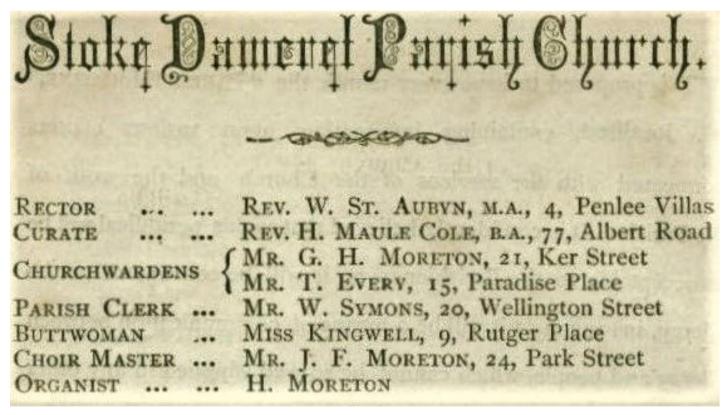
FROM THE ARCHIVES OF STOKE DAMEREL PARISH CHURCH

A SHORT CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE PARISH OF STOKE DAMEREL

Details of the first building to be erected on the site of the current church are unknown but some structure, possibly in timber, may well have existed even before the Norman Conquest.

The present building has no known official dedication to any saint, so has always generally been referred to as Stoke Damerel Church or even, by many who live locally, as *The Mother Church of Devonport*.



EXTRACT FROM FIRST PAGE OF FIRST STOKE DAMEREL CHURCH MAGAZINE JANUARY 1878

[FROM AN ORIGINAL 1878 PARISH MAGAZINE IN STOKE DAMEREL CHURCH ARCHIVES]

It is possible that the name of St. Andrew may have been the first early unrecorded dedication, especially as he is the patron saint of fishermen and the building would then have generally been approached by many worshippers from the adjacent tidal creek, in addition to those who would have approached via field paths. From at least the early years of the twentieth century the building was referred to as the church of St. Andrew and St. Mary.

There are two primitive carvings in the South Porch, thought to date from the late fifteenth century, which are reputed to be representations of St. Mary and St. Andrew.



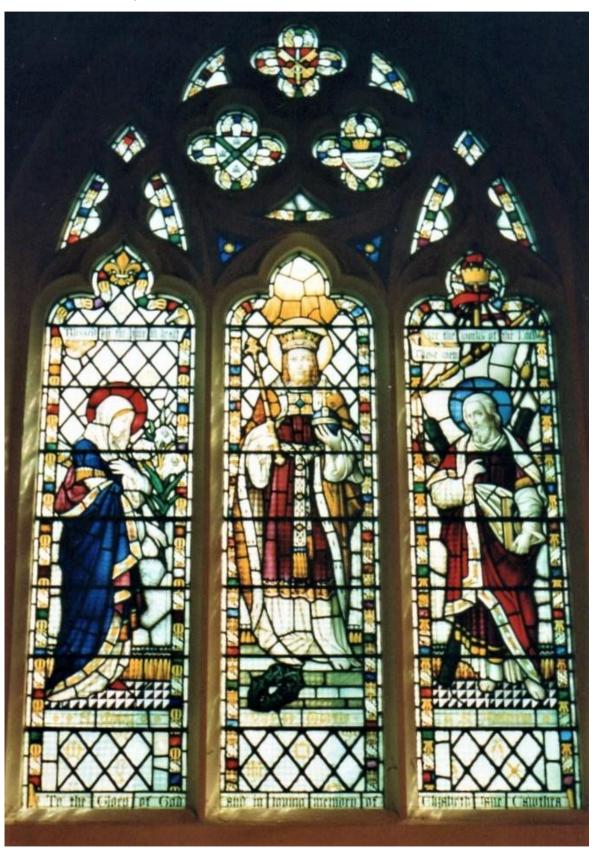


REPUTED REPRESENTATIONS OF ST. MARY AND ST. ANDREW
[FROM ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHS, BOTH BY TONY BARNARD]

In the latter years of the twentieth century, or the early years of this century, for reasons unknown, St. Luke seems to have replaced St. Mary when referring to the church officially. Considering the uncertainty this has created, we may be safest continuing to just speak of Stoke Damerel Church.

