



St. Barnabus Church

Anglican parish church Grade II listed.

In 1875 Gloucester and Bristol Diocese Association gave £200 towards a church & school for Gorse Hill. *The Western Daily Press 13-03-1875*. Originally an Iron Mission church that was built 1872 near Kembry Street, comprising large hall and vestry. It was known locally as 'Episcopal Mission Chapel' or the 'Gorse Hill Mission Church' and seated less than 120. A school was opened in church in 1873 for 20 scholars, with James Hand & Miss Iles as teachers. Vicars were originally supplied from St. Margaret's.

After a piece of land was purchased from Thomas Arkell for £750, in 1884/5 the current church was built (by *J.P. Seddon*) of Rock-faced sneaked Swindon stone with Bath stone dressings and Bath stone interior. and Whitland Abbey slates (greenish in colour) with a tiled ridge crest. Lead covered stair tower and Sanctus bellcote. Nave and aisles, short chancel with side chambers (100ft x 25ft.). South-west porch under lower 2 storeys of incomplete tower. Opposite north-west porch. Paired lancets between ashlar dressed pilasters, and lancets of clerestory continued as blind arcade along chancel. East triple lancets to chancel under continuous hood. Porch with early English style doorway. 4 lancets to west end. Interior: arcade of 5 bays, with further bay into chancel and half-bay at west. Moulded arches on quatrefoil columns. Clerestory of alternating columns and clusters on wall string supporting coved hammer beam boarded vault at a cost of £3,190. *British Architect vol 23, Apr 24, 1885, p 108*. Octagonal limestone pulpit with arcade on grey stone columns. Font at west end of nave; dog-toothed bowl with surrounding trefoiled arcade. A memorial stone was laid Oct 4, 1884. *Building News VOL 47, Oct 31, 1884, p xvii*. 1885 Gloucester and Bristol Diocesan Association made donation of £80 to the new church, and on 3rd Feb the first service took place at St Barnabas Church, Gorse Hill, followed by the first baptism, the next day. However, the church still was not complete when it was consecrated by the Bishop of Gloucester on June 11, 1886 (St Barnabas Day), finally being finished in 1898 – and even then, didn't include the tower that was originally planned. After an Instrument of Transfer issued 12th December 1889 the ecclesiastical parish of St. Barnabas Gorse Hill was formed 14/02/1890 from that portion of Stratton St Margaret contained in the urban district of Swindon and is now part of Swindon. Mr. David Archer formally opened the new schoolroom. *North Wilts Herald 27-09-1889*. 1890 The Bishop of Gloucester held the first confirmation since St. Barnabas became its own parish on 21st March. *Swindon Advertiser 25-01-1890*. and a grant of £400 was given towards building of vicarage from Bishop Monk's Horfield Trust. *The Bristol Mercury & Daily Post 18-10-1890*. A new vicarage built in Ferndale Road during 1891/92, by J. J. Smith as the cost of £2384 14s 9d, replacing the small villa on Cricklade Road. South aisle, clergy and choir vestries added in 1894. The Incorporated Society for Churches made a £25 Grant. *Swindon Advertiser 24-02-1894*. In 1896 a church school was opened, *Swindon Advertiser 24-10-1896*. 1898, North aisle added at cost of £1000, Major W. Dean laid the memorial stone, *The Citizen 18-07-1898*. 1903 The new Bevington & Sons Organ was officially opened on Sunday at a dedication service. Sermon by Rev Dr Browne of Kempsford. *Swindon Advertiser 09-01-1903*. In 1903 it was decided to extend the boundaries. *Swindon Advertiser 08-05-1903*. By 1909 there was a Church Lads' Brigade, meeting and drills on Fridays and church parade on Sundays. *Swindon Advertiser 20-08-*

