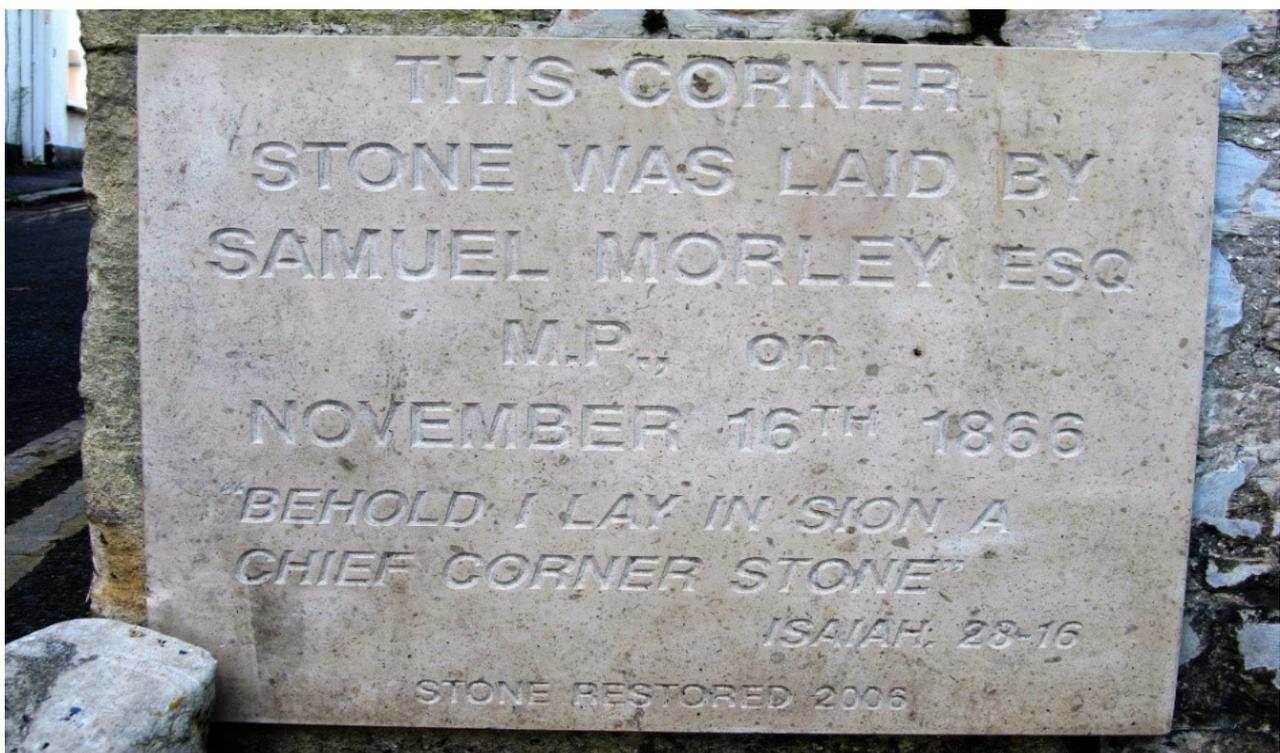


**GLENORCHY CHAPEL, EXMOUTH.
LAYING THE CORNER STONE
On 16th November 1866**





As reported in the
Western Times 20th November 1866
with some background information
on Mr Samuel Morley M.P.
Researched by Michael Hooper

also the background to his castigation of
the Established Church and its Romish practices.

By David Lee

The Foundation stone of the current Church was laid on 16th November 1866 by Samuel Morley M.P. I have researched the original report of the day's events as reported in the Western Times of 20th November 1866, which is reproduced below. So as we approach the 150th Anniversary of that event, and look back over the years, we must give thanks that there were people who were willing to stand up for religious tolerance.

It is notable that the tea played an important part, as it is today, recording the names of the ladies "providing trays". The collection that day was **£212** which equates to **£17,640** today!!!! I also include some information on Samuel Morley M.P. who performed the opening. David has also provided some comments on the religious conditions and attitudes to the Established Church at that time, and those called the "Dissenters", also some notes on local history.

Michael Hooper

October 2016

GLENORCHY CHAPEL, EXMOUTH.

