

7. Gulliford Burial Ground



Introduction

Gulliford is the site of two former Dissenters' chapels. The first was built in the early 1690s by Presbyterians and its popularity was such that a larger two-storey replacement was built in the 1770s. The brick walls of the second chapel can be seen at the back of the site.

The Act of Toleration (1689) allowed Dissenters to worship publicly and build chapels away from centres of population. After great popularity up to 1820 the chapel declined in the late 19th century, became derelict and was demolished in 1907.

To find out more, scroll down.

This is one of a set of info points around the village.

For more information click [here](#).

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Working Party, 2018

Chapels

Dissenters were those Protestant Christians who rejected both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. Presbyterians were a prominent dissenting sect whose fortunes rose and fell during the seventeenth century. Under Oliver Cromwell and the Commonwealth they were welcomed within the Church of England and able to worship on Exeter Cathedral.

The restoration of the monarchy in 1660 saw them pushed aside. The Act of Uniformity of 1662 required all clergymen to use the Book of Common Prayer, to use the sign of the cross and to require kneeling for communion. All of these had been rejected by the Dissenters and over 2,000 clergymen refused. One of these was Samuel Fones, vicar of Woodbury, who was forced from his post but continued as a dissenting minister in private homes.

In 1688 the Catholic James II was replaced by William of Orange and his Stuart wife, Mary. Life and worship became easier for the Dissenters. 1689 saw the passing of the Act of Toleration, allowing Dissenters to

worship publicly and build chapels. These had to be away from centres of population, however, which is why this site – on the border of Lympstone and Woodbury parishes – was used. The first chapel was built in 1691.

Despite early attacks from anti-Presbyterian rioters, the congregation expanded. Of the 95 subscribers to the minister's stipend in 1733, 47 were from Lympstone, 26 from Woodbury and 22 from Exmouth. Carriages would line up in Meeting Lane to collect well-to-do worshippers.

Thomas Jervis (minister 1769-72) and his brother John (minister 1772-1820) proved hugely popular and a new, larger chapel was built in 1774 at the back of the site which could accommodate 250 worshippers. From 1821, however, the congregation dwindled. A rival chapel was built in Church Road, Lympstone, where Ellenthorpe now stands, now that it was legal to place a chapel in the heart of the village. From 1870 the new Methodist Chapel provided further competition.

By 1885 the trustees were all from George's Meeting House in Exeter, repairs were few and the ageing minister no longer held services. The chapel became derelict and was demolished in 1907.

Tombs and Graves

Among the tombs is that of Worthington Brice, who founded Lympstone's whaling industry in the 1750s. He was a contributor to the building costs of the second chapel and died aged 80 in 1781 joining his wife and five children who had died before him.

The gravestone of Charles Baring (1742-1829) can be seen near the bench. His elder brothers, John and Francis, founded Baring's Bank in 1762, but Charles did not share their financial skills. He lived at Courtlands (now Lympstone Manor) but ran up huge debts and eventually had to sell it.

Near the Baring grave is the grave of Sarah Abbott, notable for what it tells us of her husband, who presumably oversaw the inscription. It reads 'wife of James Abbott of the parish of Lympstone, Turn Broach to his Majesty George the third'. A turn broach was someone who managed the spit roasting of large pieces of meat or whole carcasses for banquets. Perhaps George had this job when the king toured the West

Country in 1789 and stayed overnight at Exeter Castle: clearly the high point of George Abbott's life.

Recent Times

In 1986, after decades of neglect, Gulliford Burial Ground received Grade II Listed Monument status and Lymptone and Woodbury Parish Councils became responsible for its upkeep. It was re-opened in 1997, but further years of neglect in the 21st century led to the formation of the Friends of Gulliford Burial Ground in 2018, who worked hard to tidy the area.

With the help of a substantial grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund it has again been restored for the enjoyment of the public. The newly refurbished Burial Ground was officially reopened on 26 October 2021.



Official opening after restoration 26 October 2021

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