Places of Worship
in
Old Sunderland

By
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Introduction

Sunderland was a Puritan town in the 17th century, and those who chose to stray from the flock were brought to heel with victimisation and violence in liberal doses. Two centuries later and the tide had turned – this bustling sea port was a strong hold of nonconformity.

In the early 1800s, the spiritual needs of 30,000 souls were tended by only four Anglican churches – Saint John’s and Holy Trinity in old Sunderland; St Michaels in the huge parish of Bishopwearmouth, and the ancient church of Saint Peter’s across at Monkwearmouth. The population was about to explode and the signs of strain were clear. A massive change in thinking was required, particularly at Bishopwearmouth, which had long since lost touch with the needs of its people.
While Sunderland Parish was locked immovably into its already straining boundaries, the other parishes had more than enough room to expand and this they did with typical 19th century enthusiasm. Wonderful Gothic structures sprung up in new parishes to the west and south, while Southwick and the other townships to the north were likewise furnished with new churches and identities of their own.

By this time the tiny nonconformist chapels like those in Robinsons Lane, Spring Garden Lane, Malings Rigg and Half Moon Lane, were flexing their muscles and attracting sponsorship from wealthy patrons, and they too, alongside their Roman Catholic neighbours would emerge as serious contenders for the ministry of Sunderland souls.

Religion would never be the same again.

1. Church of England

Saint Peter's Church, Monkwearmouth

Saint Peter's Church, built in 674, is without doubt one of the most precious jewels that the city has to offer.

In the reign of Egfrid, a grant of land in Monkwearmouth was obtained by Benedict Biscop, on which he built an abbey, dedicating it to Saint Peter. In 1075, Bishop Walcher of Durham gave the vill of Southwick and certain lands to
a body of monks from Melrose, who rebuilt the church of Biscop. In 1083, William, his successor, removed the monks to Durham and made Weremouth a cell dependent upon Saint Cuthbert’s at Durham. The monastery was dissolved in 1546.

The tower porch is the most ancient part of the building, and the crumbling structure underwent much needed restoration in 1875, at a cost of £7,190.

The church, whose accommodation is given at 700, was almost lost to a fire in the latter part of last century – this almost 200 years after the parish registers suffered a similar fate in 1790.

*Records have been gathered from various sources including Bishop’s Transcripts, and are available at DCRO. Births: 1702 onwards. Marriages 1734 onwards and deaths from 1683. SLS – Bapt: 1726-1967, Mge:1736-1967*

*Saint Michael’s, Bishopwearmouth.*

St. Michael’s is now the prestigious Sunderland Minster and very much a church of the people - enjoyed by local groups as well as parishioners. Built in 930, it was given the name Bishop’s Weremouth Church to distinguish it from its venerable neighbour to the north, Monk’s Weremouth. For eight hundred
years its parochial area stretched from the sea to Offerton and from the river to Ryhope.

No incumbent’s name appears on the records prior to the 13th century. In 1704 the church retained many marks of Saxon architecture, and was restored by John Smith, rector, who died in 1715. The chancel is substantially, and the stones of the chancel arch identically the same as in the pre 1704 restoration work.

The church accommodates 1250.

*Baptism and burial records are available from 1567. – 1950s at SLS*

Sunderland Parish Church

In 1719, the residents of Sunderland petitioned for a church of their own – after all, the long walk to Bishopwearmouth Church was over a mile, and mostly uphill. Holy Trinity, which still stands today, was consecrated on 5th September 1719.

Very different in style to its neighbours, Holy Trinity is post-Renaissance in design and built of brick with occasional stone embellishments.
Daniel Newcombe, the first rector, built a circular apse at his own expense, in 1735.

The church was not only a place of worship, but also served as a centre of local government, home to monthly parish meetings and the decision-making machinery that went hand-in-hand with a growing and progressive parish.

*Baptism and Marriage records are available from 1719 – 1970s and burials from 1719 – 1909 at SLS*

St. John’s Church, Sunderland.

As the population of the East End grew to bursting point, it became clear that the Holy Trinity Church was no longer capable of accommodating for the religious needs of the area. In 1769 a new church was built in Prospect Row, near to the Town Moor. St. John’s Parish Church, which housed 1800 worshippers, would stand for two centuries before it was demolished in the 1970s along with many of the homes that it once served.

