THE UNITARIAN HERITAGE
An Architectural Survey
The production of this book would have been impossible without the generous help and hospitality of numerous people: the caretakers, secretaries and ministers of chapels, and those now occupying disused chapels; the staff of public libraries and archives in many towns and cities; the bus and train drivers who enabled us to visit nearly every building. We would like to record grateful thanks to the staff of D. Williams's Library and the National Monument Record for their always courteous help; Annette Percy for providing the typescript; Charran Lacey for reading and advising on the script; and to the North Shore Unitarian Veatch Program, and District Associations in the British Isles for their generous financial help.
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Chapters 1 to 8 are each composed of an introduction, an alphabetical gazetteer and a list of disused and demolished chapels.

The names and addresses of chapels are given as they appear in the Directory of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

All quotations, unless otherwise stated, are from individual chapel histories. A catalogue can be consulted at Dr. Williams's Library, Gordon Square, London.
Introduction

This survey brings together for the first time those chapels of architectural interest within the British Isles that belong, or have belonged, to the Unitarian and allied denominations. The majority are still used as Unitarian places of worship; some have passed to other denominations or are in secular use; some demolished buildings of interest have also been included. Where a congregation has been housed in more than one building, the succession of buildings will be noted.

The reasons for demolition or reconstruction are various. In the earlier period, dissenters suffered persecution; Dr Priestley's experience in Birmingham in 1791 when his New Meeting was burned by the mob, and the harassment of the dissenters of Newcastle-under-Lyme in 1694 are cases in point. Often, however, the meeting-house became too small or old-fashioned and was pulled down and rebuilt in Gothic style to accommodate a congregation. Sometimes the meeting-house became too small or old-fashioned and was pulled down and rebuilt in Gothic style to accommodate a larger congregation. Sometimes a congregation split over theological differences. During the Second World War 13 chapels were destroyed by bombs; at least 15 chapels have been demolished due to local authority developments; a number of others have been voluntarily demolished by their congregations in order to rebuild in a form more appropriate to twentieth century needs.

Older chapels have been affected by alterations to their environment. Dissenting chapels occupied a distinctive place in the community; some were built behind the street facade and approached by an alleyway, thus concealing the extent of their premises (Kendal is a good example). Others are more openly sited in a graveyard facing the street; yet others on the periphery of the community, alongside the boundary walls. Modern re-planning of urban centres and the development of road systems has completely destroyed the environment of some of these chapels, for example, Boston, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Dover. Attempts have been made at Mansfield and Dudley to incorporate the eighteenth century chapels into new developments; such an opportunity was tragically missed at Oldbury. The environment of the fine chapel at Ipswich has been drastically altered. Other alterations include the turning back-to-front of chapels where the thoroughfare changes, chapels once deep in the country (sometimes built as a result of the Five-Mile Act of 1668) are now surrounded by suburbs.

No house of worship, however simple, can be appreciated without some knowledge of the beliefs and customs of the congregation whose home it is. About briefly, an outline of the development of Unitarianism must illuminate the description of brick, stone and mortar.

From the seventeenth century onwards various strands of belief have contributed their quota to what is now an organised denomination. Unitarianism only became legal in 1813 with the passing of the Toleration Act. The existing Unitarian chapels owe much to the English Free Presbyterians, something due to the General Baptists and, in the nineteenth century, to the Methodist Unitarians, Universalists and Christian Brethren. These groups all contributed their individual strands of belief. The Unitarian strand, originating in various parts of Europe at the time of the Reformation, developed into an organised denomination via a movement of thought within the Church of England and the dissenting churches, and a liberalising of theology contributed by teachers in the Dissenting Academies. The first avowedly Unitarian congregation of 1774 grew out of a protest by Theophilus Lindsey, vicar of Cotterick, against the imposition of the creeds of the Church of England as a test of orthodoxy. In the nineteenth century the writings and teachings of James Martineau and modern Unitarian movement of thought within the Church of England and the dissenting churches, and a liberalising of theology contributed by teachers in the Dissenting Academies. The first avowedly Unitarian congregation of 1774 grew out of a protest by Theophilus Lindsey, vicar of Cotterick, against the imposition of the creeds of the Church of England as a test of orthodoxy. In the nineteenth century the writings and teachings of James Martineau and Theodore Parker contributed to Unitarian development and consolidation.

Certain basic religious attitudes were typical, an early, and to some extent continuing, reliance on a rational interpretation of the Scriptures; a belief in human reason as a guide in the search for truth, and an acceptance of the individual's right to believe in his own way.

The many different strains within the one tradition are reflected in the buildings. Preaching occupied an important position in nonconformity, thus the pulpit is a central feature in early dissent. Ritual, except for the important hold that Communion had among dissenters, was minimal. In General Baptist churches total
immersion was practiced, making necessary the provision of baptistries. Especially in the North-West, day-schools were attached to Unitarian chapels, reflecting the Unitarian belief in the importance of education and democratic self-improvement.

It is estimated that nearly 1,000 meeting houses were erected between the Toleration Act of 1689 and 1770. Of this enormous number, most have long since returned to dust; a few belong to the Baptists and Society of Friends, and more became Congregational. Some 21 chapels from these early years are now Unitarian, and the remainder - how many we are only now beginning to discover - are still in use as secular buildings of one sort or another.

The simplicity of the early meeting-house is an important factor in its survival. It was usually built, though not from costly (Ipswich Meeting House, one of the best, cost £396 in 1760). Their modest size and simplicity of design reflect their function as both preaching-house and meeting-place and in mute contrast to the Unitarian chapels of the nineteenth century Gothic revival, whose decay is an awful warning of the frailty of bricks and mortar.

The large proportion of early chapels of architectural merit which are now Unitarian has been explained by Martin Briggs as due to their predecessors (the Presbyterians) being 'the most intellectual of the three denominations (Baptist, Independent and Presbyterian) and the most inclined to approve and attain to dignity of architectural design and beauty of internal fittings'. It must also be remembered that they were among the most prosperous of the early Dissenters. From the period before 1750, must also be remembered that they which are now Unitarian, and the more inclined to approve and attain to dignity of architectural design and beauty of internal fittings'.

The Gothic idiom was still used for educational and social functions - always important for Unitarians - continued space. Many of the later Victorian chapels, and indeed up to the First World War, have an open, single-space design reminiscent of the Friars' buildings of the late Middle Ages, and their function as preaching houses was of course similar.

Throughout the Victorian age there are fine examples of newly-acquired wealth being used with aesthetic discrimination in Unitarian churches: Todmorden, Gorran, Monton, Ullet Road, Liverpool, and Flowery Field and Cee Cee Cross in Hyde were built by men like the Fieldens, the Ashtons, Sir John Brunner, Sir Henry Tate, and Richard Peacecock.

More recently, apart from modest replacements of older churches destroyed by bombs, local authority planning, or by the shifting of societies' boundaries, there are successes and carefully designed new churches at Goldsmiths Green, West Kirby, Cambridge, Lytham St. Annes, and Halliwell Road Bolton from the inter-war period; the unusual church in date and style, of Newcastle upon Tyne of 1940, and post-war churches such as Buxton, Dudley, Kensington, Pendle, Rawtenstall and Stand.

An account of Unitarian churches of architectural interest must include some which have been subjected to a change of use or demolition. This needs emphasizing because some in our list had only a short life as Unitarian places of worship. Whether they lasted 50 or 300 years is immaterial - an unsatisfactory building was rarely the cause of congregational failure.

Some Unitarian churches would be outstanding in any survey of British architecture - others less so. Unitarians comprise a small body of people and their churches are not as numerous as those of many other religious groups. Thus is it possible for us to survey in one book the complete body of Unitarian churches in the British Isles - a task it would be difficult or impossible to attempt with a larger denomination.

Most of the older buildings have been altered, extended or partially rebuilt, only a handful are in the original condition. In listing them, the earliest date of erection has been taken as the reference point; it has, we hope, been made clear that subsequent alterations may have greatly altered the original structure.
CHAPTER ONE
The Puritans: Before 1662

Few dissenting chapels were built before the mid-seventeenth century, for the obvious reason that Dissent was illegal. But many seventeenth century chapels were built by puritans who belonged to the Church of England. Especially in the north — much later than the South in developing a parish-system embracing the whole population — chapels were built to serve remote areas, their status being 'chapels of ease' attached to a parish church. In large parishes like Halifax, Sheffield or Bolton, many such chapels existed in moorland and remote farming districts of Yorkshire and Lancashire. Here, away from centres of church government, puritanism flourished and many ministers and congregations adopted Presbyterianism. During the Commonwealth those churches with a puritan character were strengthened, only so be denounced in 1660 when the Restoration heralded the Act of Uniformity of 1662.

The few dissenting chapels built before 1662 bear a strong resemblance to Anglican chapels of the period, and are not unlike chapels built at the end of the century, when the laws against dissenters were relaxed.

In the remoter areas of England the Act of Uniformity made little difference to the way people worshipped. At Chowbent near Bolton the original brick chapel was in existence by 1645 as a chapel of ease of Leigh Parish Church. The Presbyterian minister, James Wood, was not ejected in 1662, and in 1673 the chapel was licensed as 'a Presbyterian Meeting Place'. However, in 1731, nearly sixty years after the Act of Uniformity, the Jacobite Lord of the Manor exercised his right to expel the Presbyterians. The congregation were then compelled to build a new chapel, completed in 1722. A similar pattern of events occurred at Rangway (later Hale Barns in Cheshire), Rivington, Walmley and Hindley in Lancashire, at Stanningtoo in Yorkshire, and other places.

Several mediaeval buildings housed Unitarian congregations and their predecessors for long periods. Blackfriars in Canterbury, Tavistock Abbey, Devon, and Kirkstead Abbey, Lincolnshire, are examples. It is probable that other early dissenting groups met in buildings left derelict by the dissolution of the monasteries; evidence for this exists at Norwich, Bridport, Warrington and Blackfriars, London.

No complete interior of a dissenting chapel of the mid-seventeenth century survives, but there is a description and photographs of the Canterbury chapel and of Kirkstead. The Ancient Chapel of Toxteth was largely rebuilt in 1774 but may be close to the original arrangement.
The Ancient Chapel of Toxteth, Liverpool, 1618 and 1774.

In 1632 Richard Mather arrived in Toxteth as master at the new school. Toxteth Park was a remote forest area, disappared in 1591 and a haven for outlawed Catholics and dissenters. Mather later returned to Oxford to complete his degree and was probably ordained by the Bishop of Chester in 1619. The Chapel was built for him, and leased from Viscount Molyneux, a Catholic. It was never consecrated, being outside a parish and beyond the jurisdiction of a bishop. In 1633 Mather was suspended for disobeying church law, he sailed for Massachusetts in 1634.

Red sandstone, stone flagged roof with small lantern. Original building work consists of two interior galleries, part of the interior woodwork (two pews dated 1660 and 1700) and some masonry. Largely rebuilt in 1774, reflecting growth in nearby Liverpool, but its compact crowded interior has the feel of the seventeenth rather than the eighteenth century. A third gallery was added in 1774 with porch on south side. 1841 extension on north side with new porch. Interior: small and dark with high pulpit, galleries and pews of dark oak. Clock by William Lassel of Toxteth Park [buried in graveyard].

Memorials to Edward Aspinwall of Toxteth Park, Esquire' 1656. Jeremiah Horrox who predicted and observed the transit of Venus across the sun, Nov. 24, 1639. Doctor Matthew Dobson, Physician, an original member of the Society for the Establishment of an Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Liverpool [est. 1769]. He was a pioneer in treatment of diabetes and became physician to Liverpool Infirmary in 1770. Also memorial to his daughter Eliza, 1778. Chapel bell 1751 probably by Luke Ashton of Wigan. Graveyard with many memorials and modern columbarium.


Presbyterians and Independents met in Lewes before 1650; a licence to worship in a private house was obtained in 1672. The move to Westgate reflected a split between Independents and Presbyterians, previously one congregation with two ministers. Presbyterians moved into old town-house of the Goring family adjacent to the Westgate, partly occupied by the Bull Inn. A plaque on the inn records that Tom Paine lived there from 1768-74.

Of the Tudor house, the first walls, one doorway and traces of moulded windows remain. Two large mullioned and transomed windows at back and cast side. Tile-hanging on rear wall. 1698-1700, roof raised and larger windows added, and circular load-bearing posts inserted. In 1913, under the direction of Ronald P. Jones, the interior was divided lengthwise and turned to form meeting-room and chapel. Vestry-cum-library adjoins entrance into passage to High Street.

The following mediaeval buildings were used as Unitarian chapels but are no longer so used.

Toxteth: The Abbey Refectory, Devon, 13th century. Founded 1600, when William, third Earl of Bedford presented and paid for a dissenting Baptist minister chosen by the Inhabitants of Toxteth. During the eighteenth century the congregation became Unitarian. A library was housed in refectory nave. Congregation ceased in 1900.

Canterbury: Blackfriars Refectory. 1236, Founded 1642.

Tiverton: The Abbey Refectory. Devon, 13th century. Founded 1600, when William, third Earl of Bedford presented and paid for a dissenting Baptist minister chosen by the Inhabitants of Tiverton. During the eighteenth century the congregation became Unitarian. A library was housed in refectory nave. Congregation ceased in 1900.

The image shows the interior of the Ancient Chapel at Toxteth, Liverpool, with a view of the staircase and the gallery, and another view showing the exterior of the chapel with its dark interior and high pulpit. The text describes the history and architectural details of the chapel, including its construction, the memorials, and the changes made over the years. It also mentions the adjacent Westgate Chapel at Lewes, which has been a place of worship for Presbyterians and Independents, and later for Unitarians. The text concludes with a list of other mediaeval buildings that were used as Unitarian chapels but are no longer so used.
CHAPTER TWO
The Growth of Dissent: 1662-1750

Following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 there was a period of intense persecution for dissenters. Informal promises had been made by Charles II at the time of the Treaty of Breda that religious toleration would be given to all (including Catholics), no matter whom they had supported in the Civil War. But the renewal of the Elizabethan Acts of Uniformity in 1662 required all clergymen to consent to using the Book of Common Prayer, to conform to the 39 Articles of Faith and to ordination by bishops. On St. Bartholomew's Day 1662 nearly 2000 clergy, about a fifth of the total, left the Church of England. The tendency to connect Dissent with treason persisted long into the eighteenth century, resulting in the 'Church and King' riots of 1715 (when at least 30 dissenting chapels were destroyed), and again at the time of the anti-French riots of the 1790s. The idea of religious diversity within the State was slow in growing, both in government and among dissenters themselves. The humble Baptists and Independents (not to mention the Quakers who had continued to meet and build and endure constant violence and destruction as a result) had no desire to be connected with a State church. Meanwhile, the Presbyterians, increasingly suffering under discriminatory laws (the Conventicle Act 1664, the Five Mile Act 1665), wanted toleration for themselves.

Until this was achieved there was little incentive to build chapels. Dissenters met in private houses, barns, guild or trade halls, or in the open air. Macclesfield and Evesham congregations met in barns from 1662 until they built their chapels in 1690 and 1737 respectively. In 1662, the Crewe Presbyterian congregation led by James Greenwood applied for a licence to meet in the Weavers' Hall. In London, merchants' halls such as Pinners Hall, Salter's Hall and Crosby Hall were used by dissenters as places of worship.

Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence of 1672 encouraged many dissenters to take out licences; these have been preserved by several Unitarian congregations - the first material evidence of their meeting-places. But indulgence was followed by further persecution. Severity was sometimes softened by the realisation that dissenters were the principal agents of trade and prosperous town life. Dissenters' influence in local affairs grew stronger in this period.

In 1689, immediately following the arrival in England of William III, the Toleration Acts were passed, exempting dissenters (but not Unitarians or Catholics) from the Acts of Elizabeth I, provided that preachers and meeting-houses were licensed by the bishop in archdeacon of the diocese. Most Unitarian churches dating from this time have a Presbyterian origin; a few were originally Independent (most Independents eventually became Congregationalists). The first trust deed of Framlingham Chapel (1737) says that the chapel 'is to be freely used... by such Protestants as shall profess to be of the Presbyterian or Congregational persuasion'. In many chapels Presbyterians and Congregationalists met together in the early years, later splitting over doctrinal differences. At Hinckley the Independent, Philip Doddridge, preached at the Presbyterian, now Unitarian, chapel.

A number of early chapels, mostly in the south and west country, are General Baptist in foundation. Besides those still active as Unitarian congregations, there were many which closed
in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the growth of
Scots and New Connexion Baptists edged the more tolerant
General Baptists towards Unitarianism. These early Baptist
chapels are more house-like than their Presbyterian counterparts
and closely related to the cottages and barns in their localities.
They are pleasant examples of vernacular building — among the
most attractive now to be found among Unitarian chapels. Their
quality as buildings has helped them to survive in their respective
communities; they are often well-cared for and worth seeking out.
Only a handful of chapels surviving from this early period — of
which 46 are now Unitarian — remain in their original condition.
Most have been altered and some drastically so.

What did they look like when they were new? And why were
they built the way they were — so different from the English
churches of the middle ages?

In the seventeenth century most churches were medieval in
classic. They had chancels, high altars, chantries and aisles,
wall-paintings, stained glass and carved wood and stone.
The reforming zeal of Edward VI's reign had led to the abandonment
of the high altar, the chantry became a storage or seating space,
the walls were white-washed, and the stained glass often removed.
Reformed churches on the Continent and in Scotland, where the
Reformation was more complete and alterations to churches
became permanent, still give a puritan impression to the visitor.
Such churches in Geneva, Amsterdam or Leiden would be seen by
men and women from all walks of life.

The earliest chapels were built by the same craftsmen as other
secular buildings in their locality. In the North, Lingholme house
and barn are commonly joined in line with mullioned windows
piecing the facade as necessary. Visitors to College Fold, Rathmell
near Settle, the surviving remnant of Richard Frankland's first
dissenting academy of 1686, can see the traditional pattern.
Fulwood Old Chapel [Sheffield] of 1728 has the minister's house of
1734 attached in the same way as farmhouses and barns in the
Mayfield valley adjacent. Further south, the chapel (now Zion
Baptist) of 1898 at Bradford-on-Avon forms the eastern end of the
line terrace known as Middle Ranks. At Ditchling the minister's

Bapust,
Left: Framlingham Unitarian Chapel (1712). Right: Wannmsiel Chapel.
Bottom: The Stone Chapel, Bradford-on-Avon (1748).
A brick place of worship in
commonplace
Wilmslow is in Lancashire
buildings in the area. Preston and the
chapel
in the city; nearby Hinckley Unitarian
their respective areas. Leicester Great Meeting (1708)

probably the first brick
building in Leicester. Right part of
Hinckley Unitarian Chapel showing
brick pillars (1720).

Demolished
work gate
Hinckley
building in
Leicester.

properties
of the period.

Symmetry is the most important feature. Order and balance
were valued highly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries —
Renaissance virtues which were noticeable by their absence
in most medieval churches. The elevations on pp 140-9 show
that the ordered disposition of two, four or six windows and
one or two doors can produce variations as subtle as any house.

Brick and stone are the two principal materials. One complete
wooden chapel, in its original state of 1700, exists at Ipswich.
Probably many others did not survive the early years; we know
that before 1778 there was a wooden chapel at Bewdley, Wors.
Col (clay and straw) was used at Credition, Devon. Stone is used in
the traditional stone areas of the North, the Cotswolds and
the West.

There are a number of brick chapels which are early examples
in their respective areas. Leicester Great Meeting (1708) was one of
the first brick buildings in the city; nearby Hinckley Unitarian
chapel (1721) must also be one of the earliest remaining brick
buildings in the area. Preston and the surrounding part of
Lancashire is an early site of brick-making, and the chapel of 1717
is an exceptionally early example. Knutsford (1689) and Dean Row,
Wilmslow (c. 1690), though in an area where bricks were
commonplace in the eighteenth century, are two of the earliest
brick places of worship in Cheshire. Upper Chapel, Sheffield,

seems to have been the earliest public brick building in Sheffield.
According to Eric Mercer (The Architectural Heritage of
Vernacular Buildings in England) it was not until the last quarter
of the seventeenth century that houses entirely of brick were
built by men of lesser status. The new material produced a completely
new kind of house which was both larger and more elegant. Brick
was used particularly by the new middle classes — men in trade
and professions such as law, medicine and banking. They were
among the first to build brick places of worship and the new form
of structure evolving from the use of brick.

The meeting house comprised a single interior space, unlike a
dwelling house. The focus of the meeting-house was the pulpit
at the centre of one of the long walls. There had evolved during the
seventeenth century the 'double plan' house, square rather than
linear. The roof of a square house had to be supported centrally,
and in a house this was easily done by resting the central roof
timber on the walls dividing the front rooms from the back. Thus
arose the double pitch and valley roof, commonly found on larger
meeting-houses. In a house this structure was quite satisfactory,
but in a chapel where the interior is open and the focus is central,
the pillars supporting the roof occupy space and obstruct the view
of the preacher for anyone sitting behind them. These pillars were
made much of as decorative features. For example, those of
Flemish oak at Taunton Chapel, 'perfect examples of the
Corinthian order from base to entablature', are planted in the
midst of the pews. A partial solution was to make them the front
supports of a gallery, as at Zilmslar and Hinckley.

The form of the dissenting chapel was new, but the detail was
very conservative — shy of decoration or flights of inventiveness.
Flamboyance of style was not considered a virtue in dissenting

At this early stage brick was often a material of outbuildings,
especially in the north. Many houses were built of wood on
a brick substructure. Brick was often used in the roof
construction. The form of the dissenting chapel was
new, but the detail was

Above: interior of Friargate Chapel, Ipswich (1700). Below: detail of one
of the pillars supporting the roof of
Taunton Unitarian Chapel (1721).
circles; the style associated with continental Catholicism was
baroque — the essence of flamboyant, emotional over-
dramatisation. Usefulness, later to develop into nineteenth
century utilitarianism, and later still into twentieth century
functionalism, was already a feature of nonconformist
architecture. Chapels of this period are traditional in many details.
Dean Row, Knutsford and Macclesfield in Cheshire still
incorporate the mullioned windows of Tudor times. Knutsford and
Dean Row (c. 1680) are late examples of the use of English bond
brickwork, rather than Flemish bond. Bury St. Edmunds Chapel
[1711] is also English bond, and an outstanding example of fine
brickwork with restrained ornament of pilasters and broken
pediments.

A number of chapels originally had exposed rafters, and were
ceil'd-in later. Bessels Green, Sevenoaks (1716) had the ceiling
added in 1852. Great Meeting Leicester (1708) has a fine plastered
ceiling of 1766. Windows and doors are usually simple. Windows,
at first with a horizontal emphasis divided by mullions (as at
Bradford (Withsey Fold), Knutsford, Dean Row and Macclesfield),
developed a more vertical form incorporating mullions and
transoms which continued to be used well into the 18th century,
as at Chesterfield and Crewkerne. Leaded lights were often set
straight into the stone or brick. Sash windows were not introduced
from the Netherlands till the end of the seventeenth century; the
oldest surviving example of this in a Unitarian chapel is the
Oeagon, Norwich (1752). Doors do not so frequently survive, but
the few that do have simple vertical planks and horizontal ledges of
oak, with iron stud-nails and strap hinges, the whole hung on
books set in the doorpost. There are good examples at Chowbent,
Atherton [1721], Dean Row, and Fulwood, Sheffield [1728].
Impressive door-surrounds, with unusual baroque decoration, are
to be found at Ipswich. At Bridgewater a fine shell-had door-
surround of 1688 was re-used in the rebuilt chapel of 1788. Often there
were two doorways, symmetrically placed, for the separate
use of men and women.

Dissecting chapels began to be planned according to the site, and
not with the eastwards orientation of the Anglican churches. Dean
Row, Knutsford and Macclesfield chapels are almost identical in
design, yet Dean Row fronts to the south, facing the graveyard.
Knutsford faces north towards the road. Macclesfield, on a
restricted town site, is also approached from the north. Knutsford
and Macclesfield have their pulpits on the north side. Most early
chapels have their main facade to the south, as do most dwelling-
houses of the period. The preoccupation with symmetry is thus
strengthened; the morning sun shines obliquely on the front
windows and moves around to sunset in the west. The window
splay was sometimes adjusted to take full advantage of this effect,
which must have been visibly appreciated during the long services
of three hours or more, customary when the chapels were new.
Few chapels had any artificial light till the advent of gaslight in the
early nineteenth century; the more light able to enter the chapels
the better, along with whatever heat the sun could provide as there
was usually no system of heating.

Inside, a symmetrical plan was centred on the pulpit. The
Hierarchy of minister, clerk, elders and congregation, seated in order of importance, is paralleled in the plan of law-courts, theatres, colleges and guildhalls. An elevated 'seat of authority' is at the centre of one wall; a canopy, or sounding-board is placed above it. Immediately below are seats and a table for those attending in a privileged capacity. Beyond are the seats for the congregation, fitting as many as possible into the space. All is subordinated to the seat of authority, now central to the space, rather than focused on the narrow east end.

Communion was important to early dissenters, but the pulpit was the focus of attention. During services it was the centre from which radiated words of comfort, wisdom, inspiration. Early Puritans had valued the lecture, a sermon-based service which enabled them to avoid the services of an unsympathetic parish priest, and the dissenters' monumental pulpit demonstrated the sermon's inherited value. Most early pulpits were moved in Victorian times. Examples in their original positions can be seen at Ipswich, Halle, Barnes, Chobham, Finsbury and Bury St. Edmunds. Most were two or three-deckers, the bottom level for the clerk who announced and led the psalms and hymns, the second for the preacher when reading the lessons and prayers, the top for delivering the sermon - the most important part of the service.

( Oliver Heywood (1630-1702), an indefatigable travelling preacher in the North of England, is recorded preaching for three hours on one occasion. Windows are common behind the pulpit, giving a good natural light for the minister and clerk to read their books but an uncomfortable glare for others. However, box-pews did not necessarily face forwards, but were grouped in squares. Although some might read the Bible it was not necessary to read to follow the service.

It was traditional for the congregation to be responsible for their own seating arrangements. Early dissenting chapels were built in the heydays of 'possessive individualism', and the notion of private ownership had embraced agriculture, wage-earning, and even worship. Heads of families 'improved' their accustomed seat in the Anglican churches by building enclosed pews, and the new dissenting chapels usually included pews from the past. Material comforts were added in the form of cushions, curtains, backrests, footstools, candles, and even individual stoves. As Dean Swift put it.

