

## DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE PLYMOUTH ATHENÆUM (PREVIOUSLY PLYMOUTH INSTITUTION & DEVON & CORNWALL NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY)

NOTE: Founded on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1812 as the **Plymouth Institute**, the organisation was soon renamed the **Plymouth Institution**. The **Devon & Cornwall Natural History Society**, formed in 1838, amalgamated with the Plymouth Institution in 1851 and was re-named the **Plymouth Institution and Devon & Cornwall Natural History Society**. The organisation was renamed the **Plymouth Athenæum** on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1961.



### Acland, Sir Thomas Dyke, 11<sup>th</sup> Baronet (1809 - 1898) Educator and Politician

Sir Thomas Dyke Acland (*left*) was the Conservative M.P. for West Somerset and later the Liberal M.P for North Devon.

He maintained a life-long interest in educational matters and in 1857-58 took a leading part in the foundation of the Oxford Local Examination Board. He took an active part in the volunteer movement, raising five corps of mounted rifles and becoming Lt. Colonel of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Devonshire Volunteer Rifles. Sir Thomas lived at Killerton, the Acland family home at Broadclyst. He was a Lecturing Member of the Plymouth Institution from 1855/65 – 1870/71.

### Babington, Charles Cardale (1808-1895) Botanist and Archaeologist

Babington (*right*) overlapped at Cambridge with Charles Darwin and, in 1829, they argued over who should have the pick of beetle specimens from a local dealer. He obtained the chair of botany at Cambridge in 1861 and wrote several papers on insects.

‘Beetles’ Babington, who was a member of the Devon & Cornwall Natural History Society, was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1851.



### Barham, Dr Charles Foster (1804 - 1884) Physician

Barham (*right*) was born in Truro and educated in Penzance and Bodmin before entering Downing College, Cambridge, where he matriculated in 1821. After studying medicine at Edinburgh, Paris and Bologna, Barham took his M.B. at Cambridge in 1827. He then practised at the Plymouth Dispensary and at Tavistock for the next four years and it was at this time he joined the Plymouth Institution. He delivered one of the addresses at the opening of the 1831/32 session “The Progress of Literature” and during the same session gave two more lectures on “Physiological Illustrations of History”. He took a great interest in all matters concerning the Institution.



Barham moved to Truro in 1832 joining the staff of the Royal Cornwall Infirmary and eventually becoming Consulting Physician. He joined the Royal Institution of Cornwall becoming Joint Secretary and later President and over the years contributing many papers to the Journal. He was appointed a Magistrate for Truro and at one time became an Alderman. As a medical man Barham became very concerned about the health and welfare of the Cornish miners who contributed so much to the economy of the county. Among other things that he advocated was better ventilation in the mines.

When Charles Barham died in October 1884 the Plymouth Institution lost its oldest Corresponding Member who had commenced as such in 1856, having been a Lecturing Member in the early 1830s.



**Bate, Charles Spence (1819 - 1889) Scientist and Dentist**

Correspondent of Charles Darwin, leading authority on Crustacea and one of the country's foremost dentists, Spence Bate (*left*) was a Fellow of the Royal Society and the Linnean Society and President of the British Dental Association and the Odontological Society – the first from outside the capital.

He also served as President of both the Devonshire Association and the Plymouth Institution (Athenaeum).

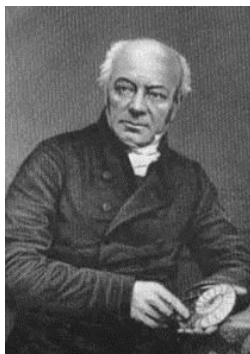


**Bracken, Charles William (1869 - 1950) Headmaster and Author**

Bracken was born in Plymouth and educated at Plymouth Public School where he became a Pupil Teacher in 1882. In 1886 he went to St. Mark's College, Chelsea and obtained a Teacher's Certificate. Returning to Plymouth he became successively Assistant Master at Plymouth Public School, Headmaster of Mount Street School and in 1900 Headmaster of the Pupil Teacher's Centre at Plymouth Technical School. Bracken was elected a Lecturing Member of the Institution in 1901 and contributed many valuable lectures.