Wesley preached here in 1784 and 1788, when his sermons on the Town Moor came to an end.

As with its older sister church, St John’s was built predominantly of brick. Its appearance was as stark
as the buildings that huddled around it.

St. Johns was the spiritual home of, among others, the thousands of soldiers who were billeted at the nearby barracks. Its parish registers which include the marriages of soldiers to local girls, are available from 1875 -1965. *Baptisms from 1875 – 1962 (SLS)*

**St. Paul’s Church Ryhope**

The original church (pictured below) was built in 1827, from which date the parish registers commenced

Upon the new church being commissioned and built in 1870, at a cost of £2950, the older building was used a day school for local children. Despite more splendid plans being offered, the design of the present church was considered to be less extravagant, and less likely to be criticized by parishioners.

The church remains an active part of the community today.

*Parish registers are available from 1827 -1960s*
(Baptism and Marriage. Burials from 1828 - 1937)

**Saint Thomas’s, John Street.**

Built in 1829 by subscription, at a cost of £6000, St. Thomas’ Church accommodated 420. Need arose for a new church when the area around the old High Street was spreading out into the fields to the west of the town.

The area then consisted mainly of dwellings, but later, when businesses took hold, the wealthy merchants moved further into the suburbs, at Ashbrooke. The church was destroyed by the Germans during an air raid in 1943. Replaced by St. Thomas at Pennywell. Joplings store now stands on the site of the original church. Parish Registers Baptisms: 1896 to 1943. Marriages: 1848 to 1943.

**Saint Mark’s, Millfield**

Built in 1872 at a cost of £4300. One of the four parishes formed by the Bishopwearmouth Rectory Act.

Baptism records are available at SLS from 1872 – 1950, and Marriages from 1872 – 1942.
Christ Church, Bishopwearmouth

Built in 1864 at a cost of £7184, the church acted for some time as a chapel-of-ease for Bishopwearmouth.

The chapelry was formed into a separate ecclesiastical parish in 1875, from which year the registers date.

With the church in danger of falling into disrepair, the Sunderland Sikh community took it over as a place of worship and community hall in 2001.

Baptisms and marriages 1876 - 1970 at SLS.

Saint Matthew’s, Silksworth

Built in 1871 at a cost of £2020, the parishes was one of four created by the Bishopwearmouth Rectory Act of 1867.

Parish registers at SLS:

The rapidly growing population of Sunderland had been served by only four churches until 1829, when Saint Thomas’ was erected as a chapel of ease. Hendon at this time was still a rural area, populated by grand houses and the odd cottage or two. By the 1850s, that scene was changing rapidly, with streets of fine houses springing up at an alarming rate.

Dr. Tatham who owned most of land in the area, gave the site in Meaburn terrace for the building of a church, and with the generosity of Christopher Bramwell, the sum of £2800 was found for the construction of Saint Paul’s Church.

Even up until the day of its opening in 1852, the land around the entrance to the new church was inaccessible, and a group of navvies who were working on the new docks were called in to ensure safe passage for the dignitaries who had gathered for its opening.

Saint Paul’s was demolished during slum clearances last century.

Holy Trinity, Southwick


Saint Columba’s, Southwick

Built in 1890 at a cost of £4300 and taken out of Southwick Parish

**All Saints, Monkwearmouth**

Built in 1849 at a cost of £2500. Formed out of Monkwearmouth and made a parish in 1844.


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**Saint Mary’s, South Hylton**

A chapelry served by curates of Bishopwearmouth was formed in 1820, from which period the registers date. A dwelling house, Hylton Lodge, was purchased from Vice-Admiral Maling and altered to be used as a church.
The chapelry was formed into an ecclesiastical parish in 1854. The old church was destroyed by fire on March 9th 1878, and the present church built at a cost of £3000. The church accommodates 340 worshippers.

Parish Registers: Baptisms 1821 – 1934, Burials, 1821 – 1856 (a few burials to 1883) and marriages 1839 – 1929.

Saint Ignatius, Hendon.

Built in 1889, as a gift from the Right Rev. J.B. Lightfoot, late Bishop of Durham.

The church, which still stands in Ward Street, Hendon, cost £8000.

