

Nonconformist Church Records

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What are the Nonconformist Churches?

The nonconformist churches are Protestant denominations which reject the idea of the special status of the Church of England and its clergy.

They do not conform to the governance and practices of the Church of England, hence they are **non-conformists**.

Because of this stance of dissenting from the Church of England, they were also sometimes referred to as **Dissenters**.

There is no more specific, all-encompassing definition of the nonconformist churches as a whole, because each denomination differs from the Church of England in its own distinct way in terms of belief and practice.



Trinity United Reformed Church, Farrar Street, Barnsley

A Brief History of Nonconformity

Until the early 16th century, England, like the rest of Europe, was a Roman Catholic country.

In the 1530s, the marital difficulties of Henry VIII and the emergence of Protestantism in Europe were the catalysts for England to break from the Roman Catholic church.

Through the remainder of the 16th century the English form of Protestantism was gradually developed to create the **Church of England**, which was established by law as the official religion of the state.

However, some people, often referred to as **Puritans**, felt that the established Church of England was not sufficiently Protestant. Among the features of the Church of England which the Puritans did not agree with were:

- the special status of ordained clergy, who had been through a service of ordination to sanctify them for their roles;
- the requirement to adhere to the rites and ceremonies of the Book of Common Prayer;
- the system of local parishes, to which all citizens were expected to belong and support financially;
- the hierarchy of parishes grouped into dioceses which were ruled by bishops.

In the early 17th century, England descended into the political chaos which led to the Civil War, the execution of King Charles I and the establishment of England as a Republic.

In this fractious time, religious non-conformity gained strength in England and many new denominations arose. Some formed around particular charismatic leaders, only to decline with the passing of those individuals. Other groups, such as the Adamites, who expressed their faith through total nudity, did not survive the rigours of the English climate.

The main denominations to emerge from the 17th century were:

- the Baptists
 - the Presbyterians
 - the Independents/Congregationalists
 - the Society of Friends (Quakers).
- They were followed, in the mid-18th century, by the Methodists.

Freedom of worship for Protestant Dissenters was permitted by the Toleration Act of 1689, but the members of the nonconformist denominations were still subject to other legal disabilities which left them as second-class citizens – they were not permitted to occupy any public office, work in the civil service, or enter the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge – which effectively debarred them from many of the professions. These legal disabilities were not removed until 1828.

Many nonconformists therefore turned to trade and manufacturing to make their living. The strong work ethic and personal integrity which were a consequence of their religious practices often ensured the success of their business ventures. They also often took the lead in moral questions such as the abolition of slavery, and social reform in areas such as poverty and education.

Nonconformity also provided a forum in which, for the first time, working class people held positions of authority and collective responsibility, whether as class leaders, chapel trustees, local preachers or Sunday School Superintendents. This led to growing confidence in their own abilities and to involvement in politics and trade unionism. In his book *Methodism and England*, Maldwyn Edwards discussed the General Election of 1885:

“The *Newcastle Daily Leader* was quoted as affirming that the first cause of the social and political advancement of the North of England was Methodism. It said, further, that men who had acquired great facility of speech in classes and preaching were very active in the elections, with results now known to the world.”

Baptists

The Baptists were founded in the early 17th century.

One of the defining characteristics of the Baptists, which distinguishes them not only from the Church of England but also from most other nonconformist denominations, is their belief in baptism as an ordinance or sacrament reserved for professing Christian believers – i.e. for adults making a conscious declaration of belief, as opposed to the baptism of infants as practiced by other denominations.

There are two main theological positions among the Baptists – one is a belief in the general or unlimited atonement of Jesus Christ – i.e. that Christ died for the entire world; the other is that Christ's atonement is reserved for the chosen elect only. The followers of these two positions are called, respectively, General Baptists and Particular Baptists.

Baptists also believe that each congregation is independent and autonomous, self-supporting and governed by its own members.

There is no formal Baptist Church hierarchy, although many Baptist churches associate themselves with bodies such as the Baptist Union, which exists for purposes of mutual support and guidance only, not as a system of denominational governance.

Baptist Historical Society of England and Wales:

<https://baptisthistory.org.uk/>

Presbyterians

When the Church of England was established as the official English version of Protestantism, one feature which many Puritans disliked was the retention of the system of church government by bishops (the episcopal system).

Their more favoured model for church government was through local assemblies of ministers and elected elders known as Presbyteries, a system in which the upper levels of these representatives exercised authority over local congregations.

In 1646, during the Civil War, Parliament abolished the episcopal system and replaced it with a Presbyterian system; most of the deposed bishops retired to private life and many of the parish clergy accommodated themselves to the new, Presbyterian order of the Church of England.

In 1660, with the Restoration of the Monarchy under Charles II, the episcopal system was restored to the Church of England. Two years later, many Church of England clergymen who still favoured the Presbyterian model of church government were ejected from their parishes. These clergy were now officially regarded as non-conformist.

