

Key

- 1 New Mills Heritage Centre/Bus Station
- 2 Church of the Annunciation
- 3 Site of Associated Methodist Chapel
- 4 Site of Mount Pleasant Methodist Free Chapel
- 5 St James the Less/Spring Bank Arts
- 6 Site of Spring Mount Primitive Methodist Chapel
- 7 Providence United Reform Church
- 8 St George's Wesleyan Methodist Chapel
- 9 Low Leighton Methodist Chapel
- 10 Site of Low Leighton Methodist Mission
- 11 Former Society of Friends Meeting House
- 12 St George's C of E Parish Church
- 13 Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall
- 14 Wesleyan Methodist Chapel
- 15 Site of Primitive Methodist Chapel
- 16 Site of Torr Top Mission

Timeline

- 1647** George Fox visits area.
- 1685** Society of Friends meet at Torr Top Hall.
- 1717** Society of Friends Meeting House built, Low Leighton.
- 1740** First of John Wesley's visits to New Mills.
- 1766** Wesleyan Chapel on High Street built.
- 1791** John Wesley dies.
- 1795** Methodists ejected from Anglican Church.
- 1808** St George's Wesleyan Methodist Chapel built.
- 1823** Congregational/Providence Church built.
- 1827** Meal Street Primitive Methodist Chapel opens.
- 1831** Parish of New Mills created, St George's Parish Church built.
- 1838** Church of the Annunciation built, consecrated 1845.
- 1838** Associated Methodist Chapel, Spring Bank, built.
- 1876** Primitive Methodist Chapel, Spring Mount, built.
- 1880** St James the Less built.
- 1880** Torr Top Mission opens.
- 1892** Mount Pleasant Methodist Free Chapel built, on site of previous Associated Methodist Chapel.
- 1911** Methodist Mission, Low Leighton, opens.
- 1952** Methodist Mission, Low Leighton, destroyed.
- 1955** Methodist Chapel, Low Leighton, built.
- 1970** St George's Chapel demolished after fire.
- 1979** Last recorded burial at Friends Meeting House.
- 1987** Kingdom Hall built.
- 1990** Torr Top Mission closes.
- 1993** Mount Pleasant Chapel burns down.
- 1995** Revival Church moves into High Street Chapel.

Churches currently active

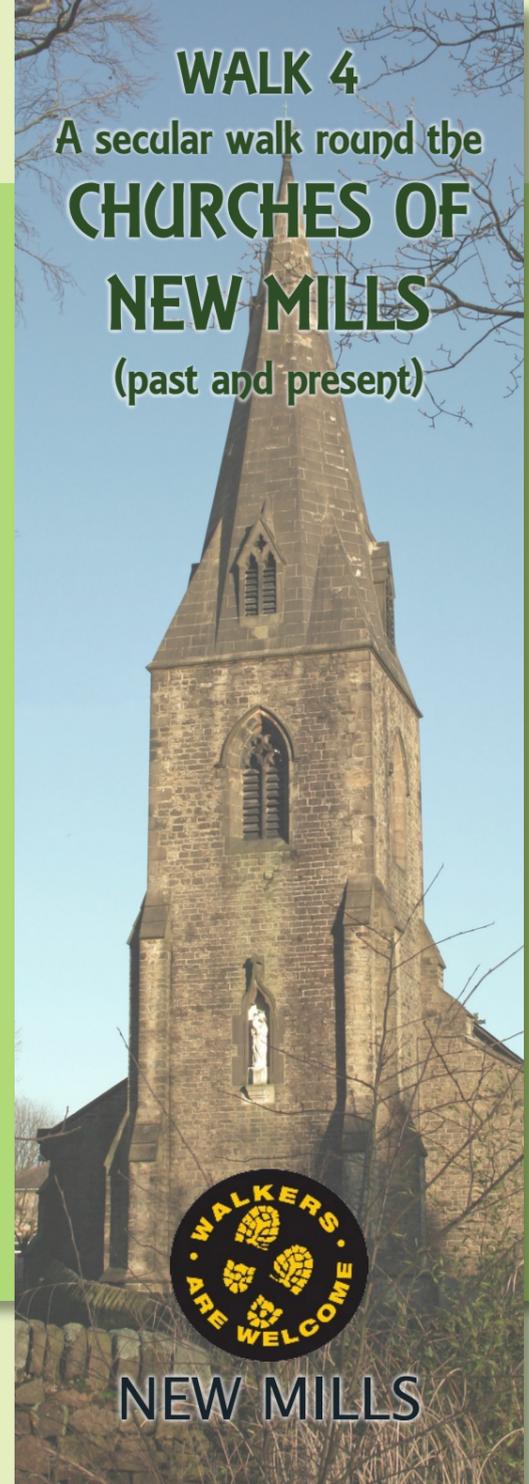
- Church of the Annunciation RC Church**, St Mary's Road
stmarysmarplebridge.org.uk
- Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall**, Hyde Bank Road
- Low Leighton Methodist Chapel**, High Hill Road
www.hpco.co.uk
- St George's C of E Parish Church**, Church Road
www.newmillschurch.co.uk
- Providence Church**, Mellor Road
- Revival Church**, High Street
www.revivalchurch.org.uk