Saint Barnabas, Hendon

The Church was built in 1868 at a cost of £4300. The parish was taken from, and the church used as a chapel of ease for Saint Paul’s, until 1876, when it was formed into a separate ecclesiastical parish.


For Baptisms 1876 – 1893, refer to St. Andrew’s Deptford.

Saint Mary Magdalene, Millfield.

Saint Peters, Bishopwearmouth.

Built in 1872 at a cost of £3286. One of the four churches formed as part of the Bishopwearmouth Rectory Act of 1867.


The Church of the Venerable Bede, Monkwearmouth, was built in 1870, and sited near to the Wheatsheaf junction. It served a relatively small population and was formed out of Monkwearmouth parish. The church, can be seen at the centre of this early postcard. Records available include: Baptisms and Marriages: 1873 to 1962. Burials: 1875 to 1879.
Christ Church, Bishopwearmouth, was built in 1864 as a chapel of ease to Bishopwearmouth. It cost £7184 when built, and registers date from 1875 when it was formed into an ecclesiastical parish.

The church, which sat in the heart of one of the town’s most prestigious new suburbs, is now used as a Sikh centre. Records include: Baptisms and marriages: 1876 to 1970. Banns: 1876 to 1933. (For Baptisms 1876 to 1958 and marriages 1876 to 1933, refer to St Thomas.

Saint Andrew’s, Deptford. Was built in 1841, at a time when the Ayres Quay area was establishing itself as a centre of industry. Shipyards and glassmakers were thriving and new streets of housing were springing up on land reclaimed from the salt grasses bordering the river.

The other church built in the Deptford area was St. Stephen’s at Ayres Quay. Built in 1878, chiefly by employers from labour from the parish, St. Stephen’s was formed out of the parish of Deptford, which was then serving a huge area. Records, which are scant, include: Baptisms: 1879 to 1957 and Marriages: 1879 to 1958.

Saint Luke’s Church at Pallion was built in 1873 at a cost of £4100. It was one of the four parish churches formed out of Bishopwearmouth Rectory Act of 1867.

Saint Gabriel’s church was one of the newer Edwardian buildings, commenced in 1909 and completed three years later. Its architect was Clayton Greene. The church is still very active in the community today. Records available include: Baptisms: 1901 to 1972. Marriages: 1905 to 1970.

The original design for the church (right) included a spire, but for some reason this was never built.

Saint Cuthbert’s, in Monkwearmouth, was originally used as Presbyterian Chapel, until it was purchased by Canon Miles and consecrated as a district church in 1880.

Records available include: Baptisms: 1880 to 1939. Marriages 1880 to 1939.

(For Baptisms 1896 – 1939 and Marriages 1880 to 1939, see Saint Peter, Monkwearmouth.)
Saint Margaret's Church at Castletown (pictured below) was built in 1874 and was formed out of Southwick Parish. The cost of building was defrayed by Colonel C.J. Briggs, J.P. Patronage in the hands of the owners of Hylton Estate.


Saint Hilda’s Church at Millfield was taken out of St. Mark’s parish in 1894. Parish Records include: Baptisms: 1894 to 1968. Marriages: 1894 to 1968.

Other churches for which microfilm records are held at Sunderland Local Studies include:


Good Shepherd, Bishopwearmouth. (see Holy Trinity for records.)

Herrington chapel. (St. Cuthbert’s, West Herrington). Marriages 1841 to 1847.


Saint Aidan’s, Grangetown.


Saint Cuthbert, East Rainton.

Baptisms: 1866 to 1932. Burials: 1867 to 1917. Marriages 1867 to 1953. (Some dates on All Saints, Eppleton.)


Saint Michael and All Angels Houghton le Spring.


A wonderful website showing images and history of this beautiful old church can be visited at: [www.stmichaels-hls.org.uk/townhistory](http://www.stmichaels-hls.org.uk/townhistory)

Saint Michael and All Angels, Usworth Colliery:  Baptisms: 1904 to 1959.


Saint Oswald, Hendon. (A mission church in Corporation Road.) Baptisms: 1979 to 1962.