Many of these Presbyterian clergy still had influential supporters amongst the laity and were able to officiate in chapels specially provided for them. The most notable of these chapels in the Barnsley area were Bullhouse Chapel at Thurlstone, built by Elkanah Rich of Bullhouse Hall, the family chapel of Sir Edward Rodes at Great Houghton (now the parish church), and the chapel built in 1699 at Chapel Fold in Barnsley (long since demolished, on a site adjacent to Regent Street).

Please note: the catalogues for Bullhouse Chapel and the Presbyterian chapels at Great Houghton and Chapel Fold, Barnsley are grouped with those of Independent/Congregational chapels under the general reference A-2258-N.

Independents/Congregationalists/United Reformed

The method of church government of Independent or Congregational churches was defined in their titles – each local church or congregation was absolutely independent and autonomous, with no upper levels of hierarchy to exercise authority over local churches.

The first principles of Independent churches were established in the 1580s, but the movement suffered much persecution in its early years. It came to a position of prominence, both religiously and politically, during the Civil War and Commonwealth in the 1640s and 1650s. (Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector 1653-1658, was an Independent.)

By the early 19th century the term Congregational came to be favoured more than Independent, but this transition was gradual.

Although each church governed itself independently, friendly links were established which in many areas resulted in unions of churches on a county basis, not for church governance but for mutual encouragement, advice and support. This process culminated in 1831 with the establishment of the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

In 1972, a majority of Congregational churches opted to join the union of denominations which created the United Reformed Church although, in accordance with the independent principles of the movement, it was up to individual congregations to decide whether to join or not.

The gradual alteration of the title of this denomination is exemplified by its representation in Barnsley:

- Old Independent Chapel/Sheffield Road Congregational Chapel, 1780-1961
- Salem Independent/Congregational Chapel, 1825-1856
- Regent Street Congregational Church, 1856-1971
- Farrar Street Congregational/United Reformed Church, 1898-date

United Reformed Church History Society:

<https://urchistory.wordpress.com/>

Society of Friends (Quakers)

The Society of Friends, otherwise known as the Quakers, was founded in the mid-17th century. Its forms are very simple and emphasise the direct experience of God on the part of the believer. It also considers that there is no distinction between the religious life and the secular life, all of which should be 'lived in the spirit'.

The Quaker style of worship is marked by an absence of defined ritual. There is no specific liturgy, but during meetings any of those attending may feel moved to speak. Similarly, there are no ministers, because they are considered an unnecessary obstruction between the believer and God. However, some individuals who are considered to have abilities to serve the meeting are appointed as Elders.

All Quaker gatherings for worship are called Meetings, of which there are different types – Preparative Meetings at a local level, smaller and larger district meetings (called Monthly and General Meetings) and the Yearly Meeting at national level.

Some meetings are distinguished as 'Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business' at which administrative matters are discussed and decisions recorded by the Clerk.

The keeping of records has always been of primary concern to the Quakers. Their ordinary business is recorded in series of minute books for the different types of Meeting, many of which date back to the 17th century, while the persecution which they suffered in their early years is recorded in 'Books of Sufferings'.

Friends Historical Society: <http://www.f-h-s.org.uk/>

Methodists

In direct contrast to denominations such as the Independents, each of whose congregations operated autonomously, the Methodists were run on a hierarchical model, with each Society or chapel being part of a local Circuit, the Circuits grouped together into Districts, and the whole movement under the ultimate control of a top-level body called the Conference.

Although Methodism had become a separate denomination by the late 18th century, it had been founded in the middle part of that century by two Church of England clergymen, the brothers John and Charles Wesley, who originally intended it to be a renewal movement within the Established Church.

The main differences of early Methodism, as compared with the Church of England, included its adoption of open-air preaching, its use of laymen, and women, as preachers, and its network of local classes and societies. John Wesley always maintained that Methodists should continue to belong to and attend the Church of England; nevertheless, the Established Church felt threatened by Methodism.

It was this original relationship to the Established Church that led to many similar features within Methodism, not least its hierarchical structure, from the Conference at the top, down through the Districts and the Circuits to the local Societies and classes.

However, this structure of top-down government eventually led to much dissent within Methodism and to several splits which created new, but similar denominations.

The effects of these splits on **Methodism in Barnsley**, and the various Methodist Circuits to which they gave rise, are noted below.

ONE

The denomination founded by the brothers John and Charles Wesley came to be referred to as the **WESLEYAN METHODISTS**.

Methodists gather their Societies and Chapels into local groupings called 'Circuits'. **Barnsley Wesleyan Methodist Circuit** was founded in 1802. (Prior to that date the Wesleyan chapels in the Barnsley area had been part of the Wakefield Circuit.) The head chapel of the circuit was at Pitt Street, Barnsley.

For records of the Barnsley Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, please see catalogue A-2-N/1.

The personal authority of the Rev. John Wesley held Methodism together during his lifetime, but after his death in 1791 there began to be dissent among Methodists about how the denomination should be run - particularly whether authority should rest with the ordained clergymen alone, or whether the ordinary members should have a say in church government. This resulted in the formation of a number of separate breakaway Methodist denominations.

