

A Wesley Walk in Central Bristol

Introduction

John and Charles Wesley were the most significant figures in the religious revival in Britain during the 18th century. Their work not only influenced religious life in the UK but also social and political life over the following centuries. As the founders of a world-wide movement their influence is still seen in many nations. Visitors from all over the world, and from many different Christianities, come to visit the first Methodist chapel ever built; the New Room (John Wesley's Chapel) in Bristol.

The Walk

1. **In the Broadmead courtyard of John Wesley's (JW) Chapel** is JW's equestrian statue. John arrived on horseback in Bristol on Saturday March 31st having been invited by the Rev George Whitefield (GW) who wanted him to take over the work he had been doing in Bristol with the religious societies and in outdoor preaching. GW wanted to return to America to build the orphanage for which he had been collecting money. He had been a member of the Wesleys' religious society ('The Holy Club') at Oxford University.
2. **The site of Newgate prison** where JW preached daily to the prisoners.
3. **St Peters.** The church JW attended with GW on his first Sunday in Bristol.
4. **Wine Street.** Here was the home of Mrs Grevil, GW's sister, where JW lodged.
5. **Castle Street.** In this street met one of the Bristol's religious societies.
6. **Bread Street** Here is the plaque that commemorates the site of JW's first open air preaching site – the Brickfields. The date; Monday 2nd April 1739
7. **Temple Church.** Here Charles Wesley (CW) was forbidden entry when in 1740 he came with some miners from Kingswood for Holy Communion. In later years both JW and CW led worship and preached here.
8. **The site of the Weavers Hall** where JW visited his first Bristol religious society with GW on the Saturday evening he arrived in Bristol.
9. **Baldwin Street and Nicholas Street.** Religious societies met in rented rooms in both these streets.
10. **The Bowling Green.** This open space near the Pithay is where on Sunday morning, the first day after he arrived in Bristol (JW) had his first experience of hearing GW preach in the open air. It became for JW a regular preaching place.
11. **St James Priory.** This Norman church was the Wesleys' local parish church where they would go for worship in 'church hours'. Worship was not conducted in Methodist building when there was worship in the local parish church.
12. **4 Charles Street.** CW, his wife Sally and their children lived in various houses in this area between 1749 and 1771. This was the house they occupied between 1776 and 1771. It is now restored as it is likely to have been during their occupation. It is available to visit by pre-booked group tours only.
13. **St James Churchyard** where six of CW's children are buried. Their gravestone still stands even though most of the others have been removed.
14. **In the Horsefair courtyard of the New Room** is CW's statue. It commemorates one of the greatest hymn-writers of all time. Many of his hymns are still used by Christians all over the world. Hymns such as 'Hark, the herald angels sing' and 'Love divine, all loves excelling'.
15. **Into the New Room** first built in 1739 and enlarged in 1748. It was not built as a church but as a multi-purpose room. It was used for meetings of the religious societies, for education as a school and book room, as a pharmacy for the poor and as a place where the unemployed were given work particularly in the severe winter of 1740/41. CW was the minister here while living in Bristol.