LAYING THE CORNER STONE

On Friday afternoon the Corner-stone of a new chapel, to be built on the site of the old one, which owed its existence to the Christian zeal of the good Scotch Christian Lady Glenorchy, was laid with due ceremony. The site is not the one anybody would have chosen whereupon to place a new chapel, but circumstances ruled the determination. In the first place the "dead hand" of the late Lord Rolle is on the greater part of the town, forbidding the erection of any place of worship other than in connection with the Established church, or using any house for preaching purposes; and secondly, the endowment was so largely mixed up with the chapel site as to make it dangerous to that interest to remove. There is another chapel in the town, built about thirty years after Glenorchy and previously to the unchristian insertion of two clauses in the Rollean leases, having

reference to the matter of worship. Some endeavour of the old right-divine Tory to keep dissent out of his territories elsewhere having failed, he resolve to secure his object henceforth by a tyrannical clause in his leases such as the laws of no free people ought to permit. It is believed that the case which raised the old Lord's bile to such a feverish height was the resolution of James Luckington, the famous bookseller, of the Temple of the Muses, Finsbury Square, to build a Methodist chapel at Budleigh Salterton. Lackington had an ample fortune and had come to Budleigh to end his days; there was a deal of difficulty in getting a site, and then in procuring the material for the walls; but the old bookseller, who had fought many a hard battle before, was not to be baulked – he persevered and built the "Temple" in spite of my lord and all his roaring.

It is said the present rulers are not so stringent as the old one, but in any shape it is a scandal to the lords and the laws. Such being the temper and tyranny of the times and other causes combining, the handsome chapel now erecting to replace the old one will be almost lost to sight by its unhandsome surroundings. It may happen that some lady – Lady Rolle would be as welcome as anybody – may take it into her generous head to purchase and have removed the block of houses in front, and so uncover the new structure with its spire and gothic gable to public view.

The ceremony of setting the Corner-stone commenced the other side of half past three. A large and miscellaneous company crowded the area, over which a great sail had been stretched to protect from the showers which threatened, but did not come. In due time the gentlemen who had been lunching at Bastin's Beacon Hotel, followed by the school children belonging to both chapels, came in procession to the place, the children carrying banners wrapped round their staves with bunches of evergreens on the top.

It had been announced that the stone would be laid by Samuel Morley, Esq, late M.P. for Nottingham , a man who for talents, wealth, and wisdom, and his firmness as a Protestant Dissenter, is held in deservedly high esteem by all nonconformists.

Mr. Gladstone expressed his regret before the House at his absence from parliament – “he may, however, be doing all the more good in another direction”. On Wednesday he was laying the foundation-stone of a new chapel in Falmouth; today he will be doing the same thing at Lewisham in Kent. He gave a handsome subscription the other day towards the erection of a new Congregational chapel at Dawlish – he does the same for Glenorchy. Besides the honourable gentleman, there were present Revs. R.H.Lovell (the esteemed pastor of the congregation), J.F.Guenett (Lympstone), D.Hewitt (Exeter), W.Bull (Exmouth), H.Pope (Sandford), S.M.Bell (Topsham), N.Hellings (Exeter), T.Collings (Budleigh Salterton) and J.H.Wilson, (scy. Home Missionary Society), W.H.Somerville, Esq. (Bath), C. Jupe Esq. (Mere, Wilts), Mr Brown (Exeter), W.G.Habershon, Esq. (London) – the building committee, Messrs. Grigg, senr, and junr. C.Hayman, Norman, Eales (treasurer), Crews, Norrie, H.Searle, and Bounsall.

The ceremony was commenced by the Rev. J.F.Guenett, who gave out a hymn, read a portion of scripture and prayed. The Rev. R.H.Lovell then announced that a bottle would be placed under the stone, containing the following interesting account, which he read:-

“The first dissenting congregation in the neighbourhood of Exmouth, was gathered by Mr Jones, Vicar of Woodbury, who was one of the Ministers ejected from the Church of England under the Bartholomew Act of 1662. This assembly was of short duration. In April 1689, a field was bought at Gulliford, a village some three miles distant, to erect, according to the words of the foundation deed, ‘A meeting for religious worship, and for the service of God by the people called Presbyterians.’