TWO

The **PRIMITIVE METHODISTS** were formed 1811. Initially they were distinguished by the comparatively plain design of their chapels and the direct style of their worship. Primitive Methodism tended to be more of a working-class denomination by comparison with the middle-class Wesleyan Methodists.

Barnsley Primitive Methodist Circuit was established in 1821, although its earliest surviving records date from the later 1820s.

The circuit continued under that title until 1892, when it was divided into two new circuits: **Barnsley First Primitive Methodist Circuit** (whose head chapel was at Westgate in Barnsley) and **Barnsley Second Primitive Methodist Circuit** (whose head chapel was at Buckley Street, Barnsley).

For records of these three Primitive Methodist Circuits, please see catalogues A-2-N/2, A-2-N/3 and A-2-N/4.

THREE

The earliest of the denominations to have broken away from Wesleyan Methodism was the **METHODIST NEW CONNEXION**, founded in 1797.

Barnsley Methodist New Connexion Circuit was established in 1811. (Prior to that date its chapels in the Barnsley area had been part of the Sheffield MNC Circuit.) The head chapel of the circuit was initially at New Street in Barnsley, before the Society built a new, grander chapel called Ebenezer at the junction of Sheffield Road and Doncaster Road.

For records of the Barnsley Methodist New Connexion Circuit, please see catalogue A-2-N/5.

FOUR

Further splits in Wesleyan Methodism occurred in the period from the late 1820s to the late 1840s. Although the catalysts for such splits were often relatively minor matters, they all reflected the underlying tension over the relative authority of the clergy (gathered together in the governing Conference) against that of the ordinary members of the denomination.

The **PROTESTANT METHODISTS** were a small breakaway denomination based around Leeds which was founded in 1828 as the result of what was known as the Leeds Organ Dispute. **Barnsley Protestant Methodist Circuit** was founded around the same time.

The tensions in Wesleyan Methodism rumbled on and in 1836 the **WESLEYAN METHODIST ASSOCIATION** was formed. The Protestant Methodists agreed to merge with this new denomination, and so the Barnsley Circuit of the Protestant Methodists became **Barnsley Wesleyan Methodist Association Circuit**.

In 1857, several small denominations, including the Wesleyan Methodist Association, agreed to merge, and came together under the new title of the **UNITED METHODIST FREE CHURCHES**. Hence the Barnsley Wesleyan Methodist Association Circuit became the **Barnsley United Methodist Free Churches Circuit**.

Through all these changes of title, the head chapel of the circuit was the chapel on the east side of Blucher Street, built in 1829.

For records of these three Circuits, please see catalogues A-2-N/7, A-2-N/8 and A-2-N/9.

FIVE

Meanwhile, the most serious of the splits in Wesleyan Methodism had occurred in the late 1840s.

The leaders of the breakaway denomination had been expelled from the Wesleyan Methodists for challenging the authority of the Conference. Their new denomination was called the **WESLEYAN REFORMERS** (also known, somewhat pointedly, as the **FREE METHODISTS**).

In 1857 the Wesleyan Reformers in many parts of the country decided to join in the merger of small denominations which created the United Methodist Free Churches, mentioned above.

But in other places, including Barnsley, the Wesleyan Reformers opted to remain separate from other denominations and to organise themselves under the heading of the **WESLEYAN REFORM UNION**, which was founded in 1859.

The Wesleyan Reform Union has opted not to join in any of the subsequent unions of Methodist denominations and remains a separate denomination at the present time (2019/2020).

*For this reason, **Barnsley Wesleyan Reform Union Circuit** remains independent of the mainstream Methodist Church, and those of its records which are held here at Barnsley Archives are in a separate series of catalogues under the reference A-2259-N.*

SIX

The later 19th century and the 20th century saw successful re-unions of Methodist denominations. The re-union of 1857 which created the United Methodist Free Churches has already been mentioned.

In 1907, that denomination united with two others, the Methodist New Connexion and the Bible Christians (the latter had no chapels in the Barnsley area but was very strong in the West Country) to form the **UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**.

The effect on the Barnsley circuits was that Barnsley Methodist New Connexion Circuit became **Barnsley Ebenezer United Methodist Circuit**, and Barnsley United Methodist Free Churches Circuit became **Barnsley Blucher Street United Methodist Circuit**.

For records of these two Circuits, please see catalogues A-2-N/6 and A-2-N/10.

SEVEN

The most significant re-union of denominations came in 1932, when the Wesleyan Methodists, the Primitive Methodists and the United Methodists all combined to form the present-day **METHODIST CHURCH**.

It often took local circuits a year or two to work out how to re-organise themselves most effectively to suit local conditions. For two years the five Barnsley circuits of the new Methodist Church carried on with their respective boundaries unchanged. To re-cap, these five circuits were:

- Barnsley Pitt Street Circuit (formerly Wesleyan Methodist)
- Barnsley Westgate Circuit (formerly Primitive Methodist)
- Barnsley Buckley Street Circuit (formerly Primitive Methodist)
- Barnsley Ebenezer Circuit (formerly United Methodist, previously Methodist New Connexion)
- Barnsley Blucher Street Circuit (formerly United Methodist, previously Protestant Methodist/Wesleyan Methodist Association/United Methodist Free Churches).

