trail maybe you can create your own. The singular configuration of the windows are often the clue that the building is or was a chapel.

Most of the places on this route can be reached by public transport. For information: www.travelinesw.com

Information for disabled passengers is available at: www.southglos.gov.uk/publictransportaccessibility

For information about public footpaths and bridleways: www.southglos.gov.uk/publicfootpaths

For information about cycle routes: <https://betterbybike.info>

Several towns and villages such as Marshfield have their own heritage trails. Books on our nonconformist heritage can be obtained through public libraries, museums and bookshops. You can visit the council's website at www.southglos.gov.uk/heritagetrails



Hanham United Reformed Church (Hanham Tabernacle)

Inside front cover: Staple Hill Methodist Church, formerly Hebron United Methodist Free Church 1874

Cover: Wickwar Congregational Church 1817



South Gloucestershire Heritage Trails are published by South Gloucestershire Council.

For further trails in this series and information: <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/heritagetrails>

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