The chapel suffered the usual persecutions of that day – being on one occasion being attacked by a riotous mob. Amongst its ministers were Samuel Tapper, who was the first stated pastor, and John Jervis who afterwards became tutor to the first Marquis of Lansdowne. The Exmouth dissenters attended the Gulliford meeting until the year 1776, when the casual visit to Exmouth of Lady Glenorchy, led to the erection of an edifice known as Glenorchy Chapel. Lady Glenorchy was the widow and heiress of John Campbell – Viscount Glenorchy, son and heir of John, third Earl of Breadlabane. Lady Glenorchy left a diary in which occurs, the following account of the foundation of the Chapel, under the date of December 1776. “We went to Exmouth where we remained some days. My chaplain preached to crowded audiences, some of whom seemed impressed. Here we met with much opposition from a neighbouring justice, who sent a press-gang to the Long Room to disturb the congregation, and ordered the landlord to give no more admission to such preachers, on pain of taking away his house. This made me much wish to have a house licensed for preaching. I mentioned it to Mr Holmes, a retired merchant of Exeter, but he seemed to think Exmouth so wicked a place, it would be in vain to attempt anything there.

The thought however never left me. I therefore wrote to Mr.Holmes to look out for a house in the town, which I might purchase. This he did. I bought this house and fitted it up for a place of worship in 1777. ‘A congregation’ adds Lady Glenorchy, ‘of some 100 has gathered, and is now in 1783 in a flourishing state.’ In 1800 the chapel was enlarged by voluntary subscriptions. The first sermon in Glenorchy chapel, was preached by the Rev. Sir Harry Trelawny, Bart, a descendant of one of the seven Bishops sent to the Tower by James II. Mr John Clayton, took part in the service. The first settled Minister was Lady Glenorchy’s chaplain, the Rev. Robert Winton, who laboured for 42 years and is buried in the adjoining graveyard. He was succeeded by the Rev. Richard Clapson, who laboured from 1819 to 1863 – 44 years, and is buried at St.John’s in the Wilderness.

He was succeeded in 1863 by Rev. Robert Henry Lovell, of the Western College, Plymouth, who together with the members of the church and congregation, in consequence of the decayed condition of the chapel, determined to seek the erection of a new one on the same site as the old one had stood. Messrs Habershon and Pite, architects of London, having given plans, the contract was let to Mr George Gibbs, of Ilfracombe, for £1200, on Sept. 24th 1866. Samuel Morley Esq. of London, laid the corner-stone of the new Glenorchy chapel, Nov. 16th 1866. Enclosed with this document are the Declaration of Faith, and Order of the body of Christian people, by whom and for whom use of the chapel is erected. *The Western Times and Exmouth Mercury*, and photographs of Mr. Clapson, Mr. Lovell and the exterior of the new building.

The stone under which the bottle was placed, bore the following inscription:- “This Chief Corner-stone was laid by Samuel Morley, Esq. of London, Nov. 16th 1866, ‘Behold I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone,’ 1 Peter 2, verse 6. G. Habershon and Pite, 38 Bloomsbury Square, London, architects.” And on the side face – Glenorchy Chapel, built by the Right Hon. The Lady Viscountess Glenorchy, 1777.”

The stone having been let down in its place, but without any formal announcement over it. Mr Morley, standing on it, addressed the company as follows:- “My dear Christian friends – I shall detain you but a minute or two in expressing the feelings with which I have undertaken this duty. I believe that no one acquainted with the place of worship which stood upon this spot where we are now assembled, will doubt the propriety of the work which we are met this day to inaugurate – the erection of a building to be devoted, we hope for many generations, to the preaching of the blessed Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I was not myself acquainted with the old building except through representations of it by the photographic process, but there can be no doubt that the time has come when in accordance with the public sentiment, and to meet the requirements of the town, a chapel like that contemplated should be raised. It is impossible to avoid expressing the opinion that this is not the most eligible site we could have chosen for a place of worship, but I gather from the public journals that the lords of the soil would have been unwilling to allow us a better one. I shall deem it my duty to refer to the subject this evening. I believe that property has its duties and responsibilities as well as its rights. But on the present occasion we have a strictly religious duty to perform.