However, the stained-glass window in the chancel at the East End, inserted in 1923, has depictions of St. Mary and St. Andrew on either side of the central image of Christ. Considering the age of this window, this surely weakens the argument for the later inclusion of St. Luke instead of St. Mary. However, when mentioned, we now refer to all three saints. The 'Gothic revival' window tracery around this window is recorded as being constructed by Fouracre and Sons of Stonehouse, using Ham Hill stone [probably from the Yeovil area of Dorset], during major renovations undertaken at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Originally glazed with plain 'Cathedral glass', the high quality stained-glass we see now was inserted about twenty years later and was designed and produced by Clayton and Bell of Regents Street, London, who were held in high esteem throughout the country, as well as abroad.



EAST WINDOW WITH REPRESENTATIONS OF ST. MARY, CHRIST AND ST. ANDREW
[FROM AN ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY BARNARD]

There follows a brief chronological listing which outlines some of the important and interesting aspects of the church and locality over the centuries.

1086 – The Domesday Book mentions *'Stoches'*, having 974 acres and 25 inhabitants, previously owned by Brismar the Saxon. The word is thought to mean a dairy farm [or possibly a fortified place].

After the Norman Conquest, King William I had given the land to Robert D'Albermarle, who was Lord of Aumale in Normandy. [Albemarle Villas, half a mile from the church, commemorates the name of this family from which the word Damerel is also derived].

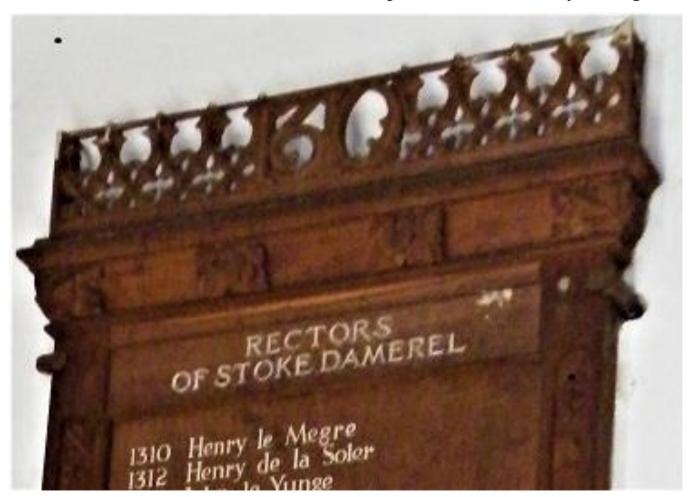
1174 to 1183 – Listed as 'Stokes' in the Index of Rolls & Charters.

1281 - Assize Rolls – Listed as 'Stok Aubermarl'.

1288 to 1291 - Taxation of Pope Nicholas, land recorded as *'Ecclia de Stok'* and valued at £3.6s.8d.

1292 – The church was recorded in the "Taxatio Ecclesiastica".

1310 – First known Rector of Stoke Damerel parish church – Henry le Megre.



ENTRY FOR HENRY LE MEGRE ON RECTORS BOARD
[FROM AN ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY BARNARD]

- 1311 In Episcopal records 'Stoke Daumerale'.
- 1316 Feudal Aids listed, as 'Stoke Daumarle'.
- 1332 Considered to be an "important parish". Tax assessment on moveable goods 17 names from the parish, paying 17 shillings and 8 pence a low amount but more than some inland rural parishes.

1361 - In Feudal Aids - listed as 'Stoke Daumarle'.



