





Walking Tour Two starting at Angel Islington

Public transport: by underground Northern Line (City branch) or by buses 4, 19, 30, 38, 43, 56, 73, 153, 205, 214, 274, 341, 394, 476 alighting at Angel station. Bus 205 is particularly useful since it connects Paddington, Marylebone, Euston, St Pancras, Kings Cross and Liverpool St stations.

On the map a red star  indicates a chapel and a red circle  another place of interest.

Itinerary of Clerkenwell Chapels

Claremont Chapel – Angel Baptist Church – Ss Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church – Woodbridge Chapel.

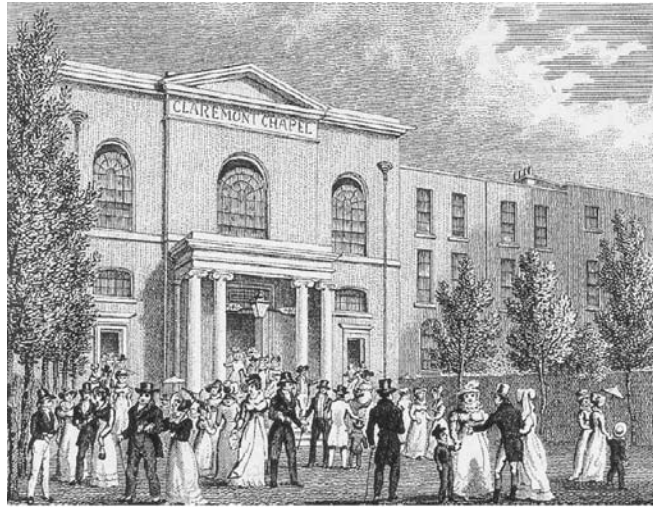
[none of these chapels will be opened specially for Chapel Society members so can only be viewed on the exterior]

From the intersection of City Road, St John Street, Pentonville Road and Islington High Street close to Angel tube station walk west along the north side of Pentonville Road until at No. 44A you find the former **Claremont Chapel (Grade II)**, now the headquarters of the Craft Council.

Claremont Chapel was one of several Independent or Congregationalist chapels built in London and the provinces by Thomas Wilson of Highbury, a former silk mercer and ribbon manufacturer, who was also active in the founding of the University of London and the London Missionary Society. It took its name from the Surrey residence of the recently deceased Princess Charlotte Augusta, and was opened for worship in October 1819. The architect was probably William Wallen and the building was initially rather plain, of stock brick with only an

Ionic entrance portico. It was said of Thomas Wilson that 'the chapels he built in London, although well adapted to hold large audiences, have bare and unsightly exteriors'.

The splendour of the current stuccoed classical detail owes much to alterations made in 1860, for which money was raised at a three-day bazaar, held at Myddelton Hall, Islington, under the patronage of the contractor Sir Samuel Morton Peto and his wife. Poorly attended and short of funds by the 1890s, the chapel was sold to the London Congregational Union for use as a Mission Station for the increasingly distressed Pentonville district, closing in 1899. It was altered in 1902 for a new role as the Union's Central London Mission being renamed Claremont Hall. It was probably then that the side entrances were given their round-headed doorways with open pediments on consoles. From the 1960s it was let for commercial use and taken over by the Crafts Council in 1991.



Claremont Chapel, c. 1828

Walk further west along Pentonville Road to the intersection with Penton Street and then cross the road southwards and enter the west side of Claremont Square. At No. 4 you will find a blue plaque to Edward Irving (1792-1834) 'founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church'.

Irving was born in Annandale in Scotland and eventually ordained to the charge of the Caledonian Church, Hatton Garden in 1822 where he set out to attract by his eloquent preaching those who had station and influence in the world, which he did for a time. Through his acquaintance with Coleridge he gained an interest in millenarianism, which he shared with some of the founders of the Plymouth Brethren. Eventually he was led to espouse the doctrine of Christ's humanity which led to his ejection from the ministry of the Church of Scotland for heresy. The church he then gathered in the early 1830s in London was the precursor of the Catholic Apostolic Church.

Claremont Square is probably unique in having in its centre what was once the principal reservoir for the West End of London. This is now a grassed-over mound but it hides a vast brick-built reservoir capable of holding about 3.5 million gallons of water to a depth of 21 feet and built in 1854/5. The original reservoir or New Pond covered an acre and was dug in 1708 at the highest point locally, fifty years before the New Road (now Pentonville Road) was built. It was part of the works of the New River Company founded by James I to bring water to London via an aqueduct from near Ware in Hertfordshire: it was completed in 1613 and had its terminus at New River Head (see Myddleton Square below). The New River still supplies some 8% of London's water although the overground channel now stops at Stoke Newington.