Then, in 1934, all the old circuits were abolished and their constituent chapels were divided into two new circuits, created on geographical lines – [Barnsley East Methodist Circuit](#) and [Barnsley West Methodist Circuit](#).

For records of these two Circuits, please see catalogues A-2-N/11 and A-2-N/12.

In 1953, six chapels from Barnsley East Methodist Circuit were transferred to the new Wombwell and Hoyland Methodist Circuit - see section nine, below.

EIGHT

In 1971, the Barnsley East and Barnsley West circuits merged to form the new [Barnsley Methodist Circuit](#).

In 1982, the boundaries of Barnsley Methodist Circuit were extended when it merged with Wombwell and Hoyland Methodist Circuit - see section nine, below.

For records of Barnsley Methodist Circuit, please see catalogue A-2-N/13.

NINE

In 1862, part of Barnsley Primitive Methodist Circuit was separated to form the new [Hoyland Primitive Methodist Circuit](#). The head chapel of this new circuit was Mount Tabor Chapel, King Street, Hoyland.

When the Primitive Methodists joined with the other denominations to form the Methodist Church in 1932, the boundaries and constituent chapels of the Hoyland Circuit remained unaltered, but its title changed to [Hoyland Methodist Circuit](#).

In 1953, a re-organisation of the local circuit boundaries resulted in the abolition of Hoyland Methodist Circuit: three of its chapels which lay in the area of the Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham were transferred to the new Wath and Mexborough Methodist Circuit while the remainder were transferred to the new [Wombwell and Hoyland Methodist Circuit](#).

This new circuit also included six chapels transferred from Barnsley East Methodist Circuit, seven from Wath upon Dearne Methodist Circuit and two from Sheffield North East Methodist Circuit.

For records of these three Hoyland/Wombwell and Hoyland Circuits, please see catalogues A-2-N/14, A-2-N/15 and A-2-N/16.

Wombwell and Hoyland Methodist Circuit was abolished in 1982 and merged with Barnsley Methodist Circuit.

PLEASE NOTE:

The boundaries of Barnsley Methodist Circuit and those of the Metropolitan Borough of Barnsley are not conterminous. It has been considered preferable to respect the integrity of the boundaries of the Methodist Circuits when determining where Methodist records should be held. Therefore:

The records of some chapels situated beyond the boundaries of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough are included among Barnsley Archives' holdings because the chapels belonged to Barnsley Methodist Circuit.

On the other hand, the records of some chapels which are situated within Barnsley Metropolitan Borough are not held at Barnsley Archives because the chapels belonged to Methodist Circuits whose records are held by the archive services of adjoining metropolitan areas.

Please see individual chapels' catalogue pages for specific information on the location of records.

The Wesley Historical Society: <http://www.wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk/>

Methodist Heritage: <http://www.methodistheritage.org.uk/index.htm>

19th and 20th Century Denominations

Please note: the following list includes only those denominations which are known to have been represented within the Borough of Barnsley.

There are also some stand-alone churches and Christian Fellowships which do not belong to any of the denominations listed below, for example, the Christian Fellowship based at Bethany Mission, High Croft, Hoyland.

Please consult the '19th and 20th Century Denominations' catalogue, A-2261-N/1.

Aetherius Society

The Society was founded in London in the mid-1950s as a result of the founder's communications with extra-terrestrial intelligences. The Society's teachings emphasise altruism, community service, nature worship, spiritual healing and physical exercise.

<https://www.aetherius.org/>

Apostolic Church

The Apostolic Church was founded in Great Britain in the early 20th century. It is a Pentecostal church (i.e. it emphasises direct personal experience of God); the term 'Apostolic' refers to its system of church government like that of the Apostles who followed Jesus Christ.

<https://www.apostolic-church.org/about-us>

Assemblies of God

The Assemblies of God is a Pentecostal church (i.e. it emphasises direct personal experience of God) and was founded in Birmingham in 1924.

<https://www.aog.org.uk/>

<http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/13082/1/346415.pdf>

Bible Pattern Church

The Bible Pattern Church is a Pentecostal church (i.e. it emphasises direct personal experience of God) and was founded in 1939 following differences of opinion within the Elim Pentecostal Church.

<http://thebible-patternchurch.blogspot.com/>

Brethren / Christian Brethren

The Brethren movement originated in Great Britain and Ireland around 1830 but divided into different groups later in the 19th century.

<https://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/c.php?g=64315&p=1521536>

<http://www.brethrenhistory.org/home.htm>

Christadelphians

The Christadelphians have no central leadership. The highest level of organisation is the local church, known as the Ecclesia.

<http://www.christadelphia.org/index.html>

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)

The Latter-Day Saints Church was founded in the United States in 1830. Many non-Mormons have come into contact with the Church through its genealogical resources, which support its doctrine of retrospective baptism of the dead.

<https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/?lang=eng>

Church of the Nazarene

The Church of the Nazarene is an Evangelical denomination which emerged through the merger of various like-minded groups, initially in North America, from the early 20th century onwards.