THE 15th. CENTURY TOWER AND THE OLDEST PART OF THE BUILDING, WITH AN ANCIENT BLOCKED UP WINDOW

[FROM AN ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY BARNARD]

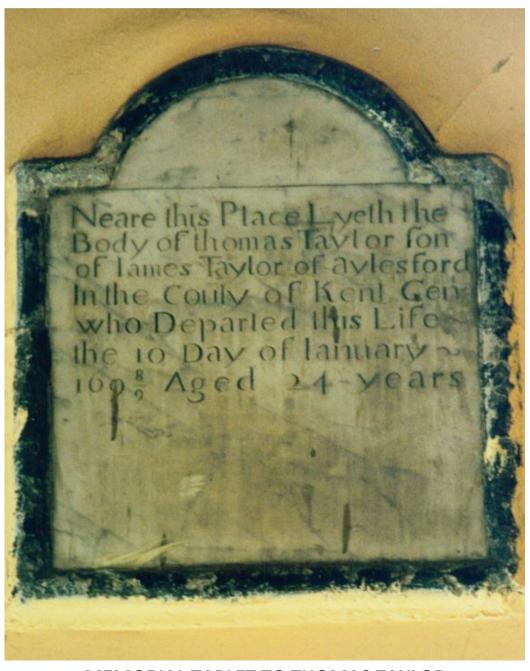
- **1400's** Rebuilding in the perpendicular style was undertaken consisting of a chancel, nave and a rectangular tower, which probably included the first bells. Parts of this building may still remain. The largest portions are thought to be the tower, north porch and much of the external walling to the northern side of the building, including the stone arch around the opening leading from the church through to the modern Parish Centre. Additionally, the carved stone heads possibly depicting St. Mary and St. Andrew, which are mounted on the columns in the South Porch, may date from this period.
- 1525 First road constructed to the church from Mill Bridge. Prior to this, field paths were the only method of access to the building by land.
- **1553** Devon County Commissioners Inventory of church goods indicates that 'Stoke Damerel' tower has four bells.
- 1500's By the end of this century the spelling of Stoke Damerel had generally been fixed as we know it today.
- 1595 First dated church registers under Rector German Goldstone Snr., in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.
- 1667 Stoke Damerel Manor was sold by Sir Edward Wise to Sir William Morice.



SIR WILLIAM MORICE — PAINTED BETWEEN 1650 AND 1679
[PAINTED BY JACOB HUYSMANS, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS]

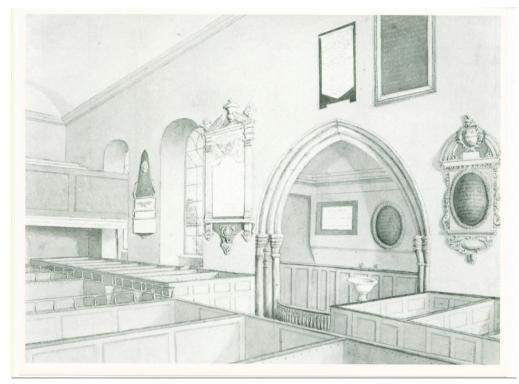
1690 – Following an earlier suggestion from Sir Walter Raleigh to King Charles II, King William III [of Orange] ordered construction of the first naval dock, located on the River Tamar within the parish of Stoke Damerel. From then until 1780, Stoke Damerel parish and manor were responsible for the government of the area known as Dock [later to be re-named as Devonport]. The population of the parish of Stoke Damerel grew rapidly and within 100 years was the largest town west of Bristol.

1698 or 1699 – Memorial to Thomas Taylor, located on the wall, high above the south door into the church – the uncertainty of dating may show the difference between the old Julian calendar then used in England and the newer Gregorian calendar in use on the continent.



MEMORIAL TABLET TO THOMAS TAYLOR
[FROM AN ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY BARNARD]

1715 – A second aisle was added to the church building and box pews installed. Richard Young of the dockyard was instrumental in this. His memorial tablet can still be seen in the church, on the North Wall.



RICHARD YOUNG MEMORIAL [BETWEEN WINDOW AND ARCH]

[FROM AN ORIGINAL WATERCOLOUR HANGING IN STOKE DAMEREL CHURCH BUILDING]

1733 – Mary Grey and Bampfylde-Moore Carew were married at Stoke Damerel church. Although his father was a respectable priest, Carew took up the bohemian style of life and claimed to be "King of the Beggars". The title page of his memoirs describes him as "the Noted Devonshire Stroller and Dogstealer". He was generally considered to be a rogue, vagabond and imposter.

