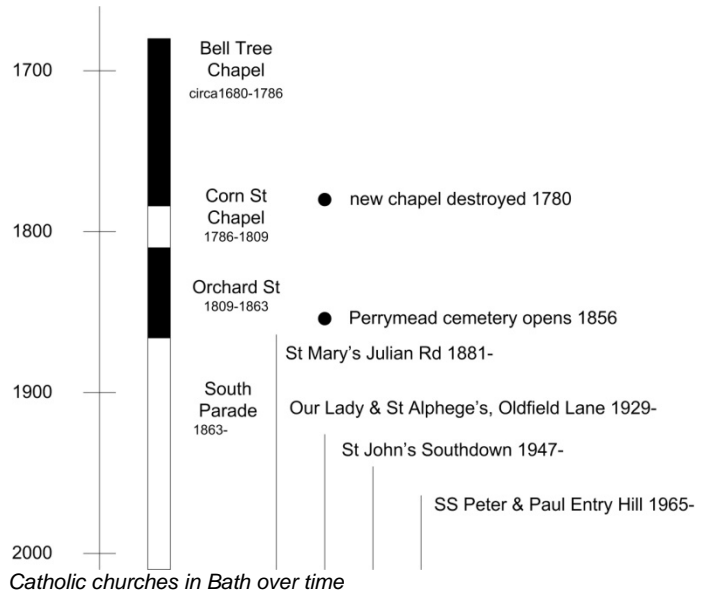


Perrymead cemetery is in Pope's Walk, off Perrymead, Widcombe adjacent to Bath Abbey cemetery. It is Bath's Catholic cemetery; it opened in 1856 and is still in use, although most burials nowadays are at Haycombe cemetery. It has a mortuary chapel and a separate chapel for the Eyre family, members of which are buried in its crypt.

**The Churches**

For those who didn't accept the 'historic comprise' of the Church of England, a series of laws were enacted that penalised them. These prevented the establishment of Catholic churches for over a century.

The first post-Reformation Catholic chapel in Bath was at the Bell-Tree House chapel from about 1680. It stood on the corner of Binbury/Bilbury Lane and Beau Street opposite the end of Bellot's Hospital. Because there were restrictions on Catholics owning or inheriting property and banning leasing property for a period greater than 31 years, the building was in the name of private individuals. These restrictions also precluded establishing a Catholic cemetery.



A new chapel between St James Parade and Lower Borough Walls was due to be opened in 1780 but it was destroyed on 8 Jun 1780 during Bath's Gordon Riots. A chapel in Corn Street was used in the period 1786-1809 after which the former Theatre Royal in Old Orchard Street (also known as Pierrepont Place) was bought. The Theatre Royal had moved to its current site in 1805. The site in Old Orchard Street was converted into a church with a floor being built over the theatre's pit, giving a vaulted crypt which was used for burials. Rooms were also used for schools. The crypt was prone to flooding and, as a consequence, a new graveyard at Perrymead was opened in 1856. St John the Evangelist, South Parade was consecrated on 6 Oct 1863. The previous church became, and remains, the Masonic Hall.



*Mortuary Chapel from the south*



*Eyre Chapel from the east*

**The Cemetery**

The Perrymead cemetery opened in 1856. Peter Augustine Baines (1787-1843), OSB, was Vicar-Apostolic and had bought Prior Park for a school and a seminary in Dec 1829. Presumably he had also bought other land, including that for Perrymead cemetery, because the land for the adjacent Bath Abbey cemetery was bought from him.

The registers are held by St John the Evangelist church, South Parade ([www.stjohnsrcbath.org.uk](http://www.stjohnsrcbath.org.uk)).

The early diocesan records were destroyed in the Gordon Riots of 1780. The names of parishioners buried in either Anglican cemeteries or the first St John's (prior to 1856) are in a series of handwritten registers from 1809-1830 and a statutory register for the period 1843-1855. Thereafter there are a series of *Libri Defunctorum* which have pre-printed pro formas for entering names, ages and cemetery of burial. The entries in these are in Latin until the 1960s. A separate index gives the location of burials for Perrymead cemetery.

A survey of the cemetery and documentation of the memorials is being undertaken by Widcombe Association.



*Arrangement of the cemetery*

#### References

- 1 Bath and Rome: The Living Link – Catholicism in Bath from 1559 to the Present Day, J Anthony Williams, 1963
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- 4 The Benedictines in Bath during a Thousand Years, John Clement Fowler OSB, Yeovil: 1895

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