Note: The Sunderland General Hospital also holds records for baptisms and copies of these are available at SLS from 1941 to 1963.
When Charles Wesley came to Sunderland in 1743, he preached to a crowd of almost 1000 people, most of whom he described as “wild”! When his brother John Came here in 1746 and tried to preach at the old market cross on High Street, he saw wild at first hand, being pelted with rotten eggs and mud for his troubles. Had it not been for the protection offered by a local fishwife, who threw her arms around his shoulders and threatened to floor anyone who touched her canny man - he might not have escaped with his life.

Despite these early setbacks, the Wesleys soon set up a small meeting house in Swine Alley, so called because it was the route that local butchers took when taking their pickled pork to the ships lying at anchor. Around this time one Christopher Hopper was cruelly pelted with stones for trying to preach to sailors, proving what a risk these early ministers were taking setting up their HQ so close to the antagonistic matelots.

Swine Alley soon became too small for the faithful, who then acquired a little house on Ettrick’s Garth (Chipchase Street.) This building would also prove too small for the growing number of worshippers, and yet more premises were sought in Sunderland’s Society Lane. (Later called Drury Lane).
The fourth premises used, in 1759, were at Numbers Garth, where some semblance of stability was established up until 1793, when the smart new church at Sans Street (pictured) was completed.

After John Wesley’s death, there was a period of crisis, with a split soon forming in the Methodist movement. The secession was known as The New Connection.

The first of the New Connection places of worship was the beautiful chapel at Zion Street, completed in around 1800. The Zion Chapel was rebuilt in 1846, and while it was well attended for many years, it ended its life as a bakery – once again providing the staff of life to its neighbours.

Pictured left is the chapel in the middle of the 20th century.

To the east of the Zion Chapel stood another haven of peace and probably one of the most popular mission houses in town.

High Street East Mission, as can be seen from the photograph below, was never short of young congregational members, with poor bare-footed locals eager to secure the warmth and comfort offered by its dedicated officials.

Over a hundred youngsters can be seen posing for the camera as they leave a service at the mission during the 1880s.
High Street Mission was first used in 1861, and during its early years the minister would hold his first service at 5 a.m. in order that the workers could attend to their spiritual needs before going about their business.

Prior to the High Street Mission being used, there was, for a short time, another chapel on the opposite side of the road, known as the Burleigh Street Chapel. (below)

During the middle decades of the 19th century, Hendon was changing from a village populated by farms and prestigious country houses, to a busy suburb of this growing town. With its mix of worker’s houses and desirable dwellings for the wealthy businessmen, there was an obvious need for the church to expand too. Saint Paul’s already catered for the Anglican congregation, but as most of the merchant middle classes seemed to prefer Methodism, then the time was right for expansion into these new suburbs.
In 1868, Hendon Chapel opened at a cost of £4,000, while at the junction of South Durham Street and Lawrence Street, the appropriately named South Durham Street Methodist Chapel was catering for locals nearer to town.

This small chapel was to close in 1934, and the congregation would join Tatham Street Primitive Methodist Chapel, (built 1875).

Sadly, the occupation would be short lived, as the Chapel was damaged during an air raid and was closed in 1942.

It was at Park Road Methodist Church that the weary worshippers would eventually settle.

Here at last was a splendid building, opened on 18th May 1887, that moved away from the predictable design employed by most Nonconformist Church designers. Built in a Gothic style the church would withstand the dreadful air raids of April 1941, during which the Victoria Hall was destroyed. While the Church lost its beautiful north window, it went on to celebrate its centenary in 1987.
THE ANCIENT CHAPEL IN THE CORNMARKET was built in 1711, by George Wilson; the chapel replaced informal meeting rooms at the house of an old widow in the west of the town. Protestant dissenters had long been the subject of mob violence and only a decade or so earlier, the tiny chapel in Monkwearmouth had been “undermined” whilst members were at worship. As the building fell to the ground, its occupants only just escaped with their lives.

When the Calvinist Corn Chapel was first used, Monkwearmouth folk would wade across the river; the men with their trousers and boots raised above their heads; the women with their gowns slung over their shoulders.

Sandwiched in Half Moon Lane, a steep and narrow alley that ran from High Street to Low Street, the Corn Chapel was situated in the midst of breweries, smith’s shops, shipyards and sailcloth factories. There were two entrances, one in Half Moon Lane to suit the north side followers and the other, through a narrow, gated alley adjoining Messrs. Newbegen’s shop.