The mere fact of placing this stone is comparatively a trifling occurrence indeed to call together a number of persons. We meet here as Protestant Dissenters, as representatives of a certain system of religious worship; as those who by their own deliberate judgment have separated themselves from other Christian communities, with whose views of church government we cannot and do not concur. We are taking our stand for the great Protestant principle – the right of private judgment – which declares that every man shall be equally in the eye of the law entitled to protection, so long as he pays due regard to the rights of others in the expression and propagation of his opinions – (Hear, Hear). We meet here in no spirit of antagonism towards other religious bodies – whom we regard as fellow workers, if they only hold right and true principles, and seek to benefit the place and the people. My hope is that the condition of Exmouth is hardly described in the language adopted by Mr. Holmes, who gave as a reason why a chapel should not be built here, that Exmouth was so extremely wicked. That I should say was precisely the reason why it should have been done – why a chapel should be built here. In every part of the kingdom, in spite of efforts made by the Established Church and various other religious bodies, there are hundreds of people who have never entered a church or a chapel.

It seems to me to be a duty, while making provision for our own personal worship, for the strengthening of our own religious life, to secure accommodation for those of the public who may choose to worship with us and to hear truths concerning the great future which lies before us.

We as Protestant dissenters have nothing to offer which the world calls great and grand, to attract our worship. We believe in the power of a holy life; we say that that religious body will be most influential with the great mass of the people, who exhibit the most consistency in the religion which they profess. The people of England want to see religion in the market place, as well as at the prayer meeting – (Hear,Hear,). I am here to say that the Independent body with which this building will be associated, holds more honestly and preaches more faithfully the doctrinal articles of the Church of England, than the Church of England itself does. I believe that the hundreds who have signed the articles of that Church do not believe or preach the fundamental principles which they contain – a state of things which is calculated to produce infidelity among the people of England – (Hear, Hear,). Mr Morley concluded by expressing his fervent hopes for the prosperity of the cause and the success of the undertaking. He was loudly applauded.

The address ended, the schoolchildren, who had been impatiently waiting for their turn in the ceremony, moved forward round the sacred block, each depositing in every variety of envelope, their gifts towards the good work. Mr.Eales, the treasurer, took charge of it, and so ended the laying of the stone. Nobody who knew the old building, but would desire to see it replaced by a new and a better one. The Minister, a young man, will find it a work to take of a little of his superfluous energy, this final success of which – he has already in fact succeeded – will be an element of strength to him all his days.

For the following description of the building we are indebted to Mr. Manning, the clerk of the works – The new chapel stands on the site of the old chapel, erected by the Lady Viscountess Glenorchy in 1777, and consists of a nave and south aisle, with a tower and spire at the south-west angle, under which is the principal entrance. There are two vestries for Minister and Deacons, arranged to be thrown into one by means of a moveable partition for meetings, and are entered through a side porch, and communicate with the chapel by doors on either side of the pulpit. The style adopted is early decorated gothic, and will be build of Berry Head stone (random work in black mortar), with dressings of Bath stone. The roof will be open timbered, carried out in fir and stained and varnished. An arcade will be formed in between the nave and aisle with wood columns, and diagonal struts supporting the roof plate, the spandrils being filled in with quatrefoil piercings and other devices. There will be accommodation for 450 sittings, which will be open benches stained and varnished. The pulpit or desk will be on a slightly raised platform, behind which a recess will be formed to relieve the end wall. A chapel-keeper's house will be built on and adjoining the south side of the chapel.

A TEA PARTY was afterwards held in the Beacon Assembly Rooms. The following ladies provided trays:- Mrs R.H.Lovell, Mrs and Miss Guenett, Miss Shepherd, Mrs Joseph Eales, the Misses Hayward, Mrs Bounsell, the Misses Strudwick, and Mrs T.Turner.

A PLATFORM MEETING followed. Mr Morley presided. After devotional exercises, the Rev. R.H.Lovell presented a "statement of the case". First he alluded to the steps which led to the pulling down of the old chapel, and said that the movement in its infancy had received a great impetus from Mr Alfred Rooker, of Plymouth, who he was sorry to say was absent from them that evening. As Mr.Morley, at the laying of the stone had observed, a better site for the chapel was desirable, but they all knew the local reasons why they could not obtain one.