His knowledge of zoology and entomology was extensive and in 1906 he was elected a Fellow of the Entomological Society and in the same year he was elected Curator of Invertebrata by the Institution. He gave many lectures on entomology over the years including the third part of the lecture given in 1943 on the "Natural History of the Rubble Heaps". He was elected President in 1916, Secretary in 1920 and elected to Council in 1923/24. He retired from teaching in 1928 and prior to that the subject of his many lectures had been the history of Plymouth and of the Plymouth Institution. Among these lectures had been one on "The Portraits and Pictures in the Plymouth Athenæum", (1936).

This became especially valuable later on as it listed so much of what was lost in 1941. At the outbreak of war in 1939, which caused the President (J.L. Palmer) to be away from Plymouth, Bracken was appointed Deputy President from September to December 1939. In 1934 he became very active in the Devonshire Association being General Editor of the Transactions for 1935/37 and President in 1940. In 1927 Bracken published his first book "A History of the Plymouth Public School" and this was followed in 1931 by his "History of Plymouth and her Neighbours", the book by which he best deserves to be known and remembered. Charles Bracken died in November 1950. He was a member of the Plymouth Institution from 1901 until 1950.



**Buckland, William (1784-1856) Theologian and Geologist**

William Buckland (*left*), who was born at Axminster in Devon, was a theologian who became Dean of Westminster. He was also a geologist and palaeontologist, writing the first full account of a fossil dinosaur, which he named *Megalosaurus*. He was praised for demonstrating how scientific analysis could reconstruct events from the distant past.

Early in his career he believed that he had found geological evidence of the Biblical flood, but later became convinced that glaciation provided a better explanation. He played an important role in promoting that theory in Britain.

Buckland was a prominent and influential scientific celebrity and a friend of the Tory Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel. In co-operation with Adam Sedgwick and Charles Lyell, he prepared the report leading to the establishment of the Geological Survey of Great Britain.

Charles Darwin and Buckland exchanged information and Buckland praised Darwin's 1837 paper on the Formation of mould as establishing a new 'geological power'.



#### **Carrington, Nicholas Toms (1777 - 1830) Poet**

Carrington (*left*) was born in Plymouth. After leaving school he became a clerk in the Dockyard but disliking the work so much he left and went to sea. He was present at the defeat of the Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent in 1797. At the end of his naval service he settled in Maidstone, but returned to Plymouth Dock in 1809 where he established a successful school. He wrote from an early age, his poems being mainly descriptive of his native county. Carrington was the father of F.G. Carrington. He died in 1830.

He was a member of the Institution briefly when it was first founded.



#### **Coleridge, Rev Derwent (1800 - 1883) Writer and Educationalist**

Derwent Coleridge (*left*) was the son of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He was not a natural creative writer but was a natural critic and editor. He was also a brilliant linguist. Becoming estranged from his father he moved to Plymouth where he became a teacher and very involved in the intellectual life of the town, joining the Plymouth Institution as a Lecturing Member. After being ordained in 1827 he accepted the living of Helston with a school attached. In 1841 he was appointed Principal of the newly founded College of St. Mark in Chelsea which later became St. Mark and St. John. The College began the move to Plymouth in 1969 and is now based at Derriford.

He was a Corresponding Member of the Plymouth Institution from 1830 until 1878

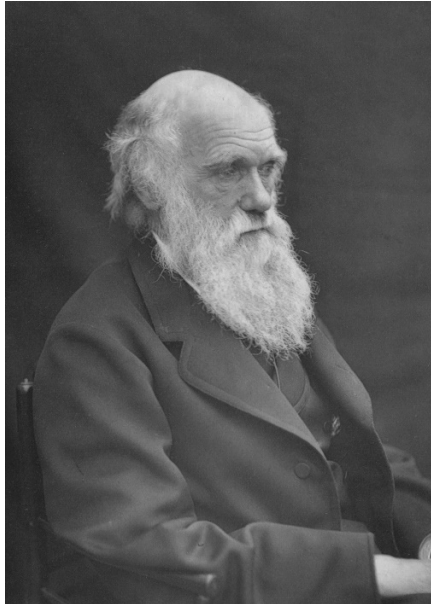
#### **Collier, Sir Robert Porrett, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Monkswell (1817 - 1886) Judge, Politician and Artist**

