

## Walking Tour One

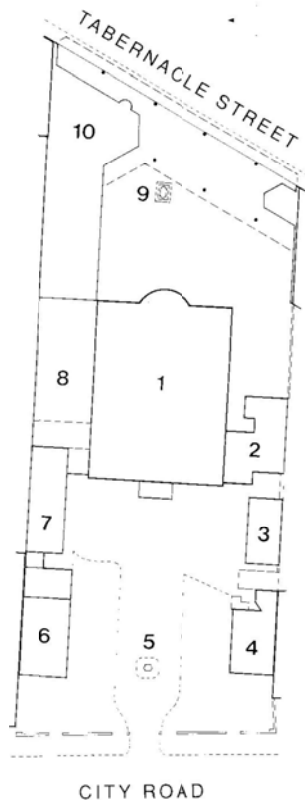
starting at Wesley's Chapel, 49 City Road EC1Y 1AU

Public transport: by underground (either Metropolitan, Circle or Hammersmith & City Lines to Moorgate station (good for mainline station connections but requiring a walk northwards along City Road to reach Wesley's Chapel) or Northern Line (City branch) to Old Street station) or by buses 21, 43, 76, 141, 205, 214, or 271 alighting at Epworth Street or by 55, 135, or 243 alighting at Old Street station. Bus 205 is particularly useful since it connects Paddington, Marylebone, Euston, St Pancras, Kings Cross and Liverpool St stations.

## Itinerary

Wesley's Chapel – Bunhill Fields Burial Ground – Quaker Gardens and Meeting House – Jewin Welsh Presbyterian Church – former Leysian Mission – St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church  
 [Aside from Wesley's Chapel, none of the chapels will be opened specially for Chapel Society members so can only be viewed on the exterior]

The visit starts at 11.00 am at **Wesley's Chapel (Grade I)**. Make your way to the chapel itself from whence there will be a guided tour of the Chapel, the Museum of Methodism in the crypt, John Wesley's house and the surrounding graveyard. Members availing themselves of the tour will be asked for a donation (minimum £3) on the day. Members who do not wish to take the tour may visit any parts of the campus they wish except John Wesley's house: the chapel and museum are open from 10.00 am.



- 1 Chapel
- 2 Foundery Chapel
- 3 Chapel-keeper's house
- 4 Wesley's House
- 5 Statue of Wesley
- 6 Manse
- 7 Benson Building
- 8 Radnor Hall
- 9 Wesley's tomb
- 10 Modern office development

The major buildings on the Wesley's Chapel campus

When John Wesley broke with the Moravians in 1740 he set up his own Society in London at an old cannon foundry in Moorfields which he had purchased the previous year. This was close to the site in Leonard Street on which Whitefield would build his original wooden Tabernacle in 1741. The Foundry stood on the east side of Tabernacle Street, to the rear of the current chapel and further south (E on the map): the approximate site is marked by a ceramic plaque which also records the death of Wesley's mother, Susannah, in 1742.

The lease of the current site on City Road was purchased in 1776 and was intended as part of the redevelopment of Finsbury overseen by Charles Dance, surveyor to the City Corporation. There were originally to be five first-rate houses fronting the road with a central carriage entrance to the chapel behind but only two of these were ever built and only one (John Wesley's house) survives.

The chapel itself may have been designed by Dance but it is likely that others had a hand. The builder was Samuel Tooth, a local timber merchant and builder who was a member of the Foundry Society. It was opened on All Saints Day 1778.

The original character of the chapel has been subsequently obscured beneath the efforts of numerous restorers and rebuilders (there have been at least two fires) not to mention the accretion of memorials considered befitting of the building's status as the 'cathedral of Methodism'. One problem has been the inadequacy of the foundations - the site was originally the repository for the spoil dug from the site of St Pauls when it was rebuilt by Wren - concrete foundations were laid in 1891 and reinforced during the most recent restoration in 1978/9. Other changes in 1891 involved raising the ceiling, raking the gallery seats, reflooring, replacing the original wooden pillars supporting the gallery (now in the vestibule) with columns of jasper. Outside the manse was built and the statue of Wesley erected.

Other features which members may wish to note include:

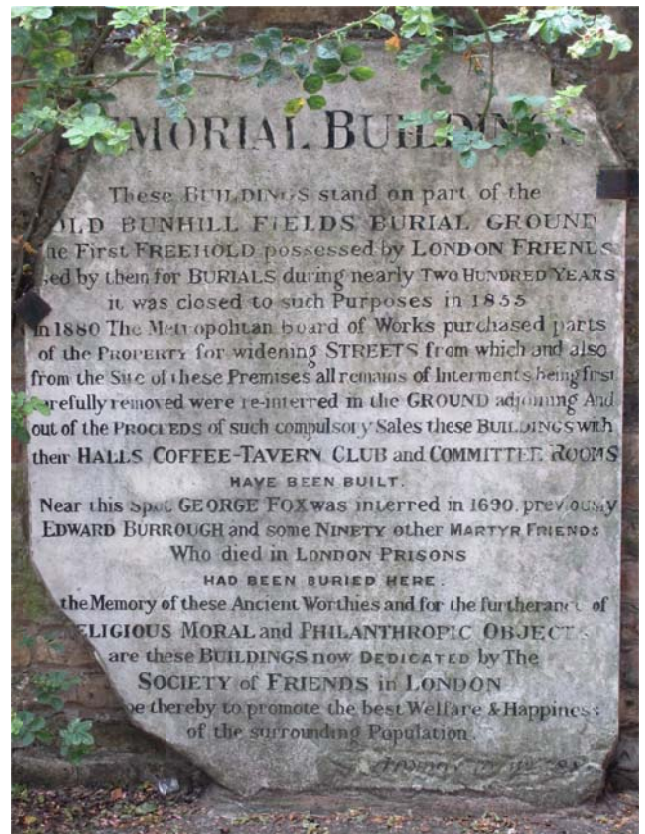
- the Foundry Chapel on the south side of the main chapel which contains some of the plain benches from the original Foundry and also Charles Wesley's single-manual organ;
- the memorial to Frederick Jobson, architect and author of *Chapel and School Architecture*, 1850, on the north wall of the chapel;
- the exterior of Wesley's house which was restored to its original period style in 1995;
- the Leysian Centre on the north side of the courtyard, now housing administrative offices, commemorates the merger of Wesley's Chapel and the Leysian Mission in 1989;
- John Wesley's tomb at the rear of the chapel.

It may be best at this point to make a note about the Leysian Mission. The Leys School, Cambridge was founded in 1875 as a 'Methodist Eton' to prepare scholars for matriculation at Oxford and Cambridge, soon after the universities were opened to dissenters. The Leysian Mission was founded in 1886 by old boys of the school who were concerned about the social and housing conditions in the East End of London. The original premises were in Whitecross

Street, to the west of City Road, but in 1890 the Mission moved to larger premises at 12 Errol Street, to the north of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church (see below), now occupied by the Royal Statistical Society. Finally in 1902/4 the grand buildings were built for the Mission on the north-west corner of the intersection of City Road and Old Street (marked A on the map). The architects were Bradshaw and Gass of Bolton. It might be an office block or town hall rising cliff-like almost from the roadside and topped by a copper cupola: it is fronted with terracotta with motifs in arts and crafts style with red granite facings on the ground floor. Plaques on the ground floor pilasters record those present at the grand opening by the Prince and Princess of Wales. Inside there were two large halls as well as offices for the myriad functions of the mission and accommodation for the old Leysians engaged in the work. It has recently been converted into city apartments and is known as the Imperial Hall.

From Wesley's Chapel cross City Road by the pedestrian crossing and enter **Bunhill Fields Burial Ground (Grade I)**. Before entering it is worth stopping to peruse the historical inscriptions on the gate piers which, although placed there in the nineteenth century, quote verbatim the original inscriptions which were recorded in 1720. Bunhill Fields was established in the 1660s, with its current boundaries fixed in the mid-eighteenth century. However the name – Bone Hill – suggests it may have been in use as a burying place for much longer. The oldest surviving gravestone dates from 1678. Records in the PRO show that between 1713 and 1854 over 123,000 burials took place and there are around 2,500 memorials remaining. The map at the end of this tour will allow you to discover some of the grave sites of the more prominent dissenters buried here before it was closed and laid out as a public garden in 1867. Following bomb damage to the north of the site in World War II this area was cleared and the Fields re-landscaped in 1964/5 by Peter Shephard, one of the foremost landscape architects of the period.

Exit from the burial ground and turn right into Bunhill Row and almost immediately left into Chequer Street. A little way along on the right is the entrance to Quaker Gardens, all that remains of the **Quaker Burial Ground** (marked B on the map) which was purchased by Friends in 1661 for £270 and later enlarged a number of times: it was closed in 1855 by which time there had been over 12,000 recorded burials. Among the burials were the 1,177 Friends who died in 1665, the year of the Great Plague, and the founder of the Society of Friends, George Fox, who died in 1691. There are two records of this latter burial, a Victorian gravestone against the wall behind the meeting house (gravestones were not permitted in Quaker burying places before 1850) and a more substantial modern one laid on the ground nearby.