A bedstead of the antique mode
Compact of timbers many a load
Such as our ancestors did use
Was metamorphosed into pews,
Which still their ancient nature keep
By lodging folks disposed to sleep.

The floor-space of the chapel was filled with private boxes, each with a door (sometimes with a lock) and seats on three sides. The boxes were originally up to five feet high, these were often lowered in the nineteenth century, or totally removed and replaced by forward-facing bench-pews. The originals were often of oak, fine examples of joinery with Flemish brass or iron fittings.

There were other additions to worship. In General Baptist chapels the baptism, large enough for total immersion, is sometimes found below the pulpit as at Taunton. In humbler chapels a nearby stream might be used, as at Billingshurst; at Bessels Green a baptism was constructed in the yard. Communion tables occasionally survive from this period, for example, the 17th century oak table in Dean Row, Westminster. Two fine Flemish brass chandeliers survive at Ipswich and Taunton. There are a few early bells - rare in dissenting chapels where steeples and the ringing of bells were forbidden. Clocks are a common feature, often with the maker's name and date, and hung on the front of the gallery.

Graveyards are important additions to many chapels. Sometimes an earlier yard surrounds a rebuilt chapel, as at Macclesfield in Cheshire. The habit of interment in vaults under the chapel (or even in the ground beneath an earth floor) continued into the eighteenth century, memorials to ministers buried in this way can be seen at Fulwood, Knutsford, Atcham, and Walsley. Excellent examples of the memorial stone-mason's art can be seen at Horsham, Billingshurst, Uxbridge, Hinckley, Bessels Green and Frenchay.
Ainsworth Presbyterian Chapel, Knowsley Road, Lancashire. 1715. Congregation originated in chapel of ease of Middleton Parish Church, from which they were ejected.

Stone, gabled Welsh slate roof; two rows of four three-light mullioned windows to each side, bellcote. Inscription over entrance: "Erected AD 1715, Enlarged AD 1773, Altered and repaired 1845". 1775 enlargement due to ministry of Rev. Thomas Barnes, eloquent preacher, later minister of Cross Street, Manchester, and principal of Manchester College, buried in aisle.

Interior, box pews (re-pewed 1845); central two-decker pulpit. Three-sided gallery. One-handed clock inscribed "Pr. Clare sect. Manchester 1774". Good Victorian accessories, such as umbrella stands, lighting, etc. Memorial to Rev. Joshua Dobson d. 1769.

Extensive graveyard, many good stones. Associated buildings north and east of chapel, Sunday School west of graveyard.

Atherton: Chowbent Chapel, Bolton Old Road, Lancashire. 1722. Congregation originally built a brick chapel of ease from Leigh Parish Church in 1645. Presbyterians ejected by Jacobite Lord of Atherton Manor in 1721. First ministers were three generations of James Wood. "General" James Wood (minister for 64 years) raised a troop against the Jacobites in 1715 rebellion.

Brick with stone detailing. Three bays, with gable-pediment, by four bays; round-arched windows in two storeys. Date of 1722 on top course of bricks on north side. Cupola and bell.


Imposing setting in walled graveyard with impressive gate.

Sunday School of 1837; day school (now local authority school) of 1859 and 1890.

One of the best examples of Presbyterian architecture.

Bessels Green: Old Meeting House, Sevenoaks, Kent. 1716. General Baptist Congregation dates from 1650, register of births from 1673. Chapel and parsonage housed under the same roof, hence the irregular, though pleasing, east front. Chapel has three tall mullioned and transomed windows, right-hand window formed the chapel entrance until 1882 when vestibule and vestry were extended into the parsonage, to which the present door originally gave access. Parsonage extended northwards in 1887; first floor windows raised into dormers, early 20th century. Walls of vernacular diapered brick (red bricks, blue headers) on ragstone base; tile hanging on south wall.

Interior originally had box-pews and pulpit with sounding board fixed to the west wall in 1749, when gallery added to north wall over original entrance (gallery removed 1882). Pulpit and box pews replaced by present pulpit and pitch pine pews in early 20th century; these pews in turn replaced by chairs in mid 1979. The roof is open and spanned by two beams with kingposts. Brass chandelier; long case single-handed clock dated 1718. Memorials: bronze plaque to the Harman family, cycling memorial to Lionel Alcwyn Blundell O.C.


"The scene is complete, an embodiment of the gentle, familial spirit of eighteenth century nonconformity." (John Newman, Buildings of England, Kent.)

Bridgwater: Christchurch Unitarian Chapel, Dampier Street, Somerset, 1688 and 1778. Congregation dates from 1662, when vicar, Rev. John Norman, ejected. In 1683 (during the Monmouth rebellion) Lord Stawell wrote: "Found the House of Worship, which was sooner pluck'd down than build ... We stood round the beams, but had not the power." He added, "The Meeting house was made round like a cockpit, and once held some 400 persons". In 1751 the chapel is described as "a fine Meeting House, with an advanced seat for the Mayor and Aldermen, who happen to be Dissenting, as also a private academy for such of their youth as are intended for preachers." (England's Gazetteer.)


Bury St. Edmunds Unitarian Chapel, Churchgate Street, Suffolk. 1711. Founded 1672.

Impressive three-bay red brick facade aligned with neighbouring buildings in the street. Four pilasters rising to Dutch-style parapets with central sundial. Central door with broken pediment and oval window above, flanked by two half-height round-arched windows with leaded lights and original fittings. Double-hipped roof hidden by parapet. Iron railings and gates at front.

Interior: square with graceful double staircase to three-sided gallery; superb woodwork. Three-decker pulpit and sounding board flanked by two oval windows. Some pews removed and area below galleries screened off, but most of the original fittings remain. Central pillar supporting valley gutter.

Ambitious and unique design for a dissenting chapel, though the style is used in the Eastern Counties for middling size houses. The chapel is being restored by the D.O.E.

Chesterfield: Elder Yard Unitarian Chapel, Elder Way, Derbyshire. 1894. Founded 1862. In 1893 High Sheriff of Derbyshire, Cornelius Clarke, did so purchase with intent to erect a new building thereupon to be a place of Meeting for Dissenting Protestants for Religious Worship. The chapel's architecture reflects the status of the county gentry of the period.

Original south front faces graveyard. Stone walls with quoins; now roughcast, tall mullioned and transomed windows. Slightly projecting central section with pediment and fine doorway. Chancel added at east end in 1853, destroying the symmetry.

Interior 'turned' 1818, pulpit formerly on north wall. Original gallery blocked off 1853 to form meeting-room. Early eighteenth century clock. Fine collection of mammoth pottery jars by Pearson of Chesterfield. Early records describe windows being with green and red curtains, pew cushions and lined with red or green braid, walls white-washed, pulpit rail painted blue.

Large graveyard with good memorials. North of chapel, attached Sunday School of 1831 and 1846, now a shop.

Chorley Unitarian Chapel, Park Street, Lancashire. 1725.

Founded 1725. Abraham Compton of Chorley Hall gave £1,000 for land and chapel. Ashlar stone in large random blocks. Two doors; two mullioned and transomed windows on each side. Red brick chancel of 1885.

Interior plain, arched rear window, organ and central choir seats in chancel donated William Tate 1902.

Graveyard with tomb of Rev. William Tate, minister 1799-1836 (father of Sir Henry Tate, sugar manufacturer and founder of the Tate Gallery, London). Attractive group opposite of school (1860) and houses; parsonage adjoins graveyard.

Crewkerne Unitarian Chapel, Hermitage Street, Somerset. 1733.

Founded 1666, Rev. Jeron Murch, writing in 1835, thought the chapel had always been Unitarian; he called it 'of the plainest kind.'

Yellow Ham stone. Cropped gable roof. Facade with semi-circular window over central door, flanked by mullioned and transomed windows, also round-headed. Extension at side for organ brought from Ilminster Chapel 1913.


Dean Row Chapel, Wilmslow, Cheshire. c. 1690.

Founded 1672. Probably on site of earlier chapel built to comply with the Five Mile Act of 1665. Location still rural though now approached by suburbia.


Interior 'turned' and restored 1845 after period of disuse. Pulpit in north-east corner, re-aligned box-pews. Galleries on east and west ends (south gallery removed) Organ 1894 in east gallery, area below walled off to form spacious vestry, containing early communion table.

Extensive and attractive graveyard, many graves, modern sundial. Lych-gate 1870. Former school 1862 and parsonage situated 200 yards north.

Ditchling Old Meeting House, Sussex. 1740. General Baptist. Founded 1698 by Robert Cheffield of Streat (d. 1726); buried in graveyard, also earlier influence of Matthew Caffyn from Horsham. Trust Deed dates from 1740 but chapel may be seven years earlier. Adjoining cottage is probably older than chapel and may have been used for early meetings.

The two buildings form a splendid group of Sussex vernacular architecture. Chapel is brick with central porch flanked by two tall pilasters and transomed windows. Hipped roof. Cottage has hanging tiles. Interior modernised, pews removed 1877. No trace remains of baptistery.

Delightful garden-yard approached by 'Twiston', footpath to chapel. Graves include that of Samuel Thompson (1766-1837), Free-Thinking Christian and radical reformer.

Dudley Old Meeting House, Wolverhampton Street, Worcestershire. 1717.


Delightful garden-yard approached through arch of Sunday School. Apart from this, all traces of environment have been swept away and replaced by car park and supermarket.

Evesham Unitarian Chapel, Oak Street, Worcestershire. 1737.

Founded 1696. Strong Puritan tradition in Evesham prior to building chapel; congregation worshipped in a barn behind ?7 High Street Third minister, Paul Cardale, author of 'Inquiry whether we have any Scripture Warrant for a direct Supplication, Pray or Thanksgiving, either to the Sun, or to the Holy Ghost' (1773) - important in spreading Unitarian ideas.


Delightful garden-yard approached through arch of Sunday School. Apart from this, all traces of environment have been swept away and replaced by car park and supermarket.

Framlingham Unitarian Meeting House, Bridge Street, Suffolk. 1717.

Founded 1660. Long history of Dissent in town; parish church had several Puritan vicars. (1716, Independent congregation at Woodbridge.) Quay gave DB for new church at Framlingham, 'to be freely used .. by such Protestants as shall profess to be of the Presbyterian or Congregational persuasion'.


Freckley Chapel, Freckley Common, Bristol. Apparently 1720, but roof timbers have been dated to 1650-80.

Founded 1620's. First Trust Deed 1691. Pennant stone. Double-hipped roof with valley gutter. Windows arched, and entrance porch and bell-tower added at a later date. Bell recast 1750. Signed 'When you hear me ringing come and praise the Lord' (recently stolen).

Interior square on plan with rear panelled gallery and two Tuscan columns supporting roof beam. Pulpit, clock inscribed Thornbury, and nice little fireplace all probably early nineteenth century. Recently modernised with box-pew paneling forming dado.

Large graveyard with many memorials, including extra heavy slabs to thwart body snatchers. Pleasant situation on Freckley Green, contemporaneous Friends Meeting House nearby, both supported by Bristol merchants in early days. Michael Maurice, father of Christian Socialist Frederick Denison Maurice, was minister and schoolmaster here 1815-24.

Gateacre Chapel, Gateacre Brow, Liverpool. 1700.

Founded 1690. Red sandstone, pitched roof with bell-cote. Bell with carved head and foliage, inscribed 'Come away make no delay 1723' (same bell as at Platt Chapel, Manchester). Roof raised c. 1723.

Interior 'turned'. Early pulpit at north-east corner, and rear gallery. Memorials to first minister James Whittle d. 1702 (in aisle floor); also to Rev. William Shepherd d. 1847. Chapel surrounded by graveyard with memorials, including Rev. Joseph Lawton d. 1747. Centrally pivoted lych-gate. 'The centre of Gateacre is not the church but the chapel' (Everson).

Hale Chapel, Chapel Lane, Hale Barns, Cheshire. 1723.

Founded 1662. Congregation met originally at Kingway (chapel of ease of Bowdon Parish Church - now under airport.) Ejected 1722 and erected 3 miles away at Hale.

Brick, formerly one outside staircase to gallery. Bell-cote. Two original entrances on north side.

Impressive interior; open rafters and kingpost trusses; box pews; pulpit with sounding-board in original position. East window by Morris and Co. (Burne-Jones) 1906.

Surrounded by large graveyard, many memorials. Lych-gate c. 1800 by Percy Worthington. Arts and crafts style school 1880 and 1910; architect F. B. Dunkinly.

Huckley Great Meeting, Barxes Lane, Leicestershire. 1722.

A house was licensed as a Presbyterian meeting place in 1672. Here the great Independent Philip Doddridge preached as a student.

Brick with eroded corner pilasters; original front is at the back. Segmental arched windows
op to two levels. Date inscribed on east side at top of wall. New entrance added 1869.

Impressive interior; two massive oak pillars support valley-roof; three-sided gallery of 1727; pews refitted 1912. Egg-cup pulpit pre-dates chapel. Behind pulpit, tapestries of 1902, concealing recess used by students of Hinckley academy when attending services in eighteenth century. Clock.

Memorials include George Dare, first secretary and manager of Hinckley Cooperative Society and secretary of first building society in the town; Arthur Atkinson, hosier manufacturer and founder of Hinckley Free Library; also Elliot McEwen, music master of Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot).

Finetrees in large graveyard with many good slate memorials.

Hindley Presbyterian Chapel, Market Street, Lancashire. Dated 1700, although accounts survive to suggest it was rebuilt on the same site in 1788. Congregation ejected from chapel of ease of 1661.


Massive complex of brick schoolrooms to east, 1877 and later. Small graveyard at rear with few gravestones.

Hinckley Unitarian Church, Worthing Road, Sussex. 1721.

Founded 1618. General Baptist origins in early seventeenth century. Rev. Matthew Calvyn (1628-1714) was expelled from Oxford in 1645 for Unitarian views (memorial window in chapel).


Baptistry and 'Copper Room' for heating water added 1772 over a well south of the chapel. Spacious garden with good memorials.

Hinister Old Meeting, East Street, Somerset. 1719.

Founded 1672. Second chapel on the site. Moolham stone with Ham stone facings. Pediment with obelisks over two Tudor Gothic windows flanked by pair of doorways. Side elevations show two unequal coped gables also crowned by obelisks; square Mullioned windows. Interior 'turned'; Victorian pulpit and pews. Prominent side gallery (rear before turning took place) supported by massive Ham stone pillars, with twin central staircases. Licence of 1719 framed on wall. Clock by J. Haustford, Hinister.

Organ chamber added 1819. Nice sentimental child's figure from Sunday School date-niche eventually added on rear (1869). Clock in organ. Magnificent brass chandelier with 24 candles, probably Dutch. Pulpit carved in Gibbons style, also carving on balusters and gallery.

Surroundings drastically altered with redevelopment, verdant graveyard has disappeared. Area to east of chapel in process of restoration and development.

Above: left, pulpit used by Philip Doddridge at Hinckley above: Hinsham.

Above (panel), exterior of chapel and detail of door moulding. Below, dimmer; interior views of gallery pillars and pulpit now in chapel Sunday School of 1846 adjacent to chapel.

Main approach is through avenue of pews to west front. Graveyard with decaying tombs; memorial stone between entrance doors inscribed 'a new front and other repairs inside in 1851'.

Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House, Friar's Street, Suffolk, 1700.

Founded 1672. First two ministers, ejected vicars of Barking (Suffolk) and St. Andrew's, Colchester. The only remaining timber-framed chapel of the period; built on brick (flooring original floor was brick). Defoe described it in 1720: 'as large and as fine a building of that kind as most on this side of England, and the inside the best finished of any I have seen, London not excepted'. Builder, Joseph Clarke, house carpenter, his contract hangs in the chapel. Probably made in components in the builder's yard and re-erected on site. The whole exterior is plastered and painted. Five bays square, with upper and lower storey multi-lighted and transomed windows and oval windows (added c. 1900) over entrance doors and on pulpit side. Pedimented entrances with carved supports of cherubs and doves. Spy-hole in door to safeguard congregation when meeting. Double-hipped roof.

Interior virtually as built with addition of organ (1799), wooden floor and removal of small area of box pews. Four pillars support valley gutter and three-sided gallery which strengthens framework of building. Clock contemporary with chapel. Magnificent brass chandelier with 24 candles, probably Dutch. Pulpit carved in Gibbons style, also carving on balusters and gallery.

Surroundings drastically altered with redevelopment, verdant graveyard has disappeared. Area to east of chapel in process of restoration and development.
Kendal Unitarian Chapel, Market Place. Founded 1662. Earliest surviving brick building in Kendal (apart from Roman remains). Dark red brick. Two outer staircases rise to access to galleries and form symmetrical entrance porches. Gabled roof, four windows at sides. Double-hipped roof of Charnwood slates; corner pilasters, and Mullioned and transomed windows in two storeys. Interior renovated but original appearance of late-eighteenth century style, commemorating chapel officials; painted and carved chancel stalls. Pulpit of 1708 (see tablet on chancel wall). Numerous memorials include the finest we have seen; superb lettering in stone and metal from eighteenth to twentieth centuries. Among them, Rev. Hugh Worthington, d. 1797, Mrs. Mary Reid, d. 1812, Paget family, Alderman W. Kempson, d. 1893, Edith Coggins, d. 1910, Thomas Fielding Johnson, d. 1931, Annie Elizabeth Clephan, d. 1930. Vestry contains collection made by Annie Clephan of pictures of the chapel; also portraits, among others, of James and William Gardner (introduced Beethoven's music to England).

Large graveyard full of finely lettered stones, slate memorials a speciality. South of yard, Sunday School of red brick, gothic, dated 1859.

Lincoln Unitarian Chapel, High Street. Founded 1662. Foundation of congregation closely linked to Disney family (descendants Rev. John Disney, colleague of Theophilus Lindsey, and Walt, of cartoon fame).


Interior interesting chiefly for its memorials; Rev. Dr. Richard Price [1723-1791], proponent of laws of probability and author of Observations on Civil Liberty, supporting the American War of Independence; Samuel Rogers and family; Anna Barbauld; Samuel Sharpe. Prominent situation facing the Green.

Leicester Great Meeting, East Road, Bond Street. 1708.

Probably second chapel of congregation founded 1662. Earliest surviving brick building in Leicester (apart from Roman remains). Square plan. Double-hipped roof of Charnwood slates; corner pilasters, and Mullioned and transomed windows in two storeys. Vestibule across full width of front and vestry, close and chancel added 1866. Interior very fine; originally open to rafters, splendid plaster ceiling added 1786. Gallery 1716, supported by iron columns. Chancel window with six lights in neo-Gothic 13th century style, commemorating chapel officials; painted and carved chancel stalls. Pulpit of 1708 (see tablet on chancel wall).

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London: Newington Green Unitarian Church, North London. 1708.

Founded 1682. The area was inhabited by influential Dissenters in the seventeenth century, for instance, Defoe and Watts; there were several dissenting academies. Edward Harrison, goldsmith, erected the chapel at a cost of £300.

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Lydgate Unitarian Chapel, New Mill, near Huddersfield, Yorkshire. 1695 and 1768.

Founded 1671, by John Armitage (kinsman of Enoch Armitage, who founded a settlement in Hopewell Valley, New Jersey in 1719). First preacher at chapel was Oliver Heywood, great travelling preacher in the North of England.

Gritstone, pitched roof with coping gable, kneelers and cupola. Some doubt about rebuilding in 1768, possibly old materials reused (see panel near pulpit carved 'John Armitage 1695'). Extensive repairs in 1848; south wall partly rebuilt with new windows, full-height porch incorporating organ loft, cupola and bell.


Macclesfield: King Edward Street Chapel. Cheshire. 1690.

Congregation dates from Ejection of 1662. Chapel was opened on St. Bartholomew's Day (August 24th) 1690 — the anniversary of the Election. List of seat-holders for the opening includes John Broadhurst, given a whole pew for kindness in letting the society have his barn to meet in. The chapel was dominated by the Brocklehurst family (silk manufacturers) till closure 1873-6 (the Brocklehurst Bank was adjacent). Design similar to Dean Row and Knutsford, but here on a restricted town site and typically situated down an alley from the road.

Sandstone, two outer staircases rise to gain access to galleries and form symmetrical entrance porches. Twelve [six over six] two and three-light mullioned windows in facade, now with Gothic tracery. Centre four windows are dormers. Rear has 16 (eight over eight) three-light mullioned windows. Lead spout dated 1690; iron wall lamp opposite alley. Slate roof (stone flags prior to 1929). Interior Gothicised 1840 but retains 'Meeting House' atmosphere. Two-decker pulpit with sounding board in centre of long north wall. Around the pulpit, blocking the four central windows are dark wooden panels with Gothic decoration and gild lettering. Originally 470 sittings [200 on ground floor and 270 in gallery]; box pews listed 1840; present pews 1929 (original benches in gallery). East and west galleries supported by timber columns 10 in square. South gallery removed c. 1800. Organ of 1876 in west gallery, where open rafters still survive. William Leicester's chair inscribed W.L. 1688.

Maidstone Unitarian Church, Earl Street. Kent. 1735.

Congregation dates from 1662 Ejection. Brick, square, with pyramidal slate roof and corner pilasters. Three bays to front and sides with mullioned and transomed windows. Front on pavement edge; central door with iron lamp over.


Mansfield Old Meeting House, Stockwell Gate. Nottinghamshire. 1701.


Pink sandstone with limestone quoins, square. Two original doorways on east side, now blocked. Mullioned and transomed windows; double hipped roof. Symmetry of present front elevation spoilt by porch of 1940.


Extensive school buildings 1837 and 1885 alongside entrance yard. Redevelopment all round, but chapel has survived well.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Old Meeting House, Lower Street. Staffordshire. 1717.

Founded 1672. Previous chapel of 1689 burnt down by rioters, encouraged by town authorities. Patronised by Josiah Wedgwood and family; Charles Darwin's mother, Susannah Wedgwood, also attended [see plaque in chapel]. 1804-20, chapel closed; open in Victorian 1873; reopened 1894. Rear gallery. Chapel now exposed by ring road.

Maidstone.
Park Lane Chapel, Wigan Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire. 1697. Founded 1674. Brick walls with narrow courses, now rendered. Mullioned windows, stone flagged roof with bell-cote. 1856, one of the two entrances blocked, chapel 'turned' and ceiling put in. 1861, coal mines started in the area, changing environment and make-up of congregation, renovations in 1871, 1904, 1926, 1946, all in part due to subsidence.

Present gallery and pews of 1873 when box pews converted into paneling (some dated 1697). Interior colourfully Gothicised with much charm; stained glass: memorial window to Gaskell family, 1914-18 war memorial windows, nice sentimental painted glass in vestiбуle, etc. Pulpit moved from middle of north wall to narrow east end. Present pulpit from Precot chapel (1756-1896). Memorial to Rev. Samuel Park, d. 1775. Collection of memorabilia gives insight into chapel life through the centuries.

Very large graveyard, with interesting tombs.

Day school buildings west of chapel (1702); recently demolished Sunday School buildings (1867) stood north of chapel. Lych-gate of 1934 erected by the Women's League as a memorial to Rev. Matthew Watkins.

Rivington Unitarian Chapel, near Horwich, Lancashire. 1703. Congregation originated in parish church of 1666 on opposite side of The Green; ejected 1662. Patron, Lord Willoughby of Parham, d. 1765 [see remarkable monument in chapel].

Stone. Two mullioned and transomed windows with leaded lights flanked by pair of doors, headstone on right dated 1703. Stone flagged roof with bell-cote at west end.

Interior original and unaltered. High pulpit centred on long north wall. Box pews with seats facing each other rather than the pulpit. Canopied pew of the Willoughby family. Stone floor. Framed stone tablet inscribed 'Ye REV'D SAMUEL NEWTONE, Driven from ye church on Bartholomew Sunday 1662', cereated when workmen were pulling down a wall c. 1840. Rural graveyard overlooking beautiful scenery on lower slopes of Rivington Pike.

Sheffield: Fulwood Old Chapel, Whiteley Lane, 1728/9. Founded 1714. Inscription in centre of front wall. 'Built 1729 in Persuance of ye last will of Mr. W. Renkley. William Renkley (1680-1724), tutor and librarian, wrote several children's textbooks on mathematics, English grammar and the classics. His will states: '...forasmuch as Fulwood is very remote from Church and Chapel my mind and will is that for the convenience of the inhabitans thereof [who are most of them Dissenters from the Church of England]. a large and handsome Chapel shall be built and finished with a pulpit and convenient seats... with the interest and produce of the said four hundred pounds...'

Sandstone with gritstone mullions, and door surrounds. Not large. Two doors, four mullioned windows with original leaded lights and glass. Interior 'turned' in seventeenth century, gabled and modernised mid-twentieth century after long period of neglect.

Adjoining parsonage, 1754; also attached, small schoolroom built soon after. Former graveyard contains village stocks found nearby and re-erected 1930. Now on edge of suburbia, but faces beautiful Mayfield Valley.

Shelfield: Underbank Chapel, Stannington. 1742.

In 1652 Richard Spoon left funds to support 'a preaching minister' in Stannington. Place of worship at this time possibly a barn. The Presbyterian Minister was ejected in 1662, but until 1669 ministants were entered as curates of the Diocese of York. A licence was taken out by dissenters to meet in nearby Spout House and endowed a minister to be a Protestant Dissenter... of the Presbyterian or Congregational denominations. The chapel has an exceptionally sophisticated design — who was responsible for it?

Sandstone with hipped stone-flagged roof. South front has two tall central round-arched windows with flanking doors; circular windows above. Pronounced gritstone window and door surrounds and quoins. Originally had six mullioned windows in two storeys to sides and rear; west elevation now has two round-arched windows with two blocked mullioned windows, altered in 1856 when pulpit moved from south to west wall and chapel 'turned'. (Pulpit subsequently moved to north-west corner 1921 when war-memorial organ installed; returned 1956 when transposed with organ.) Originally three galleries; only east one survives, leaving interior sadly much altered. In vestry (under gallery) delightful sampler depicting chapel, signed 'Isaiah Oates 1868'.

Small cottage adjoins chapel. Schoolroom dated 1853 across road on moorside. Large graveyard with many interesting stones. Superb setting; still isolated, yet suburbia creep nearer.

Sheffield: Upper Chapel, Norfolk Street. 1700, reconstructed 1848. Congregation originated with ejection of Rev James Fisher, vicar of Sheffield, in 1660; met in private houses till 1678, then at New Hall Chapel on Snig Hill. Present chapel built during ministry of Timothy Jollie (Jollie was principal of Armitage Academy, East of Sheffield).