1909. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners have made a grant of £65 for 1910 and annual grant of £60 up to 1913. *The Western Daily Press* 26/3/1910. Aisles have west end lancets with glass by Morris & Co. c1918. In 1921 a stained window depicting St. Anne and her daughter Mary was added in memory of Ann Gardener (verger), 1929 saw one of St. Barnabus in memory of William James Gardner (verger), and one of St. Paul dedicated to Mary Jane Morris. *North Wilts Herald* 31-01-1930. In 1933 a window of Our Lord and St. Peter was the memorial to the first vicar, Philip Maddocks. There are two murals on either side of Chancel & Sanctuary, On the south side the mural represents the movement towards the Altar and shows represents the Apostolic Church standing against Industrialisation, on the north side the mural represents the Mission of the Church with the Apostles delivering the word of god, with scenes of Gorse hill behind. they were painted between 1946-1948 by Rev. John Perret at the behest of Rev. Basil Minchin. Full [description of murals](#) can be seen here. In 1953 one of St. John was added, dedicated to Ruth Roseanna Crockford, others have been added since, St. James in memory of Fred and Fanny Sandle in 1961, St. Andrew to Walter and Alice Orpwood in 1963, St. Bartholomew to Alice Ball, Florence Edith Edwards and Olive Grace Mulcock in 1965, St. Thomas in memory of Arthur Baker, and in 1983 St. Matthew in memory of Ruth Emily Canfield. Given Grade II listed status 17-2-1970.

The Organ (1903) –

Great Organ, 9 pipes, Swell Organ 4 pipes, Pedal Organ, 4 pipes, pedal board to Royal College of Organist's scale.

Incumbents/Curates -

1882	Curate - Rev H. H. Wyndham Wydham. (<i>The Hampshire Advertiser</i> 11-3-1882)
1886-1931(Mar)	Rev. P Maddocks (<i>Citizen</i> 11-03-1886.) Died 10-03-1931, buried in Radnor Street. cemetery. <i>North Wilts Herald</i> 13-03-1931.
1899	Curate – G J Saywell
1903	curate, I F Brown
1904	curate, C F Burder
1909	curate, H Higgins
1911	curate, E Jones
1914	curate, W J Grigg
1922-1929(Nov)	curate, G Coulson (moved to Bristol)
1931(Feb)	curate, Alexander K McGovern ordained 1929 from St. Matthew's, Bootle
1931(Sep)-1942	Rev. E. A. Smith (from St. Dunstan'[s, Bedminster, later canon of Bristol)
1932	curate, A. E. Hibberd
1935	curate, H J Coker
1939	curate, B G F Minchin
1940s	Rev. J Perrett
1942-1950	Rev. I. T. Page-Wood
1948	Curate – Charles Francis Gilbert Dare from St. John's College, Durham <i>The Western Daily Press</i> 20-09-1948.
1948	curate, C G F Dare
1950-1953	Rev. W. Goddard (later Canon of Guildford)
1953-1958	Rev. W. F. Blissett
1959-1994	Cannon Raymond Harris
1997-2012	Canon Alastair Stevenson
2019	Rev. Barbara Sheppard

Anniversary services were held on 26-03-1892. *Swindon Advertiser* 09-04-1892.

A Bazaar in aid of church and school funds to be held on Wednesday, 4th April. *North Wilts Herald* 30-03-1888.

Harvest Festival, the services were held throughout the day. The evening sermon was preached by Rev. h Ault of Bishopstone. *Swindon Advertiser* 23-09-1893.

Feb 25th, 1895, Cyril Archer Maddocks, only son of Rev. Philip & Florence Jane Maddocks dies at age of 2 years 11 months. *Swindon Advertiser* 09-03-1895

1897, Jan 5, to wife of Rev. P. Maddock's a daughter. *Swindon Advertiser* 16-01-1897.

English Church Union held their branch meeting in the schoolroom last Monday. *Swindon Advertiser* 19-06-1897.

A parochial tea was held in the schoolroom to which about 200 attended. An evening's concert followed. *Swindon Advertiser* 25-10-1901.

A concert was held in the schoolroom, music by St. Barnabas band. Accompanied by a couple of soloists. *North Wilts Herald* 14-02-1902.

The parochial tea Saturday last for St. Barnabas was followed by a concert in aid paying off the balance of the £51 needed to cover paving and kerbing. *North Wilts Herald* 17-06-1904.

1907, 5th October, reported in local paper, 'A Harvest Thanksgiving was held on Wednesday, Rev. W. Butt of Kempsford gave the sermon, the Sunday being "St. Michael and All Angels" the celebrations continued with good attendance all day.'