Their new chapel would cost them about £1300, of which sum £419 7s had been collected; the bazaar had brought in £125, some friends had promised a similar sum, and he thought they might reckon on receiving £200 from the English Chapel Building Society, so that altogether they would have £850, leaving a balance of £450 to be provided. It rested with them to say whether their new chapel should be opened free of debt. In speaking of the morality of Exmouth, he remarked that he thought the town should show as large a percentage with regard to attendance on Divine service, for its population, as any town in the West of England. He thought that few were habitually absent from a place of worship, and they had certainly made great strides since the days when Lady Glenorchy visited Exmouth. – (Applause)

The Chairman said that if the new building commenced that day were to be a blessing to Exmouth, it would depend on their fidelity as Christian men and women in the mission which the Church was bound to undertake – that of endeavouring to bring the world to the rule of Christ. The population of Exmouth was 6,000; therefore 4,000 should attend places of worship: but he apprehended that there was not accommodation for anything like that number – (hear, hear,). There must be a large number of persons who never went to a chapel or church. Consequently there was plenty of work to do. He rejoiced in the building of new places of worship, because they were additional agencies for the good of the people. Earnest men and women had their work to do with reference to the masses of the population in Exmouth as well as other parts of England, who were living to a very large extent outside the pale of religious effort. . In every town of this Christian land there were those who were ignorant as to the great future before them.

Therefore, speaking of places of worship, which were more distinctly the centres of religious effort, he wished them to bear in mind that mere sentimentalism would not avail much. After attending once or twice a place of worship on Sunday, and giving a slight amount of money, they should not imagine that their duty was at an end. He impressed upon them the important fact of their individual responsibility. They must impart the Gospel to others, and not rest satisfied with leaving religious efforts in the hands of the deacons and ministers. The ministry – and he said so in the presence of many honoured friends on that platform – had failed to reach the people, and they would be the first to admit the fact.

Until Christian people were alive to the individual responsibility attaching to them, he did not believe the world would ever be converted to religion. He did not believe in the efficacy of pains and penalties; he had not the least faith in political power in reference to religious conversion. The Established Church as an Establishment – he quite distinguished between the church and the Establishment – had proved a failure. There was doubtless a vast increase of life in that great system, but it was not the result of the system, it existed in spite of the system. He believed that if tomorrow it were relieved of the incubus of political parties, spiritual life would be evoked which would go far to accomplish what had not yet been done in this country. He was afraid that they had been delighting themselves too much with the idea that England was a Christian country, but there were parts of the heathen world where the natives were giving more heed to religion than was given in many parts of England. That was a fact which needed to be looked at. The servants of the Lord Jesus Christ must be alive to their perpetual responsibility.

He had remarked at the stone laying, that the Independent denomination professed to hold – and he contended they sincerely did hold – all the doctrinal articles of the Church of England.

Some friend in the crowd observed “But what about Baptismal regeneration?” Well his (Mr.Morley’s) reply was that there was not a word about that in the Articles of the Church of England. – (Hear, Hear) Lord Chatham once said in the House of Lords that the Established Church in this country had a Popish ritual, a Calvinistic creed, and an Arminian clergy; what his lordship would have said of the clergy of the present day it was hard to guess, for they seemed to be running wild – to a monstrous and absurd extent – (Laughter) – certainly their practices were not sanctioned by God’s Word or the Articles which they had signed.

He believed that an immense proportion of the clergy did not believe the Articles they had signed, and which they stood before the country pledged as enlightened and honourable men to believe. This he held was dishonourable and calculated to excite infidelity among the people. The object of his visit to Exmouth was to confer with his friends on a subject in which he felt deeply interested, and which was thus brought before his notice by the *Western Times*:-

“It is said that on the Rolle estate, to which a good part of the town belongs, no nonconforming place of worship is allowed to be built, and every leaseholder is bound not to permit any praying or preaching on his premises. In a place where wealth uses its power to crib, cabin and crush religious, and consequence civil liberty, the erection of a place of worship which should be, among others, a standing protest against such tyranny, and a nursery for better principles ought to commend itself not only to every Christian, but to every patriotic Englishman. There never was a period in our history when it was more imperative upon all true men to support that side in religion to which, as a nation, we owe nearly all the political, civil, and religious liberty we enjoy – (Cheers)

The following was a copy of the covenant in the lease made by the Lessee for himself, his Executors, Administrators and Assigns:-