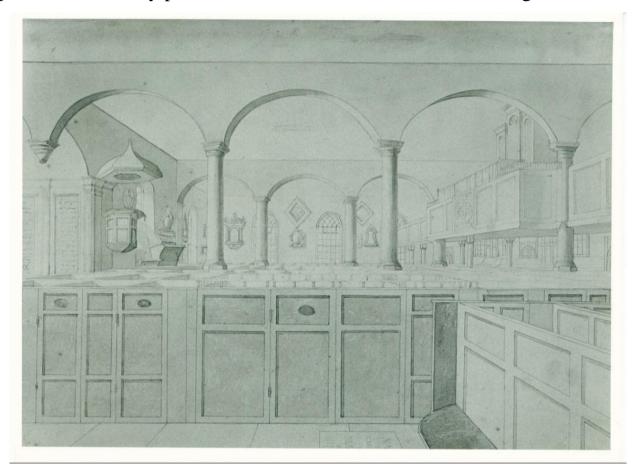


BAMPFYLDE MOORE CAREW

[FROM AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CHAPBOOK, UNKNOWN AUTHOR, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS]

1742 – Sir John St. Aubyn, Bart. became the Lord of the Manor.

1750 – A third aisle was added on the south side of the church, and extensive renovations undertaken. The rear gallery and a three-tier pulpit were installed. The Rector's Vestry was created in the base of the tower and the main entrance into the church was moved to the south. The church building became greater in width than length. The Admiralty provided materials used inside the building.



EXTENDED CHURCH WITH THREE-TIER PULPIT AND REAR GALLERY

[FROM AN ORIGINAL WATERCOLOUR HANGING IN STOKE DAMEREL CHURCH BUILDING]

1760 – Glebe land reduced to only 17 acres. The remainder had been sold to the government for £3987.15s.0d.

1760's – Visit to Stoke Damerel by the Wesley brothers. Charles Wesley reputed to have preached to 4,000 in the churchyard.

1772 – Tobias Furneaux sailed with Captain Cook to discover New Zealand. Furneaux charted Tasmania [He gave names to Eddystone Point, Mewstone, and Swilly Bay] and went on to be the first man to circumnavigate the world in both directions. His tomb is in the churchyard opposite the North Porch. A number of Furneaux family memorials can be seen inside the church on the North Wall. The family lived in, the now demolished, Swilly House.



MEMORIAL STONE TO TOBIAS FURNEAUX

[FROM AN ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY BARNARD]

1780 – Commissioners took over the governing of Dock, jointly with Stoke Damerel Parish Vestry, and this arrangement continued until 1837.

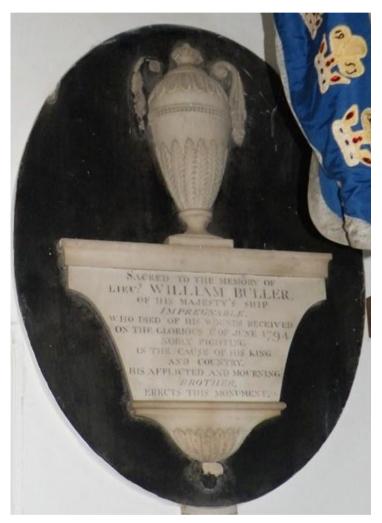
1788 – Philip Smith [Dockyard Clerk] was murdered in the churchyard by John Richards and William Smith [Dockyard workmen]. This was considered to be revenge by Richards for being discharged by Smith. Both men were apprehended, tried and found guilty, then executed at Heavitree, Exeter. Their bodies were returned to Stoke and hung from the Millbridge gibbet for seven years or more.



EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ETCHING SHOWING GIBBET AND CHURCH

[FROM AN ORIGINAL ETCHING HANGING IN STOKE DAMEREL CHURCH BUILDING]

- 1788 The church bells were re-hung as a peal of six, although the Rector, Edward Blackett, suggested only one large tenor bell be hung as "six bells would be productive of more idleness and drunkenness than is in the Parish already..."
- **1789** George III visited Dock and the new bells were first rung as his carriage passed by the church.
- 1794 Battle of 'Glorious First of June' against France in the Atlantic Ocean. Both sides claimed victory. The French lost most men, but 130 grain ships got through from the U.S.A. to France. A memorial to Lieutenant Buller, who died in the battle, is in the church on the West Wall.



