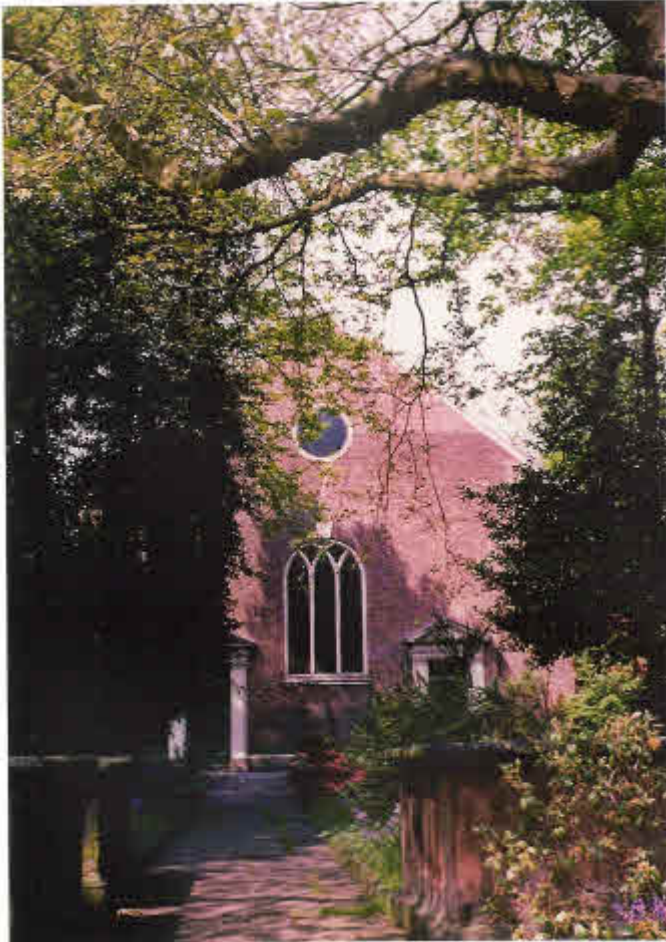


# Cairo Street Unitarian Chapel



Produced by Ray Beecham 2007 Member of the Congregation  
Price

# Cairo Street Chapel

Founded by Dissenters, who were seeking tolerance and liberty for themselves and others.

## You Are Welcome to Worship at Cairo Street Chapel

We believe in Religious Worship that is unfettered by dogma or tradition. For a Religion which is in harmony with the spirit of free enquiry and the living aspirations of the human soul.

No form of religious doctrine is imposed upon its Ministers or its Members. It welcomes to its membership and fellowship all who share its principles, however they may express their beliefs.

We believe our religious faith must be:

Personal	- our own, not another's
Thoughtful	- the result of thinking.
Honest	- true to conscience.
Free	- leaving room for growth.
Vital	- shaping our daily life.

You are very welcome to join us.

Minister Revd. Lynne Readett

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[www.unitarian.org.uk/mdma/warrington](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/mdma/warrington)

*There is a past that has gone for ever ...*

*But there is a future that is still our own*

F.W. Robertson

## **The Origins of the Chapel**

Cairo Street Chapel is the second oldest surviving place of worship in Warrington. The man responsible for the founding of the Church was Robert Yates, ejected from the Church of England in 1662, he ultimately obtained a licence for public worship.

In 1689, religious dissent was permitted by the Act of Toleration and the congregation worshipped in Eccleston Barn.

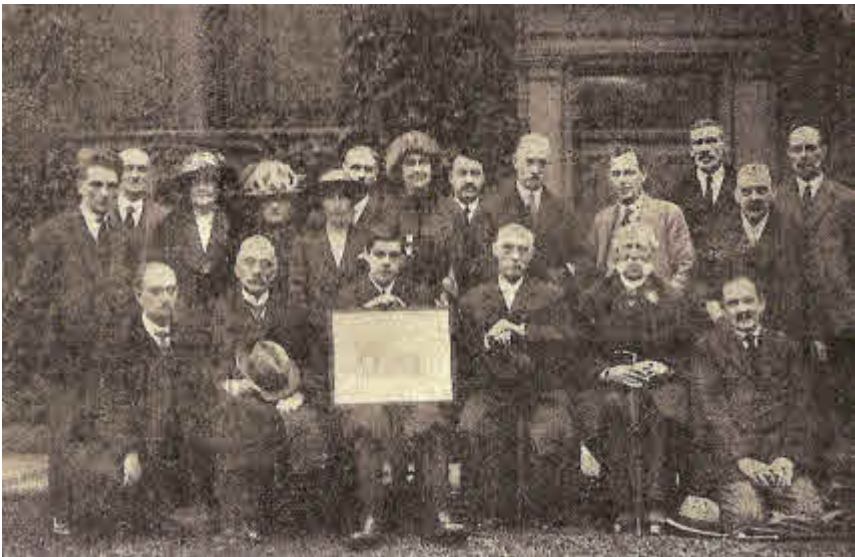
The Toleration Act enabled Dissenters to build their own places of worship and in 1703, following the raising of sufficient money through subscriptions, a chapel was built on land behind Randle Myddleton's Smithy in Sankey Street, (the same site as is now Cairo Street.)