Chapel originally faced West, approached from Fargate down Pepper Alley. In 1948 — delayed till passing of Dissenters' Chapels Act — it was enlarged and 'turned' to face Norfolk Street. This street, laid out c.1770, became the principal street in the town for chapels — Unitarian 1700, Congregational 1715, Methodist 1780, Roman Catholic 1850.

A look at the rear court is instructive. Brick side walls of 1700 — the oldest exposed brickwork in the city — can be discerned rising to the upper window arches. In 1848 these were raised by 6 feet and a new roof constructed. An extra bay was added to the East end, forming a vestiбуle with classical stone facade and portico supported on 4 Ionic columns. At the West end the first vestry with organ loft was added, incorporating datestone 'Built in 1700 enlarged 1847'.

Internally present gallery added, and a layout similar to today adopted. Rebuilding cost about £2,000, under the direction of John Frith, Architect, of Sheffield. Re-opened for public worship on 21st May 1848, the chapel makes an interesting contrast with Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, and Gee Cross Chapel, Hyde — both built...
Great Hucklow (son of William Bagshawe, 'Apostle of the Peak') by Chantry, the Hunter family (Rev Joseph Hunter was author of definitive histories of Hallamshire and South Yorkshire, and instrumental in establishing the Public Record Office). Vestry contains fine collection of paintings and photographs of past ministers of the chapel and of Susannah, wife of Rev Joseph Evans. Adjoining West wall in the rear yard is a barely legible Latin memorial to Timothy Jollie.

From graveyard landscaped as a small public garden with memorials and sundial, Southwest of the chapel and adjoining is the Hollis block built as the Sunday School c.1815. South again are the caretaker's house and Channing Hall, the latter built above a smart parade of shops in 1862 on the then new Surrey Street. Facade resembles a Venetian palace; interior has multi-coloured glazed brick and fine timber roof, linked to chapel by spiral staircase. Architects, Flockton and Gibbs. (F. M. Gibbs, a leading member of the congregation, also responsible for pews, pulpit and vestry extension).

Shrewsbury Unitarian Church, High Street, Shropshire. 1889-1885.

Congregation dates from 1662. Election of two Shrewsbury vicars, Rev John Bryan and Rev Francis Talbots. Chapel burnt down in 1715 riots, rebuilt 1718 with government funds; large Coat of Arms of George I in chapel. 1839, further rebuilding. 1885, forecourt built over to create the present stone street facade, Fowser thinks it may be an attempt to recreate style of earlier facade.

Interior, refined classical, panelled dado, high square windows, central pulpit with recently-restored coat of arms above. Memorials include one to Charles Darwin, who attended chapel in his youth; also Rev. Job Orton, minister 1741-66 and a founder of the Royal Salop Infirmary. 1798 Coloridge candidated for the minisny here; Hazlitt describes hearing him in 'My First Acquaintance with the Poet'. [Brass plate near pulpit in commemoration.] Clock by J. C. Beck 1724.

Sidmouth Old Meeting, All Saints Road. Devon. 1710

Walmley Unitarian Chapel, Bolton, Lancashire. 1772.
Founded before 1671. Congregation originated in Old Walmley Chapel, Turton Heights, about one mile away (now consists of foundations remains and graves). Remote situation, to Act of Uniformity not very effective, Old Chapel shared by Anglicans and Presbyterians till 1706. First minister at Walmley, Rev. James Milne, buried beneath aisle.

Reddish, Valentine stone from nearby quarry. Six three-light multihued windows on each side, altered in nineteenth century.


Warrington: Cairo Street Chapel. Lancashire. 1745.
Founded 1662. Original chapel of 1703 on same site, before that congregation met in Warrington Courthouse (now Greyfriars). It is possible chapel has similar design to previous chapel, even incorporating part of the structure.

Brick. From on gable end, central rounded window with Gothic tracery, two doors. Interior altered, repewed and gallery removed 1863. Now a strange amalgam of Neo-Gothic and remains of eighteenth century glory — chiefly evident in memorials round the walls. Memorials: Edward Garth, d. 1758, aged 15; John Andrew Wilson, d. 1760; John Galway, student in the Warrington Academy, d. 1777; John Askew, Professor, d. 1780; Holbrook Gaskell, d. 1842; Rev. Philip Poarsall Carpenter, B.A. London, Ph.D. New York, d. 1877. Licence of 1672 framed in vestry.

Parliament clock.

Chapel facing long yard full of gravestones, many table graves to Gaskell family, etc. Fine wrought iron gate from street. Large schoolrooms of 1862 and 1896.

Warrington Dissenting Academy, 1757-86, was the most celebrated of the nonconformist 'red brick' universities. Rev. John Seddon was minister of the Chapel 1747-1770 and tutor in Language, Oratory, Theology and Philosophy. It has recently been transported 60 feet to a new site at Bridgewater and restored.

Complectedly hidden behind shopping street, approached down side alley. One of the walls has been found to be the back of a fourteenth century house in Flowergate.


York: St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, 1693.
Founded 1662. Lord Hewley (mayor of York 1665, MP for Pontefract and York, d. 1697) and Lady Hewley (held licence to preach at her house, a. 1710) gave money to build chapel. See portraits in vestry, also Lady Hewley's chair. The Hewley mosaics later gave much trouble to Unitarians -- see Chapter 4.

Brick; austere facade below elaborate plan in form of Greek cross. Short tower on crossing originally pierced by windows; pyramidal slate roof. Sash windows 1870.


Chapel set in graveyard, high brick wall replaced by railings 1860. Its centralised plan and austere character make it the most distinctively Nonconformist chapel in the city, wholly uncompromising and making no concessions to anyone. (Professor Patrick Nuttman, York. Buildings in the City, 1978.)
Disused and Demolished Chapels and Churches


Alloa, near Falkirk, Clackmannanshire. 1670. Founded 1672. From 1799 to be a college for a public school. Formerly a dwelling house.

Anston, Buxton, Derbyshire. 1600. Founded 1606. Demolished 1756, sandstone house, with red brick and stone.
Clockwise from top left: Hayton, Euston, Lower Buffins Lane, Cheshunt, Denby, Rushall.

Clockwise from top left: Shepton Mallet pulpit, Shepton Mallet exterior, Credlan, Newton's, Credlan interior.

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CHAPTER THREE
New Status,
New Identity,
New Technology:
1750-1840

Daniel Defoe argued strongly for the encouragement of dissenters rather than their persecution; they created trade and wealth. They were now in a position to provide for not only the town charities and trusts for which they are well-known, but also for ministers of religion, new chapels, and increasingly, for schools.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century there had been a spate of chapel-building, in most towns and larger villages the dissenting chapel became an accepted part of the scenery. Later in the century their improved status was expressed in the building of larger and more sophisticated chapels. Westgate Chapel, Wakefield (1752) was built nearer the town centre than the old chapel at Westgate End, among its members were some of the leading gentry and tradesmen of the neighbourhood. Stourbridge Chapel (1788) replaced the previous chapel, itself a replacement of the chapel destroyed by the ‘Church and King’ mob of 1715. The 1716 chapel was described as ‘inconvenient . . . having nothing venerable, but exciting the idea of a dwelling house of three stories converted into a place of worship’. Stourbridge was an expanding industrial town and the chapel shared in its prosperity. It is large and up-to-date — brick, with classical detailing, iron-frame windows and high-quality woodwork.

This was the first century of peace between Establishment and Dissent, coupled with widespread use of the printed word. There was decreasing persecution (apart from the time of the French Revolution) and greater freedom of debate in dissenting circles, on matters theological as well as political. Educated ministers of religion and dissenting laymen read and discussed the works of John Locke, Samuel Clarke, Joseph Priestley, and, on a more popular level, Isaac Watts. The Bible was, of course, the foundation of church life and was also discussed freely.

Ministers were sustained by leading laymen such as the Earl of Shelburne, who employed Priestley as his librarian, Lord Russell, who paid the Presbyterian minister at Taunton, and the merchants of Exeter and Norwich, who were able to dictate to the dissenting communities in their cities. Led by Priestley and Rev. John Taylor of Norwich, the more intellectual dissenters gradually expressed new ideas based on a rational interpretation of the Bible. From the second quarter of the eighteenth century Presbyterians, General Baptists and some Independents progressed via Arminian to Unitarianism (Arminians held that the Father is the supreme God; the other persons of the Trinity owe their existence to Him).

The dissenting academies were at the root of the change. Priestley wrote of his education at Philip Doddridge’s academy: ‘The general plan of our studies . . . was exceedingly favourable to free inquiry, as we were required to read authors on both sides of every question, and were required to give an account of them’. Education was not confined to the academies; smaller schools, run by dissenting ministers as a supplement to their livelihood, became a common feature of town life in this period.

The cross-fertilisation of ideas via academies and dissenting academies (who moved around the country in the course of their careers) is well-documented. An average example was Rev. John Houghton (1730-1800), who was born in Liverpool, educated at Northampton academy, and was minister at Plutt, Hyde, Nantwich, Elland and Wem, before running a school in Norwich in his retirement. Joseph Priestley was educated at Daventry, was minister at Platt, Hyde, Nantwich, Elland and Wem, before moving to Leeds and Birmingham, before emigrating to the United States. It would be surprising if the material designs of chapels were not also transmitted from one part of the country to another, and indeed their visual appearance is remarkably similar.

In many cases, it was not long before chapel extensions and galleries needed to be built (though confidence in expansion was often misplaced).

The substantial oak gallery at Minster seems to have been added even before the chapel was completed. At Cross Street, Manchester, the gallery of the old chapel (destroyed in 1940) was built by private subscription less than a year after the erection of the chapel. Galleries were added at Lydgate (1768), Bessels Green
Print of Birmingham Old Meeting in Bridport. 1827. A girls’ school crocodile Sunday School pews in gallery at Bridport.

English religious life as a whole was changing. Methodism, other sects evolved, among them the Countess of Huntingdon’s Universalism. Chapel, Belper, was built by Jedediah Strutt for his workers. Lye Chapel, Styal (Cheshire) was founded by the Unitarian Samuel Thompson, grandfather of the poet Sidney Dobell. Methodism’s ‘warmth’ and ‘enthusiasm’ — derogatory terms to the old Dissent and Anglicans alike — brought many converts to their once meeting-places and chapels. Methodism was disliked by the old Dissent for obvious reasons — it took away members and was undeniably working-class. The result for Unitarians was, on the one hand, reduced support, but on the other an ultimate enrichment through Methodism’s greater vigour. The emotional stance of Methodism affected Unitarianism as much as other religious walks of life. Joseph Cooke (1775-1811) was a Methodist lay-preacher on the Rochdale circuit. He was expelled for his ‘unsound doctrines’ and his numerous followers built chapels at Rochdale (Providence Chapel, Clover Street) and Newchurch. Congregations were also formed at Padiham, Todmorden, Haslingden, Rawtenstall and Burnley. Methodism’s influence is still apparent in the strongly cohesive, basically working-class Methodist Unitarian congregations of the Rochdale area.

The Free-thinking Christians were a small group founded by Samuel Thompson, grandfather of the poet Sidney Dobell. Thompson influenced a group of churches in Kent and Sussex, and further afield at Loughborough, Dewsbury and Jewin Street, London. The large, plain but well-preserved chapel at Cranbrook survives, now a social club.

The relationship between Unitarians and General Baptists...
evolved over a period of a century or more. By the mid-eighteenth century General Baptists were Arminian in outlook, that is, they had a tolerant attitude towards redemption, leading to a more inclusive church. In 1770, the Baptist New Connection (Strict Baptist) was formed by the more evangelical members. In 1802, the General Baptist Assembly was transformed by the admission of the Baptist-Universalist William Vidler. His preaching caused the final break with the New Connection, and many General Baptist chapels followed Vidler and the man who inspired him, the American Rev. Elhanan Winship. Chapels were built as a result at Brighton (congregation formed 1793), Northiam (1810), Chatham (1802), Cranbrook (1807), Headcorn (1819), Rolvenden, Birdenden (1834), and South Place, Finsbury, now the Ethical Society (1824).

At Dover, a chapel was built for the Presbyterian congregation, founded in 1643, now much expanded by Benjamin Massey, a follower of Vidler. The travelling Baptist-Universalist missionary Richard Wright (1764-1836) and Robert Aspland, minister of the General Baptist-Universalist chapel at Newport, IoW, did much to strengthen the cause at this time. A number of places had General Baptist chapels which in the course of time joined nearby Presbyterian/Unitarian congregations, as at Boston, Portsmouth, Lewes, Taunton, and Hull. In 1916, the General Baptist Union joined the Unitarians, and in 1929 became part of the newly-founded General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

These movements arose from differences within dissent, from a freely-expressed individualism which found a place under the tolerant umbrellas of Unitarianism. However, a more important element for Unitarianism was the succession of the Anglican clergyman, Theophilus Lindsey. The only churches founded as a result were Essex Church, London, originally in Essex Street (1774), now in Palace Gardens Terrace, Kensington (rebuilt 1778); Devonport (1791), now a public house, and Dunloe, founded in 1785 by Lindsey’s friend Thomas Pyshe Palmer, the last man in Britain to be transported for sedition. In the nineteenth century, the presence of ex-Anglican clergymen within Unitarianism probably helped to influence both architecture and liturgy in an Anglican direction.

Between 1796 and 1814, only a handful of new Unitarian chapels were built. The reason is not hard to find; Unitarians were enthusiastic supporters of the French Revolution, seeing it as an overthrowing of the kind of unjust privilege which had for long been a stain on government and many other aspects of life. Tete Paine attended the Lewes Unitarian Chapel; Mary Paine taught in the Warrington Academy; Benjamin Franklin, American Ambassador to revolutionary France, was a close friend of Joseph Priestley, and Priestley himself suffered the destruction of his home, chapel, library and laboratory in the anti-French riots of 1791. It was not the time for conspicuous building projects. Kingswood, Birmingham, was destroyed by an anti-revolutionary mob in 1793, and was rebuilt in 1793 with government compensation. In central Birmingham, the New Meeting was burnt down, and rebuilt in 1802. In Manchester, the Unitarian chapel in Moseley Street (built in 1795) was destroyed by a mob in 1792. The congregation rebuilt in Upper Brook Street in 1839.

Until the very end of this period there was an apparently conscious effort on the part of dissenters to avoid any suggestion of ecclesiastical style. By contrast, out of the 214 Anglican churches built following the Church Building Act of 1818, 174 had Neo-Gothic architecture. In other words, 174 Anglican churches had pointed arches and pitched roofs rather than classical columns, a horizontal architrave and pediment. Until 1839, no Unitarian chapel of this period has any Gothic features (Warwick, Styal, Kidderminster and Kingswood, among others, were gothicised in the later nineteenth century). Gothic architecture, described by A. W. Pugin as ‘true Christian architecture’, was associated with many people’s minds with the Catholic Church, nonconformists were therefore reluctant to use it. Conversely, the architecture of Greece and Rome seemed entirely appropriate to Unitarians who were in the vanguard of academic learning, trade and classical education. ‘Gothic’ equalled ‘superstition’, ‘Classical’ equalled ‘Reason’. Unitarian chapel facades resembled town mansions, assembly rooms, even custom-houses and warehouses. The builders of mill and chapel were one and the same; the architecture of the Industrial Revolution was plain, evolving out of a heritage of vernacular craftsmanship and long-inherited classical forms.

And the vernacular tradition was not dead. In remote areas, or where traditional building crafts excelled, the old styles continued. Stanton (1742), Marshfield (1792), and Saltwood, Walden (1792) are fine examples from the Penines, the Cotswolds and East Anglia. In the deeper rural communities, simply-crafted chapels survive; in the Penines, Bradwell (1754), Great Hucklow (1795), and Lydgate (1695); in the South, Godalming (1789), Billingshurst (1754) and Northiam (1810). Congregations of the towns and more prosperous villages wanted something more appropriate to their ‘respectability and opulence’ as Bridgeport congregation put it.
Landmarks of this kind in their respective communities were Wakefield (1752), Stourbridge (1788), Kidderminster (1783), Bewdley (1786), Bridport (1794), Bath (1795), Boston (1819) and Dover (1819).

The persistence of the large chapel, where an auditorium was the essential requirement, meant that the structural problem of roofing a wide span still remained. Various solutions to this problem were tried out. At Paradise Street, Liverpool (1791), an ingenious system of long-pile and radiating beams was devised by "an Irishman by the name of Wynne", the architect in the initial stages of building the octagonal chapel. As Lewis's Mead (1791), a completely new idea was introduced, by suspending the ceiling on chains. At Belper (1788), a comparatively small chapel was created out of the upper segment of a cube, the lower segments on either side forming a burial vault and part of the caretaker's cottage, with the auditorium raked above. But the biggest innovation was the Octagon Chapel, Norwich, built in 1756 by Thomas Ivory. Using the suspending columns on the periphery of the octagonal seating area, an open central space was created. Whether Ivory was the originator of this idea, or whether he was prompted by the large and influential congregation led by his minister, the eminent theologian Rev. John Taylor, we do not know, but it was certainly the first octagonal ecclesiastical building to be erected. What's visit to the Octagon may have been seminal in that numerous classical idiom

In many chapels of this period, the load-bearing pillars are of cast-iron, as they were in factories and warehouses built at the same time. At Stourbridge and Lye, the builders introduced iron window frames. The style of the meeting-house had long been flavoured with a classical ingredient such as the "classical" pediment, albeit in humble brick, at Chesterfield, Wakefield and Bridgwater. Mary Street, Taunton, and the Octagon, Norwich, employed the classical orders on interior columns. Sometimes, in the course of restoration, a "classical" facade was added to an earlier, more modest, vernacular one, as at Lincoln and Newington Green.

During the period of Greek-revival architecture of 1820-30, when the work of Sir Robert Smirke and Decimus Burton was fashionable, several Unitarian chapels were built in this style. The best-known, and only one now active as a Unitarian chapel, is the Unitarian Church in 1822; Stamford Street, London, where the facade alone remains (1823), Warrington (1830). Little Portland Street, London, now demolished (1833), and the recently-demolished St. Vincent Street Chapel, Glasgow (1856). Apart from the Greekian features, the area behind remained a "preaching box" on traditional dissenting lines. The classical idiom did not inspire the design of the interior.

But times were changing. Two new Unitarian chapels were built in 1839.

In the relatively new London suburb of Brixton, a congregation had been formed and a chapel was soon after built. It had a high gable finished by turrets, and a large rose window which, according to the architect R. P. Jones "bore great credit of the Gothic style" probably appeared to the building committee to be no less truly Gothic than the west front of Rheims Cathedral.

More noteworthy, however, was the opening of Upper Brook Street Chapel in Manchester. The Unitarian congregation of Moseley Street dated from 1789. It was founded in response to the more assertive Unitarianism of Priestley and Lindsey; the Protestant Dissenters' Almanac of 1811 refers to Cross Street, a seventeenth century foundation, as Presbyterian, Moseley Street as Unitarian. Its members included an affluent and intellectual section of Manchester society led by their minister, Rev. J. I. Taylor. In spite of destruction in the 1792 riots, the congregation survived, and in 1839 built their new chapel at Upper Brook Street, commissioning Sir Charles Barry as architect. Three years earlier, Barry had won the competition for designing the new Houses of Parliament. He was riding on the high tide of success, and had just completed the Royal Manchester Institution (now the Art Gallery, 1831) and the Athenaeum in Moseley Street (1839). The Unitarian congregation demonstrated, in their choice of architect, the fact that they had arrived. Not only was the architect the best that money could buy, the style was completely new for a dissenting church. Upper Brook Street was built nearly twenty years after the first Neo-Gothic church in the area (Barry had designed St. Paul's Church in 1822), but it claims to be the first nonconformist chapel in Neo-Gothic style. Like the Houses of Parliament, it is a rectangular shape in Gothic dress; it has a plaster ceiling, galleries, and an impressive central pulpit in the traditional dissenting pattern. It was opened by James Martineau on September 1st, 1839. In spite of the superficiality of its Gothic style, Upper Brook Street was a landmark and a precursor of many Gothic Unitarian churches to come.
Gazetteer 1750-1840

Belper: Field Row Unitarian Chapel, Green Lane. Derbyshire. Dated 1788. Hipped-roof and transomed windows. The 1780s were a period of enormous industrial growth in Belper, with the mill owner, Mr. Evershed, developing the local water-power for cotton spinning. He built the cottage in 1773, and in 1796 added the adjacent chapels and cottages. It is likely that access was then to the present rear of the chapel, from the Sunday School on Green Lane.

T-shaped plan. Sandstone with hipped roof, round-arched windows, and cantilevered stone staircase to gallery. Interior has unique construction with tiered seating on each side sloping to middle aisle, with deacons' area on both sides, under conical boxes and part of caretaker's cottage under the Sunday School benches (Strutt established schools at the mills). Two cruciform iron columns. Clock of 1788 by John Whitworth of Derby. Memorials to Strutt are in the gallery. The interior has simple pews and rear choir vestry at front. The pulpit, the stained glass, the hymn boards, and the front of the chapel were probably added at a similar time to the building of the cottage, circa 1820. It is likely that access was then to the present rear of the chapel, from the Sunday School on Green Lane.

The chapel was paid for by subscribers among the congregation and friends and by pew-rents (not freeholds, as previously). Built on the site of the Crown Inn, alongside town ditch. Total cost £1,942 1s 3d. No designer or architect can be named; possibly Rev. Samuel Fawcett, leading Dissenting minister of the church, was paid bills for joinery repairs, and joinery is by far the largest item in the cost of building. The new chapel was paid for by subscribers among the congregation and friends and by pew-rents. A delightful plain rural chapel, with the men and women sitting on different sides, the deacons crouching round a table at front of the pulpit, the singers in the gallery, the hymns introduced by the walk of a pitch pipe. [J. Dundy, Record of my Life, 1878]

Boston Unitarian Chapel, Spain Lane. Lincolnshire. 1819. Founded 1804. Mellow red brick, three bays square with hipped roof. Well-proportioned facade, round-arched door, windows with interlaced tracery.

Interior little altered apart from Victorian pine pews, original gaslight fittings at pew ends. Rear gallery supported on four tubular Doric columns. All woodwork is of excellent workmanship, but pride of place goes to central pulpit, mahogany, classical style with Doric pillars, deacons area below. Art Nouveau stained glass screen forms vestry at front. Ground floor and garret at rear with some wall memorials. Gothic style caretaker's house adjoins. Chapel now faces busy bypass road — which also caused demolition of General Baptist chapel of 1804 (congregations amalgamated by mid 19th Century).

Bridport Unitarian Chapel, East Street. Dorset. 1794. Founded 1673. Original chapel probably 1690. In 1791 demolished as 'extremely mean in its appearance, and uncumbersome, tho the respectability and opulence of the society, incommodious both to the speakers and hearers, insufficient for the accommodation of all those who worship there, and, moreover, in a very decayed and ruinous condition'. Bridport manufactured nets and ropes, supplying most maritime needs in the 18th century. Merchants and town corporation were largely dissenters. The new chapel was paid for by subscribers among the congregation and friends and by pew-rents (not freeholds, as previously). Built on the site of the Crown Inn, alongside town ditch. Total cost £1,942 1s 3d. No designer or architect can be named; possibly Rev. Samuel Fawcett, leading Dissenting minister of the church, was paid bills for joinery repairs, and joinery is by far the largest item in the cost of building.

The chapel is a pleasing example of a small rural Dissenting Church, with a large graveyard and many fine headstones, at end of long approach from road. Small, patterned brick, tile roof overhanging eaves, segmental arched Mullioned and transomed windows. Vestry at rear 1825, incorporates baptistery (previously used stream).

Interior has simple pews and rear choir gallery. Six-bracket chandelier and clock by Inskip of Horsham.

'A delightful plain rural chapel, with the men and women sitting on different sides, the deacons crouching round a table at front of the pulpit, the singers in the gallery, the hymns introduced by the walk of a pitch pipe.' [J. Dundy, Record of my Life, 1878]
Theseus as illustrated in Millar's Rev classical scholar. The Prince Regent for Genexal were thus excommunicated. After joining the and on October 13, 1793, it was decided that all doers. Stevens uncnced other members follower of the American Baptist-Univmsalist, in Bond Street was joined by William Stevens, a Brighton Matthews of Bridpmt. Pews Sunday School at rear, added 1840. Downstairs, accommodation for mayor and corporation. Wood supporting three large galleries, gallery for singers, sides for Sunday School; special pews for teachers at right-angles to 58

In 1791 the Calvinistic Baptist congregation in Bond Street was joined by William Stevens, a follower of the American Baptist-Univmsalist, Rev Etham Winchester. The main split ... came on the issue of eternal punishment for evil doers. Stevens influenced other members ... and on October 13, 1793, it was decided that all those who could not accept the doctrine of everlasting Hell should be expelled. 19 members were thus excommunicated. After joining the General Baptist Assembly, they came under the leadership of Dr Morell, headmaster and classical scholar. A plot of land was bought from the Prince Regent for £650. Morell had the theory that a modern church should resemble a Greek temple; design is based on the Temple of Theseus as illustrated in Millar’s Ancient

Architecture. It is described in the Royal Brighton Guide of 1827 as ‘built after the manner of a heaven temple’; and in The Stranger in Brighton of 1822 as ‘this very elegant and truly classical building.’ Stucco façade, four Doric columns and pediment, originally with Greek inscription. Interior was pure dissenting meetinghouse, plain cube with central pulpit and box-pews, now modernised. Meeting rooms adjacent added c.1880. Organ from Essex Church, London. Stained glass memorials include one to proprietas of the Theatre Royal (across road).

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St Francis of Assisi, Bristol. Lewin’s Mead Meeting, 1791. Congregation dates from Election of Rev John Wooka, one of seven ejected clergy in Bristol; first chapel 1694. Murch described the chapel in 1835: ‘Besides commodious vestries attached to the chapel, the congregation possesses other eligible buildings on the same spot. When the chapel was built, stable and coach-houses were provided for the accommodation of the worshippers. Over the stables is a lecture room built in 1818 ... here the intermediate school is taught and the chapel library kept.’ Further extensive rooms built 1826, mostly for educational purposes, during the influential ministry of Lant Carpenter (1780-1840). Memorials to him and his daughter, Mary Carpenter, the social reformer (1807-77) are in the chapel.