Robert Collier (*right*) was born at Mount Tamar, Plymouth, the son of John Collier owner of Collier and Son, Southside Street, Corn and Timber Merchants (reputed to be founded in 1676). He was educated at Plymouth Grammar School before entering Trinity College, Cambridge from where he went on to have a brilliant legal and political career. He joined the Inner Temple in June 1843 and joined the Western Circuit and the Devonshire, Plymouth and Devonport Sessions. Local influence and wide knowledge gave Collier a good practice. He was also a witty, sharp and eloquent Advocate. He became Counsel to the Admiralty and Judge Advocate to the Fleet. Later he was appointed Solicitor General. From 1852 – 1871 Collier was Liberal M.P. for Plymouth. He wrote little during his life and it was through his painting that he became distinguished, exhibiting frequently in the Royal Academy.



He was President of the Devonshire Association in 1879, addressing the Annual Meeting at Ilfracombe on the progress and development of the art of Painting. A highly accomplished man in more than one sphere.

Collier was knighted in 1863 and created Baron Monkswell of Monkswell, Devon in July 1885. He died in October 1886 having been a Member of the Plymouth Institution from 1855 – 1885. The title is still in existence, currently held by the 5<sup>th</sup> Baron.



#### **Darwin, Charles Robert Darwin (1809 - 1882) Scientist**

The great scientist, Charles Darwin (*left*), was a regular visitor to The Athenæum in October and November 1831 ahead of his five-year voyage of discovery aboard HMS Beagle. Darwin calibrated equipment in The Athenæum's garden and attended a lecture by Snow Harris.

The Beagle was one of the first trial vessels for Snow Harris' lightning conductors for ships system, and survived lightning strikes unharmed during Darwin's voyage. Darwin socialised with Snow Harris and other members of the organisation during his stay in Plymouth.

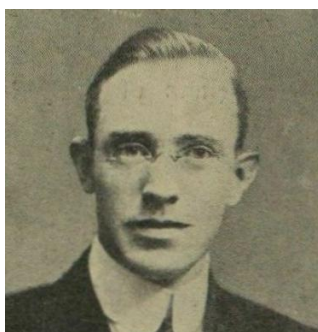
Darwin later became a member of the organisation and its members - including William Pengelly, Charles Hamilton Smith, Charles Spence Bate, Albert Gunter and Baron Avebury (John Lubbock) - formed part of Darwin's 19th Century world wide web of information and collection sources.

#### **De la Beche, Sir Henry (1796-1855) Geologist and Palaeontologist**

Sir Henry (*right*) was the first director of the Geological Survey of Great Britain, who helped pioneer early geological survey methods. De la Beche spent his early life living with his mother in Lyme Regis, where he acquired a love for geology.

Years later, after returning to the South West, he began the detailed investigation of the rocks of Devon and Cornwall. Contact with the mining community gave him the idea that the nation ought to compile a geological map of the United Kingdom, and collect and preserve specimens to illustrate, and aid in further developing, its mineral industries.

Among their correspondence, Charles Darwin discussed questions about his coral reef theory that were raised by De la Beche.



#### **Foot, Rt. Hon. Isaac (1880 - 1960) Politician and Solicitor**

Isaac Foot (*left*) was born in Plymouth, the son of a carpenter and undertaker, and educated at Plymouth Public School and the Hoe Grammar School. He then worked at the Admiralty in London, but returned to Plymouth to train as a solicitor. In 1903, with his friend Edgar Bowden, he set up the law firm Foot and Bowden, which exists today as Foot Anstey.

He became a member of the Liberal Party, and in 1907 was elected to Plymouth City Council, of which he served as a member for 20 years.



As Deputy Mayor in 1920 he represented Plymouth in the United States for the celebrations 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower.

Foot was elected as Member of Parliament for Bodmin in 1922, losing his seat in 1924 but regaining it in 1929. He held the seat until he lost again in the 1935 general election.

In 1931 he became Secretary for Mines in the National Government, but resigned the following year. In 1945 he was chosen unanimously as Lord Mayor of Plymouth, despite not being a member of the council.