WALK 4

A secular walk round the

CHURCHES OF NEW MILLS

(past and present)



NEW MILLS



Research by Mike Daniels. Although the details were believed to be accurate at the time of publication, do let us know of any changes. Produced in association with New Mills Heritage Centre with the kind support of High Peak Borough Council. Second edition copyright © 2021 New Mills Walkers are Welcome (www.nmwaw.org.uk).

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The Walk

Start at **New Mills Bus Station 1**, the site of Torr Top Hall, wherein the Society of Friends held meetings as early as 1685 until the building of the Meeting House in Low Leighton in 1717. The hall was demolished as part of the development of Union Road and the bridge.



Walk uphill, on St Mary's Road, to **The Church of the Annunciation 2**, with its broach spire reaching 110 feet or 34 metres high. It was built in 1838 in response to the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 and the Relief Act of 1832, in the Early English style. Consecrated in 1845, it features a grotto modelled after Lourdes and built by Father Heald in the 1930s.

Continue up St Mary's Road to the junction with Hall Street. Turn right onto Hall Street, passing the old Police Station on your right and the library on your left. Reaching the main road, Spring Bank, turn left. The derelict building besides the Town Hall is the site of two former churches, the **Associated Methodist Chapel 3**, built in 1838 by Cheetham and Berry and replaced by **Mount Pleasant Methodist Free Chapel 4**, which was built in 1892. Mount Pleasant closed in 1980, and the building burnt down in 1993 and the ruin is now on the English Heritage 'Buildings At Risk' Register.



As we progress further down Spring Bank, we come to a small collection of almshouses and **St James the Less C of E Church 5**, which has been converted to Spring Bank Community Arts

Centre. Well worth inspecting inside for the spectacular restoration work of this Pugin-inspired building, it was originally constructed in 1880, by Mary and John Mackie, to aid elderly residents who found the walk to the Parish Church of St George's beyond them physically. Built by Stafford and Hudson, the building was briefly shared with local Methodists, but

falling congregations made the church unviable, and work on the arts centre commenced in 2011. During World War Two, the garden for the almshouses held an air raid shelter, which was dismantled in 1947.

As we continue down Spring Bank, we pass St James' school building built in 1910, as companion to the church, which reminds us that many of the early churches around New Mills had associated schools.

Almost opposite the school is the site of the **Spring Mount Primitive Methodist Chapel 6**, built in 1876, which replaced the earlier Primitive Methodist Chapel on Meal Street. Replaced by two modern houses, the original build had provision for four cottages. It cost £2792 13s 10d to build, and the side road, Spring Mount, takes its name from the chapel.



We move on down Spring Bank to Mellor Road where we turn left, and make our way about 100 metres to Stafford Street where we pause to look at the **Providence United Reform Church 7**. It was originally built as a Congregational Church on land donated by the Stafford family in 1823; the money ran out and the building was only completed five years later, and extended in 1905. It was known as the church built out of 'stones from the river' because the women carried stones up from the river in their aprons to help in the construction. A school predated the church, opening on 17th September 1816, and there is documentary evidence of an average of 320 children attending, which demonstrated the need for the church.

Walk down Stafford Street and through onto Bridge Street. Now we turn uphill, back to the crossroads

where we turn left down Dye House Lane, passing by the 'Drunkard's Reform' on the right. Pause as we cross Salem Bridge over the River Sett, looking up at the outcrop on which **St George's Methodist Chapel 8** was built in 1808, when the previous church on High Street proved too small for the congregation.

Our path now leads uphill, taking the path to the left of the outcrop, stopping to look through the locked gates partway up the path. Through these gates we see the remnants of the graveyard and what little remains of the chapel, which was demolished in 1970 following a fire. The dwindling congregation had already returned to the chapel on High Street in 1960, The stained-glass windows moved to Mount Pleasant Methodist Free Chapel which, as we have already seen, was destroyed by fire in 1993.

Continue uphill, crossing the Sett Valley Trail until we reach Ollersett Avenue, where we turn left and walk to the end of the avenue then turn right onto High Hill Road. On our right, we find **Low Leighton Methodist Chapel 9**, built in 1955, a modest building in a style common to the period; we pass on. Reaching the main road, we turn right upon Low Leighton Road.



