

SAMUEL LILLYCROP

On Sunday, 20th March 1863, speakers described Samuel Lillycrop as 'a faithful minister', 'a man of unwavering principles'. This was at the end of his farewell service when he retired as minister of Victoria Street Baptist Church. Less than two years later, because of his 'unwavering principles' his name was erased from the Church Roll, and he was no longer a member. According to *Windsor and Eton Express* of 28th March 'the chapel was filled by a large and attentive congregation, comprising, in addition to the ordinary attendants,



Samuel Lillycrop on his retirement in 1863

many of those in the habit of attending other places of worship in the town'. During his lifetime and until 1891, there were two distinct Baptist Churches in England – General Baptists (Armenians) and Particular Baptists (Calvinists). Windsor was a Particular Baptist

Church. Calvin wrote that there was sin in everyone – original sin – and that nothing impure was acceptable in the presence of God. Strict Particular Baptists believed that only those who were Baptized by immersion were pure enough to take Communion at the Lord's Table. (Closed Communion). Others believed that all Christians should be allowed to His table (Open Communion). In the first half of the nineteenth century disagreement between the two groups was nationwide. Samuel could never accept Open Communion.

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Samuel Lillycrop was born in Crediton, Devon on 14th February 1795. According to the Baptist Magazine of 1867 he wrote what the article calls a 'diary', which has not been found, called *The Records of a Sinner Saved by Grace*. In it, he described himself as 'Shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, and brought forth as a transgressor from the womb'. He says that during his childhood he nearly met his death three times, once by scalding, and twice by drowning. When he was older he was sent to a relative to train him as a musician. He was quite talented and seems to have become a reasonable composer. However, his master did not look after him, and he returned home to his parents. It was when he was sixteen that he went for a swim in the River Exe and was once more nearly drowned but was 'not moved by thankfulness' for his deliverance. It was then that he met Mary. She came from a Christian family, and under her influence he began to attend the Wesleyan Chapel. He began to work harder in his daily life and before long the couple were married.

The article in the Baptist Magazine tells how he heard a sermon preached by Dr. Hawtrey, later to become Headmaster and Provost of Eton, the text of which was 'Lazarus, come forth'. He never forgot the impression that those words made on him. So began a gradual process of religious experience at the end of which he became Baptised by a friend at Plymouth. He began to teach at Sunday School and later to preach in and around Crediton. Then to Kenton (Devon), where he became a regular preacher at a newly founded Baptist Church. This ended when he became ill. He had to give up his secular work and his preaching and for a time, on doctor's advice, travelled around the country and on the continent.

It was in 1839 that Samuel was appointed Minister of Dover First Church. It was during this period that 16 members found fault with