His son, Michael, became a Member of Parliament and was Leader of the Labour Party from 1980–83.

He joined the Society in 1926 and the highlight of his time as a member came on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1943 when he delivered a lecture on ‘The Battle of Freedom Fields, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1643’ at Sherwell Church Hall.



### **Foulston, John (1772 - 1841) Architect and Town Planner**

John Foulston (*left*) was a pupil of Thomas Hardwick and set up a practice in London in 1796. In 1810 Foulston, who had worked with John Nash in London, had been appointed to design and build the Royal Theatre and Hotel on land owned by the Corporation in George Street. Foulston had become an early member of the Plymouth Institution (Athenaeum) and gave his services freely to the Society. He designed the ‘Athenæum’ to match the classical facades of the Theatre and Hotel.

Foulston was responsible for the creation of Union Street from the Frankfort Gate which was built across marshland to unite the three towns (Plymouth, Stonehouse and Devonport).

Not long before he retired, he took into his partnership the architect George Wightwick, who succeeded to his practice. Foulston became a fellow of the Institute of British Architects in 1838, and in the same year published “The Public Buildings of the West of England”, a book that included plans and drawings of many of his buildings.

In his later years, he created an elaborate water garden at his home (Athenian Cottage in Mutley), and he was wont to drive round the streets of the town in a gig disguised as a Roman war chariot.

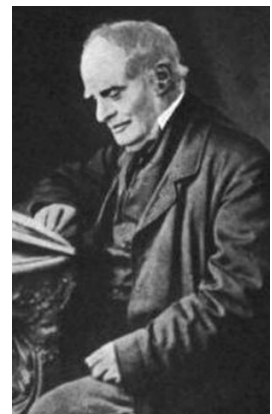
He died at his home and was buried in St Andrew’s new cemetery in Plymouth.

### **Fox, Robert Were (1789-1877) Natural Philosopher and Inventor**

Robert Were Fox (*right*) was born in Falmouth in April 1789. The Fox family were members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and were descended from members who had long settled in Cornwall, although they were not related to George Fox who had introduced the community into the county.

He is known mainly for his work on the temperature of the earth and his construction of a compass to measure magnetic dip at sea.

Fox made improvements to the dip circle which made it a practical aid for polar navigation. In the 1830s, he developed the first dip circle that could be used on a moving ship.



Alternately known as a dip needle or dip circle, the device is a compass pivoted to move in the plane containing the magnetic field vector of the earth. It will then show the angle which the magnetic field makes with the vertical.

Dip needles measured the angle between the horizon and the Earth's magnetic field (the dip angle). They were used in surveying, mining and prospecting as well as for the study of magnetism.



**Gibbons, (Edward) Stanley (1840 - 1913) Chemist and Philatelist**

Stanley Gibbons (*left*) was born in Plymouth and on leaving school was apprenticed to his father who was a pharmaceutical chemist. He inherited the business following the death of his father.

Stanley always had a keen interest in stamps and his father realising this, had allowed him to run a business from a desk in the corner of the chemist shop.

The philately business continued to grow and he eventually sold the chemist business and moved to London in 1874 where he went on to establish the world's leading stamp dealing business

He was an Associate Member of the Plymouth Institution from 1864 to 1872.

**Gray, John Edward (1800 - 7 March 1875) Zoologist and Philatelist**

John Edward Gray (*right*) was Keeper of Zoology at the British Museum from 1840 until 1874. He published several catalogues of the museum collections that included comprehensive discussions of animal groups as well as descriptions of new species. He improved the zoological collections to make them amongst the best in the world.

Frequent correspondent with Charles Darwin, including on the sexual differences in sloths, their work overlapped and influenced each other, particularly on the topics of pigs and Cirripedia.



Gray, alongside Stanley Gibbons, is one of two former Athenaeum men of global significance in stamp collecting. On 1<sup>st</sup> May 1840, the day the Penny Black first went on sale, he purchased several with the intent to save rather than use them - and became the world's first stamp collector.