On the left, we pass Pingot Road. Here we find the Fire Station which is built upon the site of **Low Leighton Methodist Mission 10** (or chapel), which was bombed in the air raid of 3rd July 1942 in which two people lost their lives.



Between the bombing of one chapel and the building of the next, various locations served as places of worship. including Royal and Jackson, and the **Friends Meeting House 11**

, which is just a little further down Low Leighton Road on the right and set back a little from the road. Now a private house, the original building dates from 1717

and was built on 17 acres of land donated by William Beard of Low Leighton Farm. 16 of the acres were sold in 1921. The building was rebuilt in 1868. Since closure as a place of worship, it has also served as a hostel for underprivileged children from Manchester. A Grade II listed building, the last recorded burial is for Edith Taylor in 1979.



Low Leighton Road becomes Church Road, and we walk uphill to the crossroads where **St George's C of E Parish Church 12** comes into sight. A brief detour through the graveyard

brings us closer to the church which was built on the creation of New Mills Parish in 1831. Previously, worshippers had travelled to Hayfield.

The east window was donated by Miss Mary Ingham – later Mrs Mackie and a great benefactor to the town. Built in Commissioners Gothic, or Pointed, style, the church has a peal of six bells.

Buried in the graveyard, you can find memorials to Harold Wilson and James Dean, though not those of their more famous counterparts.

As we walk on down Church Road, we cross Arden Street, once home to a Christian Science Reading Room, though this is long gone. As we reach the last of the houses, we find a small footpath on our right, just before we reach the railway. This leads to Midland Terrace, named for the nearby railway. At the end of the road, turn right onto Hyde Bank Road and within yards you will find **Kingdom Hall 13**, built for the Jehovah's Witnesses in 1987. The first ever Kingdom Hall named as such was built in 1935 in Hawaii, the name coming from a phrase used by Joseph Franklin Rutherford, President of the Watchtower Society.

Crossing over Hyde Bank Road we walk besides the River Sett as we make our way back to the Salem Bridge, passing under the remnants of St George's Chapel. Make your way over the bridge again, and then turn left into High Street.

A short way along High Street we find **High Street Chapel 14**. It was built in 1766 as a Wesleyan

Methodist Chapel, the upper storey being added in 1881. The original building proved too small for the congregation as New Mills expanded, and so St George's Chapel [8] was built, and this building converted to a school. Services reverted to this chapel in 1960, before transferring to St James the Less [5], and then on to Low Leighton. The Revival Church took over the building in 1995, quickly establishing itself as a vibrant element in the community. (The Revive café on Market Street is another 'face' of the church, with all profits going to charity.)



John Wesley himself visited New Mills on many occasions – in 1740, 45, 47 and 48 before the chapel was built, and in 1768, 72, 74, 76, 79, 82 and 88 after its construction. He remained an Anglican Priest all his life, which suggests that perhaps the Chapel was originally C of E.

The original pulpit from which Wesley preached can now be found in New Mills Heritage and Information Centre. An elegant, simple pulpit well suited to the oratory gifts of Wesley, the pulpit has travelled extensively before finding its way back to New Mills and is well worth a visit if you have the time.

We continue up High Street, taking the first road to our left, Meal Street. Originally known as New Street, Meal Street was once a busy thoroughfare: the incline is less steep than on High Street, so most heavy traffic passed this way. Pause for a moment by the second

lamp-post on the left, the location of **Meal Street Primitive Methodist Chapel 15**.

Built in 1827 as a consequence of the rifts that beset the early Methodist Church, the building had a chapel on the top floor, accessed from Meal Street. The next floor down offered accommodation to the priest, the first ministers being Thomas Blaides and John Bryant. The lower floors were the home of the chapel keeper or steward.

With the opening of Spring Mount Chapel [6] in 1876, the building became home to New Mills Old Prize Band, before the Salvation Army moved in.

The buildings on this side of Meal Street proved unsound. though, and started to slip down into the River Sett, so the Salvation Army moved their Barracks and Army Yard from here to Torr Top Mission [16] and from there to the Employment Exchange on High Street.

As you walk up the cobbles of Meal Street, notice the unevenness of the surface, evidence of the subsidence that previously affected to buildings. Reaching Market Street, turn left and left again into Torr Top Street, passing the supermarket and the car park.

On the far side of the car park, a cobbled lane leads down into the Torrs, and beside this track is a terrace of modernised houses. The upper storey of the house closest to Torr Top Road once housed **Torr Top Mission 16**, which was for those families whose clothing was too poor for St George's. The Mission opened in 1880 and closed 100 years later.

With your back to the car park, proceed up the side road, Rock Street, then turn left onto Rock Mill Lane. Cross Union Road by the pedestrian crossing, and thence uphill to the bus station. If you are able, now would be a good time to visit New Mills Heritage and Information Centre to view Wesley's pulpit.

And that concludes the walk.