MEMORIAL TABLET TO LIEUT. WILLIAM BULLER
[FROM AN ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY BARNARD]

1796 – Edward Jenner carried out experiments to protect against smallpox. The word 'vaccine' was suggested by his friend, Doctor Richard Dunning of Albemarle Villas. A memorial tablet to members of the Dunning family is located on the North Wall, over the arched opening leading through to the Parish Centre.

1797 – The Military Hospital was built on the side of the tidal creek opposite the church. This is now Devonport High School for Boys.

- **1801** First national census undertaken. Dock population 23,747; Plymouth 16,040; Stonehouse 3,407.
- **1804** Robert Stephen Hawker was baptised at Stoke Damerel church by his uncle, Reverend John Hawker. In later life Robert became vicar of Morewenstow church. He is reputed to have introduced the first modern Harvest Festival in 1843 and is famous for composing the Cornish 'National Anthem' *Trelawney*.
- **1804** Samuel Phelps was born in St. Aubyn Street. When orphaned at the age of 16 he went to London to try and make his fortune. He became an acclaimed tragic actor and founded Sadlers Wells in 1844.



SAMUEL PHELPS AS CARDINAL WOLSELEY [FREDERICK WARDE, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS]

- **1810** 'Saucer-eyed' ghost seen in the churchyard claimed to be a deceased waterman anguished over the speed of his widow finding new love.
- 1811 The clock was installed into the West face of the tower.
- **1813** At the election of churchwardens, '*Dockyardsmen*' exercised their electoral rights by nominating their own warden, John Coulter, in opposition to the parishioners' choice. Coulter was duly elected [480 votes to 360].

1815 – Napoleon Bonaparte detained on board *'Bellerophon'* in Plymouth Sound. Stonemason John Boynes drowned whilst returning by water after trying to get a glimpse of Napoleon. Boynes' tombstone is in Stoke Damerel churchyard.



TOMBSTONE OF JOHN BOYNES
[FROM AN ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY BARNARD]

- **1823** Townspeople petitioned for Plymouth Dock to be re-named Devonport.
- **1827** The gibbet finally collapsed after more than 35 years. Snuff boxes and other items were made from the wood as 'souvenirs'.
- **1828** Rector Thomas Williamson died. Curate John Hawker had been expected to become the next Rector, having served as Curate for many years, but he was dismissed by the Lord of the Manor who appointed his own relative, Rev. William J. St. Aubyn [who became known as the "*BAD St. Aubyn*"]. Reverend Hawker then set up Eldad chapel, later to be replaced by St. Peter's Church in Wyndham Square.
- **1830** A Guide to Plymouth was published. Stoke Damerel Church was not liked "Few public buildings possess so little pretence to architectural distinction, while the monuments are proof of affection rather than taste".
- **1830** Lights spotted in the churchyard at night by local residents Body snatchers were at work and were followed. They took corpses from the churchyard to a villa in Mount Pleasant [located approximately where the traffic lights now

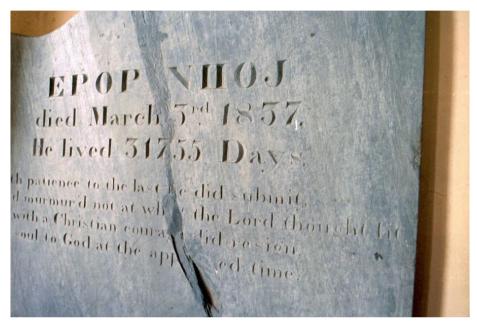
stand at the end of Wilton Street, at the junction with Molesworth Road]. They were all caught and transported.

