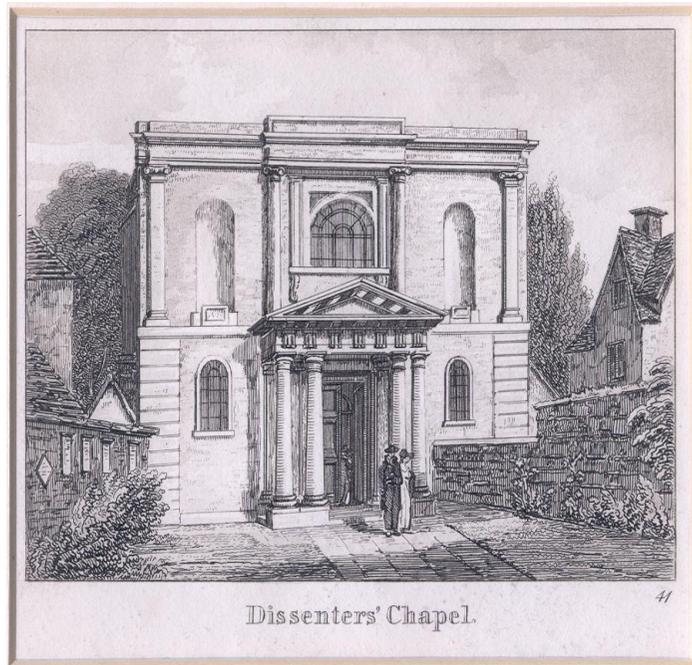


particularly deserving of their notice (1824). The leatherbound spine of the book reads simply 'Views in Oxford'. The book contained 42 etchings of scenes around the city, commencing with a view of Magdalen Bridge and Tower as the 'Entrance into Oxford'. The volume was dedicated to George William Hall, D.D., the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and was intended as a guidebook for visitors to Oxford. The Preface of the book explains the rationale behind its publication:

The following forty-two Views, with the Oxford Guide, published at the Herald-Office, will enable an entire stranger to visit every part of Oxford, and to see every College, Hall, and Public Building, without any further assistance. The Fronts of the Colleges, &c. are generally given, and the Views are placed in such order as very much to facilitate the perambulation of Visitors. As no public building is omitted, every Member of the University will find a faithful, although a miniature representation of the College or Hall to which he belongs; and this small volume may therefore be considered a neat present to such friends of Academics as may not be enabled to visit this celebrated seat of learning. The plan was suggested by a Gentleman of high rank in the University, and the publishers most earnestly hope that the manner in which the Work is performed will be found to merit his approbation.

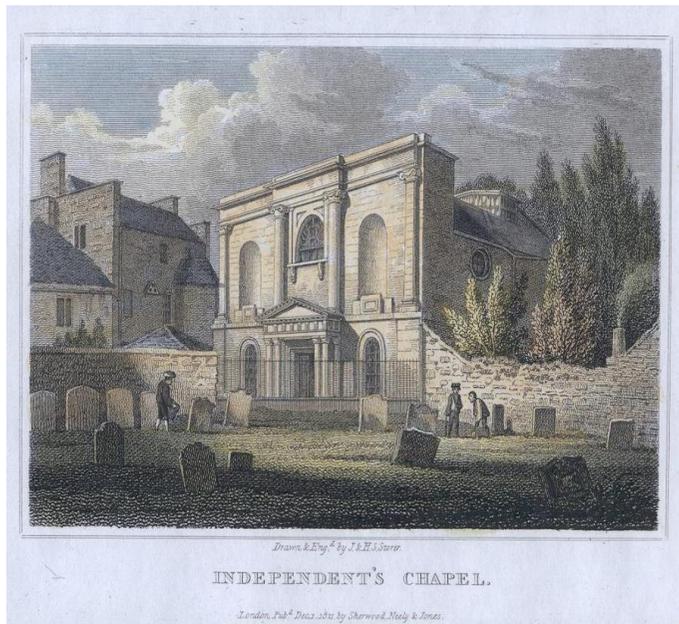


Interestingly, the final two etchings of the book are views of the Baptist and Methodist churches, respectively entitled *Dissenters' Chapel* (#41) and *Wesleyan Chapel* (#42). The only note of explanation accompanying the etching of the Baptist church building is that it is 'On the Road to Cheltenham'.