Architecture, William Blackburne. Stone, classical design. Central pediment over semi-circular porch. Lower floor of rusticated stone; upper floor has large tri-partite window with semi-circular top in centre of each elevation, and three such behind pulpit at rear. The whole exterior is reminiscent of a mansion-house (18th century members included Lord mayors of Bristol).

Interior, very broad and spacious (similar proportions to Wakefield). Excellent pulpit centre of rear wall. Mahogany box pews for 2,000 sittings (imported through Bristol Docks). Two side galleries and organ gallery with choir stalls over entrance. Coffered ceiling suspended from the roof on chains. Many memorials on pulpit wall, including one to Rammohun Roy (1780-1833), founder of the liberal Hindu movement, Brahmo Somaj, who died while on a visit to Mary Carpenter.

Many ancillary rooms and caretaker’s house at side and rear of chapel, built into the cliff face below Christmas Steps. The future of the chapel is uncertain.

Craddle, Netherend Chapel, Park Lane. Worcestershire, 1796. Original Meeting-house of 1767 was at Pensnett Meadow, destroyed 1715, rebuilt 1716, sold to Methodists 1796. Present chapel built by Rev James Scott. Set in open, semi-industrial country — an area of collieries, nail and chain-making. Patterned brick made on the spot the previous summer, plain well-proportioned round arched windows with interlaced tracery. Bell-tower and spire added 1864. Interior: pulpit set in chancel, also added 1864. Gallery with large central organ, organists’ memorial plaques and choir stalls. Large verdant graveyard with many good memorials. Substantial parsonage of 1753 stood close by. Small school (also 1753?) along track — now used for light industry.

Dover Unitarian Church, Adrian Street. Kent. 1819.

One of the oldest General Baptist foundations (1643), Captain Taverner of Cromwell’s army (see Dealing was a founder-member. Second chapel built 1745, enlarged 1793. Present chapel built by house large following of Benjamin Martin, disciple of Universalist William Violett. Yellow brick, octagonal. Two matching venetian windows on opposite sides with pediments over, slate roof, formerly with bell-cote. Plain arched windows of good proportions.

Interior: original plain box-pews, pulpit moved to one side when semi-circular organ...
Exeter: George's Meeting, South Street. Devon. 1760. Founded 1662. Originally there were five dissenting congregations in Exeter, with much scope for schismatic opinions. 'Presbyterianism was very acceptable to successful merchants, for it gave them a degree of control over religious affairs which would have been impossible in the Church of England, or in the more democratic organisations of the Baptists, Independents and Quakers, all of whom were active in Exeter.'

Hallett's dissenting academy was active in Exeter in 1720s and '30s, when Trinitarian-Unitarian controversy was rife. Re-alignment of congregations led to founding of George's Meeting in 1760.

Impressive facade of red brick and stone dressings; Tuscan porch and arched parapet. Segmental arched windows to ground floor and round-arched windows to first floor, front and sides.

Spacious interior with high quality woodworkmanship gives an impression of opulent good taste in spite of neglect. One of the earliest chapels to have pulpit on short wall. Very fine two-decker pulpit with canopy and carved drapery surmounted by cross. Box pews. Gallery on three sides supported on square Ionic timber pillars. Good stained glass.

Chapel now deserted, fate uncertain.

Godalming: Meadow Unitarian Chapel, Farncombe, Surrey. 1789. General Baptist foundation. Wed June 4th 1785, as a Church meeting held at Bro. Wm. Hallett's at Eashing. Godalming, it was agreed that a more convenient Place of Public Worship may conduz to the Ease and prosperity of this chapel. Agreed that a meeting house be Erected at Meadow Godalming for that purpose.

Brick and stucco with stone quoins, three round-arched windows back and front; porch added later. Brick cottage of 1821 attached. Brick and stucco with stone quoins, three round-arched windows back and front; porch added later. Brick cottage of 1821 attached. Brick and stucco with stone quoins, three round-arched windows back and front; porch added later. Brick cottage of 1821 attached.

Original meeting house and subscription hall of 'The New Meeting-House' founded by Richard Baxter when dissenting congregation (established by Richard Baxter when ejected from the parish church) disagreed on the choice of a new minister. The less Calvinistic [and more prosperous] group, including carpenter and cabinet maker Nicholas Pearsall, withdrew from original meeting house and subscribed to building of 'The New Meeting-House'.

Chapel is situated at the end of long approach (and garden. It is not clear whether the present chapel replaced an earlier one. Cruciform, set lengthwise to the road in a small graveyard. Porch with bellcote, and gallery added 1901 when interior refurbished, schoolroom behind pulpit. Memorials. Former parsonage 200 yards north in village street.

Kidderminster, New Meeting House, Church Street Worcestershire. 1782, remodelled 1870-83. Founded 1781 when dissenting congregation (established by Richard Baxter when ejected from the parish church) disagreed on the choice of a new minister. The less Calvinistic [and more prosperous] group, including carpenter and cabinet maker Nicholas Pearsall, withdrew from original meeting house and subscribed to building of 'The New Meeting-House'.

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Below the chancel arch is Richard Baxter's pulpit dating from 1663 — a fine example of Jacobean woodworking. It was thrown out of the parish church as rubbish and bought by Pearsall in 1785. Good memorials including Lant Cornwall, William Baxter's 'Apostle of the Peak'. His brother John, made High Sheriff for Derbyshire in that year, lived at the Old Hall nearby; he probably gave William shelter and use of a barn, possibly that on the south of Grindlow Lane. It is not clear whether the present chapel replaced an earlier one. Cruciform, set lengthwise to the road in a small graveyard. Porch with bellcote, and gallery added 1901 when interior refurbished, schoolroom behind pulpit. Memorials. Former parsonage 200 yards north in village street.

Gritstone, set lengthwise to the road in a small graveyard. Porch with bellcote, and gallery added 1901 when interior refurbished, schoolroom behind pulpit. Memorials. Former parsonage 200 yards north in village street.

Below the chancel arch is Richard Baxter's pulpit dating from 1663 — a fine example of Jacobean woodworking. It was thrown out of the parish church as rubbish and bought by Pearsall in 1785. Good memorials including Lant Carpenter and Nicholas Pearsall (whose gravestone stands outside chapel door). Stained glass.

At base of the chapel, now demolished, were Grammar and Charity Schools built by Pearsall 1792, enlarged 1855, part of these buildings later house the library. Also Sunday School, enlarged 1883 (classes begun by Pearsall in 1780).
Kingswood Meeting House, Packhorse Lane,
Birmingham. 1793.
Original chapel founded and built in 1708 at
Dark Lane, burnt by mob in 1715; rebuilt and
again destroyed by mob in 1791. Chapel and
parsonage: rebuilt nearby with compensation
money. Set back from road in large graveyard in
open country. Large number of gravestones,
18th century to present day.
Reconstruction of 1787 has all but obliterated
earlier character, though surroundings remain
idyllic. Brick, porch, chancel, raftered roof and
walled yard above window height of 1874. Lower side wall
has bricks of 1702 incased with builders' names:
B. & S. Greves, Thos Greves, John Redditch.
Facade now has broad 3-bay porch with gallery
over middle bay. Semi-circular, segmental and
pointed arches feature in the present confusing
elevation. Interior completely Greek classical;
rathered roof, splayed windows, pediment at
entrance with nice woodwork. Central pulpit
flanked by stained glass windows over entrance. Bulls-eye dormer
window, chancel with organ and parapet.
Stained glass, brass door to pulpit.

Newport, IOW Unitarian Meeting House, High
Street. 1774. Congregation founded 1726. First
chapel 1728. Brick, rendered and brightly painted. Naive
Gothic.
Hung glasses on side and back walls. Set back
from street with low graveyard, caretaker's
chapel at side. Enlarged 1825, either then or
later, facade and windows Gothicised. Interior
decorated with very modernised back gallery
with iron pillars holding organ. Large Victorian
schoolroom at back.

Northam Unitarian Chapel, Duxter's Road,
Susex. 1795 and 1810. (Dorsetstone).
Founded 1796 from Brighton on initiative of
Interior has pine pews and open roof with simple
trusses, very modest.

Norwich: Octagon Chapel, Colegate. Norfolk.
1755.
Rev John Collinges ejected from St Stephen's
Church, 'but his people loved him and
purchased a place of worship for him in Colegate
in 1687 on the former Blackbaird convent ground'.
(Intermittent meetings had been held in
the conven.) The congregation flourished, and
during the ministry of the eminent theologian
Rev John Taylor (1733-1757) the chapel was
rebuilt on the same site by Thomas Ivory
(1709-1779) (Ivory was also responsible for the
Methodist Meeting of 1753 and the Assembly
Rooms of 1754. In 1775 he built and became
manager of the Norwich Theatre. He was
described in his will as 'builder and timber
merchant'.

Moretonhampstead, Devon.
Two chapels, linked from 1838 onwards, but
both continued in use. General Baptist in Fore
Street. Founded before 1650 by Anabaptist
wooden workers. Built 1796, closed 1866 and
then a ruin. Similar proportions to Cross Street
but with rectangular windows. Presbyterian in
Cross Street, built 1802 (founded 1662 by Rev
James Taylor in 1822 with bestowal from parish
Schoolrooms of 1890 to ear; parsonage next
door also 1793.

Stone, rendered. Pyramid slate roof. From
façade has two storey plain windows sides and
rear two long round-arched windows. Builder
came from Exeter, used materials from previous
chapel of 1693. Interior, concave gallery over
entrance with nice work. Central pulpit
flanked by stained glass windows in memory of
Susam and Thomas White, 1873. Chiming
Parliament clock from Credon. Memorial to
Edward Bowring. [Moretonhampstead was
the home of the Bowring family. Sir John Bowring
was author of 'In the Cross of Christ I Glory'.
Thmas Bowring donated the Public Library and
built cottage terraces and parsonage c 1895].

An attractive chapel, set in walled graveyard
with good memorials, looking over Bovey
Valley to Dartmoor.

Newport, IOW Unitarian Meeting House, High
Street. 1774. Congregation founded 1726. First
subsequent years. He wrote: 'Wednesday,
December 23rd, 1757. I was shown Dr Taylor's
new meeting house, perhaps the most elegant
one in all Europe. It is eight square, built
of the finest brick, with sixteen sash-windows
below, as many above, and eight sky-lights in
the dome, which indeed are purely ornamental. The
inside is furnished in the highest taste, and is as
clear as any nobleman's saloon. The
communion-table is fine mahogany, the very
latches of the pew-doors are polished brass. How
can it be thought that the old coarse gospel
should find admission here?'

Stourbridge Presbyterian Chapel, Lower High
Street, Worcestershire. 1788.
Philip Foley, innkeeper, was a strong
supporter of the dissenting cause and had a
private chapel in the grounds of his house. His
chaplain, Rev George Flower, became the first
pastor of the Dissenting Meeting House in
Stourbridge. This was built by Richard Baker
circa 1690 behind his house in Coventry Street.
Burnt down by mob 1715 but rebuilt within a
year.
At the Government Commission of 1716, set
up to assess reparations for property destroyed
by riot, John Conquest, carpenter and joiner
claimed that he had helped to build the original
chapel, and estimated that to rebuild it would
cost £82 8s 3d. This was confirmed by John
Wright of Bromsgrove. Thomas Parker, mason,
also helped to build the chapel 16 years before.
The 'Meeting House was 35' in length, 21' 11"
in breadth and 17' 9" in height from the floor
to the wall plate'. 'Cost of bricks, tiles, timbers,
yeard, sand, masons workmanship and
laths and other things would be £34 9s 6d'. John
Bankes, glazier testified that the cost of
'casements, bars, and workmanship... £5
19s 2d'. Joseph Carpenter, mason, claimed £4
6s for time overlooking the workmen.

Rebuilt on new site during ministry of Rev
Benjamin Carpenter. Urban setting in the best

62
Wakefield: Weegate Chapel. Yorkshire. 1752. Congregation founded 1662. Ambitious design, possibly the work of Robert or John Carr. Replaced the earlier meeting house of 1697 which stood in Weegate End and suffered flooding from Alverthorpe Beck; graveyard and parsonage survived till early 20th century.

Traditional site arrangement of chapel at end of long approach and graveyard, now opened up. Red brick with classical pediment across full width of façade; bell-tower at apex. Two classical doors flank Venetian window; three windows above with rusticated stone surrounds. At sides, three round-arched windows in recessed panels. Four windows at back — two either side of pulpit with stained glass.

Interior has woodwork of high quality. Tall central pulpit with sounding-board and flanking staircases dates from 1737, brought from earlier chapel. Replaced 1882 in walnut, but retaining original orientation. Former box-pews reused as wall panelling. Rear gallery with organ of 1847, supported on iron columns encased in timber with arcading between. Side galleries added 1790, now removed. Timber-panelled ceiling of considerable span. Memorials include Daniel Gaskell of Lupsett Hall, first MP for Wakefield.

Under chapel are barrel-vaulted catacombs with tombs containing remains of gentry, sealed with inscribed slates. (The congregation was described in late 18th century as "from the wealth and influence of several of its leading families... perhaps the most considerable in the North of England").

Passageway leads under Back Lane from chapel to schoolrooms — formerly the orangery of Pemberton House, owned by the Milnes family, leading cloth merchants in Wakefield and early benefactors of the chapel. Delectable classical design, single storey of stone, round-arched windows with iron tracery. Surrounded by evocative garden containing burial monuments; caretaker's house at entrance.

Styal: Noccliffe Chapel. Cheshire. 1824. Founded 1824 by Samuel Greg as part of the model village for his workers at Quarry Bank Mill. Greg, a Unitarian cotton manufacturer, also built the Methodist chapel in the village. The Mill is now the National Museum of the Textile Industry, owned by the National Trust.

Shaped and added windows Gothicised 1667. Interior also Gothic with open roof. Memorials to Gregs.

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Disused and Demolished Chapels

Aldwick, Correction House Yard, off Market Place, Northumberland. 1717. Closed 1862, now demolished.

Ashford, Found Chapel, Downside Somnerset. 1768. Closed 1854 (see ‘Old Mendip’ by Robin Atkinson)


Birmingham, Paradise Meeting, Little Cannon Street, 1809. Replaced chapel of c.1790 in Paradise Street, closed 1841.

Bradwell, Derbyshire. 1754. Limestone, with 3 grottoes and small-domed windows. Situated next to village, once dependent on lead mining. Closed 1854. Now a power station.


Bewdley, High Street, Worcestershire. c.1770. Situated at top of village, once dependent on lead mining. Closed 1969, now a remnant.


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organ case on short east wall, rose window above. Rubbed and
arched glass panel; closed 1951. New Court for Islamic Studies.
Interior divided.

Mansfield, High Street. Gloucestershire. 1752. Founded
1816. Traditional situation at end of long approach from
street. A beautiful example of Cotswold vernacular. Ashlar
stone. Hipped stone slate roof. Symmetrical, two round-
arched windows from and rear, central door with date over,
surrounded by mass. Small graveyard at rear. Interior retains
two side galleries. Closed 1886, now British Legion Hall. Still
immediately recognisable as a mid 18th century chapel.

Mountsorrel, The Green, Leicestershire. Mid 18th century.
Mountsorrel grass with gable end to road. Much altered.
Closed c. 1842; now a chemist's shop.

Unitarian Baptists.

North Shields, Northumberland. 1832. Closed 1846.
Olsham, Uplady Place, Birmingham Street, Worcestershire.
1805. First meeting house 1768. Red brick with blue brick
detailing. 3 bays by 4, round-headed windows with iron
glazing bars. Heavy moulded pediment. Interiors altered 1863
and 1899, but on classical rather than Gothic lines. Chapel had 3
chapel (see chapter 4). Parsonage and school still stand
opposite, now known as Norton Grange 1744. Chapel had 3
Windows and door re-used in Hollinsend

Patton, Orchard Street, Yorkshire. Founded and built
1816, inspired by Richard Wright. Sold to Congregationalists 1853.
 Converted to a house 1900.


Sheffield, Norton. Founded 1732 at Norton Hall, under
parsonage of Cornelius Clarke (see Chesterfield, chapter 2). The estate passed to the Shore family who built chapel 1794 in Cox's Court off High Street. Damaged by mob 1710, later sold 1843 on collapse of Shore banking house, chapel closed, pulled down 1853. Windows and door reused in Holmwood Wesleyan chapel nearby. Staircase organ is now at Haslingden
chapel (see chapter 6). Parsonage and school still stand opposite, now known as Norton Grange 1744. Chapel had 3
round-headed windows, hipped roof, well-dressed length of
wall opposite parsonage indicates its location.

Stanford, Smarden Bell Kent. Eighteenth century
founders' gravestones survives with good cosmetic,
unblemished façade.

Skelmestyl, Carlisle: founded and built 1830 by Rev. John
Gibbons whose theology changed from Wesleyan to Baptis-
tismal Unionism, influenced by Robert Aspland (see Wicken).
Closed 1870, converted into a cottage, now 3-5 Mill Street. No 3 was parsonage. Brick, segmental arches and hipped
roof.

Stainforth, East Street. South Yorkshire. Founded and built
1816, inspired by minister Richard Wright. Closed 1854.
Demolished.


Thorne, Orchard Street, Yorkshire. Founded and built 1826,


Wickham, South Street. Dorset. 1818. Set back from road in narrow entry. Plain classical style, squared front with prominent portico on 4 Ionic pillars. Now a library.

Wickham, Hampshire. 1550. In grounds of family house
In the nineteenth, as in the eighteenth century, Unitarians were distinguished by their role as civic leaders, and workers for social good and improvements in health and education. By 1840 they had also won the battle for civil rights, the Act of 1813 legalised their religion and in 1828, along with Roman Catholics, they benefited by the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.

During the early nineteenth century the travelling preachers Richard Wright and Robert Aspland strengthened and founded congregations, and produced influential periodicals such as The Monthly Repository and The Christian Reformer. In 1841, Joseph Barker was expelled from the Methodist New Connexion and quickly formed a following of about 200 congregations, called Christian Brethren or 'Barkerites' in the North and Midlands. He was supported by Unitarians, including Sir John Bowring, who gave him a printing press. Other congregations such as Newcastle-under-Lyme and Bank Street, Bolton, welcomed the newer more working-class Brethren, and permanent chapels were built at Mossley, Mottram and Pudsey. An identifiable Unitarian and Free Christian body was thus forged by small dissenting groups such as the Methodist Unitarians, General Baptists, Free Christians and Christian Brethren. In 1825 Unitarians established for the first time a national organisation, the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. The confident, rational Christianity of the dissenting academies had been muted by the intolerance of the Napoleonic period, but their efforts continued to bear fruit in the work of Rev. Charles Wellbeloved at Manchester New College, York.

But a serious challenge was at hand. In 1816 the Unitarian chapel in John Street, Wolverhampton, was appropriated by a Unitarian group and action at law failed to secure its return. In 1835 George Hadfield [a Manchester Calvinist lawyer] published The Manchester Socinian Controversy, maintaining that all chapels with a Presbyterian foundation were rightfully the property of Orthodoxy, rather than the incumbent Unitarians. The chapel at Risley, near Warrington, was taken over, and the ousted Unitarians were forced to rebuild at nearby Croft. In 1830 the Hildreth trust, founded in 1760 by Dame Sarah Hildreth of York for 'poor and godly ministers of Christ's Gospel', was taken out of Unitarian hands by a court case, finally lost by the Unitarians in 1842. It was now realised that chapels and funds alike would be lost unless Parliamentary protection could be obtained. The reformed Parliament of 1832 contained six Unitarian members. One was Edwin Willans Field, M.P. for Warwick, whose father had been minister at the Warwick chapel. He accepted the responsibility of seeing appropriate legislation through Parliament, and in 1844 the Dissenters' Chapels Act was passed, securing chapels to the congregations who had worshipped in them for the previous 25 years.

Now that Unitarians were safe in their own premises, renewed confidence led to new buildings, renovations and extensions. Confidence flowed into the movement. The strength of nonconformity in general was revealed by the census of 1851, and later by the unofficial survey of 1881-82. Nonconformist strength in the House of Commons, led for much of the time by the Scottish Presbyterian, Gladstone, made Liberals the governing force in politics. Unitarians found acceptance in this scheme of things unlike their predecessors of the eighteenth century. No longer ostracised, they inevitably became assimilated into the Establishment. Children of wealthy Unitarians went to public schools and to Oxford and Cambridge. Predominant in local government, Unitarians mixed with the local gentry and aristocracy. As with other nonconformists, increased status brought a compromise which had little time for doctrinal niceties.

Unitarianism's progress was along two ways, on the one hand, via the inheritors of eighteenth century rationalism following Priestley, Thomas Belsham (minister and tutor at Hackney Academy) and advocates such as Lindsay, Wright and Aspland; on the other hand, through the less sectarian, liberal Christian element, based largely on the old meeting-houses. Here the most influential voice was that of James Martineau, who developed a philosophy of liberal Christianity based on the dictates of conscience.

How did these developments affect Unitarian building? Now that their premises were safe from orthodox predators, chapels needed to be appropriate expressions of Unitarian teaching and status. The story of chapel architecture in the later nineteenth century is the story of the Gothic revival.
The Church of England had adopted a superficial Gothic style for many of the 'Commissioners' Churches' of the 1820s, but not until a deeper understanding of Gothic architecture was demonstrated by A. W. Pugin and protagonists of the High-Church Oxford Movement in the late 1830s did a genuine neo-Gothic architecture emerge.

Initial enthusiasm for medieval styles was not shared by non-conformists, who abhorred any style reminiscent of Catholicism. But Unitarians in some parts of the country, notably Liverpool and Sheffield, had co-operated with Catholics in social work during the cholera epidemic of 1844, and in mutual efforts to secure the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. And, of all dissenters, Unitarians were probably the most open to new ideas.

In August 1840, Dukinfield Chapel was opened, though the building was not quite finished (nor would it be till 1893). It was a replacement for the 1708 meeting-house, blown down in a gale in 1839. The congregation, led by the dynamic Rev. Robert Brook Aspland (son of the mission preacher) chose a neo-Gothic design by Richard Tattersall of Manchester 'in the style of architecture that prevailed at the beginning of the fourteenth century'. The interior, unchanged today, was well adapted to time-honoured Unitarian practice, with the pulpit in a central place. The sense of Gothic style is nevertheless all-pervading and successful.

In 1848 the nearby church at Gee Cross, Hyde, was completed in the most up-to-date Gothic style, to all intents and purposes identical with an Anglican parish church. Gone is the central pulpit, the Sunday School galleries and vestiges of eighteenth century meeting-house mentality. Surrounded by a large graveyard, it is clear that the Unitarians of Gee Cross considered themselves as 'established' as any other branch of Christianity. It was opened by Rev. Charles Wicksteed, since 1835 minister of Mill Hill, Leeds, and close associate of Martineau. In the same year Mill Hill was rebuilt by the same architects, Bowman and Crowther, as had built Gee Cross.

A spokesman for the congregation wrote at the time: 'Taste varies with the generations, and the Meeting-House congregation has never been afraid of expressing its own mind, even at the risk of the pitying disapproval of its successors'. Despite the defiant tone of uncertainty, Mill Hill Chapel remains an impressive expression of mid-nineteenth century Unitarianism. As Peers points out, the plan is reminiscent of that of St. Peter's parish church, Leeds, re-built only six years before. The Mill Hill...
congregation evidently wanted to keep up with the Anglicans; the current position of their chapel was appropriate for their major role in local government and business affairs.

A year later in 1849 Hope Street Chapel, Liverpool, was opened by minister James Martineau and his friend John James Taylor at 2 Upper Brook Street, Manchester, John Hamilton Thorn at 1 Renshaw Street, Manchester, and Charles Wicksteed, previously at The Ancient Chapel, Toxteth, were central figures in the adoption of new-Gothic architecture by Unitarians. Where new chapels in Gothic style were erected, inevitably one of the ‘Quakers’ as they were called, would deliver the opening sermon. These peroration emphasise the value of earthly beauty in carvings, stained glass and a generally ‘ecclesiastical’ atmosphere to the quality of religious experience. All four men had studied the new German biblical criticism, Martineau travelled to Germany for a year in 1848-9, having previously ensured that his congregation at Paradise Street would abandon their ‘picturesque and elegant’ chapel and re-build in Gothic style in Hope Street. The new romantic mood emanating from Germany affected religious and the arts alike. While the English Gothic revival had its roots deep in English mediaeval buildings, encouragement for its use was there a tangible expression of the Unitarian belief in all its rational roots, had no apparent connection with rational doctrine. The high regard for religious buildings is there a manifestation evidence of increased wealth and confidence. The Unitarian contribution to this corpus of architecture was small, but the quality of many of their chapels was good. Starting with Dukinfield of 1840, a succession of impressive chapels were built: Gee Cross, Hyde (1848), Mill Hill, Leeds (1848), Trowbridge (1850), Todmorden (1854), Broadfield, Cottington (1874), Manchester (High Pavement, Town Hall 1855, High Pavement, Church of the Messiah, 1876), Bury (1858), Huddersfield (1859), Oldham (1860), and Ullet Road, Liverpool (1859). Other notable churches, new and ancient, include Hope Street, Liverpool (1849), Bury (1853), Stepney, Luton (1852), the Church of the Messiah, Rochdale (1855), Old Meeting, Birmingham (1858), Chapel Lane, Bradford (1858), and Essex Church, London (1857). These chapels were landmarks in their locality — Gee Cross spire can be seen for many miles from the south-west, making an unforgettable feature of the lower Peak scenery. Todmorden is even more impressive in its commanding height above the town, its soaring spire balanced by the high classical pediment of Town Hall, designed by the same architect, John Gibson. The best building in Dukinfield according to Pevsner, the chapel dominates the town, and the church (no longer a Unitarian chapel) speaks eloquently of its status in the ancient quarter of Nottingham, with the Parish Church across the road and the busy law courts adjacent. Broadfield, Cottington, is ‘strikingly impressive’, says Pevsner, Conishead Chapel, Trowbridge, is described in the chapel history of 1890 as ‘quite an ornament to the town’; the complex of school rooms, chapel and gardens is a focal point of the Conishead as an area now sadly deserted. The Church of the Messiah, Huddersfield, had perhaps the most unusual site of them all, astride the canal entrance to Gas Street Basin. Unremarkable from Broad Street, the approach is by boat through the tunnel and under the church was unique.