*“and shall not use or convert, or suffer to be used, or converted the whole or part of the said demised premises to or for any religious meeting dissenting from the Church of England, or to or for any such purpose whatsoever.”**

**(It should be borne in mind that on failure by the Lessee to keep this covenant, the Lease immediately thereupon becomes absolutely void, at the will of the Lessor, and that if by one Lease several properties are demised, they all revert to the Lessor or forfeiture of the Lease, even though a Dissenting prayer meeting were only held once in one single house or any part of it)*

It was said that a man had a right to do what he liked with his own. In one sense he had, in another he had not. He held it to be a prostitution of the power of property to attempt to crush, to interfere with religious liberty. Therefore he was glad to come amongst them and strengthen their hands as a body of nonconforming Christians in that town, where there might still exist and did still exist a disposition to use the enormous powers which the possession of vast territorial property gives to individuals to interfere with personal rights – (Hear,Hear.) The lords of the soil seemed to forget that when the Act of Uniformity was passed, there was not a single dissenting place of worship in the country; now, however there were upwards of 20,000 – (Hear,Hear,). He rejoiced in the fact, because it proved that men chose to think for themselves – (Hear, Hear) and they would not be dictated to by others as to the views they should hold. He distinctly held there was abundant evidence in the Church of England of the growth of that which was absolutely irreligious, absolutely mischievous, because it could only end in Romanism, which was fatal to civil and religious liberty in this country – (Hear, Hear) The clergy were playing many curious pranks.

Country people could hardly have a conception of the lengths to which members of the Established Church in the neighbourhood of London were going in the direction of what was called Rationalism, but which he plainly termed Infidelity. Nonconformists should raise a public protest against this state of things.

They did assert their right to think and speak for themselves – (Hear, Hear) - In his own immediate neighbourhood, the lord of the manor distinctly stated that he declined to accept any proposal to build a Nonconforming place of worship on his property, which was very extensive, and where places of worship were greatly needed. But he was thankful to say there were a few Independents well able to undertake the responsibility cast upon them; that in consequence of the Lord of the Manor's refusal they were the more determined to erect a chapel; and that they saw a way by which their purpose could be accomplished – (Cheers) – But no thanks to those who had power and exercised it – (Laughter) - He remembered that during a discussion on the Corn Laws, the late Richard Cobden said it would be an evil day for the aristocracy of this country when the people were driven to investigate their title deeds. That was a serious statement to make. There was no attempt to lessen the security of property, but there were considerations as to the grounds upon which large properties were held in this country, in which it was clearly seen that public good was not to be ignored on the part of those who were in a sense, morally and equitably, trustees on behalf of the public. He ventured to express his utter and absolute reprehension of holding property to the interference of the rights of conscience – (Hear, Hear) – Having reverted to the interesting event of the afternoon, Mr. Morley spoke of the value of the services rendered to the country by the great non-conforming body. Non-conformity, he submitted, had been honourably identified with some of the most important events in the history of the noble doings of the men, of whom the historian Hume gave this testimony:- “So absolute was the authority of the

Crown that the precious spark of Liberty had been kindled, and was preserved by the Puritans alone, and it was to this sect that the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution – (Applause)

Mr Brougham (now Lord Brougham) in a debate, and speaking of the Independents, said –

“That body, much to be respected for their numbers, but far more to be held in veneration for the unshaken fortitude with which in all times they have maintained their attachment to civil and religious liberty – men to whose ancestors this country will ever acknowledge a boundless debt of gratitude as long as freedom is prized among us; for they, I fearlessly proclaim it, they are the zeal of martyrs, the purity of the early Christians, the skill and courage of the most renowned warriors, gloriously suffered and fought and conquered for England – (Renewed applause)