A deed signed between Dr. Charles Owen Minister of the Chapel and the Earl of Warrington refers to a "late erected building or meeting place".

It was during the ministry of Dr. Owen in 1745 that the present larger chapel was built.

Dr. Owen was the minister of the chapel for fifty years from 1696 to 1746 and it was he who lead consolidation and growth of the chapel.

In 1863 the chapel was extensively repaired, the old gallery was taken down and the interior re-seated to make it look much as it does today.



September 30<sup>th</sup> 1922 celebrating the 250<sup>th</sup> granting of the Royal Licence to become a recognised church. The Revd. P Whiteman is holding the licence.

## **Some Prominent Ministers of the Chapel.**

### **Founding Father**

**Robert Yates 1662- 1678**

In 1646, Robert Yates came from Preston to Warrington to take up the appointment of Rector at the Parish Church. In 1649, during the struggles on the organisation of religion, Yates found himself disagreeing with the Parliamentary organisation of Independent worship and spoke out against it and refused to subscribe to the orders. For this objection, he was arrested and tried at Lancaster Castle where he was convicted and sentenced to death. Determined not to retract his objection, it was whilst he was writing his last speech and testament that he was reprieved.

Robert Yates returned to Warrington to continue as Rector until in 1662, with the restoration of the Stuart Monarchy, Ministers of Religion had to accept the Act of Uniformity to preach. Yates refused and was forced to leave the Parish Church, shortly after he was denounced under the Five Mile Act for preaching and sent to prison again. He continued to preach and in 1672 Charles II relaxed conditions for Dissenters and allowed the issue of licences both for preachers and places of worship.

Robert Yates obtained a general licence to preach at some of the homes of his flock and in a room at the Court House.

Today, we are free to believe what we feel is true to ourselves and not to have our beliefs imposed by state or church. Men and women like the Revd. Robert Yates were imprisoned to obtain that right. We should be eternally thankful for their fight for our freedoms.

### **Founder of the Warrington Academy    John Seddon    1747 - 1770**

The Revd. John Seddon followed Charles Owen in the Ministry at Cairo Street Chapel or Sankey Street Chapel as it was then known. The son of a dissenting Minister born in Hereford and educated at Caleb Rotherham's Academy in Kendal, he campaigned and fund raised tirelessly for the establishment in 1757 of The Warrington Academy. He was a lecturer at the Academy, its Secretary and Minister of the Chapel. Active in many spheres of dissenting and town life, John Seddon was the first President of The Warrington Public Library.

### **Age of Enlightenment and Arianism Willian Enfield 1770 - 1785**

William Enfield succeeded John Seddon as Minister of the Academy. It was a time of scientific revolution and religious debate, the old Protestant Dissent began to give way to what its opponents called 'Arianism' the belief in one God and Jesus as a human ethical teacher. Influenced by Joseph Priestley and other Arian theologians, the congregation gradually became Unitarian. Not however without dispute and in 1799 a group who had withdrawn from the chapel opened Stepney Chapel as the first Congregational Chapel in Warrington. At Cairo Street, the humanity of Jesus became more and more emphasised. A noted theologian, his hymnal published in 1772 'Hymns for Public Worship' included five hymns written by Anna Barbauld. Whilst a Minister in Liverpool, he was a friend and supporter of William Roscoe MP the anti-slavery campaigner and Unitarian.

### **A Man of International Repute Pearsall Carpenter 1819 – 1877**

Pearsall Carpenter was born in Bristol into a famous Unitarian family. He trained as an optician but left this career to become a Minister. Pearsall Carpenter was a vegetarian, interested in healthy living and opposed to smoking and drinking. He campaigned to improve public health in Warrington especially the need to establish a sewerage system in the town. He established an Industrial School at Cairo Street to provide orphaned boys with a trade to equip them with skills to live an advantaged life.

A recognised authority on shells in 1855, he bought the Gulf of California shell collection and in 1857, he established the shell collection of the British Museum by donating 8,000 specimens.

In 1859 he visited the Southern states of the USA and defying threats of being tarred and feathered, he delivered a lecture against slavery.

The Smithsonian Institute Annual report from 1860 states 'we have employed a distinguished conchologist, Mr. P.P. Carpenter of Warrington, England to classify and label the collection of shells.' This became the core of the Smithsonian's collection of shells.

In 1865, the Revd. Carpenter emigrated to Canada where he opened a school for boys and concerned himself, amongst other issues with Montreal's sanitation problems. He died in Montreal in 1877 of typhoid.