Few, if any, features of this Gothic style are unique to Unitarianism. Stylites, coloured and intricate windows, chandeliers, are all indistinguishable from orthodox places of worship. The Ecclesiologist might ridicule the idea of designing tripartite windows, symbolic of the Trinity, for Unitarians, but such doctrinal niceties were not required by most chapel building
This page, top and bottom left: Todmorden. Top and bottom right: High Pavement, Nottingham.
committees. Two characteristics of Unitarian chapels stand out. The finest of them, cited in this chapter out of a number of less significant buildings, comprise fine workmanship. Such quality is not, of course, unique to Unitarian chapels, but the quality of detail and construction is noticeable. When stained-glass is chosen, whether by Morris and Co. or Holiday or from a continental workshop, it is often the best Masonry, as at Todmorden, Howley Field, Mill Hill, Leeds, or Ullet Road, Liverpool, is remarkably accurate and sensitive. R. W. Morris and E. H. Tudor were selected with care. Fittings, such as those at Blonde, Mill Hill or Ullet Road are well-designed and made.

A very small number of post-1850 Unitarian chapels are not built in the Gothic style. Astley, near Manchester, and Shiel, near Halifox, are small and plain with no Gothic feature. Hastings has a classical facade and details on a modest scale. Leeds (York) and the impressive Minshull (Ches) are utterly remote from Gothicism. Upper Chapel, Sheffield, rebuilt in 1848, follows the classical style of the 1700 chapel.

Two forms of architects were responsible for some of the finest Unitarian chapel designs. Bowman and Crompton of Manchester, following the example of A. W. Pugin and George Gilbert Scott, created chapels and churches of convincing solidity and accomplished detail.

The Worthington family firm of architects was more important. Worthington themselves, they were descended from a line of Presbyterian and Unitarian ministers (see the memorials at Stourbridge). The family lived in the heartland of Manchester suburbia at Alderley Edge. Thomas Worthington was a follower of A. W. Pugin and learned his craft with Bowman and Crompton. He built, among others, Howley Field Chapel, Hyde (1878); Brookfield, Gorton (1871); Newton (1879), Manchester College, Oxford (1893) and Ullet Road, Liverpool (1899). This last was designed to be associated with his son, Percy, who was responsible for the splendid social hall and ancillary rooms. Percy also designed the Arlton Hall at Manchester College (1913) and was in fact the more accomplished architect.

Not only were new Gothic chapels being built, older chapels were being adapted to the new style. It was cheaper to achieve a 'correct' religious atmosphere by converting an old interior than to build new. Two eighteenth-century preaching boxes received a complete face-lift at Upper Chapel, Sheffield. Meeting-houses were often re-built from the windows upwards, with arched windows and an open-beamed roof replacing the old rectangular windows and flat ceiling. End walls were boarded and channel extensions built. New facades of Gothic design were added, creating vestibules and stairs. The interior had to be suitably adorned; box pews were taken out and bench pews of varying quality, mostly pitch pine, were put in their place. Stained-glass, often memorials, replaced plain. A font was added previously unnecessary, as Presbyterian baptism were either held in the family home or a small portable metal bowl was used.

The chapel with its East window and choir stalls, was a better setting for the pulpit and communion table; they were removed from the long wall and placed as in an Anglican church. The chapel might be decorated with wood-carving, stained glass, tiles, and embroidery. It was now the focus of the chapel. The clerestorey might be painted with the scroll and words so redolent of non-conformist worship: 'Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness', 'The Lord our God is One God'. 'Rejoice and be Glad', 'Strength and Beauty are in His Sanctuary'. Often the only evidence of the existence of an earlier chapel are the memorials fixed to the walls, their classical austerity a mute reproach to the surrounding clutter.

At the end of the century standards of design improved with the growth of the Arts and Crafts movement, inspired by the teachings of Ruskin and William Morris. A stained-glass window by Burne-Jones from the workshop of Morris and Co. became the hallmark of the large, successful Unitarian Church. The movement flourished in most of the large cities of Britain, but was especially associated with Unitarians in Birmingham and Liverpool. William Kenrick, ironmonger manufacturer, Mayor of Birmingham and leading Unitarian in the city, was Chairman of the Board of the Birmingham Guild, a quasi-commercial venture whereby crafts and craftswomen, trained at Birmingham Municipal School of Art, supplied work in a variety of disciplines for churches and private houses. Virtually nothing remains in Birmingham Unitarian churches, apart from some very fine lettering on inscribed memorials from a later date at Five Ways Meeting. Murals in the school of Old Meeting, Bristol Road, were destroyed in the blitz.

In Liverpool, the Rathbone family were long standing patrons of the arts. Edmund was a member of the Century Guild (as was Ronald P. Jones, the leading Unitarian architect of the early 20th century); Harold Rathbone ran the delia Robbia Pottery of Birkenhead; Richard taught metalwork at the University of Liverpool. All these skills came into play in the building of the ambitious Ullet Road Chapel, Sefton Park, where fine examples of Arts and Crafts work can be seen. R. P. Jones, whose first work was with the Worthingtons at Ullet Road, later worked mainly in the south of England, and emphasised the quality of craftsmanship in his writing and in his architecture.

There was also a desire for comfort. It was John Ruskin's acid comments on the stuffy atmosphere and 'arctic' conditions in Paradise Street Chapel, Liverpool, that led to a swift re-building in 1849, incorporating grand Gothic style and a new commodious and economical way of heating large buildings. Eighteenth century worshippers usually had no artificial heat or light; the installation of gas light was often the first step in a scheme of modernisation.
Bedfield Unitarian Meeting House. Suffolk, 1855.

Congregation founded 1859, through work of Postal Mission and Rev. Alfred Arny, who pushed a mobile organ around the Suffolk lanes and held open-air services at Bedfield, Ashfield and Monk Saliam.

Small, corrugated iron, set in village street among farm workers’ cottages. Interior retains mission room atmosphere much timber boarding. The chapel is also used as village hall and by British Legion, etc.

Birmingham

The history of Unitarian chapels in Birmingham is a complicated one, and a brief outline of the history of Unitarianism in the city might be helpful. Before the nineteenth century there were two Presbyterian/Unitarian churches: Old Meeting, founded in 1587, and New Meeting, founded at the Lower Meeting House, Deritend, in 1672. Old Meeting, partly destroyed in ‘Church and King’ riots of 1675, and split by the secession of Independents to Carrs Lane Chapel in 1747, was destroyed in the Birmingham riots of 1791. Rebuilt 1795, it was again demolished as part of the New Street Station extensions. The 1885 building was regarded by P. J. Jones as a rare example of a Gothic Church. It was a substantial building with three large lancet windows and a tall assymetrical tower and spire; architect A. A. Cossins. Bombed in 1940; the congregation did not long survive this event.

New Meeting moved from Deritend to Moor Street in 1732, this chapel was Joseph Priestley’s charge and was destroyed in the riots of 1791. Rebuilt in classical style in 1802, this chapel still stands as the Roman Catholic Church of St. Michael. Succeeded five-bay front, round-arched windows divided by paired Ionic pilasters, three-bay pediment. Interior retains three-sided gallery with rear organ and pews. 1862 Church of the Messiah built over the canal tunnel leading from Gas Street Basin by a prosperous and confident congregation — members were the vanguard of Birmingham Civic development, including the Chamberlain family. Pink sandstone with Limestone details and assymetrical tower and spire. Large decorated window Rectangular interior with rear gallery. Demolished 1978, site now a garden. Architect J. J. Bateman. See Chapter 5 for modern chapel.

One late nineteenth century Unitarian chapel survives in Birmingham: Chapel at Waterley Road Church, Small Heath, 1898. Built partly from proceeds of the sale of Church of the Saviour, Edward Street, founded by George Dawson, Baptist founder of the ‘Free Christians’, whose articles of faith were, and are, the guiding principles of this church — see memorial plaque now in vestibule of Sikh temple. In 1846 Dawson led his congregation from their Baptist chapel to Hurst Street Mission for morning services, and to Newhall Hill Chapel for evening services. A building society with £10 shares was formed by the congregation, and in 1847 Edward Street Chapel opened. Sold 1897 to Methodists, congregations joined with group formed at Little Green Lane Board Church on initiative of Midland Christian Union and together built Waterley Road Church.

Church was built first, then connecting cloister, Dawson Hall (1918) and ancillary rooms. Brick, stone detailing. Gabled roofs of church and hall stand on either side of garden and cloister. Interior of Church gallery; high arched nave, aisles, clerestory lights, now cleared of pews. Architects, J. A. Grew and S. H. Echols. (1960, sold to the Ramgarh Gujwara Sikh Temple) Unitarians have converted the Dawson Hall into chapel.

Blackpool, South Shore Unitarian Church, Thomas Road and Lytham Road. Lancashire. 1903.

Congregation founded 1854 as off-shoot from North Shore Church, first services held in Masonic Hall. Brick, stone detailing in modified lancet style. Simple interior, timber beams with decorative iron brackets.

Bolton, Bank Street: Unitarian Chapel, 1856.

First Minister, Rev. Richard Goodwin, elected in 1662, first chapel built 1696, on the same site, as was school and parsonage. Towards mid-nineteenth century the old building began to show signs of decay. Also, c. 1855, congregation enlarged by Christian Brethren who had adopted Unitarian ideas (see p. 37). Present chapel faces street with steps. Architect George Woodhouse. Stone facade with lancet windows and pinnacles. Original 1854 Sunday School was in basement (large brick Sunday School premises of 1874 to top of chapel now demolished). Interior dark and cluttered — not unattractive, but architecturally undistinguished. Stained glass: rose window of 1867 in memory Harwood family. Memorials to cloth merchant Robert Heywood, mayor of Bolton (1786-1839) and his business partner, Charles Darbishire. Bell, now in vestibule, given 1965 by Rev. Robert Seddon, M.A.

Bolton, Deane Road, Unity Church. Lancashire. 1893.

Congregation founded 1862 from Bank Street as an extra Sunday School: first met 1858 in a beerhouse in Commission Street. Red brick, front and side gables, perpendicular windows. Sunday School below, chapel above steeple. Day School of 1870 at rear. J. J. Bradshaw, F.R.I.B.A., a member of the chapel and partner in Bradshaw and Gass, architects of many town halls, public libraries, etc., bought the land and presumably designed the chapel.

Bournemouth Unitarian Church, Westhill Road. Dorset. 1891.

Bradford, Broadway Avenue Church. Yorkshire. 1906.

Corrugated iron 'temporary' building. Environment of streets and stone housing still intact.

Bristol, Clifton Unitarian and Free Christian Church, Oakfield Road. Avon. 1864.

Stone, saddle-back arches with tall lancets and plain ill-matched chapel in Decorated style. Dark, churchiy interior.

Chatham Unitarian Church of the Good Companions, corner of Hammon Hill and New Road. Kent. 1869.


Cheltenham, Bays Hill Unitarian Church, Gloucestershire. 1864.


Coseley Old Meeting House, Old Meeting Road. Staffordshire. 1875.

Founded c. 1662, first minister, 'elected Assistant Vicar of Sedgley. First meeting house 1717, a 'primitive structure with two stout timbers upholding the roof'. This date is recorded on two bricks set in the wall descending to the heating chamber, which suggests that the present chapel is built on the foundations of the old. The chapel was built with the proceeds of the sale of mineral rights to the Bilston Iron Company in 1874.

Stone, gabled front with Decorated window above central door, two pinnacles. Plain interior, after screen now removed, rear organ gallery on two iron columns. Behind the chapel an older building now redeveloped, with industrial iron, round-arched windows as at Stourbridge. Was this originally the Sunday School of 1799?

Culchompton Unitarian Chapel, Pound Square. Devon. 1913.

Congregations originate from 1662 erection. Two previous chapels, 1698 and a cob building of 1815 which collapsed. Nice example of late neo-Gothic, more or less as built. Architect R. M. Challis. Interior, bare brick walls, stone quoins. Original iron electric light brackets; stained glass window 'The Good Shepherd' from W. H. Green Unitarian chapel. Furniture made by members of the congregation. Two good memorials from previous chapel.

Denton Unitarian Chapel, Wilton Street. Lancashire. 1879.

Congregations founded 1875, on initiative of Robert Stuart Roddorn and Robert Kenyon of Mottram and Oldham; trial services held in Co-op Hall. First Minister, Lawrence Scott (1875-1939). Red brick, simple lancet windows, buttresses. Large Russell Scott Day Schools of 1882 adjoining rear.

Doncaster Free Christian Church, Hallgate. Yorkshire. 1912.

Founded 1692, first chapel was on the same site, then the eastern edge of town, built 1744. Simple, brick, two round-arched windows, pediment 1864. Present building, approached through archway from Hallgate, is externally undistinguished.

Interior rectangular with three-sided gallery, organ chamber beyond chancel arch, barrel-vaulted ceiling. Light timber panelling extensive range of ancillary rooms to rear.

Dukinfield Old Chapel, Chapel Hill. Lancashire. 1840.

Original congregation connected with Denton chapel of ease (St. Stockport Parish). Among first ministers, John Angle of Denton, and Samuel Angle of Dukinfield, who was licensed to preach in a barn in 1845. Sir Robert Dukinfield gave land for a chapel in 1760, first service was Thanksgiving for the battle of Osterode [July 6th 1708]. 1839, chapel collapsed in a storm — after the congregation had decided to be rebuilt. Led by their minister, Robert Brood Aspland [1837-58], they chose as architect Richard Taitersall of Manchester. In 1839 he also designed St. Paul's Church, Stalybridge, and a large cotton mill at Calibone near Wigan.

The chapel was built in stone to a cruciform plan in the Lancer style, with a facade of three lancets above doorway, similar to that still visible on the tetrapod gables. It was extended forward in 1893 when the facade was given a large 'Geometrical' window flanked by a pair of turrets and pinnacles. An early use of the Gothic style in a Unitarian chapel.

Interior virtually unaltered, lofty nave with side aisles. Iron columns, emphasizing cruciform plan, support three-sided gallery. Pulpit with canopy and organ screen of dark stained wood gives a rich 'antique' aura. Pulpit entered from vestry with preacher's seat incorporated in door. Roof construction concealed above plates of iron riveting with iron bosses not unlike vanishes in pre-Gothic chapel ceilings. Many memorials including Asley and Armitage families. Stained glass.

'The best building in Dukinfield' (Pevsner). Chapel stands at highest point of town, adding to impression of height. Large rear graveyard (including Asley memorial 1825) merges with municipal cemetery with distant views of the Peak District. Manse of 1865 next door. Early Sunday School 1810 in nearby Pickford Lane, enlarged 1820, 1839 and 1862, also used as day school from 1870; an extensive group of buildings reflecting the importance of education to the Unitarians and of their standing in this 19th century cotton town.

Hastings, Unitarian Free Christian Church, South Terrace. Sussex. 1868.

Horwich Unitarian Free Church, Church Street, Lancashire. 1896.

Hyde Chapel, Stockport Road, Gee Cross, Cheshire. 1848.
Original chapel 1708, second chapel 1767, on same site. Architects, Bowman and Crowther of Manchester (Pligin was asked but refused the commission); they were a progressive and fashionable firm who designed Anglican churches and secular buildings in this area. This is the first nonconformist church to be built on the model of an Anglican parish church set in its churchyard.

Some church in 'Early English' style: long nave with clerestory, nave and chancel. West tower with tall spire (1856). It cost £7,500, major patrons, the Ashton family (see Flowery Field Church).

Interior: chancel with large east window contains finely carved altar with massive conical hanging cover, also nave with clerestory, nave and chancel. West tower with tall square battlemented south east tower with stair-turret.

Leeds, Mill Hill Chapel, City Square. Yorkshire. 1848.
Stone, 'Decorated' Gothic. With Gee Cross, Hyde, the first Gothic style nonconformist chapel. Bowman and Crowther of Manchester were architects for both chapels. Flag and style seem to have been partly inspired by rebuilding of Leeds Parish Church of St. Peter in 1841.
Long, buttressed seven-bay facade to City Square. Central projecting gabled vestibule surmounted by large window; good stone carving on parapet and gable, but pinnacles removed c. 1900. Nave and side aisles, wide chancel, stained glass by Morris and Co., also in side aisle. Carved stone heads at side arches.

Leigh Unitarian Church, Twist Lane, Lancashire. 1807.
Congregation founded 1837. Typical small but well-built chapel in red brick. Meeting hall at side. Large cruciform design window in gable.

Liverpool.
A brief survey of early chapels may be useful. Apart from the Ancient Chapel of Toxteth (see chapter 1), there were two Presbyterian 'Erection' chapels, at Castle Hey (built 1688) and Kaye Street (built 1707). Castle Hey ('Old Meeting') moved in 1727 to Bern's Garden (South Castle Street), in 1814 to Renshaw Street (preserved now Rosebud Gardens), and in 1899 to Ullet Road, Sefton Park. Kaye Street congregation moved to Paradise Street in 1791.
and to Hope Street — an ambitious Gothic church built 1849 in the ministry of James Martineau — demolished 1965. In 1863 part of Beres's Garden congregation left to form the new Unitarian Chapel in Temple Court, where a liturgical service — an innovation in nonconformist practice — was introduced; it closed in 1776 and became St. Catherine's Anglican Church.

Liverpool: Ullet Road Unitarian Church, Sefton Park, Lancashire. 1889.

Architects Thomas and Percy Worthington. Exterior, red brick with monumental nave buttressed by porch, transepts, side-aisles and apses, 'Decorated' Gothic detail. Facade with fine rose window above full width porch, topped by statue of Christ and bell-cote (no bells). Church is joined to matching hall 1902 by cloister.

Interior of church faced in red Cheshire sandstone (added as an afterthought — originally design was in glazed brick). Wide nave, narrow arcaded side-aisles; high simple vaulted roof, clerestory windows, canopied pulpit. Polygonal apse with large stained glass window by Morris and Co. Altar table with carving of Last Supper. Carved choir stalls. Splendid Art Nouveau electric light pendants with eight lamps. Beaten copper West doors.

Bettman, Rosalyn Chapel. 1862.

Congregation founded in 1867; first minister was probably chaplain to the Honeywood family (city merchants, lived in adjoining Carlile House). Previous chapels, all on same site, built in 1692 and 1828. This last, a plain brick box, survives as school-room and porchage. Present chapel of Bath and Kensington Ragstones. Architect, John Johnson, with extensions of 1886 by Thomas Worthington. 1862 building was simple gabled nave with small central spire, porch and vestry to west (in 1886 east aisle, chancel, flanking vestry and committee room added, creating a more irregular appearance.

Interior, wide nave [pews cleared 1966], plain boarded roof vault. Several good stained glass windows; south side, 1867 unknown artist, resembles work of Hardman, west aisle, 1887 by Henry Poole, 1886 by Wilson and Hammond. Gallery windows are from Essex Church [demolished 1973], in memorial to John Brunner. Carved oak choir stalls with brass decoration now in rear of chapel were designed by R. P. Jones 1884 and also came from Essex Church, as did the oak font designed by Jones in 1803. Another smaller stone font is a nice example of genuine fifteenth century work.

Good memorials, marble relief of James Martineau by H. R. Hope-Pinkers [in Little Portland Street Chapel, demolished 1910]; Art Nouveau metalwork of 1901 by Wragge to Rev. Brooke Herford; marble and lapis lazuli Celtic-style of 1916 to Rev. Stoppard Brooks; metalwork Celtic style of 1900 by Katharine Shaw to Isaac Solly. Listed: marble and tiled work of 1926 to Helen Allingham; bronze panel with lettering by William Morris to Dr Thomas and Mary Sadler. Four marble panels by Flaxman, Parliament clock by William Billington of London c. 1792. Spacious grounds include earlier chapel and cottages.

Stratford Unitarian Christian Church, West Ham Lane, 1859.


Loughborough Unitarian and Free Christian Church, Victoria Street, 1854.

Congregation originated in 1872; chapel of 1874 all Churchouse survived till this century. Robert Bulwew, agriculturalist, 1725-95, was member.

Stone, steep pitched roof, gable end with entrance and circular window, side tower. Architect John Norris of Nottingham. Church chapel and hall with nave and aisles, turreted, 1877. Designed by Hadrian and Hansom for sale of Mountsorrel Chapel [sold to Baptists 1867, now chemist's shop].
Lye Unitarian Chapel, Stourbridge Road, Worcestershire. 1806 and 1861.

Lye was open common occupied by 'rude and barbarous' mud huts built by nail makers. From 1790 Rev James Scott of Cradley preached to licensed houses, then with a legacy from his aunt acquired a thin strip of land adjoining the Birmingham to Stourbridge Turnpike, building the meeting-house in 1806. Brick with iron framed round arched windows, now middle of the group of buildings.

Present chapel built to west of 1806 chapel, begun 1857, ... a small but beautiful and carefully arranged Early English Church ... from the designs of Francis Smales Smith of Stourbridge. Whilst it was in course of erection, the villagers, reverencing the memory of Mr. Scott determined to add a clock to the building and they subscribed in sums varying from a penny upwards.

Chapel hugs the pavement with 4 round arched windows with Gothic openings and steeply pitched slate roof perched by small dormers. Tallish tower over entry porch, red brick with blue band courses and yellow top, now minus spire and weathervane. Clock renewed 1953 to commemorate coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Interior simple, colourful and attractive. Hammerbeam roof with corbels of leaves and flowers, plus one skull, picked out in vivid colours. Two memorials to Rev James Scott, one in Gothic niche in chapel, other on stone slab in porch. Hall contains portraits of all past ministers. Gothic school addition to East.

Manchester.
The city's expansion has engulfed several erstwhile villages, where a Unitarian chapel was often a part of the community. This is an aspect of early Presbyterian strength, but no early buildings survive (but see Plate, chapter 3).

Chorlton-cum-Hardy Unitarian Church, Withington Road, 1900.


Brookfield Church, Hyde Road, Gorton, 1871.

Congregation founded 1864, original chapel of 1703 was at the rear of present chapel, on other side of the brook. Brookfield was at the expense of Richard Peacock, M.P. for Gorton and locomotive builder (his partner, Charles Beyer, built Gorton Parish Church at the same time). Architect Thomas Worthington. Very large stone church of 'Anglican' Early English design, orientated to east. Gabled nave with clerestory, aisles chancel and north transept. Almost free-standing north tower with high bouchet steeple - a landmark along Hyde Road, gargoyles, and peal of eight bells.

Impressive interior: white painted walls with stone arches and pink granite columns (typical Worthington design). Barrel roof.

Opposite: Lye. Above: Chorlton-cum-Hardy.


Extensive grounds surround chapel, small lodge north-east corner, interesting gravel, two staircases to Richard Peacock - bronze relief on church wall has bust of Peacock flanked by Vulcan and angel (erected by his workforce, and his friends). Gothic marble mausoleum west of church, 1875. Large hall and Sunday School of 1883 further to west.

Mossley Christian Unitarian Church, Standford Road, Lancashire. 1852.

Congregation founded 1845 by Christian Brethren led by Joseph Barker (see chapter 3). Trust Deed of 1853 describes congregation as '...persons of the Christian name who by some are called Christian Brethren and by others Unitarians' and describes the chapel as a '...large plain building capable of holding 800 persons, with schoolroom beneath, and beneath that again a class-room and a cottage, ...with on the side of a hill, and the back looks like a factory'.

Solid stone, set in Pennine community. Single story gabled front, central five-light window flanked by doors with enormous arched lintels. Plaque above records 'Christian Church and Sunday School Built 1852'.

Interior: vast single square space, no gallery. Beautifully carved pews with graduated angle at the sides. Carved pine and maple central pulpit and dado front. Raised dais across full width of chapel with choir stalls and central original organ by M. Holt of Leeds. The whole
impressive interior is custom-made for a performance of the ‘Messiah’. Industrial-type iron roof supports. Plain round-arched windows with pastel glass, giving spectacular views of River Tame, cotton mills and hills around.

Mottram Unitarian Church, Hyde Road, Cheskire. 1846. Christian Brethren foundation of 1841. Plain, rectangular stone ‘meeting house’ of six bays. Iron-framed front windows with diamond panes. Shallow pitch roof, no hint of Gothic. Sunday School on ground floor, chapel above. Large square interior recently divided; hall retains original iron roof and good beam with ‘Sunday-School’ appearance. Central plaque records ‘Mottram Christian Sunday School for children of all denominations built by subscription AD 1846’. Much building work done by the congregation, resulting in construction cost of only £700.

Newchurch, Bethlehem Unitarian Church, Waterfoot, Rossendale, Lancashire. 1865. Methodist Unitarian foundation of 1806. Like Providence Chapel, Rochdale, and Todmorden, the earlier Newchurch Chapel was built for Joseph Cooke and John Ashworth, the leading preachers of Methodist Unitarianism. A library embracing all subjects was an important part of the chapel from the start, remaining a local amenity until Carnegie Library opened in 1930. Stone, large gabled with two transepts; Early English Gothic. Single space interior with prominent roof trusses. Pulpit in memory of John McLauchlan c. 1925. Memorials.

Large Hillside graveyard with Gothic Sunday School adjoining dated 1874, built on site of first chapel (1806).

Northampton Unitarian Church, Kettridge Road. 1897. Congregation seceded 1827 from Doddridge’s Castle Hill Congregational Chapel; occupied ex-Wesleyan chapel in King Street. Present chapel donated by Sir Philip and Lady Mansfield. Architect Charles Corman, who had recently designed the Mansfield shoe factory. Red brick with stone detailing, asymmetrical steeple. Large and extensive meeting-rooms adjoin. Interior, single space with wide choir and chancel, rear gallery. Original light pendants. Now isolated on a traffic island.

Oxford, Manchester College, Mansfield Road. 1893. In 1889 Manchester College moved to Oxford from London; previously it had been in Manchester and York. Architect Thomas Worthington. The buildings are arranged round two quadrangles. Library donated by Sir Henry Tate. The chapel has geometrical windows, hammer-beam roof, fine carved oak screen and canopied choir stalls. ‘The whole set of Burne-Jones windows in Manchester College Chapel of 1893 is in fact a pure joy.’ [Pevsner.] They depict the six days of creation with inscription by Dibdin & Elsiesk Dieu. Arllesh Hall by Percy Worthington has good timber roof and oak paneling (1913). Padiham, Nazareth Unitarian Chapel, Church Street. Lancashire. 1874. Founded 1866. In 1889 Rev. L. A. Burt described a visit: ‘In this manufacturing village there is a society of Methodist Unitarians who meet together and instruct and edify one another; Mr. Ashworth and others occasionally visit and preach among them; they meet in a pretty large room, but it is too small... The people are all poor.’ First chapel of 1823 still survives in Market Place – domestic appearance, though always good. By 1859 the building was ‘too small and inconvenient, besides being situated in a back street’. Relocated on two-acre site on Knight Hill.