- 1831 First Cholera epidemic in Britain.
- **1831** Gas lighting was installed in Stoke Damerel Church. [Electric lighting was later installed in 1904]
- **1831** Charles Darwin stayed in Devonport from October to December awaiting improvements in the weather before sailing on HMS Beagle to South America. Darwin wrote that the time he spent waiting was "*The most miserable which I ever spent*".
- **1832** Anatomy Act passed brought about by grave robbers' actions around the country [especially churchyards like Stoke Damerel].
- **1832** Cholera epidemic reached Stoke -700 died in the area.
- **1834** Dispute over occupation of pews. Parishioners fought to see the Bishop. Blows and kicks were exchanged in church.
- **1834** Sir John St. Aubyn presented his famous mineral collection to the Civil and Military Library of Devonport.



SIR JOHN ST. AUBYN M.P.
[PAINTED BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. SOURCE - PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS]

- 1836 A two manual organ was purchased and erected in the rear gallery.
- **1837** The municipal borough of Devonport was created by Royal Charter. Edward St. Aubyn [Steward of the Manor of Stoke Damerel, son of Sir John St. Aubyn and brother of Stoke Damerel's Rector] was elected first mayor of the borough. His father donated the mace.
- **1837** John Pope died his tombstone is now in the church on the West Wall. His name is spelt backwards, and his age is given in days, apparently to confuse the Devil. He was buried vertically, hoping to be the first to rise on judgement day.



TOMBSTONE OF JOHN POPE

[FROM AN ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY BARNARD]

- **1838** Protest against Rev. William J. [*The BAD*] St. Aubyn's attempt to raise the 'rate' to cover the cost of church restoration. "*Crowd of youths and idle persons jumped on the seats, jostled in the aisles and filled the church with indecorous cries*" However £800 was raised and then the 'rate' was abolished.
- **1839** Krystyn Lach-Szyrma, a Polish Professor and Colonel (and Polish national hero) first visited Devon after fleeing from a Russian invasion of his home country in 1831. He had initially travelling around Scotland and England and published two books about his travels. Whilst here, he fell in love with a local girl. They married at Stoke Damerel church. He is buried in Stoke Damerel churchyard.
- **1841** Władysław Somerville Lach-Szyrma was born in Devonport, to Sarah and Krystyn Lach-Szyrma. He was ordained in 1865 and in 1875 became vicar of St. Peter's, Newlyn. He wrote poetry and science-fiction, championed the Cornish language and supported the local fishermen.
- **1849** Cholera epidemic. 1,894 died in the area.

1851 – Great Exhibition in London. Stoke Damerel church pulpit was one of the exhibits at that event.



PULPIT FROM THE GREAT EXHIBITION 1851

[FROM AN ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY BARNARD]

1855 – Alfred Wallis was born in Devonport. Initially he trained as a basket maker, then became a deep-sea fisherman sailing in schooners between Penzance and Newfoundland. In 1890 he set up his business of "Wallis, Alfred, Marine Stores Dealer" in St Ives. He took up painting in 1922. Two years later he was discovered by Ben Nicholson [who was later to marry Barbara Hepworth]. Self-taught, Wallis never trained as an artist, but is now considered one of the country's best 'naïve' painters. However, he died in poverty in Madron workhouse in 1942. His artist friends arranged for his grave, which is in St. Ives cemetery, to be completely decorated with glazed tiles, created by Bernard Leach in the style of one of Wallis' paintings.

1859 – The organ builder, George Hele (who had been born in 1836 when Stoke Damerel's first organ had been installed) married Mary Ann Calvert at Stoke church.

1864 – Edward St. Aubyn, the first mayor of Devonport, gave the mayor's chain of office to the Corporation.

1868 – New chancel built alongside the location of the original chancel at the East End of the church.

1868 – Robert Falcon Scott [of the Antarctic, a distant relative of Sir Walter Scott and father of Sir Peter Scott, the famous naturalist] was born. He was baptised at Stoke Damerel Church, his family living at Outlands. He reached the South Pole in 1912 only to discover that he had just been beaten to the Pole by a Norwegian team of explorers. He and all other members of the British expedition perished on the return journey across the frozen wasteland of Antarctica.