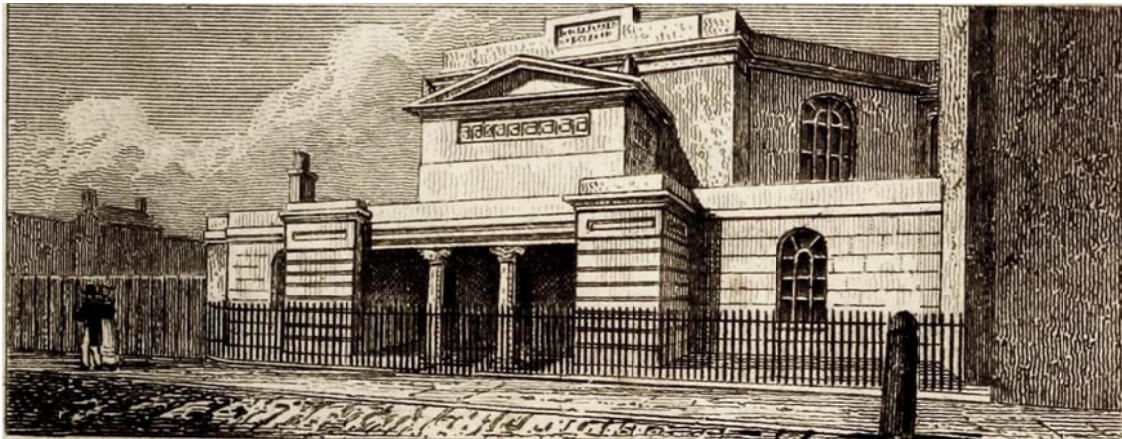


*Victorian Memorial Stone in Quaker Gardens*

No meeting house existed on this site until 1881 when, after some experimental tent missions, the **Bunhill Fields Memorial Buildings**, comprising a mission hall, schools and a coffee tavern were erected (enlarged 1888) in the Queen Anne style. This complex was destroyed by bombing in 1944, the only part to survive being the caretaker's cottage which has subsequently become the meeting house.

Walk past the meeting house to the north and exit onto Banner Street, turning left along the street and then left again into Whitecross Street, right into Fortune Street and forward onto Fann Street. Here on the left, on the corner of Viscount Street, is **Jewin Welsh Presbyterian Church** (marked D on the map) of 1960/1 by Caroë & Partners. The distinctive square west tower is topped with a pyramidal roof with large and distinctive finial. Inside the large rectangular church the woodwork is a particular feature, being of unpolished smoked American oak: there is a tiered gallery on three sides merging into an organ gallery at the east end.

This is the successor to a Calvinistic Methodist congregation which formed around 1774, Welsh language services being held in Cock Lane, Smithfield organised by Edward Jones, rum and brandy merchant, and Griffith Jones, ginger-beer manufacturer. It moved in 1785 to a chapel in Wilderness Row, Clerkenwell and then to grander premises in Jewin Street in 1823. It finally moved to Fann Street, carrying the 'Jewin' appellation with it, in 1879 to an Early English Church by Charles Bell and costing £10,000. This building was destroyed in the Blitz in 1940 but rebuilt eventually through the dedication of the Revd D S Owen, minister from 1915 to 1959. In more recent years it has again been under threat of closure and BBC News presenter Huw Edwards is leading a campaign to save the building.



*The Welsh Presbyterian Chapel in Jewin Street in an engraving of 1826*

Those who travelled by the 205 bus from the west will have passed another Islington Welsh Church - in this case the Welsh Congregational Tabernacl of 1853/4 (formerly Pentonville Road Congregational Church) which stands on the south side of Pentonville Road shortly after Kings Cross station. This had to close for lack of support within the last five years and is now home to the Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church UK.

Retrace your steps along Fann Street and, crossing Golden Lane, enter the Fortune Street Gardens, exiting into Whitecross Street through Salisbury Passage. Straight ahead is Errol Street with, on the right, the Cherry Tree Walk shopping precinct (Barbican Waitrose) followed by the City YMCA hostel. Walk past these to the corner of Lambs Buildings. Here you will see the former **Leysian Mission** (see Wesley's Chapel), now home to the Royal Statistical Society: built in 1889/90 it is in

Queen Anne style with a gabled front topped by the arms of the Leys School in cut and rubbed brick.

Turn the corner into Lambs Buildings and you will find near the end on the right a pedimented arch topped by a cross which forms the rather modest entrance to **St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church** (marked C on the map), built with its schools in 1901 to replace a former church and schools of 1856. The earlier building had the church above the schools: the present building has the church in the basement. There had been an orphanage and schools here since 1815, a church was added in 1848.

Beyond the church on the corner of Lambs Buildings and Lambs Passage is St Joseph's Garden, a modest tribute to the late Cardinal Basil Hume (1923-99), Archbishop of Westminster, monk and shepherd. The garden was designed by young landscape gardener Simon-Peter Stobart, whose influences included Japanese design and one of the themes from the Song of Songs in the Bible - an enclosed garden in which the Beloved might be encountered and experienced.

The walk has now ended. Turn left towards Bunhill Row along Lambs Passage and return to City Road through the Burial Ground.

Making your way to Union Chapel for Chapels Society AGM: take bus 271 going north, towards Highgate Village or Archway, from stop N in City Road just opposite Wesley's Chapel. Alight at Highbury Corner (stop marked H) and continue forward to the roundabout. Turn left onto the roundabout and up the steps to Compton Terrace: Union Chapel ([www.unionchapel.org.uk](http://www.unionchapel.org.uk)) is a little way down on the left.

Any members interested in twentieth-century art and with time to spare at this point can get off the 271 bus one stop earlier, at Canonbury Square (stop marked L) to visit the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art ([www.estorickcollection.com](http://www.estorickcollection.com)) which specialises in Italian Futurist works. Walk forward from the bus stop to the other side of the square and the Estorick is on the other side of the road next to the traffic lights.

Chris Skidmore  
June 2014

Acknowledgement: the text of this tour is greatly indebted to the book *Islington Chapels* by Philip Temple, published in 1992 by the Survey of London.