<https://www.nazarene.org.uk/>

Churches of Christ

The Churches of Christ were established in Great Britain in the mid-19th century.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches_of_Christ_in_Europe#:~:text=History%20in%20Great%20Britain,In%20the%20early&text=In%201842%20the%20first%20Cooperative,an%20annual%20meeting%20in%201870.

Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance / Elim Pentecostal Church

Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance is a Pentecostal church (i.e. it emphasises direct personal experience of God) and was founded in 1915. It is now known as Elim Pentecostal Church.

https://www.elim.org.uk/Articles/417849/Our_History.aspx

Free Church of England

The Free Church of England separated from the mainstream Church of England in the mid-19th century in reaction to the re-introduction of High Church or pseudo-Roman Catholic practices in the Anglican Church.

<https://fcofe.org.uk/our-history/>

Jehovah's Witnesses

The Jehovah's Witnesses emerged in the United States in the late 19th century.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/witnesses/history/history.shtml>

Mormons

See Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

New Church (Swedenborgian)

The New Church movement was founded in the late 18th century, influenced by the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772).

<http://newchurch.org.uk/>

Redeemed Christian Church of God

The Redeemed Christian Church of God is a Pentecostal church (i.e. it emphasises direct personal experience of God) and was founded in 1952.

<https://www.rccguk.church/>

Salvation Army

The Salvation Army was founded in London in 1865. Its beliefs derive from Methodism, but it is distinctive in its organisation, for example its use of military terminology.

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/about-us/our-history>

Seventh Day Adventists

The Seventh Day Adventists were founded in the United States in the mid-19th century. 'Seventh Day' relates to their observance of Saturday as the Sabbath, and 'Adventist' to their belief in the advent (or Second Coming) of Jesus Christ.

<http://www.adventisthistory.org.uk/>

Shiloh United Church of Christ Apostolic Worldwide

The current headquarters of the denomination are at Gower Street, Burngreave, Sheffield.

<https://www.facebook.com/ShilohSheffield/>

Spiritualist Church

The Spiritualist movement was founded in the United States in the mid-19th century and its distinctive belief is communication with the spirits of the dead. Spiritualist churches in Great Britain are co-ordinated by the Spiritualists' National Union.

<https://www.snu.org.uk/>

Unitarians

The distinctive belief of Unitarianism is that God is only one person – God the Father. In the Unitarian view, Jesus Christ was inspired by God but was not a divine being himself. (This is in contrast to most other Christian denominations which are Trinitarian – i.e. they believe in the equal divinity of the three persons of the Trinity - God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit.)

<https://www.unitarianhistory.org.uk/index.html>

Baptisms, marriages and burials

Researchers who have hitherto been familiar only with Church of England baptism, marriage and burial registers may encounter some differences in the way that these events are recorded in the records of the nonconformist denominations.

Baptisms

The early history of nonconformity was marked by persecution, so even those denominations which accepted the practice of baptism might not necessarily have made a written record of the event.

On the other hand, baptism in the Church of England resulted in a legally recognised entry in the parish baptism register, which was important for civil matters such as legitimacy, inheritance and poor relief.

For this reason, some nonconformists who might have been expected not to deal with the Church of England in fact practiced what was known as 'occasional conformity' and went through the motions of a Church of England baptism for these reasons.

The **Baptists** believe in baptism as an ordinance or sacrament reserved for professing Christian believers – i.e. for adults making a conscious declaration of belief, not for infants. Therefore, the arrival of a child in a Baptist congregation would have been recorded in a register of births, with the ceremony of baptism taking place many years later.

Baptisms among the **Independents/Congregationalists** were recorded both in registers of baptisms and in special sections of the Church Records Book, which was a dual purpose volume for the recording of administrative matters along with information on membership.

The **Society of Friends (Quakers)** do not practice baptism. However, they do maintain registers of births within their communities.

When **Methodism** was founded, John Wesley directed that its members should maintain their allegiance to the Church of England along with their membership of the Methodists. This included the direction that baptisms should take place in the Church of England – there are therefore very few separate Methodist baptism registers before about 1800.

After about 1800, baptisms amongst Methodists reflect the close relationship of individual chapels with the circuit to which they belonged.

Many of the oldest existing Methodist baptism registers are those of Methodist circuits and contain entries relating to Methodist families from a wide geographical area throughout the circuit.

Later, it became more common for individual chapels to maintain their own baptism registers, but in many places this did not happen until well into the 20th century.

Occasionally, this distinction between circuit registers and chapel registers is not so cut-and-dried, with certain volumes alternating between the two functions.

Therefore, the search for Methodist baptisms should encompass **both** the registers of the individual chapels and those of the circuits to which the chapel belonged. Please see the introductions to each Methodist chapel catalogue (Ardsley – Worsbrough) for information on the relevant circuits.

Marriages

Before 1753, marriages could take place in nonconformist chapels and were recorded in chapel registers. Although such marriages were regarded as ‘irregular’, they were valid.