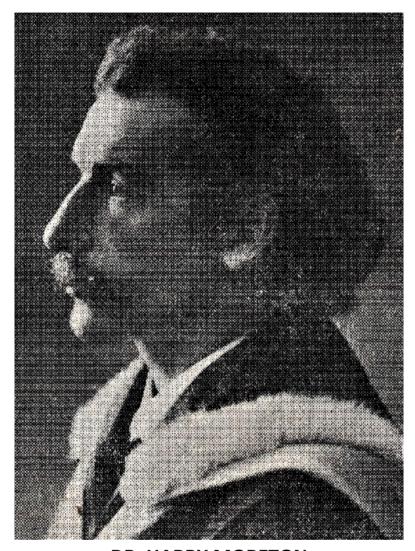


CAPTAIN ROBERT FALCON SCOTT

[HENRY MAULL (1829–1914) AND JOHN FOX (1832–1907). SOURCE - PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS]

- 1871 Burials in churchyard limited to walled graves and vaults only.
- **1872** Smallpox epidemic. 448 died in the area.
- **1873** Organ moved from rear gallery to current position.
- **1874** 10-year-old Harry Morton was appointed church organist and held the post for five years. His mother was choir mistress. However, the organ could not be played for three weeks. The previous organist had been sacked and refused to give back the key. Morton later became famous as a local broadcaster and concert

organist. He was also organist at the (now Minster) church of St. Andrew in Royal Parade for many years until his retirement in 1958, only three years before his death at the age of 97.



DR. HARRY MORETON

[FROM AN ORIGINAL 1956 CHURCH CONCERT PROGRAMME IN STOKE DAMEREL CHURCH ARCHIVES]

1876 – Concerned about the welfare of sailors, when in port, 'Aggie' Weston opened the first Royal Sailors Rest in Devonport. When she died in 1918, thousands lined the route of her funeral cortege, from the Dockyard chapel to Weston Mill cemetery, including about 2,000 naval officers and men. She was the first woman to be buried with full naval honours.

1878 – First Stoke Damerel church magazine published.

1879 – Battle of Rorke's Drift in South Africa. Approximately 150 British Troops were attacked at the Mission Station by up to 4,000 Zulu warriors. The British lost 17 men. 15 were wounded, including Sergeant Francis Atwood who was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. He was brought back to the Military Hospital opposite Stoke Damerel Church. His memorial is located on the South Wall of the church.

1891 – 'The Great March Blizzard of the West' hits the South West of England. 200 perished, along with thousands of animals. Captain Andrew Haggard [brother of the novelist Ryder Haggard] was based in Raglan Barracks and wrote to The Western Morning News – "...whatever the cyclone might do in the way of lulling occasionally down at the Raglan, on the top of Stoke Hill it blizzed all night with perfect impartiality." At Stoke Damerel Rectory, then at Wingfield Villas, the storm sent a large chimney stack crashing through the roof into the drawing room – "doing great damage to some valuable furniture."

1893 – Many websites suggest that Leslie Hore-Belisha was born in Devonport. However, his birth certificate confirms that he was born in Hampstead. He was the Member of Parliament for Devonport between 1923 and 1945 and had a home in Albemarle Villas. He was responsible for the introduction of the National Driving Test, the 30mph speed limit and Belisha Beacons, when he was Minister of Transport.



BARON HORE-BELISHA
[BASSANO LTD, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS]

1899 – Paradise Road was widened, taking up part of the churchyard.

1903 – St. Mary's Lady Chapel, Crypt and Vestries were built in Collingwood Road. These were the only parts of the proposed Anglican Cathedral to be constructed and were eventually demolished in 1967.



PHOTOGRAPHS OF RECTORY AND ST. MARY'S CRYPT
[FROM DOCUMENTS IN STOKE DAMEREL CHURCH ARCHIVES]

1911 – Guy Burgess [spied for USSR during the Cold War] born in Devonport and lived at No. 2 Albemarle Villas. He died in 1963, at the age of 52, in Moscow.

1914 – The towns of Devonport and Stonehouse amalgamated with Plymouth.