# The 19th-Century Etchings of New Road Baptist Church, Oxford

## 1. *The Independent's Chapel (1821)*

An interesting view of New Road Baptist Church appeared in a book entitled *The University and City of Oxford*, published in London by Sherwood, Neeley and Jones in 1821. The book contained 72 illustrations of various views of Oxford together with a commentary on them by Rowley Lascelles (1771-1841). The commentary by Lascelles is described as a 'Dialogue after the manner of Castiglione'; the reference is to Baldassare Castiglione's influential volume *The Book of the Courtier* (1528) which offered insight and advice on life within the upper echelons of Renaissance society in Italy. Lascelles' comment on the New Road Baptist Church follows immediately after his discussion of the Wesleyan Chapel and is worth quoting in full. He says:



But all though the front of the Dissenters' Chapel approached nearer the model of the pure antique. The basement story is Doric, like the former [Wesleyan Chapel], only that the entrance-door has a flat-lintel; that there is a triangular pediment over the entablature of the porch, and that the side windows are cut down to the pavement. It has also at each end, rustic pedestals for the pilasters above it. In the centre of the upper story is a semicircular window between two noble Ionic columns, and at each extremity of that story, two pilasters of the same order. Instead of a window between these and the pillars, there are two spacious niches unoccupied, but with pedestals for a statue respectively. The entablature is simple without any pediment. Long antecedent to the year 1718 (in the reign of Elizabeth), the presbyterians and baptists had their separate place of worship in *St Peters-le-Bailey*; but about that year, the congregations were united, and a small chapel was erected with the aid of a donation from George the First. The building has been enlarged at two separate times; its present front was added in 1819, by the architect Hudson, of Oxford.

Two things about the history of New Road Baptist Church are worth calling attention to within Lascelles' description of the building itself. The first concerns the suggestion that the Presbyterians and Baptists had separate places of worship in the parish of St Peter-le-Bailey during the reign of Elizabeth I (1533-1603). This is a somewhat misleading comment for it suggests that Baptists worshipped at St Peter-le-Bailey during the time of Elizabeth I and that they may have even done so alongside a congregation of Presbyterian believers. Quite simply, this is too early for such non-conformist worship to have taken place. It is true that the church of St Peter-le-Bailey, which stood at the corner of what was Butcher's Row (the present Queen Street) and New Inn Hall Street, was very ancient indeed, but there is no firm evidence that Baptists worshipped here or anywhere else in the parish, certainly not at the time of Elizabeth I (Baptists do not really arise until the time of Charles I). The tower of St Peter-le-Bailey collapsed in 1726, necessitating the rebuilding of the parish church in 1740. The church stood until 1874 when it was demolished to make room for a road-widening scheme.

Second, it is interesting to see how he notes that the erection of a Baptist chapel was made possible in about the year 1718 through the financial assistance of George I (1714-1727). This is no doubt in the wake of the riots of 1715 in which persecution of Dissenters in Oxford reached a peak, with Nonconformist churches and Quaker meeting houses ransacked, and houses of prominent Dissenters destroyed. The riots appear to have been triggered by a dinner part held in honour of King George I's birthday. Perhaps pangs of conscience over religious persecution associated with his name prompted the King to make the donation which effectively provided a place for the worship of Presbyterians and Baptists on the New Road site, an amalgamation that was to become more formal in 1780.

The illustration of New Road Baptist Church within Lascelles' volume is given the title 'Independent's Chapel' and bears the date 1 December 1821. This was drawn and engraved by two men, James Sargant Storer and his son Henry Sargant Storer. The father, James, was born in Cambridge in 1771 and died in London in 1853. For many years James Sargant Storer was associated with another well-known topographical artist, John Grieg. In his own right, James made quite a name for himself as an artist and engraver whose work, which concentrated on old English buildings and antiquarian subjects, was noted for its extreme attention to detail and beauty of finish. His work was frequently exhibited at the Academy in London. Beginning in 1814 he worked exclusively in partnership with his eldest son Henry. One important feature of the Storer engraving is the fact that it illustrates the additions that were made to the building in 1819. Notable among these is the present front of the church. The cost of the refurbishment at the time was £1,600; this was borne by members of the congregation which was about 700 strong.

The illustration produced by James Sargant Storer and Henry Sargant Storer has had an interesting after-life following its appearance in 1821. It has been reproduced in a number of ways over the years, including greeting cards sold in aid of the church's Renovation and Rebuilding Fund.

## 2. *The Dissenter's Chapel (1824)*

The Oxford publishers Munday and Slatter issued a book entitled *Views of all the Colleges, Halls and Public Buildings in the University and City of Oxford; with descriptions, which point out to strangers all the places and curiosities, more*