He (Mr. Morley) thought the young men of the present day should be told of those who had fought and bled for religious freedom – men of whom in every sense the world was unworthy; men hunted to death, ruined in their circumstances, degraded to the utmost extent because they would not submit to any infringement of the rights of conscience – (Hear, Hear) - They ought to be thankful to God for the altered circumstances of the present day. He had ventured to remark on the way in which the Rolle estate was leased out, and dismissing the subject, he would say that the man who would give vent to his miserable spite in letting out property with clauses in the leases, preventing the Nonconformists from holding religious services, could not be too publicly held up to execration. All right minded people would hold up such system to execration. He spoke warmly on the subject because he thought it his duty to do so. The Nonconformists might be mistaken in their modes of doing things, they might subject themselves to ridicule and contempt, but if they had an honest desire to do good to those amongst whom they lived,

they ought not to be interfered with by those who possessed property; they ought to be allowed to do what they chose in matters of conscience – (Hear, Hear) – Mr. Morley dwelt on the principles of Independency. The Independents did not believe in the monarch of any country being at the head of the church; yet in true and devoted loyalty they would yield to none – (Hear, Hear) – They believed in simplicity. That the present Ecclesiastical organization was acceptable to the Head of the Church he could not find the slightest authority in the Word of God; Ritualism had utterly failed to discover it. Nonconformists carried out what they believed to be strictly scriptural. They believed that love and sympathy were amply sufficient to maintain the influence of religion among the people: in other words they had not the slightest faith in State interference; they believed that religion was safest when left to the care of its friends, and disapproved of the system of compulsory antagonism instead of drawing out the affections of the people.

In the words of Dean Stanley, there was no other belief without subscriptions. They believed in the right of every church to elect its own members, and bear its own charges and responsibilities. They had no faith in benches of bishops or anybody outside themselves. Their willingness to accept for the high and lasting advantages which grew out of it. Mr. Morley enlarged on this subject, and concluded with an energetic appeal for the cultivation of personal piety. He was much applauded. He said that he had promised £25 towards the funds of the chapel; he should give £100 more as a proof of his sympathy with them in their undertaking. Rev. David Hewitt, Rev. J.F.Guenett, and others also addressed the meeting. The sum of £212 was subscribed during the day.

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Samuel Morley (15 October 1809 – 5 September 1886) was an English woollen manufacturer, philanthropist, dissenter (Congregationalist), abolitionist, political radical, and statesman. The youngest son of a hosiery manufacturer with premises in Nottingham and London, he was born in Homerton, now part of London.

He began his career at sixteen in the counting-room of his

father's business. When his father retired in 1840, he became head of the London and 15 years later when his brothers retired, he was left in overall control. By 1860 he was sole owner of both the London and Nottingham parts of the business, and as it grew rapidly into the largest of its kind in the world he became very wealthy, and a model employer.

Morley had a large residence in Stamford Hill, Stoke Newington when not living at his City of London address. He was a member of Thomas Binney's King's Weigh House Congregational Chapel in Fish Street Hill, London. (Currently, the Ukrainian Cathedral of the Holy Family in Exile).

He ventured into publishing, becoming one of the principal proprietors of the London Daily News, the main Liberal paper of the period. By reducing its price from 3d to 1d, its losses turned to gains and carried greater influence.

As a Liberal, he was one of Gladstone's keen supporters, and was elected as an M.P. for Nottingham in 1865, and later Bristol (1868–85).

In later life he became a strong advocate of temperance. Sometimes called 'The Philanthropic Merchant', he was sufficiently eminent to be caricatured in *Vanity Fair* (15 June 1872). A contemporary biographer, writing in the 'Annual Register of World Events', considered that he would be remembered by posterity as *one of the leading merchant princes and philanthropists of the century*.

Amongst Morley's many philanthropic ventures, at least one continues to make an important contribution to London life today – Morley College – which he endowed for adult education .

In his day, he was also treasurer of Homerton College, chairing its inauguration on 20 April 1852 as the new 'Training Institution of the Congregational Board of Education', following purchase, extension and rebuilding on the site of the old mansion and buildings of Homerton Academy.

He was an abolitionist, a cause closely associated with nineteenth-century Whigs, political radicals and their subsequent British Liberal party, Morley became treasurer of the fund to finance Josiah Henson, an escaped American slave who was given support in Britain. Josiah Henson later wrote *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life: an Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson (Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe's 'Uncle Tom'), from 1789 to 1876*. This contained an introductory note by 'George Sturge & S. Morley, Esq., M. P.' and a preface by Harriet Beecher Stowe. In his autobiography, Josiah Henson records,

I received numerous tokens of regard from many philanthropic gentlemen while I was in London, which I shall never forget; but I was particularly touched by the special kindness of Samuel Morley, Esq., and George Hitchcock, Esq., of St. Paul's Churchyard. These two gentlemen invited me to dine with them every day.