Grit stone, geometrical Gothic; gabled nave, chancel, transepts, porch and north-east tower with spire and pinnacles. Interior high, pitch pine roof, small galleries in transepts (removed 1904). Schoolrooms underneath. Architect Virgil Anderson, member of congregation. ‘Mr. Cornelius Anderson, as the contractor for the masons’ work, did his work at merely a nominal price. Mr. El Whitehead undertook to do it at a low rate. The three stone crosses on the roof were worked and given by masons engaged on the building, viz. Joseph Anderson, Fergus Anderson and Andrew Williamson. A large part of the excavating was done by the people themselves after work hours.’ Centenary memorial school built at rear, 1903, in similar style.

Schools were established in Accrington, Burnley (2), Colne and Nelson but since closed.

Pudsey Unitarian Church, Church Lane, Yorks. 1861. Christian Brethren foundation; in 1864 Joseph Barker preached in Pudsey to 1,400 people in the open air. Congregation formed 1853. Stone, modest. Steeply pitched roof with front gable, side butresses with pinnacle, now commons. Interior, blue and white painted wood, stained glass in apse. Schoolrooms behind.

Richmond Unitarian Free Church, Ormond Road. Surrey. 1896. In 1824 a society was founded ‘to discuss religious and kindred subjects’. In 1836 at a meeting in the Schoothouse, Petersham, attended by the Earl of Dysart, Countess Russell and members of her family, and E. Wilkes Smith of the Russell School, Petersham and first secretary of Richmond congregation, it was decided to build a church. Soon after, Channing Hall in Friars Lane was built. (James Ramsay MacDonald was a lay preacher there.) Present church, brick, stone detailing, gabled roof, side porch. Interior better than exterior; fine wood roof and paneling; shallow apse with windows by Burne-Jones. Raised dais at front. No pews but original wooden chairs. Beaten copper memorial to Countess Russell, 1893. Modern brick extension at rear, architect Kenneth Taylor. Pleasant gardens.

Rotherham, Church of Our Father, Moorgate. Yorkshire. 1880. Founded 1862 when John Shawe and Luke Clayton seceded from the Parish Church. First chapel of 1706 still stands opposite in Don Street, originally with multihung and transomed windows, hipped roof. Altered 1841 during long ministry of Jacob Breetel, when it was turned, windows round arched and porch added. Chapel became schoolroom, now a workshop, Small graveyard adjoining. On the brow above confluence of rivers Don and Rother.

Present church pink sandstone, Early English style. Front gable has richly detailed central doorway by Wharfmeire Fireclay Co. (John Armitage, proprietor, buried at Underbank Chapel, Stanleigh). North-west tower and spire rise to 100 feet. Schoolroom underneath. Little-altered interior includes brass lectern by Quest & Charnes of Rotherham; organ by Albert Kears of Sheffield c. 1900; Batsto lantern. Rear gallery with ventilators under, high, steeply pitched hammer-beam roof. Stained glass lancet side windows include ‘The Good Shepherd’ commemorating 25th year of William Blabye’s ministry, 1885. Memorials.

Old chapel. Rochdale (1864). Architechts Flockton and Gibbs of Sheffield (see Upper Chapel), much of the craftsmanship being done by members of the congregation. Cost £3,620.


Bright red brick with stone detailing, gabled front with central window and projecting porch. Built on steeply sloping site with meeting hall and games room on separate floors beneath. Rear elevation includes caretaker’s house. Architect J. R. Wijguff, builder D. O’Neill.

Interior has transepts and low side aisles; through arch, large chancel with choir stalls; organ from Addy Street. Curved ceiling. Good stained glass includes chancel window depicting ‘Security, Truth, Mercy, Peace’ with central figure of Justice by Holiday; Charles Wood’s memorial window 1898 and matching war memorial window in Morris style. Beaten copper memorials in chancel.

Below are extensive hall, meeting-rooms, kitchen and cloakrooms with original fittings. Surrounded by gardens. The last chapel built on the grand scale.
Stalybridge Unitarian Church, Forrester Drive, Cheshire. 1870.
Congregation founded 1865, result of mission by East Cheshire Union of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. Surroundings have been transformed by demolition and redevelopment of suburban housing.

Stockton-on-Tees Unitarian Church, Wellington Street, Durham. 1873.
Stock brick, red brick detailing, gabled nave, side aisles and lancet windows. Schoolroom behind. Interior: high nave, clerestory supported on 2 x 5 iron columns, pulpit on central dais. Memorials from old chapel to James Crowe, 1825 (Improve of Tiers Navigation, built New Cut in 1809), H. E. Wright, 1857 (now partially hidden).
'In 1835 an organ was placed in the chapel. It contained two barrels and twelve tunes each, and this for some years made was to satisfy the musical aspirations of the congregation . . .' Redeployment round chapel.

Todmorden Unitarian Church, Fielden Square, Yorkshire. 1869.

Architect John Gibson of Westminster (pupil of Charles Barry) also built Todmorden Town Hall and Fielden residence. The style is 'Decorated Gothic', built to Anglican pattern. Millstone, very sharply and accurately cut. Nave, aisles, transepts, bell-tower and spire over entrance, rising to 196 feet.
Interior, long nave, marble floor and pillars; transepts form a mortuary chapel to south, organ chamber and vestry to north. Both transepts have grilled roofs of red and white Mansfield stone. Main roof oak, corbels and spandrels of carved fruit, flowers, angels, etc. Original fittings including lights (converted to electricity). Superb font in coloured marble. Woodwork by Messrs. Clay of Audenshaw, marble work by Fields of London. Three matching memorials to the Fielden brothers in north aisle. Stained glass by M. Capo natuur of Brussels results in under-lit interior; circular apertures in side windows of clerestory arches give extra light. Porch has polished granite memorial to the three Fielden brothers, set in floor under steeple.
Todmorden is one of the most impressive and accomplished Victorian chapels. The setting is exceptional, steep hillside and mature woodland, it is the natural religious focus of Todmorden and could be mistaken for the parish church. Extensive grounds and graveyard with winding walks up the hillside. Carriage drive has small lodge at entrance gate.
Torquay Unitarian Church, Montpelier Road, Devon. 1912.

Trowbridge, Congregational Chapel, Wiltshire. 1857 and 1865.
Congregation established 1855. Anabaptist origins among clothiers in nearby Southwick. First Congregational chapel of 1703/4, off-shoot from Southwick. 'The old Meeting House was built in a style which indicated that the worshippers were opulent as well as numerous in its early days. The roof consisted of several arches, curiously constructed, and supported by two large pillars. There were three galleries, a high nave, arcaded side aisles and galleries, the grand scale, corner pinnacles. No tower. Deserted interior on quieted between chapel and bus station. Chapel of 1857 now disused, she was erected 1890. Murch wrote in 1835, 'Everyone goes to chapel and meeting-room; stone with two matching gabled facades, semi-circular windows, arched doors and windows below. Memorials in chapel and schoolrooms.

Urmston Free Church, Queen's Road, Lancashire. 1900.

Walsall, The Memorial Church, Manor Road-Chesire. 1859.
Dated from 1888 as Liverpool District Mission venture. Temporary chapel of 1892 survives on Bridge Street — an excellent example of 'corrugated Gothic', well-maintained and now used by United Reformed Church. Church was gift of Mrs Martha Elam in memory of her husband William. Architects, Waring and Rathbone. Red brick, stone detailing, with projecting octagonal tower and adjoining hall. Interior 'decorated in a style new, so far as we are aware, to this country' (The Inquirer 1899), in other words, Art Nouveau. Oak panelled walls and ceiling; stone arch to chancel which contains Della Robbia panels by Harold Rathbone from his pottery in Bangor, the panels depict a blue and white glazed mother and child, shepherd, fields and tree with inscription 'And what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and love mercy, and to walk honourably with thy God'. Painted communion table, pulpit and choir stalls by Bernard Sleigh of Bromsgrove Guild of Arts and Crafts. Original light fittings by Walter Gilbert.

Wolverhampton, All Souls Unitarian Church, Park Road West, Staffordshire. 1911.
Congregation originated in 1700. First chapel 1701 in John Street; Unitarians lost it in 1817 on successful orthodox claim (see Hewley case). Chapel built at Snow Hill 1831, sold 1859. Temporary chapel, Bath Road, 1902. Present chapel red brick, simple, fan-traceried design. Tudor Gothic window over entrance. Interior, wide nave with waggled arches to narrow side aisles. Tudor arched roof. Chairs, no pews. One of the first town-centre chapels to move to suburbia.

Opposite, top: Torquay (left); Trowbridge (right).
Middle: Ullas Road church and library, Liverpool.
Studbridge Bottom: Walsall (left), Gorton (right).
Disused and Demolished Chapels and Churches

B = Built, F = Founded, C = Closed, D = Demolished, V = Varied, L = Listed

Ashford, Hempsall Street. X. B 1875, V c 1990

Aston-under-Lyne, Richard Hill Unitarian Church. Lost. F 1877, B 1939, C 1984


Birmingham, Fazeley Street Mission. F 1844, B 1848

Lawrence Street, 1877 Lower Fazeley Street Schoolroom 1888. Now a factory. Foundation stone laid by Chamberlain.

Birmingham, Hurst Street Mission. F 1840, B 1844, 1870, C and D. Known as 'The People's Hall'.

Birmingham, Newhall Hill. F 1834, B 1840, enlarged 1865. Now a museum for bar officials. In 1915uminium moved to Clifton Road, Handsworth, now 'Beech United Church of Jesus Christ'. (For New Meeting and Old Meeting see p 70)


Bradford, High Garend and Holmead. Essex. High Court built under patronage of Samuel Cunliffe, who invested nearby and owned textile mills in Bradford and Holmead. He opened a school in 1840 and started services in 1853. The building in Elizabethan gable style survives as a market gardening centre (recorded on plaque within). In 1899 congregation moved to chapel in Cogshall Street, Bradman, closing when congregation ceased.

A chapel also built 1857 in Gloucester Road East, Holmead, C 1959. D. It stood amid Cunliffe's mills and workers' cottages.

Bristol, Montague Street Mission. F 1839, B 1841. D by bombing WW2

Burnley, Turfgarth Street. Lancashire. F 1850, B 1871, C 1850.

Architect Varch Anderson (see Padiham). (Also mission in Ramsbottom B 1903)

Bury Chorlton, Halstead Street. Lancashire. F and B 1883, B 1974, D.

Buxton, Derbyshire. F 1715. B in Market Place behind King's Head Hotel. Larger remains survive with some spiral staircase link to parlour. c 1872. Harlington Road, C 1968. Architect Thomas Worthington 96

Carlisle, Victoria Viaduct. Cumberland. F 1853, B 1859, C 1957, latterly meeting at Long Street. Chapel survives, almost altered, as churchly showrooms. Originally had barrel vaults and arched windows.

Chelmsford, Legg Street. Essex. F 1877, R 1879, C 1913. Now 'Old Excelsior House'.


Clearwell Mill, Cumberland. c 1840. Established under patronage of Thomas Answorth, Unitarian mill owner, C 1900.

Coalville, Bridge Road Leicestershire. F 1903, B 1908, C 1916


Crewe, Beech Street. F 1862, B 1865, C and D 1977.

Croydon, Dunnett Hall Mission, Dunnett Road. Surrey. F 1888, B 1888, C and D 1931.

Darwen, Loud Yard. Ormskirk. F 1852, B 1873, C 1932, D.

Darwen, Boldon Road. Lancashire. F 1877, B 1879, C and D.

Dewsbury, Willis Road. Yorkshire. F 1858, B 1866, C 1953.

New Elim Stone, gabled, later. Land windmills Sunday School underneath.

Douglas, Isle of Man. Cunda Road. F 1880, B 1884, C.


Greatbatch, Cross Street. Kirkstall. F 1853, B 1854, C 1909, D.


Lichfield, Rosemary Hill, Walsall. F 1700, B 1705, 1866. With permission of Rev. John Hulse's Field the passing of the Dissenters' Chapel Act (Architect Pearson; C 1891, now the Priory Theatre)


Nottingham, Eastern Road. Mission. Bond Street. F and B 1859, C 1919, D.

Hamilton Road Mission. F 1862, B 1871, C 1974, D.

Beckton, Stanley Road. F 1865, B 1895, C and D 1972.


London

Acton, Credlefield Road. F 1902, B 1898, C 1904, D

Bellerby Street Mission. F 1857, B 1857, C 1955, D.

Bexley, Port Road. F 1853, B 1858, C 1904, D.

Blakemere Place Mission. F 1835, B 1877, C 1928, D.

Chantry, Maidstone Road. F 1902, B 1895, C 1928, D.

Chesham, Albert Embankment. F 1895, B 1895, C 1928, D.

Nominate, F 1895, B 1895, C 1928, D.

Dulwich, Elmsford Road. F 1886, B 1909, C 1928.


Whitstable, Town Road. F 1862, B 1867, C 1940. D. Connoisseur.


Manchester


Mickleover, St. Peter Street. F 1877, B 1911, C 1914. D. Miles Platting, Oldham Road. F 1857, B 1883, C 1929. amalgamated with Callyhurn. D.


Middlesbrough, Corporation Road, Yorkshire. F and B 1853. West Street, the first church established in the then new town. F 1873, B 1893.


Newark, Kings Road, Nottinghamshire. F 1843, B 1894, C 1920. Now a CEGS social centre.


Nottingham, High Pavement. F 1862, B 1890, 1895 and 1876, all on same site. An important church, with many town mayors and leading citizens among its 18th and 19th century congregations. Rebuilt on grand scale during successful ministry of R. A. Armstrong. Architect S. Cullum of Bristol.

Gothic with prominent tower and spire with gables, aisles and transepts. Sandstone with heaviest steeple. City landmark on cliff above Great Central Railway tunnel mouth.

Good interior seating 1,000, richly carved arcade, clerestory above. Very good stained glass. Chancel window by Burne-Jones. 23 figures in 3 tiers. Chancel vacated by congregations 1983. Now owned by local authority and being adapted as heritage centre.

Nottingham, Prince Hill Road. F 1840, B 1864, C 1938. D.

Nottingham, Bracken Road, Huyson Grove. F and B 1883, C 1901.


Poole, Hill Street. Dorset. F 1864, B 1705, 1866, C 1966. D.

Reading, London Road, Berkshire. F 1876, B 1877, C 1973, D.


Sheffield, Shelter Lane, Attercliffe. F 1901 as mission from Upper Chapel, B 1856, C 1971. Became a mosque, destroyed by fire, declared.

South Shields, Deaby Terrace, Durham. F 1872, B 1874, C 1883.


Swindon, Victoria Street, Wiltshire. F and B 1865, now church later bought by Church of England. Also B 1867 g. Rollaton Street. C and D.


Weslown, Lodge Road, Staffordshire. F 1871, B 1875, C 1899, now Pentecostal.
CHAPTER FIVE
Destruction, Decay and Renewal: 1918-1984

Among Unitarians, the First World War marked a period of crisis, change was brought about by the early death of young Unitarians in the war, by a landslide decline in churchgoing, paralleled by the swift decline in the fortunes of the Liberal Party (supported by many Unitarians), by a sense of reaction and release from Victorian attitudes and values. This reaction, common to other non-conformists, was marked in Unitarianism, where individual reason and responsibility are considered paramount. It was manifest in energies put into international relations and the early work of the League of Nations, and in an egalitarian approach to Unitarian congregations in India and Africa. The Domestic Missions in England began to lose their impetus, though remaining active in the big cities through the depression of the ‘20s and ‘30s. Individual Unitarians played their part in local government and state education, valuing the democratic and progressive character of the emerging welfare state. Women ministers, the first of whom had emerged in the 1870’s, now became more numerous. Despite the pessimism induced by the war, and general disillusionment with Victorian ideals of progress, Unitarians tended to remain loyal to their maxim of ‘Onward and Upward for Ever’.

State-control and its influence on private life was echoed in religious organisation. No longer was the individual congregation expected to exist in isolation, minding its own business and pursuing its own path. Increased centralisation, even in Unitarianism, that most individualistic and unsupervised of religions, was accepted with the formation of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches in 1928 — the amalgamation of two 19th century organisations, the British and Foreign Unitarian Association (founded 1825), and the National Conference of Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian and other non-subscribing or Independent Congregations (founded 1881). Ministerial training and welfare, annual meetings, and international links were all better organised. Centralisation could be seen as strength in retrenchment rather than growth at grass roots. Moreover, it could be seen as a ‘regrouping’ in order to move forward more securely later.

For the first time in English history, books appear about chapel architecture; Ronald P. Jones’s Nonconformist Church Architecture (1914) and Martin Briggs’s Puritan Architecture (1946); the emphasis was still on advice to those contemplating building a chapel. Not until John Betjeman’s First and Last Loves of 1955 were chapels considered in a historic context as aesthetic creations, and their religious function and design discussed. The architectural quality of chapels is analysed in Pevsner’s Buildings of England, 1951-74; further serious assessment has been done by Marcus Binney and Kenneth Powell of SAVE, and the British Council for Architecture. Chapels of all denominations are being abandoned, because congregations cannot or will not maintain them. Religious habits are changing, and often congregations prefer to start anew rather than try to adapt the buildings they already have.

Thirteen chapels were destroyed by bombing in the second world war. At least 15 have been demolished for re-development or roadworks. 35 new chapels have been built since 1914; four were for congregations founded in this century: Cambridge, Lytham St Annes, Cudders Green, and West Kirby. The remainder replaced chapels destroyed by war or town planning.

Local authorities are far from averse to the development of prime sites, and their road-building programmes have taken precedence over the conservation of old buildings. About 56 Unitarian chapels — over a fifth of the total — were closed in the 1960s and ‘70s. This does not necessarily mean that the congregations died out — they sometimes carried on in other premises.

The twentieth century has not been a time when English Unitarianism has needed many new buildings. Growth has taken place in other parts of the world, but not in England. Suburban population growth, briefly seen by nonconformists as a promising area...
of religious growth, did not produce more than a handful of Unitarian chapels (though it did strengthen previously rural chapels such as Dean Row [Wilmslow], Kingswood [Birmingham], and Fulwood [Sheffield]). At West Kirby and Lytham, both areas of coastal suburban development, new chapels were erected when Unitarians moved out from the older towns.

The architect of the two finest 20th century Unitarian chapels, at Cambridge and West Kirby (both 1928), was Ronald P. Jones, who also adapted the Westgate Chapel at Lewes in 1913. Jones was a pupil of Thomas and Percy Worthington, and received his architectural education in the heart of Unitarian church building practice, at Ullet Road, Liverpool. He wrote an interesting account of work on Ullet Road (published in Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society). An admirer of the neo-Georgian style and no lover of Victorian Gothic, his own work is an attractive example of the former. However, in his book he gives a balanced assessment of Gothic church architecture, recognising that many congregations possess nineteenth century Gothic chapels, and it is desirable that they should appreciate their good qualities. His interiors at Cambridge and West Kirby are similar in their restrained yet rich design and woodwork. Jones was an enthusiast for the work of Wren, and he was not ashamed to use the master's lessons. As he intimates in his book: “in all interior fittings, Wren's example is a safe guide; however richly his pulpits are adorned, the tone and colour are the same throughout, the limitations of the material itself curb undue extravagance, and the essential repose... is never broken.” It is sad that R. P. Jones did not design more Unitarian chapels.

The other churches built between the wars were Golders Green (1925), Lytham St Anne's (1930), Halliwell Road, Bolton (1931), Coventry (1937) and the remarkable Church of the Divine Unity, Newcastle upon Tyne, completed in 1940. The first three were the first permanent homes for their new congregations; the last two had distinguished histories from the time of the Ejection. Chapels destroyed by bombing were Croydon, Brixton, Islington, Cross Street Manchester, Plymouth, Portsmouth (two), St Helens, Southampton, Stand (north of Manchester), and Great Yarmouth. Destroyed and never re-opened were Old Meeting, Birmingham (built 1885) and Fihy, Norfolk (built 1706). Those rebuilds vary considerably in the success of their design. Unashamedly nostalgic is Stand Chapel (1955) an evocation of American colonial style. The most successful designs are those which take advantage of their site to create a satisfactory series of rooms and outdoor areas with various functions and uses. Such are Croydon (1929, architects, David Evelyn Nye and Partners), Brixton (1962, architect Kenneth Taylor), and Portsmouth (1956, architect E. A. Down). Taylor's work at Brixton in particular is a model of its kind; he also designed Islington, the modest Putney chapel and the pleasant garden extensions at Richmond, besides being the architect of the new Essex Hall (1959, bombed in 1940). If the '50s and early '60s were the age of replacement after the war, the later '60s and '70s were the age of urban renewal — often a case of population shifting and traffic reorganisation. Here, too, new chapels vary considerably. Of those in the South, Essex Church (1971), Kensington, is one of the more interesting, in the North, Rawtenstall is, perhaps, the most adventurous. Five Ways New Meeting, Birmingham (1973), the replacement for the Gothic Church of the Messiah, is uncompromisingly plain with a well-planned interior. The two slate memorials at New Meeting are examples of the fine twentieth century lettering to be found in Unitarian chapels — a facet of the renaissance of that art inspired by William Morris and later by Edward Johnston and Eric Gill. Leicester Great Meeting, West Kirby, Croydon and Hampstead have good examples on their walls.
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For earlier history of Birmingham churches see Chapters 3 and 4.
Architect, Eric M. Hemsoll. Brick, low-lying with continuous concrete lintel band. Raised copper roof over worship area, with clerestory windows. Central concourse with large marble memorial to Priestley of 1805. Hall and offices on one side, chapel on the other. Two good memorials in chapel, to John Sutton Nettlefold, 1869-1930, first Chairman of the town planning Committee of Birmingham City Council, and to Ruth Nettlefold, 1876-1957, both of united gilded slate.

Bolton, Halliwell Road Free Church (Unitarian), Lancashire. 1953.
Congregation founded as a mission from Bank Street Chapel in 1899, first met in converted cottages.
Brick with end saddleback tower. Rear Sunday School at right angles.
Interior is a late and original example of Gothic revival. Rectangular with narrow side aisles. Brick semi-circular arches divide tower, nave and chancel. Mellow red brick walls and low-arched clerestory windows with purpose-made brick tracery. Open black-and-white roof with carved timber trusses. Raised chancel includes a memorial lectern and chair from previous chapel. Architects Bradshaw and Gats, builder Tyson, Bolton, brickmaker Higson of Dobble.

Congregation founded 1672 at Horton Hall. Moved 1689 to Wibsey Fold; chapel still survives as a cottage. Stone mullioned and transomed window, coped gables and kneelers. Mansard roof in close-knit cottage environment.
Congregation moved again to Toad Lane, now Chapel Lane, in 1719, rebuilding in 1869 in Gothic style. Architect Andrews Son and Pepper. Gabled with side wings, geometrical tracery window incorporating large rose. Demolished 1969 for city centre development.
New chapel shares site with Society of Friends, set in large garden in inner suburban area. Stone, pyramidal slate roof with gutter and brackets forming marked feature.

Bury Unitarian Church, Bank Street. Lancashire. 1974.
First chapel, 1719 in Silver Street; second 1839; third, 1852 in Bank Street (by Bowman and Crowther, design similar to Mill Hill, Leeds).
Purple-brown brick, strongly vertical design with vestigial tower, gently rounded corners, and narrow half height windows between brick mullions.
Interior square and high, slim floor-to-ceiling windows, blank front wall with hanging bronze sculpture of five joyful figures, top-lit from tower. Rear organ loft (organ rebuilt from old chapel). Burne-Jones windows from old chapel incorporated at rear. Bell from first chapel, inscribed "Haste away, make no delay". Two storey wing, lounge and vestry with classroom and hall over. Architect, Terence Ratcliffe. Cost, approximately £90,000.

Cambridge Memorial Church, Emmanuel Road, 1928.
Congregation founded 1904. Faces across green of Christ's Pieces. Architects, Ronald P. Jones. In style of Wren (as in Pembroke College Chapel). Light brown brick with full-height stone Ionic pilasters flanking entrance at each corner; oval window and pediment with dented cornice. Lantern on roof. Meeting hall in similar style at rear, 1922. Classical interior, panelled oak walls; coffered barrel-vault ceiling; semi-circular apse with side lunettes and Ionic pilasters; rear organ loft carved with classical motifs and swags.
Chairs with embroidered memorial kneelers. Metalwork, Birmingham Guild of Handicraft. Cost of building donated by Mr. G. W. Brown, 'a man of business', in memory of his daughter Millicent. Latin memorial in chapel is based on 18th century memorial at Toxeth, qv. Chapel is similar to West Kirby, also designed by R. P. Jones in the same year.
Chester, Matthew Henry's Chapel, Nevin Road, 1956.
Congregation dates from 1662, Matthew Henry was ordained in 1687 and began his ministry at Chester, where a chapel was built for him in Crock Lane (Trinity Street) in 1700. [Gallery added 1706 for use of Independents in the congregation.] Redevelopment led to demolition and re-building about 2 miles along the Blacon Road on an extensive housing estate.
Architects, Saxon Smith and Partners, Chester.
Brown and yellow brick. East wall of brick and translucent gold plastic forming grille. Flat roof with skylights. Central porch, hall on one side, church on the other. Surprising interior making much use of items from the old chapel. Plain brick walls, a fall for pulpit at 1700, choir stalls, tall Matthew Henry's communion table, organ, broken pediment clock by William Thompson of Chester, memorials. Stained glass at sides depicting Matthew Henry and Martinau, at rear with motifs of lily, rose, wheat and vine (all now lit artificially). Font 1972. Folding doors at rear to schoolroom-hall.

Coventry, Great Meeting House, Holyhead Road, Warwickshire, 1827.
Congregation dates from 1662. Vicars of St Michael (now Cathedral), and Holy Trinity were founder-members. First chapel 1700 in Smithfield Street, demolished 1835 when the old chapel became unsuited to the exigencies of our age. Re-built in inner suburbs.

Congregation founded 1870 by newly suburban Unitarians. First (iron) church bought from Baptists and opened by Martineau. Stone Gothic church opened 1883, destroyed by bombing 1941. Broad-gabled church, perpendicular style with castellated corner turrets.
New site on Friends' Road (since renamed). Architects, David Evelyn Nye and Partners.
Brick and concrete, meeting-house style with large windows divided by mullions. Good use of site with central garden surrounded by chapel, covered walkway and hall. Large vestiule with stairway and upper landing leads to chapel. High ceiling, strong light from full-length windows, back gallery. Focus is on Bom wall, with mural incorporating words from the Wisdom of Solomon and stained glass windows by Lawrence Lee.