In 1754, however, a new Marriage Act came into force which required all marriages to take place in a Church of England church and to be conducted by an Anglican clergyman. The only exceptions were for the marriages of Jews and **Quakers**, both of which were communities noted for the thoroughness of their record-keeping.

Therefore, between 1754 and 1837, even the most fervent **Baptist**, **Congregationalist** or **Methodist** had to marry in the Church of England, where the ceremony would be recorded in the parish register, usually with no indication of the parties' true religious affiliation.

A change in the law took place in 1837. One effect was to create civil marriages conducted in register offices; another was to permit marriages to take place in nonconformist chapels provided that they had been specially registered for that purpose. Such services could be led by nonconformist ministers, but only if the local civil registrar was also present to make the official record of the marriage.

Since the civil registrar's record was the only official record of the marriage, usually the only way to obtain a certificate of a marriage in a chapel between 1837 and 1898 is through civil registration records.

Having said that, a few chapels maintained *unofficial* marriage records during this period. Where these exist, they are noted in the catalogues.

Please note that not every chapel took advantage of the provision to register for the solemnization of marriages (because there were fees to be paid for registration). Therefore, marriages of nonconformists from small villages may not have taken place in their local chapel but in a large town chapel which had been registered for the purpose.

A further change in the law came into effect in 1899. From that date, the civil registrar did not need to be present to register the marriage, provided that the chapel had appointed an 'Authorised Person' (usually the minister) to carry out that function; and chapels could keep their own registers of marriages.

Therefore the majority of individual chapels' marriage registers date from 1899 onwards; and many smaller chapels still did not apply for registration for the solemnization of marriages until well into the twentieth century.

Burials

The existence of burial records among nonconformist congregations is based to a very large degree on whether the chapels in question had sufficiently extensive premises to allow for a burial ground.

Such burial grounds, and the records that arise from them, are more common among the **Baptists**, **Congregationalists** and **Quakers**.

Even among these denominations, however, the provision of a burial ground was not always possible – for instance, although the Congregationalists in Barnsley built Salem Chapel in 1825 with an adjacent burial ground, when they moved to their much larger new church on Regent Street in 1856 there was no adjacent space for burials.

In cases where no chapel burial grounds and no chapel burial records exist, the most likely sources to consult are Anglican parish registers of burials and, from the mid-19th century onwards, the records of municipal cemeteries.

This is particularly the case for **Methodist** chapels, very few of which had any provision for burial grounds.

Glossary of terms

Band of Hope Children's temperance society (promoting abstinence from alcohol).

Church Meeting Annual meeting of all members of a Methodist society; replaced by the General Church Meeting in 1976.

Church Council The governing body of a local Methodist church; established by the Methodist Church Act 1976.

Circuit A local administrative unit of the Methodist Church – each local Society or Chapel belongs to a Circuit.

Circuit Schedule In Methodism, an annual statistical return, including membership statistics.

Circuit Trust Schedule In Methodism, an annual statistical return concerning chapels and other property such as manses.

Class Sub-division of the membership of a local Methodist church – typically 15-20 people; hence **Class Book** for membership/attendance.

Deacon Lay person who serves the spiritual and practical aspects of their local church.

Envelope System Weekly financial offerings in anonymised envelopes.

Funeral Fund 19th century funeral insurance for Sunday School children.

General Church Meeting Since 1976, annual meeting of all members of a Methodist church; usually recorded with Church Council minutes.

Guild A social/spiritual group within a nonconformist church.

Handbill Leaflet or flyer.

Leaders' Meeting Office holders in a Methodist Society, responsible for membership, services, departments and groups; replaced by the Church Council under the Methodist Church Act 1976.

Local Preacher A Methodist lay person (man or woman) trained to lead services.

Love Feast Christian fellowship meal.

Manse Residence of a nonconformist minister.

Manual Baptist publication, see Year Book.

Methodist Union The creation of the modern Methodist Church through the union of older denominations in 1932.

Minister Ordained clergyman of a nonconformist church.

Missionary Society Fundraising group to support Home Missions (evangelization in Britain) and Foreign Missions (abroad).

Pastor Minister in the Baptist Church.

Pew Rent See Seat Rent.

Poor Steward Methodist office holder with responsibility for donations to poor members and provision of Communion wine.

Preaching Plan A chart outlining the Sunday service appointments of Methodist ministers and local preachers at the chapels in a circuit; usually printed quarterly.

Promissory note A form of IOU for repayment of a loan.

Property Committee A committee of a Methodist Church Council with responsibility for buildings since 1976; successor of the Trustees.

Pulpit Notice book Weekly announcements during Sunday services.

Quarterly Meeting In Methodism, an important local meeting of representatives of every chapel in a circuit; four times a year.

Quinquennial Inspection Property survey, once every five years.

Seat Rent Regular payment for seats in chapel; abolished by c.1920.

Society An officially recognised congregation of Methodists, usually associated with a particular chapel.

Society Meeting Annual meeting of church members; also referred to as Church Meeting.

Trustees An appointed group of people who were the legal owners of chapels, manses, etc in the Methodist Church; replaced by the Property Committee in 1976.