An old descriptive of the chapel states: The contour of the Chapel, described as Salem, is to be seen in a few of the old Borough Maps.

The pulpit was a high decker, with an octagon sounding board; the choir being on the south side and the minister’s vestry to the north.

The chapel was sold in 1843 and later partially destroyed by fire.

*Baptism records are available from 1717 to 1837*
Following a split in the church, when George Wilson introduced “Popish and unscriptural” hymns, to the services, a break-away group set up first in Pewterer’s Lane and then, in 1739, in a chapel in Robinson’s Lane.

It was at this time when the congregation called a minister who was a licentiate of the Church of Scotland and ordained by the Presbytery of Glasgow. Some say that this was the introduction of the Presbyterianism to Sunderland.

The cover page of the Church Book bears the handwritten legend – *Register of Baptisms belonging to the protestant dissenting congregation in Robinson’s Lane* – just in case there was any doubt as to its allegiances.

It was not long before a second Presbyterian Church was established, this being in Spring Garden Lane.

First used in 1766, the Presbyterian secessionist meeting house was a popular centre of worship for the poor.

In contrast to its sister church in the cramped alley down in Robinson’s
Lane, the Spring Garden Lane Chapel was a purpose built building that would satisfy its congregation for many years to come.

The division between the two establishments above deserves an explanation, and it may be said that Robinson Lane Church was connected to the Established Kirk in Scotland, whereas Spring Garden Lane was connected to the Secession Kirk which had come out of the establishment in 1733.

In 1821 however, more of the congregation broke away to form another church in Back Lonnin, which had recently been renamed Coronation Street in honour of King George IV. The church bore the name **Union Chapel**

Another Presbyterian Church was also well established by this time, that being a substantial stone building in Malings Rigg.

**Malings Rigg Chapel** (below) had opened in 1778 as an independent church under the ministry of John Hyslop.

For a brief time in the 1820s it shared a minister with Spring Garden Lane, causing much confusion as the two churches had very different ideas and identities.
The Scotch Church,

Meeting Hill, on Monkwearmouth Shore, was given its name because of the Baptist meeting house that stood at its crown at the beginning of the 19th century. Worshippers were given their salty baptism at Holey Rock due to the scarcity of water in the town.

At the foot of the North West corner of the hill were the old brewery stables, and opposite these stood the Old Scotch Church. Prior to this being built, non conformists had to attend the chapel in Robinson Lane, Sunderland, but following an unfortunate ferry accident and the subsequent loss of worshipper’s lives, the formation of a church on the north side became a priority.

The first meeting place, during the spring of 1777, was in a converted stable at Brewery Bank, but this soon became too small for the ever-growing population. In 1778, land was acquired opposite to the brewery and the Rope Walk Chapel appeared on the landscape.

In 1827, the congregation moved to North Bridge Street, where over the next seventy years, two
more fine buildings, the old (above) and the new Scotch Churches, would dominate the landscape, each growing from the ruins of its predecessor.

The New Scotch Church, built in 1891, still stands proudly, looking out over the town.
St. George’s Church

St. George’s Church was built in 1890, formerly as a Presbyterian Church, but now hosting other congregations too. The building was financed mainly by Mr Bartram, the shipbuilder, who laid the foundation stone in 1889.

Designed by John Bennie Wilson of Glasgow, the Scottish connection was further extended by the use of red Dumfries sandstone as a choice of building material.

The church was built to replace that of the same name in Villiers Street when the latter became too small to accommodate its growing congregation.

Chapel of Saint George, Villiers Street.

A former Presbyterian Chapel, but now used as a business centre.

Built in 1825 by James Hogg, it replaced the earlier chapel in Robinson’s Lane.
During the Georgian period, the **Union Chapel**, formed out of disaffected **Spring Garden Lane worshippers**, was going from strength to strength. Members who lived over the water were given permission to found a church at the north side of the river. (Travel to and from the north to Coronation street incurred tolls at the bridge, and these were never popular at the best of times, so church attendance could be quite costly.)

In the meanwhile, predictably, a rift was growing at the Union church which led to the formation of the **Smyrna Chapel in Borough Road**. Opened in 1832 it served the community for eleven years before being taken back into the fold of Spring Garden Lane and being renamed, simply, Smyrna!