Derby, Friargate Unitarian Chapel, Stafford Street, 1877.
On site of original chapel of 1698 (demolished 1769). Now incorporated in ground floor of office block. Interior plain, large coat of arms of George II from old chapel. (For old chapel see Chapter 2).

Great Yarmouth, Old Meeting, Greyfriars Way, Norfolk, 1954.
Congregation founded 1642 on ejection of Independents. The town had been strongly Puritan for some time previously and an independent congregation, out of which the chapel grew, was in existence in 1644. Second chapel 1845 in Middlesbrough Street. Destroyed by bombing 1940.

Hull Unitarian Church, Park Street, Yorkshire, 1976.
Congregation dates from the Ejection. First chapel before 1700 in Bowl Alley Lane; second 1811, demolished 1977. Stone, gabled, asymmetrical tower and spire, twin porches.
Brick, small, plain, gabled, on site of previous church. Dual-purpose chapel and hall with kitchen and vestry.

Lancaster Unitarian Church, Scotforth Road, 1966.

London, Brixton Unitarian Church, Effra Road, 1962.
Congregation founded 1836, when Brixton was developing as a suburb. First church 1839; Gothic 3-bay gable, centre set forward with circular window over porch. Destroyed by bombing 1940.
Architects, Kenneth Taylor. Brick with concrete window surrounds, low-pitched roof. Spacious grounds progressing from garden (site of old church) to porch and chapel, hall, parsonage and caretaker's bungalow, all attractively arranged with interspersed gardens. Interior of chapel simple, exposed brickwork, wood laminated trusses, organ loft at rear. Original pulpit. Behind, complex of meeting-rooms, offices and stage.

Congregation founded 1903 in Weech Road, Hampstead, chapel and land donated by the four Misses Field, daughters of Edwin Wilkins Field MP (see Chapter 4); they also donated land for the new chapel.
Architects, G. Reginald Fanner and Sydney R. Turner. Red brick and Portland stone, pantile roof. 'Byzantine' style with semi-circular steps and entrance arch under pediment. Interior, single space with apse. Large plain windows, rear gallery, vaulted ceiling. 'Byzantine' wall pilasters. Chairs (originally intended to have pew). Partitioned side opening to hall. Focal point of church is semicircular mural in apse, the first known painting of Ivon Hitchens, 1919; painted as a war memorial, forest scene with deer and legend. 'The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations'. (Another version is in Maidstone Parish Church.) Memorial to Rev Joyce Daplyn 1931, daughter of first minister, Rev Edgar Daplyn.

London, Islington, Unity Church, Upper Street, 1958.
Congregation has illustrious history dating back to 1571. Matthew Sylvester, ejected vicar
of Gunnerby, Lincolnshire, friend of Baxter, 'A high genius of rich imagination' according to Calamy, his assistant, joined a congregation at Charterhouse Yard. Succeeded by Richard Baxter, minister there for last four years of his life. Chapel built 1692 in Meeting-House Court, Blackfriars, destroyed in High Church riots 1710. New chapel built 1734 at Doctors Commons, Little Carver Lane, 'in point of workmanship is scarcely equalled by any dissenting place of worship in London'. The architect, named on foundation stone, was G. Sampson. Stone incorporated in Unity Church, Islington, built in 1861. Declining City population on Sundays was reason for move to a residential suburb. Architect was Thomas Charrilf-Clarke. A large stone church with tower and broached spire. Destroyed 1940 by bombing.

Architect, Kenneth Taylor. Set back from street down passage. Stock brick with copper roof. Dual-purpose hall and church with concrete trusses, high ceiling; shallow 'chancel' area partitioned off behind stage. Gallery and minister's room at rear contains portraits of all ministers since foundation. Rear complex of meeting rooms and offices survived bombing; entrance on Florence Street has inscription 'Preston Hall 1906'.


Congregation founded by Rev. Theophilus Lindsay 1774 after his resignation from Church of England, the first avowedly Unitarian foundation. First purpose-built chapel in Essex Street, Strand, 1778, meeting-house with box pews and 3-sided gallery.

Following decision of British and Foreign Unitarian Association to form 'a Free Christian Church in the West End of London', church built in Kensington 1887. Architect T. C. Charrilf-Clarke, who designed Essex Hall at the same date.


London, Putney Unitarian Church, Upper Richmond Road, 1868.

Congregation founded 1882 in Wandsworth, small building on Trusley Hill still survives, replaced 1885 by Gothic chapel on East Hill. Completedly purchased 1967 for road works.


Lytham St Annes, Ansdell Unitarian Church, Channing Road. Lancashire. 1930.

Congregation founded 1905; first chapel, converted from, 1906.

Brick, stone detailing, mildly Gothic. Short square tower between gable-ended chapel and meeting rooms overlooking garden. Interior has pews, chancel with choir stalls and organ. Roof trusses and ceiling in dark oak. Memorial chalice window to Rev Herbert Crabtree 1943-54.

Manchester: Cross Street Chapel, 1959.

Congregation originated in 1662 Erection; first chapel 1694, survived until bombed in 1940. The focus of Lancashire Unitarianism — its importance in the history of Manchester can be measured by the fact that the chapel features in the 1863 Corporation of Manchester's leaflet on Conservation areas, when the site alone has any present-day significance. Rebuilt on same site in the heart of the city's commercial quarter. Architect F. J. Halliday. Buff brick with Portland stone window surrounds. Flat roof, tall mullion windows, Egyptian-style pillars in mullions. Interior, spacious, plain, a dignified conception of a modern 'Meeting House', free from unnecessary or fussy detail and relying on good proportion and simple lines to make their effect' (Kenneth Taylor).

Vestibule contains memorial to Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-65), wife of William Gaskell, minister 1828-1854. Vestry block at rear survived blitz, contains pictures, clock and memorabilia of old chapel and Sunday schools.

Top left: Ansdell Unitarian Church, front building 1906. Top right: Essex Church, interior of first chapel 1774. Middle left: Ansdell, Lytham St Annes 1930. Middle right: Interior of Essex Church 1977. Below: Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, first building of 1864.
Includes the famous 'Cross Street Chapel Room', where the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society and the Manchester Academy (College) were founded. Graveyard with many graves, now laid flat.

Manchester: Dob Lane Chapel, Oldham Road, Failsworth. 1975.
First chapel built 1758, evolving from prefabricated Newton Chapel. Gabled brick, four bays with round-arched windows. Three-storey parsonage added 1750 to left. Set back from road in graveyard. Replaced by building in Early English style 1879. This collapsed in early 1970's. Schoolroom c.1879 now adapted as chapel with simple brick meeting room added to front 1973. Graves removed. A fine old meeting house site, ruined by decayed urban surroundings, and an incongruous group of chapel buildings.

Newcastle upon Tyne, Church of the Divine Unity, Elsholme Place, 1940
Congregation founded 1662 by Rev Richard Gilpin, physician and ejected vicar of Greystoke, Cumberland. Soon after, the independent congregation gathered by Rev William Duranti, ejected Lecturer of All Saints' Church, joined them. (Duranti's memorial can be seen on the vestibule wall.) First chapel 1665, Close Gate (exact size and appearance unknown, built for Dr Gilpin); second 1727, Hanover Square (plain meeting-house style); third, the 'magnificent' 1854 Church of the Divine Unity, Bridge Street, architect John Dobson, designer of many of the dignified streets and squares of 19th century Newcastle. Demolished 1939.
Church of 1940 built during the long and fruitful ministry of Herbert Barnes 1919-51. Architects, Cackett, Burns, Dick and Mackellar. Brick, stone detailing — a very large building. Flat roof with clerestory to chapel, tower with full-height, slit windows. Monumental stone gateway entrance to vestibule between hall and church. Church interior almost square, large, with chancel. Narrow central roof bounded by clerestory and rear gallery. Light oak pews. The bright pastel colours of the decor, imposing beamed ceiling, rectangular 'Art-Deco' design of chancel, and period window-glazing make this interior unique among Unitarian churches, possibly among all British churches.

Oldham Unitarian Chapel, King Street, 1971.
Congregation founded 1813, first chapel 1816.
Second chapel 1877, both in Lord Street. Rebuilt 1971 because of town re-development.
Brick, small, narrow windows, flat roof. Situated on traffic-laden road.

Plymouth Unitarian Church, Notte Street, Devon. 1958.
Founded 1662 by Rev George Hughes, ejected vicar of St Andrew's Church. First chapel built 1689. Rebuilt 1832 during successful ministry of Rev W. J. Odgers, founder of numerous chapel institutions such as library, savings club, writing classes, Sunday school, etc, and campaigning for improved Public Health facilities. Stone, S lay with pediment. Destroyed by bombing 1941.
Architect, Louis de Soissons and Pannett. American Colonial style, square, wood with rendered panels and pyramidal slate roof surmounted by slim spire.

Portsmouth, John Pounds Memorial Chapel, High Street, Old Portsmouth, Hampshire. 1969.
Two congregations joined in 1946; Presbyterian-Unitarian chapel in High Street (first chapel 1819, second 1716, destroyed by bombing 1941), and St Thomas Street General Baptist Chapel (first 1693, rebuilt 1715 and 1865, bombed 1941).
Attractive arrangement of chapel, garden and parsonage. Interior, barrel-vaulted ceiling, semi-circular apse, mullioned side windows. Pews. Organ from Poole chapel. Garden contains memorial to John Pounds (1768-1839), shoemaker, who, though crippled by a fall into a dry dock, taught numerous children to read and write while at his work.

Rawtenstall Unitarian Church, Bank Street, Lancashire. 1971.
First chapel 1757, an independent foundation, by George and Richard Whittaker, inspired by preaching of George Whitefield in Rossendale. 1818, congregation decided to become Unitarian 1833, second chapel built, altered and schoolrooms underneath added 1852. Demolished 1971 when roadworks damaged the foundations.
Unusual and effective design in white artificial stone. Chapel surmounted by larger cantilevered upper hall with pyramidal roof. Set
on brow and approached by Victorian gates and steps rising through old graveyard.

Interior, modest chapel, cedar woodwork. Splendid hall with slated wood ceiling rising to pyramid; clear vertical windows here and in chapel give magnificent views of surrounding country.

Rochdale Unitarian Church, Clover Street, Lancashire. 1974.

Two congregations, one Presbyterian, the other Methodist. Unitarian, amalgamated 1890.

The first founded by ejected vicar and curate of Rochdale Parish Church, built meeting house 1672, again in 1717 and in 1857, both in Blackwater Street (in 1587 first sermon was preached by Martineau). Demolished 1974. Stone, gabled, small bell turret, two sides, geometrical tracery.

The second, Providence Chapel, built 1807 for Joseph Cookes, replaced by Clover Street Chapel in 1818. On amalgamation this became the Sunday School, demolished 1972 to make way for present church. Simple, gabled, round-arched windows in two stories. On the old road over Rooley Moor towards Rossendale are remains of 'Praying Stations' used by Methodist Unitarians, eg Fairview, Kirkburton and Raikes Farm.

New chapel is of red brick with prominent stone five-sided apse. Shallow pitch roof, plain windows. Interior, dual-purpose hall with rear stage. Burne-Jones windows from Blackwater Street Chapel set in rectangular frames in apse. School and meeting-rooms in two-storey wing using sloping site.

St Helens Unitarian and Free Christian Church, Corporation Street, Lancashire. 1950.


Salford, Pendleton Unitarian Free Church, Cross Lane, Manchester. 1976.


Large complex of buildings in brown brickwork with castellated appearance. Octagonal chapel with copper roof and spire, school and meeting rooms and large windowless hall with raked roof. Set in area of new housing ¼ mile south of previous chapel.

Interior yellow brick with narrow lights. Lattice steel trusses rise from octagonal corners to central lantern. Interlocking chairs. Pleasant hotel-like lounge opens into chapel. Large stage in hall. Architect, Ray Cowling, chosen because he had never designed a church before!

Southampton Unitarian Church, London Road, Hampshire. 1956.

Congregational founded 1846 by Rev Edmund Kendal from Birmingham, archivist and anti-slavery campaigner. First chapel 1860, an ornate design in free Lancelot style, Destroyed by bombing 1940. Present chapel is built on its foundations (see lower stone courses and rear rooms).

Brick, large window on facade. Interior, plain, spacious; stained glass in apse. Edmund Roll Memorial Hall at rear. Chapel is about to be rebuilt on rear site.

Southend-on-Sea Unitarian Meeting House, Essex. 1937.

Congregational founded 1897; first chapel 1898. Converted iron with barbage and three towers.

Stand Unitarian Chapel, Ringley Road, Stand Close, Whitefield, Lancashire. 1955.

Congregation originates from period of Ejection, when Stand was a remote area where a number of Puritan families lived. First chapel 1693 on site of present chapel; exact appearance unknown but possibly on Hale/Dean Row pattern, housed by Trustees of Stand Grammar School (minister was schoolmaster, and school appears to have taken place in chapel on weekdays). Rebuilt 1818, meeting-house style with pedimented gable and bellcote, a design not unlike the present building. Bell in old chapel inscribed 'Henry Penn made me, 1708'. Destroyed by bombing 1940.

Architect, J. S. A. Young of Young and Parves (his grave is in the churchyard). Brick and painted wood, American colonial style with tall lantern. Stone set in wall below lantern inscribed 'Condemned AD 1693, Renewed AD 1818, Deletum AD 1940, Restituta AD 1952'.


West Kirby Free Church, Brookfield Gardens, Cheshunt. 1928.

Congregational founded 1906.

Architect, R. P. Jones (see Cambridge). Rustic brick and stucco. Gabled chapel and matching hall with arched link and brick steps; good iron bannisters, lamps, drain pipes, etc. Chapel side walls have brick pilasters with wooden heads forming coves.

Interior beautifully designed — the best of R. P. Jones. Parana pine panelled walls to pillar height; semi-circular chancel with Tocan pillars and two lunettes. Shallow barrel-vaulted ceiling, plain round-headed windows. Original heating and lighting fixtures. Chairs. Font in memory of Harold Coventry 1934. Very good memorial tablet to chapel members who died before chapel was built, 1928. Whole chapel is a subtle geometrical arrangement of semi-circles and repeated modules of space. Good window lights.

Hall and kitchen 1932 also with good original fittings. Surrounded by pleasant gardens; adjacent parsonage 1905.

Disused Chapels

Acocks Green, Oxford Street, Lancashire. 1839, B 1868, rebuild 1906, prefabricated box, now Ebenezer.

Blackburn, Clive Road, Cheshunt. 1810, B 1851 at Charting Cross, and 1903 at Broombridge Road. Typical vernacular church. Gothic in style. Rebuilt 1924 as Bury Wood Road. Prefabricated building with hall-membered gable and small porch.

Birmingham, Bilston. B 1859 in Drury Road. Rebuilt, 1924 as Yardley Wood Road. Prefabricated building with hall-membered gable and small porch.


Leys Hall. 1827, B 1833 in Lea Bridge Road, Keetley Green. C 1960, now an external shop.

Manchester, Whithenbank. 1855, B 1856 and 1955 in Riverley Road. Gabled building, initially successful as a meeting house and later a school. C 1976 now a West Indian Church.

CHAPTER SIX
Unitarianism in Wales: The Background to Belief

In preparing this chapter, we owe a debt of gratitude to Rev Dr Elwyn Davies, whose book on the history of Welsh Unitarianism, They Thought for Themselves (1982), has been the main source of information.

The most distinctive feature of Unitarianism in Wales, in contrast to that of the rest of Britain, is the Welsh language. Its almost universal use in the chapels of Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire—called the Black Spot—by orthodox critics is an integral part of close-knit communities with a rich history, difficult for the English speaker to penetrate. In South-East Wales English is more often used.

The Orthodox Established Church in Wales was the church of the landowner and squire, often English-speaking. The strong growth of nonconformity in Wales sprang from the alienation of the Welsh people from their landlords, and, as elsewhere, from a rapid industrialisation with attendant immigration into the towns and valleys of South Wales.

Unitarian beliefs, as in England, developed within the Presbyterian and Independent congregations formed during the 17th century, and especially after the Ejection of 1662. For example, in Swansea three houses of dissenters were licensed for religious services in 1672 and from these congregations arose a General Baptist and a Presbyterian church; the present Swansea Unitarian chapel stands on the site of the first Presbyterian chapel of 1698. Rev Samuel Jones (1628-1697), ejected in 1662, founded the important academy of Brynmawrwaith, and established the Presbyterian Chapel at Bridgend, which in the course of the 18th century adopted Unitarian beliefs.

Welsh Unitarianism owes its strongest roots to the love of learning and the founding of a number of academies, some of very modest size, in the rural communities of mid and South Wales. The liberal academy founded by Rev Samuel Jones at Brynmawrwaith in mid-Glamorgan was later transferred to Carmarthen, and became the most important training centre for Unitarian ministers. Although it was open to orthodox Independents as well. A pupil of Samuel Jones was James Owen of Oswestry, who was in turn the teacher of one of the most influential of the early liberal tutors at Carmarthen—Thomas Perrot. The Unitarian David Davis (Dafis Castell Hywel) 1745-1827 kept an academy on his farm at Castell Hywel, near Llwynrhydowen, where he prepared students for Carmarthen College and the English universities. A classics scholar and renowned poet in the Welsh language, he translated Gray's Elegy into distinguished Welsh. David Evans of Cribyn established a number of small schools and academies in South Wales around 1800. William Thomas (Gwilym Marley) kept an academy at Llandysul in the 1860s and 70s.

Ministers trained in these academies came from rural communities and often returned to them. Thomas Evans (Tomos Glyn C critical) 1764-1833, a farm servant and weaver at Brechfa, Carmarthenshire, was taught by Dafis Castell Hywel and later established what is considered to be the first Unitarian church in Wales at Gwm Cottis near Gwernogle, north of Carmarthen, in 1792. He later moved to Abertawe and translated a number of Unitarian books into Welsh. Jenkin Jones 1700-1742 (great-uncle of the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright) was a pupil of Thomas Perrot. He built his own chapel at Llwynrhydowen in 1726, after eviction from his Independent church because of unorthodox Arminian views (universal salvation as opposed to salvation of the elect). Rebuilt in 1733, it is now a museum of Welsh Unitarianism. In 1742 a sister church was built at nearby Altyr-Tafla. An occasional preacher at these two churches c.1800, Dr Charles Lloyd, inspired the building of two more nearby chapels at Pantyfeddai and Capel-y-Grês. A minister here, Rev John James, lodged on the farm at Lloyd Jack of David Jenkin's Rees who, by his enthusiasm and generosity, founded a school at Ystrad and the Unitarian Chapel at Rhydygwyd. The old chapel at Llwynrhydowen continued to provide points of growth; the dynamic preacher and social reformer William Thomas (Gwilym Marley) 1834-79, great-uncle of Dyfan Thomas, was minister here after training at Carmarthen and Glasgow University. He also founded Craig Chapel in the market town of Llandysul.
By the late 18th century contacts were being forged with Unitarians outside Wales. Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg) 1747-1826, monumental mason, poet and bardic antiquary, possessed, according to Richard Wright, ‘great zeal for the promotion of rational religion’. He translated several English Unitarian works into Welsh and travelled on foot to London many times to meet Lindsey, Priestley and Belsham; he attended the opening of Essex Church in 1774. The three Rees brothers, sons of Rev Josiah Rees of Gellionen, 1744-1804, who published the first Welsh magazine, Yr Eurgrawn, were respectively Thomas Rees, translator of the Racovian Catechism and author of The Beauties of Wales, Owen Rees, founder of Longmans publishing company; and Sir Josiah Rees, British Consul in Smyrna. Rev Dr Richard Price of Bridgend became Minister in London at Hackney and Newington Green, and was a champion of civil liberties as well as the proponent of the principles of life assurance. In 1811 and 1816-19 G.Lyons, George Harris and Richard Wright travelled through Wales on preaching missions. Their records of these journeys provide valuable insights into Welsh Unitarianism and its chapels.

The ideas of the French Revolution found a sympathetic ear among Unitarians in Wales, as elsewhere. Thomas Glyn Coibi was jailed in 1801 for his political views. Later in the century the radical minister Thomas Emlyn Thomas of Cribyn supported the Children of Rebecca by preparing a petition for the extension of the franchise. Gwyllyn Marles, champion of an oppressed tenantry, fell foul of the landlords and was evicted from Llwybrhydwen Chapel in 1876 for supporting free elections.

In 1802 the Welsh Unitarian Society was founded on the initiative of Iolo Morganwg. At the same time a number of General Baptist chapels in South Wales became Unitarian. During the 19th century rapid industrialisation in the Valleys led to the building of chapels in the area of Aberdare, Merthyr Tydfil, Pontypridd, and Glanrhondda. Welsh nonconformist chapels — including Unitarian ones — have characteristics rather different from English chapels. None of the Unitarian chapels rise to the soaring splendour of the Baptist or Methodist Zion and Bethels. Most of them were built in the 19th century, but their style is generally traditional (the meeting house tradition is still evident as late as 1900 at Capel Ifan). The earlier chapels of the meeting house period, stone and often now rendered in a sombre grey, have the characteristic side doors with central pulpit on the long wall and galleries to the sides and/or rear. Some are now ‘turned’ and galleries removed (as at Bridgend).

After the mid-19th century most chapels present a gable end to the road with a central entrance, round-arched windows to sides and above. Only rarely was the Gothic style adopted, usually in the larger more sophisticated towns such as Swansea (1847) and Merthyr Tydfil (1893), where Gothic detail is in full flight. Cardiff has a character all its own. Gothic was never used in the village chapels; designs were copied from one location to another.

Internally the later chapels are a plain rectangle with gallery over the entrance on iron columns. The central pulpit is on the short wall opposite the entrance with a shallow moulded and pointed arch behind, of which quite a feature is made. The large pulpit door is reached by a pair or single flight of steps with decorative balustrading, in front is an enclosure for the altar table.

Since many chapels are in remote areas, the only artificial light had to be an oil lamp mounted on the pulpit. Electricity has reached some of the chapels, but the oil lamps remain — an attractive feature. Nearly all the interiors are impressive in the meticulous preservation of traditional arrangements and furniture.
**Gazetteer: Wales**

**Aberdare**, Highland Place Unitarian Church, Monk Street, Glamorgan. 1860. Founded same year.

An English-speaking church, the result of increased population in this coalfield area. Unitarian landlord encouraged the building of a large church — Methodists, Baptists, Catholic as well as Unitarian.

Stone, high gable-end with Gothic window above porch. Architect H. J. Paul of Cardiff. Topped by the roof, on a steep hill.

**Aberdare**, Trecynon Old Meeting House, Alma Street, Glamorgan. 1862. Founded 1751 together with Coed Coed as a result of breakaways from Cwmgly and Ynysgau Independent churches on the other side of the mountain. Has had a succession of distinguished radical ministers.

North wall has inset headstone of Rev. John Jones (John Glyn Cothi), minister 1811-13, radical, Unitarian, and friend of Priestly and Lindsey. Another minister, John Jones, kept school and was founder of the Welsh language, Yr Ynysgau.

Rendered stone, gabled facade with arched doorway and first-floor windows.

**Abertythwyrd**, New Street Meeting House, Cardiganshire. First met 1893 in library of G. Eyre Evans. Chapel was built as a school after c. 1810, later a Quaker Meeting House (now shared with Quakers). Dedicated as a Unitarian Christian Church, 1906. Very small, classical facade, elegant arrangement of doors, windows and pediments.

**Aberystwyth**, Union Street Unitarian Chapel, Llanwythryd. Cardiganshire. 1837.

Founded 1740, the second foundation in the 'Black Spot' after Llwynderyd, and by the same minister, Jenkins leaves D. Jacob Davies, a national figure was minister 1957-74. The original building is reputed to have been converted into cottages.

Grey rendered, simple arrangement of arched windows and two doors. Long graveyard in front, many graves.

**Bridgend**, Old Meeting House, Park Street, Glamorgan. 1794.

Founded 1672 by Rev Samuel Jones, ejected from his living at Llanwyn-y-mo, mid-Glamorgan. His first dissenting congregation was at Cilgwyn from which sprang churches at Betws and Bridgend. Now re-used as a Public Meeting House. Capital building, now a Masonic Lodge.

**Cardiganshire**

**Barn**, First met 1835-65 founded Yr Ynysgau, the Welsh Unitarian periodical, examined in Aberystwyth, and kept a Grammar School at Cardigan. Founded 1697. The first dissenting congregation was at Drefach, Llandysul and re-erected 1764. Established as breakaways from Independent churches at Cwmgly and Merthyr. Site was a remote forest-clearing. Rev Owen Evans minister 1835-65 founded Yr Ynysgau, the Welsh Unitarian periodical, examined in Aberystwyth, and kept a Grammar School at Cardigan.

High gable-end on steep hillside, rendered. Romanesque windows with classical pediments. Usual clear lettering identifying chapel on facade.

**Cefn Coed**, Cefn Coed Meeting House, Lampeter, Cardiganshire, 1846.


**Cilian Aeron**, Cardiganshire Unitarian Chapel, Lampeter, Cardiganshire. 1889. Founded 1863, the chapel of Carmarthen College (college merged with Aberystwyth).

Small, plain, gabled; odd mixture of lancet windows and Ionic side-plaisters. Central dedication stone, usual on Welsh chapels.

**Cenf Coed**, Hen Dw Cwrd, Old Chapel Road, Merthyr Tydfil, Glamorgan. 1853.

Founded 1747 together with Trecynon chapel, Aberdare, as breakaways from Independent churches at Cwmgly and Merthyr. Site was a remote forest-clearing. Rev Owen Evans minister 1835-65 founded Yr Ynysgau, the Welsh Unitarian periodical, examined in Aberystwyth, and kept a Grammar School at Cefn Coed.

High gable-end on steep hillside, rendered. Romanesque windows with classical pediments. Usual clear lettering identifying chapel on facade.


**Craye**, Carmarthenshire. 1890. Founded 1697. The first dissenting congregation was at Drefach, Llandysul and re-erected 1764. Established as breakaways from Independent churches at Cwmgly and Merthyr. Site was a remote forest-clearing. Rev Owen Evans minister 1835-65 founded Yr Ynysgau, the Welsh Unitarian periodical, examined in Aberystwyth, and kept a Grammar School at Cardigan. Small, sturdy meeting-house, rendered stone. Sash windows. Name and date in plaster in gable. Plain, traditional interior. Clock inscribed ‘Rhodi. Mrs Davies Trebanne. D. Jones Lampeter’. Graveyard and manse adjoining.