Walk south along this road, which turns into Amwell Street, and at the corner of Ingelbert Street turn left towards Myddleton Square. You are now facing the impressive west front and tower of St Mark's Myddleton Square (Grade II). This Commissioners' church was built 1825/8 as part of a residential development of the New River Company land in the area and was designed by William Mylne, surveyor to the Company. The windows, with the exception of the East window, are unique in having cast iron tracery manufactured by the Ironbridge Company.



Angel Baptist Church, Chadwell Street, in 1991

Walk around the Square or through the churchyard to the exit on the opposite side into Chadwell Street, half-way down which, on the south side, you will find **Angel Baptist Church (Grade II)**. This was built in 1824 for a group of Calvinistic Methodists and named initially Providence Chapel. It is a small Classical building, stucco-fronted with an Ionic portico: curiously the front of four bays surmounted by a pediment is lower than the surrounding terrace, which was built at the same time.

The initial congregation left after only 3 years and, after a period of coming and going involving a number of congregations, the chapel was occupied in 1853 by a Strict Baptist congregation and renamed Mount Zion Chapel. Espousing the more local

name in recent years, this occupancy lasted until 2002 although from the evidence of the internet the church may still host worship of an evangelical Baptist nature.

Retrace your steps to Myddleton Square and you will find at No. 30 (just round the corner from Chadwell Street) a plaque recording the residence of Jabez Bunting (1779-1858), one of the foremost Wesleyan Methodists of his day, who lived here from 1833 to his death.

Bunting was born and educated in Manchester where he began to preach in his twentieth year, being finally received into full connexion in 1803. After a number of stations he came to the headquarters of the denomination in 1833 where he filled the chief posts of influence and authority, serving as president of conference in all four times. He was a born disciplinarian, and with some justice has been called the second founder of methodism: he found it a society and consolidated it into a church free from Anglican connexions. Bunting gave to methodism the machinery of self-government, encouraging equal participation of laymen with ministers, thus moving away, as was necessary, from the autocracy of Wesley; but while he lived he guided the machine with a hand which never relaxed its firmness.

Continue round the south side of the square onto River Street and back to Amwell Street, turning left and continuing south and downhill.

[A slight deviation from the square into Myddleton Passage will allow you to view the area known as New River Head by going through the iron gate just where Myddleton Passage turns left.]

New River Head was the original terminus of the New River and initially consisted of a reservoir – the Round Pond – and the Water House. The two buildings remaining from the eighteenth-century waterworks are the round stump of a windmill and behind it an engine house from later in the century. To the left of the grassed area is the former Headquarters of the Metropolitan Water Board of 1915/20 by Herbert Austen Hall, now converted into flats.

Since all the land in this area was originally owned by the New River Company it is not surprising that the street names reflect the company's history – both Chadwell and Amwell are names of Hertfordshire springs that help feed the river; Sir Hugh Myddleton (1560-1631) was a

Welsh clothworker, entrepreneur and self-taught engineer who was the driving force and the source of much of the funding for building the New River. A statue to him stands at the south end of Islington Green, which you will be able to see as you make your way to Union Chapel later in the day.

Once past the intersection of Amwell Street with Merlin Street and Hardwick Street you will see on the right the former Northampton Tabernacle, now the **Roman Catholic Church of Ss Peter and Paul (Grade II)**. This was built in 1835 (architect John Blyth) for a group of members of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion who had seceded from the main chapel in Spa Fields (see below) but who failed to settle here. The lease, which had originally been obtained from the Marquis of Northampton, one of the chief landholders in the Islington area, was eventually sold in 1847 to a Catholic mission set up by two Spanish priests five years earlier.

The façade of three bays is in an Italianate style in brick and stucco with a large Venetian window over the entrance. There are three doors, the symmetry of the design being interrupted by a crucifix placed to the left of the main door. The interior has a gallery on three sides supported on cast iron columns and with Gothic-style cast iron panels forming the balustrade.

We now come to Rosebery Avenue which must be crossed, proceeding ahead, with the former Finsbury Town Hall on your left, into Rosoman Street (not marked on the map) which soon curves to the left and becomes Skinner Street. Continue along here with the park on your right until you reach the junction with Corporation Row and Woodbridge Street. Now take Woodbridge Street, crossing Sekforde Street until on the right hand side, at the intersection of Woodbridge Street and Hayward's Place, you find **Woodbridge Chapel (Grade II)**.

This was built in 1832/3 by Thomas Porter (also responsible for the later schoolroom in Woodbridge Street added 1844/5) for the Independent High Calvinists. It is a plain building in a style matching the surrounding housing and in the same yellow brick with stucco dressings and a modest Classical-type doorway. By 1894 the congregation had dwindled and the chapel was taken over by John Groom for the Watercress and Flower Girl's Christian Mission which he had founded in 1866. Towards the end of the Second World War the chapel was let to the Islington Medical Mission (now the Clerkenwell and Islington Medical Mission) who still hold Sunday services here.

