

OLD TOWN
NR. HEBDEN BRIDGE
W. YORKSHIRE HX7 8SU

WAINSGATE BAPTIST CHURCH

HISTORIC CHAPELS TRUST

TRADITION: BAPTIST

BUILT: 1859-60

CONGREGATION ACTIVE
UNTIL: 2001

LISTING: GRADE II*

OS GRID REFERENCE:
SD998288

CHAPEL WITH A CONCERT
STANDARD ORGAN IN A BEAUTIFUL
MOORLAND SETTING



TRANSPORT

By car, take the Keighley road out of Hebden Bridge up hill to Pecket Well (2 miles). At Pecket Well take the sharp right signed for Old Town. At Old Town (about ½ mile) turn right at the signed cross road and park in Old Town Mill Lane. Walk back and across the crossroads, up the unmade track for about 200 yards. Wainsgate Baptist Church stands alongside in a large burial ground.

Two bus services run from Hebden Bridge Station to Old Town stop next to the cross roads, near the chapel.

VISIT US

Open for concerts in summer months and group visits by arrangement with the keyholder www.wainsgate.co.uk



HISTORY & BACKGROUND

The first meeting house at Wainsgate was built in 1750, as a result of the Evangelical Revival taking place in the north of England. The land was donated by a local farmer, and the chapel was funded by local subscriptions. Smaller than the present chapel, it accommodated just 100 people. The first minister, Richard Smith, had been converted to the Baptist movement by the preaching of William Grimshaw, an Anglican churchman who was also involved in nonconformist activity, building a Methodist church at Haworth.

One of the chapel's early ministers was John Fawcett, a prime mover in developing an Association of Particular Baptist Churches in Yorkshire and Lancashire, and a prolific writer. Among many treatises he also wrote the hymn *Blessed be the Tie that Binds*. Despite leaving the chapel in 1777, Fawcett returned to preach at the opening of the second chapel on this site in 1815, as the first meeting house had become too small and unsafe.

The present chapel was built during the ministry of John Bamber, who was the minister at Wainsgate for thirty-two years. There is a memorial tablet to him in the gallery, to the left of the organ.

The Mitchell family, owners of the woollen mill nearby in Old Town, were generous benefactors. They presented the church with its alabaster pulpit in 1891, they also gave four of the five stained glass windows, and the mosaic floor. Their patronage took place at the high point of the chapel's activity, with 320 attending the ordination of David Lindsay in 1896. The First World War weighed heavily on the chapel, with eleven former Sunday school pupils dying in the conflict. The Second World War, too, impacted both the congregation and the building itself, with the railings that surrounded the chapel requisitioned for the war effort. Following the chapel's bicentenary in 1950, the congregation fell into decline, resulting in part from demographic changes and rapid closures of the industries once important to the Calderdale.

After 1967 the chapel no longer possessed a full-time minister, and until the 1990s a communion service was taken once a month. The Yorkshire Baptist Association assumed full trusteeship in 1988, and helped celebrate the 250th anniversary of the chapel in 2000. However, in 2001 it was decided to close the chapel, and it was transferred to the care of the Historic Chapels Trust in 2005.

THE BURIAL GROUND IS OPEN DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS AND BURIALS SPACES MAY BE PURCHASED.

STUDIO PACES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE SCHOOL BUILDING; CONTACT HCT TO GO ON THE WAITING LIST.

THE FRIENDS OF WAINSGATE WORK WITH CONCERT PROMOTERS AND ARTISTS.

If you are interested contact www.wainsgate.co.uk

To find out more visit www.hct.org.uk or contact chapels@hct.org.uk

THE HISTORIC CHAPELS TRUST | ST. GEORGE'S GERMAN LUTHERAN CHURCH,
55 ALIE STREET, ALDGATE, LONDON E1 8EB, UK | REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1017321



THE EXTERIOR

The present chapel of 1859-60 is constructed of local hammer-dressed sandstone, with ashlar dressings, rusticated quoins and a Welsh slate roof.

The front is in a simple classical style, with a bold entrance. There is a date stone marked 'Wainsgate Chapel, built 1751, rebuilt 1815, school rebuilt 1834', and the door is flanked by and two tiers of round-arched windows. The attached school and hall is of the same date, and now contains workshops and an artist's studio.



THE INTERIOR

The interior comes as a surprise after the restrained exterior and was furnished in the 1850s, and enhanced in 1890. The curved gallery, with steeply raked and fitted pine pews, and the Corinthian capitals are of 1852, whilst the rostrum, pulpit, stained glass windows and communion rail are evidence of the later work.

The communion rail was worked by J.W. Mitchell of Halifax. On the top the carving of oak leaf and acorns; the balusters with vines, fruit and flowers. The base has a garland of primroses.

The communion table of c.1896 has carved baluster legs with motifs of fruit, and an inlaid table top. This type of carving had been popularised by A.W.N Pugin for Anglicans and Catholics, and it was only later that it can start to be seen in nonconformist places of worship.

The pulpit is largely of pink alabaster, with carvings in white marble. Designed by Anthony Welsh of Leeds, it was installed in 1891 and is classical in style. Round the body of the pulpit are a series of onyx pilasters with carved capitals. The scenes depicted on the panels are 'The Baptism of Christ', 'The Agony in the Garden' and 'The Blessing of the Bread and Wine'. The inscription on the base reads: 'This pulpit was presented by Miss Cousin, and Mrs Mitchell of Boston Hill and her family'.

The memorial tablets in the upper gallery were installed in 1904. The mosaic floor, added in 1919, was a gift of the Mitchell family.

The archway of the choir/organ loft has ornate plasterwork. Its wagon roof retains its original star-spangled azure colour scheme, although the original stencil work decoration of the body of the chapel has been overpainted.

On the south side of the church there is a First World War memorial, next to which one can see photographs of the 11 members of the Sunday school who lost their lives in the conflict.

SUBSEQUENT HISTORY

Wainsgate was transferred to the care of the Historic Chapels Trust in 2005, and a first phase of urgent repairs was completed in 2011. The works included repairs to keep the building weathertight. Completion of a full restoration is being planned, subject to funding being found, so that the building will be able to host a variety of events.

FURTHER READING

Paul Barker, *Hebden Bridge: A Sense of Belonging* (London, 2012)

Charles W. Thomson, *Wainsgate Baptist Chapel, West Yorkshire: A History and Guide* (London, 2012)