Vouchers Tradesmen's accounts, invoices, receipts, etc.

Wesleyan Reform Union Formed 1859, still in existence; independent of the mainstream Methodist Church.

Women's Auxiliary Women's branch of a Missionary Society.

Women's Bright Hour Women's social and fellowship group.

Year Book Baptist church annual publication – office holders, members, historical notes, accounts, etc.

List of Catalogues, with notes on the Arrangement of their Contents

- A-2-N/1 Barnsley Wesleyan Methodist Circuit (1802-1934)
- A-2-N/2 Barnsley Primitive Methodist Circuit (1821-1892)
- A-2-N/3 Barnsley First Primitive Methodist Circuit (1892-1934)
- A-2-N/4 Barnsley Second Primitive Methodist Circuit (1892-1934)
- A-2-N/5 Barnsley Methodist New Connexion Circuit (1811-1907)
- A-2-N/6 Barnsley Ebenezer United Methodist Circuit (1907-1934)
- A-2-N/7 Barnsley Protestant Methodist Circuit (1828-1836)
- A-2-N/8 Barnsley Wesleyan Methodist Association Ct. (1836-1857)
- A-2-N/9 Barnsley United Methodist Free Churches Ct. (1857-1907)
- A-2-N/10 Barnsley Blucher Street United Methodist Ct. (1907-1934)
- A-2-N/11 Barnsley East Methodist Circuit (1934-1971)
- A-2-N/12 Barnsley West Methodist Circuit (1934-1971)
- A-2-N/13 Barnsley Methodist Circuit (1971-date)
- A-2-N/14 Hoyland Primitive Methodist Circuit (1862-1932)
- A-2-N/15 Hoyland Methodist Circuit (1932-1953)
- A-2-N/16 Wombwell and Hoyland Methodist Circuit (1953-1982)

Methodist Circuit Catalogues – main sections

1. Registers and Membership
2. Circuit Administration (including minutes, accounts and statistical schedules)
3. Circuit Personnel (including Ministers, Local Preachers and Trustees)
4. Property: records relating to Chapels

5. Property: other than Chapels (including Manses)
 6. Circuit Organisations and Events (including youth groups, women's societies, missionary societies and guilds)
 7. Publications and Miscellaneous (including preaching plans and circuit magazines)
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- A-2-N/17 Ardsley Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/18 Barnsley, Blucher Street Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/19 Barnsley, Buckley Street Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/20 Barnsley, Doncaster Road, Zion Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/21 Barnsley, Ebenezer Methodist Chapel, Sheffield Road
- A-2-N/22 Barnsley, Heelis Street Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/23 Barnsley, Honeywell Methodist Chapel, Bridge Street
- A-2-N/24 Barnsley, Huddersfield Road Methodist Chapel / Emmanuel Methodist Church
- A-2-N/25 Barnsley, John Street Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/26 Barnsley, Kingstone Place Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/27 Barnsley, New Street Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/28 Barnsley, Old Town, Zion Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/29 Barnsley, Old Town, Greenfoot Lane Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/30 Barnsley, Old Town, Thorntree Lane Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/31 Barnsley, Pitt Street Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/32 Barnsley, Westgate Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/33 Barugh, Bourne Methodist Chapel

- A-2-N/34 Barugh Green Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/35 Birdwell, Chapel Street Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/36 Birdwell, Wentworth Street Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/37 Birdwell, Sheffield Road Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/38 Blacker Hill Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/39 Brierley Wesleyan Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/40 Brierley Primitive Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/41 Brierley, Church Street Methodist Church
- A-2-N/42 Broomhill Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/43 Carlton Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/44 Carlton Welsh Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/45 Cortonwood Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/46 Crane Moor, Mount Gerizim Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/47 Cudworth, John Smith Memorial Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/48 Cudworth, White Cross Road Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/49 Cudworth, Ebenezer Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/50 Darfield Wesley Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/51 Darfield Main Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/52 Darton, Station Road Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/53 Darton, Zion Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/54 Dodworth Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/55 Elsecar, St John's Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/56 Elsecar, Foundry Street Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/57 Gawber, Intake Lane Methodist Chapel

- A-2-N/58 Gawber, Redbrook Road Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/59 Great Houghton Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/60 Grimethorpe, St John's Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/61 Grimethorpe, Bethany Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/62 Haigh Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/63 Harley Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/64 Hemingfield Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/65 Hemsworth, Westfield Road Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/66 Higham Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/67 Hoyland, St Paul's Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/68 Hoyland, Mount Tabor Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/69 Hoyland, Bethel Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/70 Hoyland, Duke Street Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/71 Hoyland Common, Christ Church Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/72 Hoyland Common, Mount Zion Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/73 Hoyland Common, Chapel Street Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/74 Hoylandswaine Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/75 Kexborough Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/76 Laithes Crescent Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/77 Low Swithen Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/78 Low Valley Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/79 Lundwood Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/80 Mapplewell, Providence Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/81 Mapplewell, Bethel Methodist Chapel