John Groom (1845–1919) was born and lived in Clerkenwell where after his apprenticeship from 1875 he set up his own engraving business at No. 8 Sekforde Street: so his mission to help some of the lowliest of the London street-vendors which had started in Farringdon came to Clerkenwell. Taking inspiration from the trend for imported handmade flowers, John Groom set up a factory from 1878 where disabled girls could work at making artificial flowers and thus make a living for themselves. The charity also gave the girls shelter and food, eventually branching out into orphanages, holiday homes and the rest. It has always retained a Christian basis, becoming John Groom's Crippleage and Flower Girls Mission in 1907. On merger with the Shaftesbury Society in 2007, as is the way with twenty-first century organisations, it became 'Livability'.

The main part of the walk is now over and you can find your own way back to Rosebery Avenue. An alternative to retracing your steps might be to go to the end of Hayward's Place, turn right and proceed north along St James's Walk, passing St James's Church by James Carr of 1792, a large preaching-box of a church with a

distinctive tower and spire. Turn left into Sans Walk, right into Clerkenwell Close and then proceed forward into Northampton Road and you will come to a path between the two parts of Spa Fields, originally a non-parochial burial ground but now given over to parks and gardens.

Spa Fields started as the pleasure gardens attached to Spa Fields Pantheon, opened early in 1770 as a 'Tea Drinking House for the Entertainment of Company'. The Pantheon was a substantial domed drum, comparable to the earlier Ranelagh Rotunda painted by Canaletto. On its closure the grounds were let in 1787 as a private burial ground: such speculative burial grounds provided a cheaper alternative to the overcrowded churchyards of the City and the Spa Fields ground had taken 80,000 burials by the early 1840s. In the early years it had seen activity by resurrectionists providing cadavers for the medical schools, however it became a major scandal in 1843 when it was revealed that to accommodate the forty new burials a day, bodies were exhumed nightly, and chopped up and burned with their coffins in a 'bonehouse'. The result was a prosecution of the manager and, although the ground was not closed, the scandal contributed towards the closure of 'intramural' town graveyards and the Burial Act of 1852.



Spa Fields Pantheon. In 1783, following conversion to use as a chapel. The house to the left was previously the Dog and Duck, rebuilt in 1756.

The Pantheon itself, on closure, became first a low-church Anglican place of worship, eventually forced to close by the vicar of St James's. In 1779 Selina Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon, who was on the look-out for London premises, intervened and took it on herself, reopening it as Spa Fields Chapel. Taking up residence in the adjoining house (originally the Dog and Duck public house), she claimed it to be her private chapel. This ruse did not work however and eventually she set up her own dissenting denomination, the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. A wealthy and influential congregation thus established itself in an area with a rapidly growing population in which Nonconformity was strong. Initially only minor changes were made to adapt the Pantheon to religious use however in 1867 it was fronted with a heavy pedimented portico. On expiry of the lease in 1886 however the Marquis of Northampton had promised the site for Anglo-Catholic use and the Chapel was demolished and the present Church of the Holy Redeemer was built. The Countess of Huntingdon's congregation built themselves an impressive Gothic church in Wharton Street, which was itself demolished in 1936.

At this point turn left and walk through the gardens towards the Church of the Holy Redeemer and, reaching it, exit to Exmouth Market. More or less straight ahead you will see Rosebery Avenue.

The Church is worthy a few moments consideration. It was designed by JD Sedding and started in 1887/8 although it remained incomplete until 1894/5 when the liturgical East end was finished by his assistant Henry Wilson. It is a living example of Sedding's belief that the Italian Renaissance, the 'living, traditional style of Europe', was the style best suited to cramped urban sites, and best able to satisfy the 'craving of the modern mind for vastness, size and space'. It is, with its campanile, strikingly Italianate and is easily mistaken for a Roman Catholic Church. It was, ironically, built in the heart of a significant Italian community.

Making your way to Union Chapel for Chapels Society AGM: take bus 19 going north, destination Finsbury Park, from stop CH Tysoe Street in Rosebery Avenue just opposite Holy Redeemer Church. Although the 19 bus is frequent, it is also possible to catch a 38 or 341 at Tysoe Street and change at Islington High Street onto a 30 or 43 (or 19!). Alight at Highbury Corner (stop marked F) and you will find Union Chapel (www.unionchapel.org.uk) is a little way back on the opposite side of Upper Street.

Chris Skidmore
July 2014

Acknowledgement: the text of this tour is greatly indebted to the volumes of the Survey of London dealing with Clerkenwell which were edited by Philip Temple and published in 2008. I am grateful to Petra Laidlaw for suggesting the original shape of the walk.