

Non-Conformist Church Records

Background

Gloucestershire Archives holds the records of lots of different non-conformist churches. Non-conformist churches are those which are not part of the Church of England. This includes:

- Baptist
- Church of Christ
- Congregational
- Jewish
- Methodist
- Moravian
- Presbyterian
- Roman Catholic
- Society of Friends (Quakers)
- Unitarian
- Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion

What records are there and what information will they contain?

Baptism, marriage and burial registers	These record the baptisms, marriages or burials that took place at the church. The amount of information recorded will depend on the date and what the minister chose to record. Dates of birth may be recorded beside baptisms.
Birth registers	Dates of birth of children of members of the congregation. Commonly found in denominations which practised adult baptism.
Memorial inscriptions	Transcripts of the inscriptions on headstones in the chapel graveyard. This may be useful if a burial register has not survived or the graveyard has closed.
Church or Communion roll	Church rolls were kept to record people who regularly attended the church and became members. These may include dates of baptism/joining, death or if a member moved away.
Subscriptions/offerings	To help fund the church, members were obliged to pay a monthly fee or offering. Pews in the chapel could also be rented. Other donations may be recorded in these records.
Minutes	As the community of a Non-Conformist church was often small and close knit, many members served on committees and attended meetings. The minutes can confirm their attendance at the church, but are unlikely to give you much personal information about individuals.
Sunday school records	Children of church members are likely to have attended the chapel's Sunday school. Adult members may also have been involved with running the school, so they may appear in minutes.

Church magazines

These documents will contain information about what was going on in the church community and local area. They may include news about individuals or significant events.

How to Find the Records

If you are looking for the records of an individual church, the best place to start is the '*Non-Conformist Guide*' available online and in person in the Searchroom. The guide is designed to help you find the records which will help you to discover more about these churches and chapels as well as the people who attended them. It does not include references to every item. They are arranged by place name and then denomination. References to related collections are given which you can look up to find out more.

We also recommend that you should do a keyword search on the online catalogue to find other related items. To search our collections please use our online catalogue [Gloucestershire Heritage Hub Catalogue](#). There are Help pages and FAQs to make sure you get the best results. You can also watch our YouTube tutorial.

Each chapel entry in the '*Non-Conformist Guide*' should look something like this:

The diagram illustrates the layout of a chapel entry in the 'Non-Conformist Guide'. It includes the following sections and annotations:

- Name of Chapel**: Points to the chapel name.
- Denomination**: Points to the denomination.
- Short History of the Chapel**: Points to the historical text.
- Name of a related Chapel**: Points to a link in the short history text.
- Look down the relevant column**: Points to the 'Baptisms' column in the registers table.
- Then look across to find the reference**: Points to the 'Microfilm Reference' column.
- If there is no table here, this means we hold no registers or rolls for this chapel.**: Points to the 'Original Register' column.
- This table contains references to other items which may be of interest to you.**: Points to the 'Other Sources to try' section.

Chapel Entry Example:

Coney Hill (Wesleyan Methodist)

Services began in a small wooden hut on Newton Avenue. The hut was used by many groups, but ownership was claimed by the Primitive Methodists first. Money from the sale of Churchdown Primitive Methodist Church was used to buy land on Coney Hill Road. The trust for this land was made up of both Primitive and Wesleyan Methodists. A new church was built using money donated by the Wheeler family, and was to be named "**The Daniel Sterry Memorial Church**". The church opened in 1934. The local people did not seem to engage with the new church, and by the early 1950s, there were a few people attending services. The last service was held on 2nd July 1955. The building was let and later sold to the Salvation Army. The registers of the Methodist Church were also used by the Salvation Army, until they left in 1961 upon the moving to Eastgate Street.

The following pages contain the references to registers of Coney Hill.
There is also a list of other major sources relating to the church, which may be of interest.

Baptisms	Marriages	Burials	Church Roll	Microfilm Reference	Original Register
1937-1955					D2689/2/3/1
	1938-1957				D3569/1/1

Other Records

Minutes	D2689/2/3/2	Trustees meetings 1933-1953
History	D2689/1/6/6	History of the Methodist churches and chapels in the Gloucester circuit from the time of John Wesley to 1970, compiled by G.R.Hine

Other Sources to try

Related Collections	See also D2689
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Three volumes of the guide have been compiled so far:

Volume 1: Gloucester

Volume 2: Cheltenham

Volume 3: Stroud Valley

Further reading

The genealogical database available on our website ([Gloucestershire Archives - Genealogical Search](#)) contains non-conformist baptisms for some chapels in Gloucestershire.

The Gloucestershire Family History Society has also transcribed many non-conformist registers of birth/baptism and burial, as well as Quaker registers for meeting houses in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire from the mid-17th century to 1837. See their website for more details at:

www.gfhs.org.uk

Research Guide: Non-Conformist Church Records

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