- A-2-N/82 Midgley Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/83 Monckton Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/84 Monk Bretton, Wesley Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/85 Monk Bretton, Back Lane Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/86 Monk Bretton, Ebenezer Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/87 Monk Bretton, High Street Methodist Church
- A-2-N/88 Pilley Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/89 Platts Common Methodist Church
- A-2-N/90 Pogmoor Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/91 Rockingham Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/92 Royston, St Matthew's Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/93 Royston, Midland Road Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/94 Ryhill, Chapel Street Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/95 Ryhill, Mill Lane Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/96 Shafton Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/97 Silkstone, Bethel Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/98 Silkstone Common Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/99 South Hiendley Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/100 Staincross, Barnsley Road Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/101 Staincross, Greenside Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/102 Staincross Methodist Church
- A-2-N/103 Stairfoot, School Street Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/104 Thurgoland, Huthwaite Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/105 Wentworth Methodist Chapel

- A-2-N/106 Wombwell, Park Street Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/107 Wombwell, Barnsley Road Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/108 Wombwell, Cemetery Road Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/109 Wombwell, Hough Lane Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/110 Wombwell, Summer Lane Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/111 Wombwell Main Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/112 Worsbrough Bridge Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/113 Worsbrough Common Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/114 Worsbrough Dale, Station Road Methodist Chapel
- A-2-N/115 Worsbrough Dale, Green Street Methodist Chapel

Methodist Chapel Catalogues – main sections

1. Registers and Membership
2. Society and Leaders (Church Council from the mid-1970s onwards)
3. Trustees (Property Committee from the mid-1970s onwards)
4. Legal Documents
5. Chapels, Schoolrooms and other buildings
6. Sunday School (including minutes, accounts and registers)
7. Organisations and Events (including women's societies, youth groups, choirs and music, and social events)
8. Publications and Miscellaneous (including magazines, souvenir booklets and photographs)

A-2257-N/1	Barnsley, Sheffield Road Baptist Church
A-2257-N/2	Barnsley, Parker Street Baptist Church
A-2257-N/3	Barnsley, Pitt Street West, Zion Baptist Church
A-2257-N/4	Thurlstone Baptist Church
A-2257-N/5	Ward Green Baptist Church
A-2258-N/1	Barnsley, Chapel Fold Presbyterian Chapel
A-2258-N/2	Barnsley, Sheffield Road Congregational Chapel
A-2258-N/3	Barnsley, Salem Congregational Chapel, Blucher St.
A-2258-N/4	Barnsley, Regent Street Congregational Church
A-2258-N/5	Barnsley, Farrar Street Congregational / Trinity United Reformed Church
A-2258-N/6	Elsecar Congregational / United Reformed Church
A-2258-N/7	Goldthorpe Congregational Church
A-2258-N/8	Great Houghton Presbyterian Chapel
A-2258-N/9	Penistone, Netherfield Congregational Chapel / United Reformed Church
A-2258-N/10	Thurlstone, Bullhouse Independent Chapel
A-2258-N/11	Wombwell, High Street Congregational Church
A-2258-N/12	Wombwell, Summer Lane Congregational / United Reformed Church

Baptist / Presbyterian / Independent / Congregational / United Reformed
Chapel Catalogues – main sections

1. Registers and membership
2. Administrative records (minutes, accounts, correspondence)
3. Legal documents (title deeds, chapel registration)
4. Property: churches (building papers, plans, closure and sale)
5. Property: other than churches (manses, schools)
6. Sunday School (minutes, accounts, correspondence, registers)
7. Organisations and Events (including social events and services)
8. Publications and miscellaneous (including magazines and photographs)

A-2259-N/1	Barnsley Wesleyan Reform Union Circuit
A-2259-N/2	Barnsley, Salem Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/3	Barnsley, Measborough Dike Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/4	Barnsley, Old Mill Lane Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/5	Cawthorne Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/6	Cliffe Bridge Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/7	Cudworth Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/8	Dodworth Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/9	Elsecar Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/10	Hoyle Mill Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel

A-2259-N/11	Hunningley Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/12	Jump Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/13	Lundhill Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/14	Royston Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/15	Silkstone Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/16	Smithies Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/17	Staincross Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/18	Wombwell, Mount Tabor Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/19	Wombwell, Mount Zion Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/20	Wombwell, Hough Lane Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/21	Worsbrough Bridge Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel
A-2259-N/22	Worsbrough Dale Wesleyan Reform Union Chapel

[Wesleyan Reform Union Circuit and Chapel Catalogues – main sections](#)

The catalogues of the Barnsley Wesleyan Reform Union Circuit and the Wesleyan Reform Union chapels listed above are structured in the same way as those of the Methodist Circuits (see page 28) and the Methodist Chapels (see page 33).

A-2260-N/1	Barnsley Society of Friends (Quakers)
A-2260-N/2	Monk Bretton Society of Friends (Quakers)
A-2260-N/3	Penistone, Lumbroyd Society of Friends (Quakers)
A-2260-N/4	Hoylandswaine Society of Friends (Quakers)
A-2261-N/1	19 th and 20 th Century Denominations
A-2261-N/2	Interdenominational Organisations
A-2262-N/1	Barnsley Sunday School Union
A-2262-N/2	Wombwell Sunday School Union
A-2262-N/3	Hoyland Common Sunday School Union