Over at Deptford, we had **Saint George’s Mission at Silksworth Row**, and also **the new Sunday School at Ayre’s Quay**, run by a local man, Peter Turnbull, who had taken the cause of the ragged kids to heart.

Built in 1832 and later extended, the Sabbath School mainly concentrated on scripture studies, but invariably would have benefitted the children in other disciplines.

**Communion Tokens**

At this time, admission to communion was made by lead tokens, many of which still survive. In 1868 however, the Union church abandoned this
practice and introduced communion cards.

Shown above: One of the lead tokens used at the Smyrna Chapel in 1832.

Two years after the introduction of communion cards, the Union Church moved from its Coronation Street base into much larger premises at Borough Road, known as Trinity (below). It was not long before the ministers there were pushing out the boat even further with the introduction of instrumental music and an organ. How the puritans must have winced!

In order to further the cause of education, St. Georges by this time had introduced a new school at Villiers Street.

By 1876, the various factions of the Presbyterian Church seemed to have extended the arm of friendship and formed The Presbyterian Church of England.
The Society of Friend’s Meeting Houses.

The Quakers, because of their non conformity had long been victimised in the town. Riots were not uncommon and the destruction of their original meeting house near to Russell Street was a direct result of the mob’s intolerance. The new Meeting House in High Street (1688) was built with windows high up the walls in order to stop unwanted visitors and missiles being thrown through while the congregation were at worship. It was rebuilt in 1718 and replaced by the Nile Street Meeting House (below) in 1822. Births, marriages and Deaths available from 1844 – 1955. Microfilms 184-6 and 190
Sunderland’s Catholic congregation had, for many years, worshipped in a private dwelling house in Warren Street. In 1746, in the wake of the Jacobite rising, bigoted locals burst into the house while a wedding was in progress, burning the priest’s robes and ransacking the property. From the 1780s, when religious intolerance had lost much of its sting, worship continued in an obscure little church in Dunning Street.

In 1835, Ignatius Bonomi built St. Mary’s Church in Bridge Street. Here at last was a prestigious building in one of the most prominent locations in town.

Shortly after this time, during the “hungry forties,” a mass immigration of Irish workers into Sunderland increased the Catholic population, and three more churches sprang up in the most heavily populated areas – the East End, Deptford and Monkwearmouth.

The Parish registers are often quite difficult to read, with gaps appearing in some places and sometimes quite illogical in their order. Dates covered for baptism ceremonies are: 1808 - 1916, and an incomplete index register from 1809 to 1927. Deaths are from 1825 – 1988 in three files. Marriages 1825 – 1988.
Saint Patrick’s RC Church was built in 1861 to serve the East End and Hendon. It was built at a cost of £3000 and could accommodate over 2000 worshippers. The Church was sited opposite to Holy Trinity in Church Street, but sadly did not survive beyond slum clearance. Records available on individual films include: Baptisms Oct 1873 – Dec 1888. Nov 1908 to Dec 1914. Nov 1889 to July 1924. Marriages Jul 1875 to May 1892. Deaths: Jan 1877 to Oct 1897. Feb 1922 to Jun 1925. Aug 1910 to Dec 1912 and Dec 1912 to April 1990.

Saint Joseph’s, Millfield.

Canon John Bamber, parish priest of St. Mary’s, had in 1871 bought land in King's Place, (then part of King's Farm), and on this was built the school chapel in 1872.

There were some parishioners still living, who could recall the days when a sliding partition separated the Altar from the school. An original stone cross, to be seen today on the northern gable of the present Junior School marks the position of the Altar and is a visible reminder of the foundation of the parish 100 years ago. The school was obviously built with an eye to an extending parish,
and Patterson's 'Guide to Sunderland' published in 1891 gives the cost as £2,000, with an accommodation for 1,000 pupils, and the date for opening as a school 1872. In those days, and for a newly-established parish, this was a huge debt for the people to carry and twenty years later the people were being reminded by their parish priest, Fr. Thomas Joseph Smith, that 'the interest on the debt, and ground rent, about £200 per annum, is twice as much as we receive through the Outdoor Collection'.

