

Non Conformist Churches

Places of Worship in Gorse Hill

Baptist Church

The ministry started here with cottage services. James Sly (1814-1882), originally from Faringdon ran the Post Office and was one of the original lay preachers. The first services of the Baptist Tabernacle in Bright Street were held on 16th and 17th February 1878, on the Saturday 150 people attended a tea lead by W. H. Wearing. *Swindon Advertiser 23-02-1878*, this building was sold May 1882. A new chapel was built on 20 perches of land bought by Mr Whiteman for £100 on the corner of Ferndale Road, (this site became the Plessy Club.). Mr William Drew was asked to draw up the plans. The brick Gothic structure was built by Mr Thomas Barrett for £600 to house about 250 worshippers. The memorial stone was laid by Mr J Holden and it opened for services on 20th October 1883.

A Bazaar and sale of work was opened by Rev S S Sarsons on Wednesday last, there was also a curiosity show hosted by Mr F J Annett with pictures and curios and in the evening songs and recitations. *Swindon Advertiser 18-12-1897*. In 1902 it was extended to include a Sunday school and gallery; the Gallery was never built. It was sold for £845. The church also had a cricket team and in a game against GWR Wheel shop they won by 49 runs. *Swindon Advertiser 06-06-1902*. The current church on the corner of Beatrice Street with the opening ceremony on 15th June 1904 by Dr John Clifford. It was built for £4,000 under the supervision of Mr S B Burton, with seating for 400. In addition, there is a schoolroom for 350. The first baptism was on 28th August 1904 conducted by Rev. Fred Shallard and 8 members were baptised. Electric lighting was added in 1904 at cost of £380. *Swindon Advertiser 28-10-1904*. The upper room of the church hall was used during the war by Fire Watchers. The latest church extension was opened on 25th November 2000 on land, which was originally a toilet block and car park, the new building has 8 rooms including a kitchen and classrooms which can be used for community events.

Ministers

1882-	H. H. Wyndham-Wyndham (from Stratton <i>Manchester Courier 8-3-1882</i>).
1897-	S. S. Sarsons.
1901-1915	Fred Couch Shellard (1865-1915)
1916-1922	William Price (1858-5/7/1947) <i>death reported The Western Daily Press 7/7/1947</i> .
1922-1933	Reginald Aubrey Good (1870-1944)
1934-1939	James Taylor Meek (1887-1982) moved to Highbridge, Somerset <i>North Wilts Herald 30-06-1939</i> .
1940-1942	James Martin (1915-2000) (induction 19-09-1940 – <i>North Wilts Herald 13-09-1940</i>).
1943-1945	Charles Everett King
1945-1953	Cyril James Street (1908-1994)
1953-1960	George Eric Cotton (1906-2001)
1960-1974	George Edmund Hand (1925-2003)
1975-1982	David George Walker (1939-)
1980-1984	David Thomas Howell (1948-)
1985-1995	(John Ernest Harris (1942-)

1996- Paul Knight (1955-)
- Steve Robinson ()

Pictures of the church can be seen [here](#).

(Thanks to Gorse Hill Baptists for supplying details of History and photographs.)

Salvation Army Citadel – Chapel Street

Around 1890 the original building was a small chapel taken over from Primitive, prior to this they held open air meetings. They also used a Mission Hall in Kingsdown (*Swindon Advertiser 11-04-1902*.) In 1960 they built a new Citadel and hall; the old building was knocked down and became part of car park. Rebuilt after fire.

Methodist Church.

Originally in a small Chapel from 1871 to 1890. In 1881 a harmonium had been purchased. *Swindon Advertiser 25-04-1881*. The chapel was taken over by the Salvation Army.

A new church was built in Cricklade Road, at a cost of £420 it was opened on Saturday 10th October 1896 by Miss Raggett of Swindon, and the sermon was given by Rev. J. H. Green. The public tea after hosted some 150 persons. *Swindon Advertiser 17-10-1896*. Anniversary of new Sunday school, with a public tea on the Saturday and special sermons on the Sunday. There was an evening concert by the Faringdon Street Wesleyan Choir. *Swindon Advertiser 13-10-1899*. It was later being renamed Russel Memorial Chapel.

On Saturday last the 11th in a series of Evenings was held, with pianoforte and singing. *Swindon Advertiser 25-12-1908*.

Sunday School Anniversary services started with a tea for over a hundred on the Saturday. Mr H Martin lead the Sunday services. Prospect Place band attended the Monday meeting. Mr Bowen (superintendent) spoke highly of the Sunday School work and of the Band of Hope and C. E. Societies now using the premises. *Swindon Advertiser 14-05-1909*.

In 1910 it had 377 sittings, the schoolroom held 300 and there were 109 members.

1914 Rev. Philip Richardson was minister.

Mrs. Miller (nee. Bowen), wife of Tom Miller funeral was held last Thursday. Rev. Peter Tillotson led the service assisted by Mr. J T Robins, secretary. The Miller's were foundation members dating back some 70 years. *North Wilts Herald 26-12-1941*.

It was closed in 1964 and became 'Camsale Parade', shops & flats in 1965

Wesleyan Chapel, Cricklade Road

Originally a meeting house from around 1873, later renamed Trinity Methodist.

1901 Plans of Mr S Watson of Oxfords extension plans to double the size of the church were excepted. *Swindon Advertiser 13-02-1901*. Memorial Stone was laid on 27th May 1901. *Swindon Advertiser 24-05-1901*. Re-opening services were held on Thursday by Rev. P J Murrell, who gave a talk on his experiences in London. Councillor Jas. Hinton presided. The Sunday services were conducted by Rev Walford Green, ex-President of the conference. On Thursday Rev W J Heaton gave a talk on King Arthur & King *Swindon Advertiser 10-0-1902*.

Bazaar held to raise final funds to cover costs of new build. *Swindon Advertiser 02-05-1902*.

Gorse Hill Wesleyan Literary Class on Saturday last, Mr J Angus read a paper on "The Romance of the Covenanters". Mr Ingram was chairman. *Swindon Advertiser 22-02-1907*.

On Sunday evening the choir rendered a cantata "The Son of Man", lead by Mr C Chudleigh, solos by Mr Jefferies & Miss N Buss, Mr Beams on piano & Mr Hunter on violin. *Swindon Advertiser 14-05-1909*.

By 1909 they had set up a Debating Class, on 13th Feb 1909 they discussed a paper "Longfellow". Born in 1907 Longfellow was an American poet. *Swindon Advertiser 19-02-1909*.

Ministers

1901 W J Heaton

1914 George Cox

St. AUGUSTINE.

There was also a proposal for a second church in Gorse Hill, St. Augustine's. As reported in the Citizen on 30th October 1905, The Bishop of Bristol had presided over a meeting of the Swindon Church Extension Commission, where it was determined to proceed at once with the collection of a fund for erection of a new church. It was finally built in Even Swindon and consecrated on 25 January 1908.