There was a cricket team, Swindon All Saints v St. Barnabus played at Southbrook Farm on Saturday. All Saints 36 with A Smith of St Barnabus taking 7 for 19, St Barnabus could only score 15 in reply. *Swindon Advertiser* 11-06-1909.

St Barnabus v Ferndale Road Methodists, St Barnabus winning by 21 runs their bowler W Smart took 6 for none. *Swindon Advertiser* 23-07-1909.

The parochial tea for St. Barnabas was followed by a concert in aid of church funds. *North Wilts Herald* 22-06-1923.

Rev. Alexander McGovern appointed as curate, started a school teacher in Cyprus and at Grenham House, Birchingham. After training as Litchfield College, he was ordained in 1929 by Bishop of Liverpool and previously served at St. Matthew's, Bootle, Liverpool. *North Wilts Herald* 06-02-1931.

A Requiem Mass was held in honour of Rev. Phillip Maddock's funeral at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday 14th. Cannon A G G Ross, St. Mark's, Swindon took the service and Bishop of Malmesbury also took part. Rev. Maddocks joined St. Barnabas. As curate in 1883, and incumbent since 1890. He was buried in Radnor Street Cemetery. Mourners came from all local society and members of clergy from around the country. *North Wilts Herald* 20-03-1931.

The parochial tea for St. Barnabas was followed by a concert by G.W.R. Choir, in aid of church funds. *North Wilts Herald* 19-06-1931.

Rev. Eric A Smith is indited as new vicar by Lord Bishop of Bristol, Dr. Nickson. Rev Smith comes from St. Dunstan's, Bedminster, Bristol. *North Wilts Herald* 04-09-1931.

Remembrance Services were held on Sunday, lead by Rev. E A Smith. Special prayers were said for the 'World Disarmament Conference', to be held in February 1932. *North Wilts Herald* 13-11-1931.

Children enacted a modern version of 'Sleeping Beauty', called 'The Awakened Princess', ain the schoolroom. Aged between 8 and 14 they did themselves proud. *North Wilts Herald* 05-02-1932.

200 joined in a special 'Rogationtide' procession, which dates back to 6th century, asking God's blessing for this seasons crops. Rev. J C Hawksworth, St Philip's and Rev. Eric A Smith, St. Barnabus, had revived the tradition. *North Wilts Herald* 06-05-1932.

Jeffry B Lovegrove and his orchestra held an event in the church schoolroom in aid of band funds. There were dance prizes and a buffet provided by women of the church. *North Wilts Herald* 11-11-1932.

Alderman Reuben George addressed a meeting of Women's United League on Wednesday afternoon, 50. members were present. He talk was on 'Looking Backward', looking at worker reform. *North Wilts Herald* 24-03-1933

A dance was organised by St. Barnabas Tennis Club in aid of funds. There were prizes for Foxtrot, Waltz and a fun one for statues. Music was provided by Geoffrey B Lovegrove and his orchestra. *North Wilts Herald* 12-05-1933.

After the evening service on Sunday, Mr George Cousins, the retiring Parish Clerk, was presented with a gold watch, his wife received a pair of crystal glass vases. *North Wilts Herald* 08-01-1937.

A Bazaar was opened by the Mayor & Mayoress last Wednesday. There were a collection of brightly coloured stall, the aim to raise £100. *North Wilts Herald 26-11-1937.*

The Youth Fellowship paid a visit to Highworth last week to help set up a new group there. *North Wilts Herald 03-03-1939.*

One again the church has a charming Easter Garden, made with spring flowers, and representing the Garden of Gethsemane, with the hill of Calvary behind. *North Wilts Herald 14-04-1939.*

Swindon Civic Chiefs including the mayor, and visitors from various parts of the country came to see the opening of a second British Restaurant in the church hall. They lined up to buy their soup, vegetable and sweet tickets. The meal consisted of soup and bread, roast beef with two vegetables, jam tart and custard, and tea. *North Wilts Herald 31-10-1941.*

The church hall is also home to 17th Swindon Scout Group. *From Evening Advertiser (on 10/9/1977 they made £30 at Fete.)*

More recently an Open-Door Centre opened to make a positive difference in the lives of adults with learning disabilities, enabling our members to achieve their highest potential.