It is perhaps appropriate that St. Joseph, the patron of the artisan and the horny-handed labourer was chosen as the patron of the mission, this church being at the heart of much of the town’s industry. The Catholic Population of the parish at the time of its opening was given at 3000.

Monkwearmouth has been served by St. Benet’s Church since 1889. Built at a cost of £7000, the church housed 1000 worshippers. Like many of the Roman Catholic churches, Saint Benet’s attended to the needs of the poor Irish immigrant population, providing education as well as religion in an area that saw a huge decline in fortunes since the beginning of the 19th century. Parish records include: Baptisms: October 1865 to October 1950 (4 films) Marriages: March 1866 to June 1974, and Deaths: January 1874 to July 1985.

The outlying towns and villages were also well-served with Roman Catholic churches, including: St. Michael’s at Houghton le Spring (1845), St. Patrick’s at Ryhope (1897),
St. Leonard’s at Silksworth, (1873) and Our Blessed Lady Immaculate at Washington. (1862) (see page 53) and St. Hilda’s at Southwick, which would be the first to be built during the Edwardian years. Records are held for all of these churches at the Local Studies Department.

We must not forget of course, that the Barons Hilton were undoubtedly saying mass for many centuries in their private chapel in the grounds of Hylton castle. St. Catherine’s, now a ruin, is one of the oldest surviving places of worship on the banks of the Wear.

The chapel was dedicated in 1366, but the earliest records relating to it are dated 1157.
The German Evangelical Church

Built by subscription with aid from the German Government, the Hudson Road building was erected at a cost of only £1500 in 1873.

The vast numbers of foreign sailors coming into Sunderland no doubt played a significant part in the requirement for a place of worship for those of other nationalities.

Another local landmark that served as a foreign seaman’s mission was Pottery Buildings, which was active in the town from 1891 until it was bombed by the German Luftwaffe in the Second World War.

Built by Edward Backhouse as a Mission Hall, it was also used by the Society of Friends and as a Sunday School before being given over to Foreign Sailors.
Sunderland’s Jewish Synagogues

The first recorded Sunderland Jew was Abraham Samuel, a silversmith and jeweller, who arrived on our shores from Europe. He died in 1794, by which time the Jewish immigrant population had shown that their skills and talents were very employable and a small community was steadily growing in the town.

In 1781, the community converted Lilburn’s old mansion in Vine Street into a simple place of worship. Shortly after this, they purchased and opened a burial ground in Ayre’s Quay Ballast Hills.

In common with other religious followings, conflict seems to have arisen within the Jewish community when more immigrants arrived from Poland. The Polish contingent were duly left to used the Vine Street property for worship, while the establish population built new property in High Street, next to their Rabbi’s home.

1861 saw new premises in Moor Street, in the East End, which served until 1928, when the splendid “Art Deco style” Synagogue in Ryhope Road was built by Marcus Glass. (This was last used in 2006 and is presently for sale.)

Many records are available, including searchable online data. Visit www.jewishgen.org/JCR-UK/Community/sunderland1/ for more information.
Sunderland Non Conformist Registers

Microfilm Numbers at Sunderland Local Studies

B

Ballast Hills WM Church (1447)
Brougham Street MC (1451)

C

Carol Street Methodist) (1447)
Castletown MC (1534)
Cliff Road, Ryhope, MC (1467)
Clockwell St MC, Southwick (1534) pictured above.
Colliery Row MC (1538)

D
Dock Street MC (1522) pictured.
Dove Street MC Pallion (1467)
Duke Street MC (1522)
Durham Road Methodist (1448)

Ebenezer MC Roker Avenue, (1522)
Ebenezer MC, King Street, Southwick (1535)

Fawcett Street Wesleyan (below) (1448)

Franklin Street and Hylton Road MC (1535)
G

George Street, Deptford MC (1451)
German Protestant Church (1537)
Grangetown Memorial MC (1467)
Grindon MC (1467)

H

Herrington Street Methodist (1448)
High Southwick MC (1534/5)
High Street East Mission (1448)
Hood Street MC (1535)

M

Mainsforth terrace, Hendon, Methodist (pictured) (1448)
Malings Rigg Scotch Church (438)
Mount Tabor MC (1451)
N
New Herrington MC (1538)
New Penshaw MC (1538)
Newcastle Rd MC (1522)

