

Neighbouring Anglican Churches

Outside the historic parish boundary to the north and west of the town are the historic parishes of Chilton Trinity, and Wembdon.

Chilton Trinity church dates from the eleventh century, and has a Norman doorway. From 1749 it has been united with Saint Mary's, Bridgwater.



Chilton Trinity church.

Durleigh church dates from the twelfth century, and was described as a chapelry. In 1976 it was united with Saint Mary's and Durleigh, but in more recent times has been united with Holy Trinity Hamp.



Durleigh Church

Saint George's Wembdon dates from the twelfth century. The parish includes a number of the suburbs of Bridgwater to the north west of the town.



Saint George's, Wembdon

The Roman Catholic Church

There were few Catholics recorded in Bridgwater in the three centuries following the Reformation, but after the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, Mass began to be said in the town at a private house from 1845. The following year, the Revd J. Moore Capes, who had founded Saint John's, converted to Catholicism and established a chapel in 1846 at Gordon Terrace. (now a commercial workshop); by 1851 it had its own resident priest

A new Catholic chapel, dedicated to Saint Joseph was built in Binford Place in 1882, and extended in 1982.



Saint Joseph's Church

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Bridgwater's parish churches

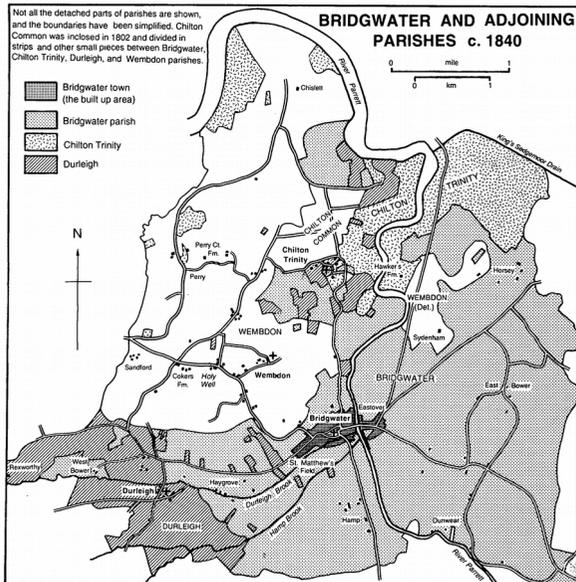


Saint Mary's, Bridgwater

The parish system was not established until the thirteenth century, when the areas and limits of the churches of the Lords of the Manor were transferred to ecclesiastical authority.

The date of the founding of St Mary's is not known, nor its boundary with any precision. The borough records contain many references to money collected for church purposes outside Bridgwater proper, and from these it is clear that Bridgwater parish included Horsey, East Bower, Dunwear (all east of the river) and Hamp, Haygrove, West Bower and Chilton-in the Marsh, (all to the west). Collectively these settlements were known as Bridgwater Without.

The neighbouring parishes were Wembdon, Durleigh, North Petherton, Bawdrip, Chedzoy and Puriton.



After VCH Somerset, Vol VI, fig 27

From the start of the C19, Bridgewater's population grew from 3634 in 1801 to 7807 in 1831 causing a strain on the accommodation at St Mary's. A new church, Holy Trinity was built in 1840, becoming a District Chapelry the following year.



Holy Trinity, St Mary Street

By the start of the 1950's the Hamp area had become a major residential neighbourhood, and a house church was started at Greenfield House, which had been bought for that purpose. The St Mary Street church was demolished in 1958, but the churchyard retained as an open space.

In 1961 a new Holy Trinity Church was consecrated at Hamp.



Holy Trinity, Hamp.

Meanwhile the population continued to expand, reaching 15,883 by 1851. Much of this was in eastern part of the town towards the line of the railway.

A new parish, St John the Baptist, was formed, and the church was consecrated in 1846. It was built at the instigation of the Revd J. Moore Capes, an anglo-catholic, and was one of the very first in the country designed for the liturgy of the Oxford Movement.



St John's Church, Eastover

In 1882 St John's opened a mission church, All Saints, off Westonzoyland Road, now used as a youth club.



All Saints, Westonzoyland Road

After World War 2, more housing was built eastwards beyond the railway, to cater for increased population and a district church, Saint Francis of Assisi, was built at Saxon Green in 1960. It became a parish in its own right in 1965.



St Francis of Assisi, Saxon Green

After these changes to the map of the historic parish, Saint Mary's now serves as Bridgewater's Civic Church, and covers the town centre, and the housing estates largely along the Durleigh road.