**Drefach**, Drefach, Llandysul, re-erected at the Welsh Folk Museum, St. Fagan's, Cardiff (1777), Right Cardiff Unitarian Church, West Grove. Below Cefn Coed Unitarian Chapel, Cefn Coed. Lampeter.

**Lampeter**, Unitarian Church, 1887. Founded 1697. The first dissenting congregation was at Drefach, Llandysul and re-erected 1764. Established as breakaways from Independent churches at Cwmgly and Merthyr. Site was a remote forest-clearing. Rev Owen Evans minister 1835-65 founded Yr Ynysgau, the Welsh Unitarian periodical, examined in Aberystwyth, and kept a Grammar School at Cefn Coed.

High gable-end on steep hillside, rendered. Romanesque windows with classical pediments. Usual clear lettering identifying chapel on facade.

**Lampeter**, Unitarian Church, Lampeter, Cardiganshire, 1846. Founded 1697. The first dissenting congregation was at Drefach, Llandysul and re-erected 1764. Established as breakaways from Independent churches at Cwmgly and Merthyr. Site was a remote forest-clearing. Rev Owen Evans minister 1835-65 founded Yr Ynysgau, the Welsh Unitarian periodical, examined in Aberystwyth, and kept a Grammar School at Cardigan. Small, sturdy meeting-house, rendered stone. Sash windows. Name and date in plaster in gable. Plain, traditional interior. Clock inscribed ‘Rhodi. Mrs Davies Trebanne. D. Jones Lampeter’. Graveyard and manse adjoining.

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Cribyn Unitarian Chapel, Lampeter, Cardiganshire. 1857.

Founded 1790 as off-shoot of Caeronwen by Dafis Castell Hywel. Original chapel of mud and straw thatch.

Modest meeting-house, stone, rendered front; slate dedication stone on side wall, original datestone of 1790. Traditional arrangement inside. Large graveyard, many stones. School conducted by David Evans (1886-1928), reputedly the last minister to keep an academy, in cottages alongside chapel.

Cwmsychbant, Capel-y-Cwm, Llanbythethe, Cardiganshire. 1906.

The most recent Unitarian chapel built in Cardiganshire. First meetings held in ‘Ty Cwrd Stroes’ [The Stores Meeting-House] 1905.

Beautifully kept simple rendered chapel, schoolhouse behind. Large graveyard with many stones. Design similar to Cwrrtenwydd.

Cwrrtenwydd, Capel-y-Bryn, Llanbythethe, Cardiganshire. 1882.

Congregation originated in the 1830s, when a school-house was built and used by Unitarian ministers from Llwprhydowen and Pantydefaid for services. A successful link with Allythylacca enabled new chapel to be built on hill above village.

Opposite left: Capel-y-Cwm, Cwmsychbant, Llanbythethe.
Opposite right: Brendefi, Lampeter

Park stone, gabled facade, arched windows front and side, central porch. Interior beautifully painted to pastel colours. Centre pulpit on dais, painted arch above, rear gallery. Nice wooden ceiling bosses. Fine graveyard with stone war memorial.

Felinfach, Rhydgywlg Unitarian Chapel, Lampeter, Cardiganshire. 1848.

Congregation originated in 1802 at Lloyd Jack Farm, Vale of Aeron, home of David Jenkins Rees. Outbuildings in which services were held can still be seen. Rees gave hospitality to Rev John James, minister of Pantydefaid and Capel-y-Groes, and services were held at Lloyd Jack until Mr Rees built a school in the village of Ystrad in 1803. Opposition caused the congregation to be evicted. The Earl of Carrington then offered a site on his estate for the present chapel.

A most attractive building, rendered and painted with hung slates on side wall and pleasant arrangement of doors and windows. Cottage adjoining, intimate interior perfectly preserved; 3 sided pine gallery, pews and pulpit. Clock, oil lamps. Graveyard with good memorials.

Gellionen Unitarian Chapel, Pontardawe, Swansea. 1801.

Congregation was one of five dissenting causes founded by Rev Robert Thomas after his ejection in 1662 from Cadron Church. Two of the five [Blaengwrach and Cellowenn] became Unitarian by the end of the 18th century, during the long ministry of Rev Josiah Rees (see Introduction). His fellow minister at Blaengwrach, Rev Thomas Morgan (1737-1813), practised medicine and is reputed to have administered cow-pox serum to hundreds of children in the valleys, long before Jenner’s experiments to cure smallpox. Buried in Rees family grave [see Introduction] in Cellowenn graveyard.

Chapel is rendered stone, meeting-house style, occupies the top of Cellowenn mountain, surrounded by a large graveyard. Interior has memorial to Thomas Morgan, reputedly carved by Iolo Morganwg.

Lampeter, Brendefi Unitarian Chapel, Cardiganshire. 1904.

Founded 1874; first chapel 1876, but structure was faulty and had to be demolished. Rebuilt on same site.

Dark grey stone, light sandstone detailing. Gothic style with small spire at side. Graveyard with nice stones.

Llandysul, Graig Unitarian Chapel, Cardiganshire. 1884.

Founded 1868 by Owlym Marles when he was living and teaching in Llandysul and minister at Llwprhydowen.

Dark stone, Gothic, south stubby entrance tower and schoolroom at rightangles. Set in town backwater of passages and narrow lanes.

Llanwnen, Capel-y-Cross Unitarian Chapel, Lampeter, Cardiganshire. 1890.

Founded 1803 at the same time as Pantydefaid, result of preaching of Rev Charles Lloyd at Allythylacca. David Jenkins Rees and Iolo Morganwg also involved in foundation; dedication stone carved by Iolo, recently found under the pulpit, now mounted on right-hand outside wall.

Rendered stone, gabled facade and interior similar to Cwrrtenwydd. Beautifully cared for; interior colourfully decorated. Large graveyard includes grave of John Jenkins the jockey, d.1804.

Llwprhydowen Unitarian Chapel, Llandysul, Cardiganshire. 1879.

The precursor of all the Unitarian chapels of South-West Wales, founded 1726 by Jenkin Jones, an Independent, was denied access to his church at Pantycrudpynn and had to build his own chapel in 1733 — the first Arminian church in Wales.

There followed a number of distinguished ministers, including David Davies of Castell Hywel, who kept an Academy at his farm, and William Thomas [Owlym Marles], great-uncle of Dylan Thomas, champion of the poor and...
oppressed tenantry at a time of great hardship. When members of the church did not vote in the 1868 election according to the wishes of the landlord, the congregation were exiled and Gwilym Maes held services in the open air. His grave is in front of the chapel. A new chapel built on the Pontcyn Road, stone, gabled, recessed centre arch with 3 windows above porch. Interior similar to Community.

Old Chapel is now a museum of Welsh Unitarianism, tall stone meeting-house with cropped gable and fine arrangement of doors and windows. Probably 1726. Graveyard.

Wooden chapel (Ty Cwrdl) used by evicted congregation can be seen on B4338 Newcastle-Emlyn Road, Castell Hwyl, now a holiday farm. is on New Quay Road about two miles from Old Chapel. Blaenamlth, home of Frank Lloyd's ancestors, lies off A475 between Castell Hwyl and Llwythogdown.

Nottage General Baptist and Unitarian Chapel, Porthcawl, Glamorgan. 1877.

Founded 1789, Baptist minister Evan Lloyd attended Assembly of Salem-Newby in 1789 and refused to assent to Baptist Confession of Faith; became minister at Nottage and Wick 1806. These two chapels were served by him and three ministers of his family until 1826 [see plaque inside chapel].

Small plain chapel squeezed into narrow lanes of Nottage village. Plain traditional interior.

Pantyfaiad Unitarian Chapel, Pengwern, Llandysul, Cardiganshire. 1836.


Original dedication stone above door carved by Iolo Morganwg, now missing. The wording 'To us there is only One God the Father' was carved by Iolo in the belief that words on a chapel wall would pass more to the passing people than a thousand sermons.

Swansea Unitarian Church, High Street, 1847.

Derives from the early history of Puritanism in the town, an independent 'guttered' church of Ambrose Marshall c.1646. Three houses licensed for worship 1672; that of Daniel Higgs of Rhodes who built a chapel c.1689, later used by Baptists. Presbyterians built new chapel, 1698, on site of present Unitarian chapel.

Set back from street behind graveyard. Stone, with arched portico and two pinacles, large Gothic window above arcing. Interior has iron pulpit and a great organ. Ten pews. Interior has iron partition and pulpit. Stained glass. Organ gallery.

Talgarreg, Bwch-y-Fadfa, Llandysul, Cardiganshire. 1906.

Founded 1812, brekaway from Llwythogdown.

First meeting-house now cottages. Chapel identical in design with Graig Chapel, Llandysul, built 22 years earlier.

Trebannos, Graig Unitarian Chapel, Pontardawe, Swansea, 1894.

Founded 1862 at bottom of Gelliwen Mountain, to ease access for Unitarian worship.

Stone, gabled facade with arched windows and finial stands high above the road.

Trecynon, Old Meeting House, see Aberdare.

Treorchy, Glansdonnau Unitarian Church, 100a High Street, Glamorgan, 1895.

Founded 1893 from Aberdare.

Rendered stone facade with 3 arched windows and centre porch on deep step by roadside; caretaker's house underneath. Plain interior, appealing in its austerity. Central pulpit, boarded ceiling with wooden bosses. Recently vacated.

Wick Unitarian Chapel, Bridgend, Glamorgan. 1872.

General Baptist foundation linked in its passage to Unitarianism with Nottage, quaker. Very modest, typical Baptist, medium house on the edge of Wick Green. Two long lancet windows either side of door, lean-to meeting-room; interior is sparse, with 3 sided gallery, pews. Large interesting graveyard with remains of baptistry. One of the most delightful of the Welsh chapels.

Dissolved or demolished Chapels

Transient Unitarian causes in Wales have been many, the following buildings reflect significant presence in the past:


Blaenamlth, Glamorgan. Foundation same as Gelliwen. C. 1878. Now foundations only.尽快 remote on mountain side above Vale of Nant, amongst sheep and hill sides with views to Brecon Beacons.

Clydach Vale, Clydach Road, Glamorgan. B 1891.


Cwmbradog, Brechfa Forest, Carmarthenshire. B 1833. Now a Unitarian Youth Centre.


Dowlais, White Street, Glamorgan. B 1881.

Merthyr Tydfil, St Thomas Street Chapel, Glamorgan. B 1901. Replaced Twyn-y-Paroch Chapel, demolished early 1970's. Attractive Gothic style, good stained glass. In use as a community centre late 70's.

Mountain Ash, Nant-y-Pool Street, Glamorgan. B 1912.


Rhydypool, St Clears, Carmarthenshire. B 1898. C 1902.

CHAPTER SEVEN
Unitarianism in Scotland
by Andrew Hill

Scotland has a distinct heritage all of its own. In education, jurisprudence, family law, property ownership and banking, and above all religion, Scotland is substantially different from the rest of the United Kingdom.

The religious heritage of Scotland is predominantly Reformed. The reformation of religion went further in Scotland than it did in England, precluding the second stage reformation which brought forth the English Nonconformist tradition in which many older English Unitarian congregations have their origins. So 'moderate' in places, during the 18th century, was the Church of Scotland (the poet Robert Burns was theologically Unitarian), that English Rational Dissenters felt quite at home in the Kirk. But the 'New Light' thinking was eventually eclipsed by an upsurge of evangelical religion and renewed emphasis upon the Westminster Confession of Faith (the doctrinal standard of the Scottish Church).

Against this background Scottish Unitarianism, now represented by four congregations at Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow, made its appearance. Two strands of influence were important:

1. A native response to the tyrannous God of Scottish Calvinism resulting in a number of small Universalist societies in the Central Lowlands during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. St Mark's Unitarian Church, Edinburgh began as one of these societies in 1776; and the present Dundee church is a memorial to Henry Williamson, a Universalist who re-founded the Unitarian church there in 1860.

2. Contact with English Unitarians. William Christie, a correspondent of Joseph Priestley, started the first Scottish Unitarian congregation at Montrose in 1781. Christie eventually followed Priestley to the United States and officiated at his mentor's graveside. Christie was also responsible for encouraging Thomas Fysh Palmer, an English ex-Anglican Unitarian, to come to Scotland where Palmer began the earlier Dundee congregation in 1785. Palmer was later deported to an Australian convict settlement for alleged sedition.

The Glasgow Unitarian Church is a response to both these strands of influence. Universalist societies were numerous in the west, and many English Unitarians came to study at Glasgow College (now the University) renowned for its theological moderatism, when the English universities were closed to nonconformists. The congregation dates from 1791. The Aberdeen congregation, the most northerly Unitarian congregation in Britain, is a tribute to the energy of Glasgow minister George Harris, in propagating Unitarianism in a wide variety of centres. The Aberdeen Church was founded in 1833.

The four Scottish churches are all very different in character. They all belong to the Scottish Unitarian Association which acts both as a district association for the British Unitarian General Assembly, and as a national association representing Unitarian interests in Scotland.
Glasgow
Mound
reseated to hold
John Pullar of Perth. Chapel marginally held
replaced with a modern
glass lexies,
Rev Southwood Smith (1812-16),
round-arched windows divided by pilasters,
later
soundmg-board,
which it
colurans. Spectacular high pulpit with
decorations
chapel in the
heart of the city. Limestone pure Ionic Greek
temple; interior illuminated by skylight, with
large draped female figures holding lights,
mounted on elaborately carved. Procellum arch
enveloped platform for pulpit and fine Snitzler
organ (now in Glasgow University). (Pews
removed and platform inserted 1854.)
Chapel demolished 1952 for government
offices. An excellent classical building and a sad
loss. Congregation now moved to former Haig
Whisky offices in Berkeley Street.
The following congregations built chapels, though most were
short-lived.
Glasgow Unitarian Church, 72 Berkeley Street.
Congregation dates from 1791; first chapel
opened 1856; striking classical design in the
interior. Limestone pure Ionic Greek temple;
interior illuminated by skylight, with
large draped female figures holding lights,
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Dundee, Williamson Memorial Unitarian
Christian Church, Dundee, 1969.
Congregation founded by Thomas Fyfe-Palmer, minister 1785-88, transported
1793 for criticism of the Government over parliamentary
reform. Second, Gothic building 1870 in
Constitution Road, during record 60 year
ministry of Rev Henry Williamson after whom
present chapel named. Demolished for inner
ring road. Exterior a stark glass and concrete
box. Interior more sympathetic and colourful,
traditional worship layout, fixed benches; organ
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Edinburgh, St Mark’s Church, Castle Terrace,
1835.
Congregation originated 1776, breakaway
group from Reformed Presbytery formed round
first minister, Rev James Purves at Broughton,
East Edinburgh (near Register House). After
several moves and support from William Voller,
Richard Wright and the successful ministry of
Rev Southwood Smith (1812-16), moved to
chapel at Young Street in the New Town, 1823.
Gothic style facade with decorative parapet,
round-arched windows divided by pilasters,
decorated with broken pediment. Set in terrace
which it adjoins. Hall at rear.
Interior has barrel-arched ceiling and side
galleries, both supported on cast iron classical
columns. Spectacular high pulpit with ornate
sounding-board, now sadly discarded and
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Two front windows have glass donated by
John Pullar of Perth. Chapel originally held 700,
reduced to hold 400. Architect David Bryce
[later designed Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, The
Mound Bank of Scotland, and Fettes College].
Chapel was undermined by Edinburgh and
Glasgow Railway in 1845, receiving £1,000
compensation; in 1893-4 received £3,000
wayleave for railway tunnel (wall built with
processes).
CHAPTER EIGHT
The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland
by John McLachlan

The Plantation of Ulster took place from the year 1605 onwards and brought to the North of Ireland many Scottish and English settlers. Not a few were Presbyterians, opposed to episcopacy and a liturgy. During the reign of Charles I, the Government deprived some of their pulpits, and only in 1641, with the coming of a Scottish army under General Monk to put down rebellion, did Presbyterianism gain a firm foothold on Irish soil.

The first presbytery was set up on 10th June 1642 at Carrickfergus. This kind of Presbyterianism was based directly upon the Bible as the word of God and not the Confession of the Westminster divines of 1647. In Dublin and the South an English type, freer both in doctrine and discipline established itself and its existence there influenced the North in the direction of a milder and mellower faith. In Belfast the first minister of the first meeting-house (note the typical word for a church), erected probably in 1688, was an Englishman, the Rev. William Keyes, and his patron, Letitia Hickes, Countess of Donegal, was an English Presbyterian.

John Abernethy has been called 'the father of Non Subscription in Ireland'. Educated at Glasgow University, where he came under the influence of liberal-minded teachers, Abernethy and his fellow students cherished the Reformation principle of the liberty of the Christian man and the right of private judgement. Soon after his settlement at Antrim, he founded an association of ministers for the discussion of theological problems. It met at Belfast and became known as 'The Belfast Society'. Its members included some of the most intelligent, cultured and distinguished Presbyterian ministers in Ulster. They determined to take the Scriptures, interpreted rationally and fairly, as their sole Rule of Faith. They were opposed to man-made creeds, specifically the Westminster Confession, and their opinions were dubbed 'New Light', as opposed to 'Old Light', epithets that became famous. Early in 1700, Samuel Haldane was installed as minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Belfast, but refused to subscribe to any man-made confession. Other members of the Belfast Society likewise refused subscription to creeds. The Non-subscription controversy which ensued resulted in 1725 in the exclusion of the Presbytery of Antrim, in which the Non-subscribers were gathered, from the Synod of Ulster.

Almost one hundred years later, when liberal ideas had further affected theology and softened the asperities of the old Calvinism, another event occurred which compelled some ministers and their congregations unwillingly to separate from the Ulster Synod. This was the attempt of the Rev Henry Cooke and others to fix the yoke of subscription once more on the backs of Presbyterians chiefly in County Down. Led by Rev Dr Henry Montgomery, a new wave of Non-subscribers drew up a Remonstrance (17 ministers and 11 lay elders) and their body was excluded from the General Synod. The Remonstrants comprised three presbyteries: Armagha, Bangor and Templepatrick, which eventually became associated with the Presbytery of Antrim and with Non-subscribers in the South of Ireland who were organised in the Synod of Munster. Finally, all these united in 1910 as 'The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland', upon the basis of the Bible interpreted 'under the guidance of the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ' and in the belief that unity in religion is to be sought, not in uniformity of creed, but in a common standard of righteousness after the pattern and commandment of Jesus. The 'sacred right of private judgement and the importance of free inquiry in matters of religion' were both upheld in the Constitution of the Church drawn up in 1910. Hence in general Non-subscribers have been in the forefront of religious thought in Ireland from that time onwards.

In 1928, at the formation of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, the NSPCI was invited to become an affiliated member. It remains, however, completely independent of the General Assembly in its government.

Though small in size - there are only 33 churches served by an even smaller number of ministers and lay-elders - the NSPCI occupies an honoured place within the community. Congregations are marked by 'church-minded', generous and loyal. Their meeting houses are often plain and largely unadorned, but possess a simple dignity which impresses and is conducive to sound preaching and serious worship. Most are plain halls with sash-windows lighting quite dignified interiors, not seldom containing box-pews and a tall
pulpit against a long wall. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, a number were two-storied with galleries and entrances treated in classical style, sometimes with columns or pilasters surmounted by an entablature and pediment.

The First Presbyterian Church, Belfast [1783] by Roger Mulholland (1740-1818) is elliptical in plan, with a fine swerving oak balcony front, oak box-pews and a rich effect centring on the tall pulpit opposite to the two entrance aisles.

The Drumcliffy First Presbyterian Church (1779), on the other hand, is a magnificent barn-church, entered by two doors on the long side of the rectangle, set between three semi-circular headed windows. Glough, Killinchy, and Banbridge Non-subscribing churches are good examples of the classical mode, whilst Newry and All Souls, Belfast, are examples of the Gothic style.

All these Non-Subscribing chapels are well cared for. In the event of a congregation ceasing to care for a chapel, due to closure or inability, the presbytery assumes responsibility.
Gazetteer: Ireland

Ballyclare Presbyterian Meeting House, County Down. 1783.
Congregation dates from 1644; the mother-church of Presbyterianism in the City. Architect, Roger Mulholland (1740–1818) who was influenced by Gibbs. Elliptical shape, fine curving, arch, fine arched porch. Impressive, georgian style, pedimented, large window over arched entrance. Interior mainly panelled, square room. Box-pews seat 60. Organ of 1817. Originally approached by boat through Duncomb Marsh.

Ballyclare Old Presbyterian Meeting House, Main Street, County Antrim. 1871.

Corcom Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Mill Street, County Down. 1838. Imposing, stands in its own 'estate', nearby Sunday School, also within the grounds.

Cork, The Old Presbyterian Church, Prat's Street. 1715.

In 1980 fire damaged the galleries, now repaired. Occasional services.

Crumlin First Presbyterian Church. County Antrim. 1837.
Congregation originated 1672. First meeting house 1715. Stone, octagonal with large two storey pedimented porch. Impressive elliptical interior, similar to First Presbyterian Church, Belfast. Gallery. Wine-glass pulpit with winding stairs on either side. Stands back from the road in its own field and graveyard. Has elegance and a simple grace.

Downpatrick First Presbyterian Church, Stream Street. County Down. 1710.
Founded 1650. Georgian meeting-house, enclad in plan, claimed to be earliest example of its kind in Ireland. 'Squire's gallery' adjoins pulpit. Has set of 4 collecting 'spoons' of copper with long oak handles, all inscribed and dated 1734. Restored 1965. Schoolroom over three old cottages.

Dromore First Presbyterian Church (Non-Subscribing), Rampart Street. County Down. 1811. Founded 1610.
Plain meeting-house in extensive yard with separate school and hall, built in 1941.

Dublin, Unitarian Church, 112 St Stephen's Green (West). 1863.
Congregation founded 1649. Earlier building in Eustace Street, 1728. Gothic church upstairs, hall below. Built for narrow site between already existing 18th century buildings — now demolished and replaced by modern high-rise neighbours. Architects, Lanyon and Purser, 1914–19. Also Flaxmill and French glass of the 1860s. Good organ. Chapel library with books from earlier meeting house. Fine communion plate c.1680 bequeathed by Dr Thomas Harrison, Chaplain to Oliver Cromwell.

Ballyclare.

Chough.

Downpatrick.

Crumlin.

Bombo.
Dunmurry First Presbyterian (Non-Subscribing) Church, Clicke Road, County Antrim. 1779.

Glenarm, Old Meeting House, Ballymena. County Antrim 1762.
Plain, rectangular, two-storey windows. Close to Glenarm Castle estate.


Holywood, First Presbyterian (Non-Subscribing) Unitarian Church, High Street. County Down. 1849.
First meeting house 1615. Fine classical front facing main road; grounds contain memorial to C. J. McAlister, minister and founder of local grammar school.

Kilinchy, Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, County Down. 1846.
First meeting-house 1570; second, 1714; congregation lost possession when they joined the Remonstrant Synod.
Fine, restrained classical facade. Interior plain rear gallery. Set in large graveyard.

Larne, Old Presbyterian Church, Meeting House Street and Ballymena Road. County Antrim. 1828.
Congregation founded 1625. Plain square meeting house in graveyard, separate school rooms, recently rebuilt.

Moira, First Presbyterian Church, Craigavan, County Armagh. 1738.
Congregation founded 1693.
Meeting house type in extensive graveyard.
Moneyrea, Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Newtownards County Down. 1770.
Congregation founded 1719. Meeting house, school and interesting small session house. Parnell met the elders of the congregation in the early 1850s in support of their minister's candidacy as a Land Leaguer, Rev. Harold Rylett, Plain, oblong, single-storey. Restored 1963.

Newry, First Presbyterian Non-Subscribing Church, John Mitchel Place. County Down. 1853.
Congregation founded 1650. First building 1688. Remains of old pulpit (from which John Wesley preached) and fine sundial of 1757 are in Meeting House Green burial ground, High Street.
Eclectic Gothic, with steeple. Architect, William J. Barr, who designed Ulster Hall and Albert Memorial, Belfast. Organ of 1806, originally 3-manual from Second Church (now All Souls') Belfast, which was first congregation of dissenters in Ireland to have an organ. Legend has it that it was built by John Snetzler, but this is unlikely. More probably a Dublin organ of late 18th century. Restored 1979.

Newtownards, First Presbyterian Congregation, Victoria Avenue. County Down. 1924.
Founded 1641, first building 1724. Small, neat brick; late neo-Gothic.

Rademon, Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church (First Kilmore), Kilmore, Crossgar. County Down. 1787.
Congregation founded 1713, first building 1715. Fine meeting-house in commanding position, large graveyard with small school-room opposite. Clock on front of gallery dated 1789.

Rato Monomastrian Church, Lame. County Antrim. 1838.
Original meeting-house; small, square, near.

Ravara, Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Moneyrea. County Down. 1838.
Small, charming meeting-house; brass plaque in vestibule records foundation in 1838.

Templepatrick, Old Presbyterian Church, County Antrim. 1851.
Congregation founded 1646. First building 1670. Semi-Gothic, stands behind estate wall, not far from old Presbyterian burial ground.

Warrenpoint, First Presbyterian Church (Remonstrant), Burren Road. County Down. 1820.
First building 1707, in Carlingford. Very simple but with unusual central curved porch; set in large graveyard.

Disused churches

Antrim, Old Presbyterian Meeting House, Main Street. 1892.
Congregation dates from 1645, first chapel 1692. Played important role in 18th century when John Abernethy was minister (1703-30) and founder of the Belfast Society — forerunner of Non-Subscription in Ulster.
Small rectangular meeting house, four large windows each side. Graveyard closed 1980.

Ballymena, High Street. Antrim. 1845.
Ballymoney, Charles Street. Antrim. 1832. Former meeting-house is now the Corporation Offices. Very plain rendered walls, four long windows and hip, hipped slate roof, later porch and door facade.

Carlowferges, Ballymena Bank. Antrim. 1836.
Classical from. Sold and now part of Carlowferges Technical School.

Clonmel (Tipperary), Nelson Street, 1782.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Nearly all Unitarian chapels have at some time or other (and often several times) produced a history of their own congregation and its buildings. A comprehensive collection of these individual histories can be consulted at Dr Williams’ Library, Gordon Square, London, or at the John Rylands University of Manchester Library. They have not been separately mentioned here, but have often been invaluable in the preparation of this book.

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