O
Old Penshaw MC (1538)

P
Pallion Rd MC (1450)
Park Road MC (1450)
Primitive Methodist First Circuit (1446 / 7)
Primitive Methodist Fourth Circuit (1447)

R
Roker Methodist Church (1522)

S
Sans Street MC (1451)

Seaham Street MC, New Tunstall (1535)

Society of Friends (184-6 and 190)

South Circuit (1446)

South Durham St MC (1451)

Southwick Green MC (1535)

Tatham St MC (1451)

Taylor Street MC. Ryhope Colliery (1467)

Thomson Memorial Hall (1534)

Thornhill MC (1451)

Trimdon St Wesley Hall Mission (below) (1451)
U

Unitarian Free Church (438)

V

Vicarage Lane, Ford, MC (1451 and 1467)

W

Westmoor Rd MC Pallion (1450)

Whitburn St MC (1451)

Note: Before 1898, Methodist Churches had to have a Civil registrar present for marriages, so often did not keep their own records. The only record may therefore be with the Registrar.
Ewesley Road Methodists, 1923

United Methodist Free Church, South Durham St.
Children from the Norman St. Bethesda.

Fulwell Sunday School Outing, early 1900s.
Parish register information held on microfilm:

**M 42/3**

1. Register of baptisms 1971 to 81
   Oxclose Church from 1971
2. 1981 to 89 baptisms.
3. Anglican marriages 1973 – 83
4. Non Conformist marriages 1875 – 77
5. Banns 1998 - 02

**M 42/10**

WASHINGTON PARISH RECORDS

Births and baptisms 1612 – 1974

Marriages 1603 – 1977

Also Churchwardens, tithe and other parish chest documents (indexed)
M42/12
Baptisms, Washington.
1921 – 1974
Marriages 1734 – 1878 (mixed order)

M42/13
Washington Parish (mainly Holy Trinity)
Marriages 1879 – 1953

M42/14
Holy Trinity
Marriages 1952 – 1977
Burials 1813 – 1900 (whole of parish)
Banns 1916 – 43

M42/15
Washington Parish
Banns 1943 – 1975
Various parish documents.

M42/817
Washington baptisms 1874 – 1979

M42/1047
Register of baptisms 1997 – 99
Washington Holy Trinity marriage register 1977 – 87

**M42/10004**

Holy Trinity Southwick funeral records 1980s –
Christchurch, BWM ditto.

Usworth Holy Trinity Baptisms 1979 – 92

**M42/ 10006**

Washington Holy Trinity Banns 1996 -8

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*Above: Holy Trinity, Usworth*

**MF 42/20**

Usworth Parish baptisms 1835 – 1902
Marriages 1835 – 1911
Burials 1835 – 1880.

**MF 42/21 EP/US 7 and 8**

Usworth Parish Burials 1877 – 1901

**MF 42/757 SM 722**

Fatfield Parish, St. George’s Harraton:

Baptisms 1876 – 1933

**MF M42/758 SM 723**

Fatfield Parish. St George’s. (pictured)

Baptisms 1933 – 1972

Marriages 1879 – 1955

Burials: 1879 – 1970

**MF M42/759 SM 724**

Fatfield Parish, St. George’s.


**MF 42/818 SM 928**

Usworth Colliery Parish


**MF 819 SM 929**

Usworth Parish

Baptisms: 1902 – 1914
Above: St. Michael and All Angels, Usworth Colliery

**MF42/820 SM 930**

Usworth Parish:

Baptisms 1914 – 1942

Marriages: 1911- 1940

**MF42/820 SM 931**

Usworth Parish.

Marriages: 1940 – 1954

Burials: 1901- 1942

**MF42/9..SM 1738**

Usworth Parish.

Baptisms: 1942 – 1963

Marriages: 1954 – 1960

Banns 1971 – 1983
MF42/932 SM 1739

Usworth Parish:
Marriages 1960 – 1967
Burials 1943 – 1952

Fatfield Parish. St. George, Harraton.
Banns 1969 – 1992
Marriages: 1979 – 1986

MF42/1004 SM 2052

Usworth Parish.

Pictured above: Our Blessed Lady Immaculate R.C. Church, in Washington Village. Parish registers are held at SUNDERLAND local studies:


All on MF 1953