## **Points of Interest in the Chapel and Burial Ground**

### **The Lectern**

This was a gift of the congregation in 1897 and is in memory of John Aiken M.D., his sister Anna Letitia Barbauld and their mutual friend John Howard the Prison reformer who often worshipped in the chapel.

### **Vestry Clock**

Another famous member of the chapel was Frederick Monks 1834-1912, an entrepreneur and industrialist, his enlightened treatment of his workforce was influenced by the ethical preaching of Pearsall Carpenter. The high esteem in which he was held is testified by the 2ft high clock of solid brass open work on a marble stand. On it are inscribed the words "presented to Mr. F. Monks of the Wire Department of the White Cross Wire and Iron Co. Ltd. as a token of respect on his retirement from active management in connection with the company in July 1874". Frederick Monks presented the Golden Gates to Warrington where they currently stand outside the Town Hall.

### **Tablets**

The Chapel's association with the Warrington Academy, a Dissenting Academy of distinction is illustrated in the tablet dedicated to Edward Garlick. A student at the Academy at the time of his death, he was a native of Virginia.

Another tablet records John Andrews Wilson of Rivington who too was a student at the Academy at the time of his death.

### **Burial Ground**

#### **Gaskell Family Vaults**

In the burial grounds, there are vaulted graves of the Gaskell family who were members of the congregation for many generations.

A member of the family, William Gaskell, an influential Unitarian, Minister of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester was the husband of Elizabeth Gaskell novelist.

#### **Frederick Monks Family Vault**

Family members are interred in both the burial ground and the Remembrance Garden.

### **Priestley Gates**

The wrought iron gates marking the lower entrance of the chapel burial ground are from the house lived in by Joseph Priestley at Academy Place.

## **Famous Unitarians Associated with Cairo Street Chapel**

### **Joseph Priestley. Scientist, Minister and Thinker 1733-1804**

Joseph Priestley is perhaps the best known individual associated with the Academy. He is now more known as a great scientist but as a lecturer he introduced the subjects of chemistry, anatomy and civic responsibility to the curriculum of the academy. He was however primarily a Minister and was ordained at Warrington. His belief that Jesus was an ethical teacher and not a God influenced greatly the development of Unitarianism. A supporter of the French Revolution and a campaigner against slavery he left England after his home and chapel in Birmingham were burnt by a mob. After leaving England and settling in America in 1794, he established the first American Unitarian Church in Philadelphia.

### **Anna Letitia Barbauld nee Aikin 1743-1825**

A member of the Cairo Street congregation Anna Barbauld was a poet, novelist and hymn writer. She was the daughter of John Aikin of Warrington Academy a friend and confidant of many famous people including John Howard the Prison Reformer, Joseph Priestley, the French revolutionary leader Jean Paul Marat, a student at the Academy and many influential Unitarians. An anti slavery campaigner and supporter of the French Revolution, her writings and commentaries were popular during her life time and are today a source of local and national historical interest. Along with Henry Alford Dean of Canterbury, she wrote the hymn 'Come ye Thankful People Come.'

### **William Gaskell Minister 1805 – 1884**

Born in Latchford of a prominent Warrington Unitarian family, he was an outstanding minister of Cross Street Chapel Manchester. In 1845, he was appointed professor of English History and Literature at Manchester New College. He established evening classes at Owen's College and from 1858 taught at the Manchester Working Men's College. He was editor of the Unitarian Herald and principal of the Unitarian Missionary Board. A writer of pamphlets and hymns, his wife Elizabeth wrote Mary Barton influenced by the poverty she saw in Manchester.

## Ministers of Cairo Street Chapel

Robert Yates	1662 - 1678
Samuel Yates	1678 – 1679
Peter Aspinwall	1696
Charles Owen	1696 – 1746
John Seddon	1747 – 1770
William Enfield	1770 – 1785
Joseph Bealey	1786 – 1791
William Broadbent	1792 – 1822
Edward Dimock	1822 – 1841
Francis Bishop	1841 – 1844
Thomas Hicks	1844 – 1846
Phillip Carpenter	1846 – 1862
J. Nixon Porter	1863 – 1872
Henry. Perris	1872 – 1877
Richard Pilcher	1878 – 1887
Priestley Prime	1888 – 1893
William Drummond	1893 – 1900
Edward W. Lummis	1901 – 1903
Charles Harvey Cook	1903 – 1911
Stanley A. Mellor	1912 – 1914
Irvine Lister	1914 – 1920
Phillip Whiteman	1921 – 1930
Fred Sokell	1931 – 1939
Charles Lord	1940 – 1944
J.Buchanan Tonkin	1945 – 1949
Ernest Deakin	1950 – 1954
Eric Wild	1955 – 1963
Judith Walker	1964 – 1965
Frank Want	1965 – 1969
Lionel Hallworth	1970 – 1973
Bertram Batchelor	1975 - 1978
William Strachan	1982 – 1984
Chris Goacher	1998 – 2004
William Beaudrealt	2006 – 2007
Lynne Readett	2007