When he died in 1886, ninety-seven religious and philanthropic groups were represented at the funeral. Samuel Morley had been associated with all of them. Samuel Morley was appointed a Trustee of the Mary Parminter Charity and was also London Treasurer – this in the days when there was also a Country (Devon) Treasurer.

Picture: by Frank William Warwick Topham (1838-1924) 'Reproduced by kind permission of the Principal and Fellows of Homerton College, Cambridge'.

Michael R. Hooper

It's hard to go back 150 years in imagination as to how things were in the Christian sphere in England at that time. There was very little co-operation between the different denominations and all the Nonconformists (Dissenters) were opposed to the Church of England and particularly the Roman Catholic Church which they regarded as Antichrist. What became known as the Oxford Movement in the Church of England fanned the flames of opposition. The Oxford Movement would today be thought of as the High Church part of the C of E. The Nonconformists regarded the introduction of practices from the Roman church (elaborate ritual, confession etc.) as completely against the teaching and practice of the early church. There must have been a feeling in the Congregational Churches at that time that they alone were right because they considered they followed the pattern of church life as recorded in the New Testament. Opposition to the C of E went back to the time of the Reformation when our spiritual ancestors felt that the C of E was a compromise and further reform was needed.

Such belief led to three of our Puritan ancestors being burnt at the stake for “heresy” in the reign of Elizabeth the first. It was a long held ideal of all the Nonconformist churches that the C of E should be dis-established, a hope which was never fulfilled. They saw the C of E and its clergy as being in a position of power and privilege.

We have to remember that 150 years ago church attendance was a great deal more than it is today, so the Nonconformist influence was very strong and expressed politically in wholesale support for the Liberal Party, whilst the C of E supported the Tories. The other cause espoused by the Nonconformists was opposition to the drink trade and the advocacy of being teetotal. Again this was a result of conditions at that time where many men spent their wages in the public houses leaving their wives and children in considerable need. There must have been general rejoicing if because of this opposition a public house was closed down.

You can see from the newspaper report that no C of E clergy were present. Among the ministers present Rev. J. H. Guenett was chaplain at Point-in-View, Rev. Daniel Hewitt was minister of Castle Street Congregational Church in Exeter and during his ministry a much larger and grander church was built in Southernhay East, often referred to as the nonconformist cathedral of the South West. Rev. W. Bull was the minister of the Beacon Congregational Church here in Exmouth. Rev. Nicholas Hellings trained for the Congregational ministry at Hackney College in London, but by 1866 was Minister of the chapel of the Free Church of England in Exeter. I believe the others were also Congregational ministers in the area. Mr. Habershon was the London architect whose firm had designed the proposed new building. Earlier generations of Exmothians would be familiar with most of the names of the gentlemen who served on the building committee.

(I wonder how it was decided who was called Esq. and who were simply Mr.) Maybe Rev. N. Hellings was present because from about 1819 until the 1960s Hackney College were the Trustees of Glenorchy and their consent had to be obtained when any call to the ministry of Glenorchy was to be made.

Samuel Morley refers to the site as being unsuitable. It's clear therefore, that there was a row of houses or cottages at that time standing on Mona Island right in front of our church so it was indeed tucked away and rather out of sight. He also mentioned the fact that all property leased from the Rolle Estate at that time had a clause in the leases banning preaching or any form of worship other than that of the C of E. There has never been a parish of Exmouth and the town is divided between Littleham and Withycombe Raleigh. The parish boundary runs down Fore Street and down the lane behind the Savoy Cinema. (This lane used to be called Crudge's Lane) The land belonging to the Rolle Estate was entirely in Littleham Parish as indeed was most of the town in 1866.

The Parade and our church site however is entirely within Withycombe Parish so Lord John Rolle could do nothing about Dissenters there.

Have you ever wondered why the road beside our church is called Meeting Street? It's because our church in its earlier days would have been referred to as the Independent Meeting although always known as Glenorchy Chapel. By the time of the foundation stone laying most Independent Churches would have used the title Congregational (rather than Independent), which continued until the formation of the United Reformed Church.

David Lee