1916 – Battle of Jutland on First of June, in the Baltic, against Germany. Britain suffered most casualties, but the German fleet was trapped in port for the remainder of the war. A number of those from this parish who perished are listed on the Stoke Damerel church War Memorials, including a former Stoke curate, Rev. George Morgan and Major Francis Harvey V.C.

1922 – Reverend Masterman became Rector of Stoke Damerel.



BISHOP MASTERMAN, RECTOR OF STOKE DAMEREL

[FROM AN ORIGINAL FRAMED PRINT HANGING IN STOKE DAMEREL CHURCH BUILDING]

- 1923 Reverend Masterman became the first Bishop of Plymouth.
- **1924** The mineral collection of Sir John St. Aubyn was passed from Devonport Civil and Military Library to its present location at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, now known as *'The Box'*.

1925 onward – Some of the twentieth century choir pews, the first Rectors Board, a Litany Desk and both Stoke Damerel church War Memorials are considered to be important pieces by local woodcarver Violet Pinwill, who's work can be seen in over 100 churches in the South-west, including Truro Cathedral.



FIRST WORLD WAR MEMORIAL ATTRIBUTED TO VIOLET PINWILL

[FROM AN ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY BARNARD]

1933 and 1936 – Hugh Ruttledge led two unsuccessful expeditions to climb Mount Everest. He lived in Stoke during the later years of his life. A small wall tablet in his memory can be found on the West Wall within the church.

1935 – Dockyard engineering worker Bert *'Stormy'* Medland elected Lord Mayor of Plymouth. In 1945 he became the Labour MP for Drake Ward.

1936 – Stoke Damerel Churchwarden Walter Littleton elected Lord Mayor of Plymouth. His name is inscribed on the 1937 Lord Mayor's pew frontal below the city coat-of-arms. This frontal can now be seen set against the wall in the southeast corner of the church.



LORD MAYOR'S PEW FRONTAL CARVED BY JAMES B. HUNT
[FROM AN ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY BARNARD]

1939 to 1945 – Many servicemen from this area perished during W.W.2. including three members of the St. Aubyn family (in addition to three members of the family who had been killed in W.W.1.). Local citizens also died during the Blitz, among them Charles Cheverton F.R.I.B.A., who had been involved in organising much of the pre-war carved wood panelling and new pews installed in the church.

1963 – The City Council took over the churchyard and flattened gravestones.

- 1974 Pat Gray publishes "Stoke Damerel Parish Church A History".
- 1977 Lead stolen from organ loft roof, allowing water to enter. Following replacement of the lead, Hele & Co. repaired the organ.
- 1977 Bells re-hung as a peal of eight.
- **1977** Pat Gray's History of Stoke Damerel, 2nd. Edition sold at 20d. per copy.
- 1986 Stoke Damerel Parish Hall was declared unsafe and was closed. The Parish Hall and the Church of England Men's Club building were subsequently both demolished. The new Parish Centre was then built adjacent to the church.
- **2016** Major works undertaken including new lighting, removal of all of the congregation pews, and the floor being re-laid to one level in limestone, with underfloor heating.
- **2018** Reverend Keith Robus M.A., R.N., formerly Church of England Chaplain of Britannia Naval College, Dartmouth, becomes the 46th. Rector of Stoke Damerel parish church since the year 1310.



REVEREND KEITH ROBUS R.N.
[FROM AN ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH ON STOKE DAMEREL CHURCH FACEBOOK PAGE]

- **2020** New sound and camera system installed which allows Stoke Damerel parish church to broadcast church services live, to the world, via 'YouTube'.
- **2020** Installation of second Rectors Board, created by local wood carver, Eric Anning, using hardwood salvaged from a redundant 1930's pew [original designed by Chas Cheverton and carved by James B. Hunt], combined with hardwood carvings taken from redundant 1950's altar rail [original carved by Violet Pinwill].



SECOND RECTORS BOARD BY ERIC ANNING

[FROM AN ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH ON STOKE DAMEREL CHURCH FACEBOOK PAGE]

2021 – Major overhaul and repairs undertaken to the 1836 organ, by Michael Farley. The organ had been moved to its present location in 1873, then extensively re-designed by Hele and Son in 1883, followed by further major works in 1904, and in the 1970's.