**Günther, Dr Albert (1830-1914) Zoologist**

In 1875 Dr Albert Günther (*right*) became Keeper of Zoology at the Natural History Museum. In 1877, he was elected a member of the Plymouth Institution. He oversaw the relocation of the Natural History Museum's collections to its new building in South Kensington in 1883.

Günther never endorsed evolutionary theory. Due to his religious upbringing, he saw the purpose of zoology to be the definition of species. He did not believe theory had a place in zoological investigation. Despite this, Charles Darwin acknowledged parts of the 'Descent of Man' owed much to Günther's work and he greatly influenced Darwin's fellow evolutionist Alfred Russel Wallace.





### **Harris, Sir William Snow (1791 - 1867) Electrical Engineer**

Sir William (*left*) was born and educated in Plymouth. After leaving school he went on to study medicine and chemistry. He married in 1824 and the marriage settlement was sufficient to allow him to give up medical practice.

He then spent the rest of his life pursuing his scientific interests in electricity and magnetism. It was his work on lightning conductors for ships that was most significant and to which he devoted a large part of his life.

His theories on conductors were not universally shared and it was not until 1843 that the government recognised Harris's work and installed conductors on ships. Harris was very active in the Plymouth community where he became a J.P. and was well known in musical circles.

He joined the Plymouth Institution around 1818 where he soon became Curator of Apparatus. He was Vice President three times and President twice, in 1847 – 48 and 1853 – 54. He was knighted in 1847. Sir William Snow Harris was a member of the Plymouth Institution for nearly 36 years.

### **Header, Jonathan Nash (1809 – 1876) Electrical Engineer**

Jonathan Nash Header (*right*) was born and educated in Plymouth, he developed an interest in science at a very early age.

He worked as a school master and was the first master in Plymouth to include science as a school subject. He invented an electrical telegraph and became very well known in the south-west as a lecturer at a very early age. When he was 23 he was blinded while experimenting with explosive compounds but he did not allow this to stop him working.

He had a long association with Snow Harris over the years. He contributed a lot of research into the invention of the induction coil and also advised on the Atlantic cable.



Header joined the Plymouth Institution in 1833 and was Curator of Apparatus for many years. He was Vice President from 1857/58 – 1861/2. He was also an active member of the Devonshire Association. He was a member of the Plymouth Institution from 1833 to 1875.



### **Henslow, Professor John Stevens (1796-1861) Botanist and Geologist**

Professor of Botany at Cambridge University, the Reverend John Stevens Henslow (*left*) is best remembered as a friend and mentor to his student Charles Darwin.

Through this friendship, Darwin learned a great deal about the practice of natural history before he was awarded his BA in April 1831.

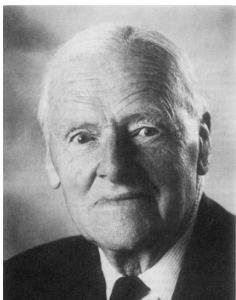
It was Henslow, a member of the Devon and Cornwall Natural History Society, who conveyed the letter of invitation to sail with Captain Robert FitzRoy as a gentlemanly travelling companion and 'scientific person' or naturalist aboard the survey ship *HMS Beagle*.



### **Hooker, Sir William Jackson (1785-1865) Botanist**

Sir William (*left*) was an English systematic botanist and organiser, and botanical illustrator. He held the post of Regius Professor of Botany at Glasgow University, and was Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. He was a frequent correspondent of Charles Darwin and his son, Joseph Dalton Hooker, was one of Darwin's closest friends.

Joseph Hooker was instrumental in creating the device whereby Russell Wallace's paper on evolution was accompanied by Darwin's notes and his letter to Asa Gray (showing his prior realisation of natural selection) in a presentation to the Linnean Society. It was Hooker Jr who formally presented this material to the Linnean Society – in the absence of Darwin and Wallace – in 1858.



### **Hurrell, Henry George MBE (1901 – 1981) Naturalist**

Henry Hurrell was born in Plymouth, the son of a prosperous corn merchant. Following his education at Plymouth College he graduated from Christ's College, Cambridge in 1920 in Natural Sciences. From then on his entire life was devoted to the study of the flora and fauna of this country and around the world. For over 40 years he and his wife lived at Wrangaton where he kept a variety of animals which he studied, the most famous being Atlanta the seal. She was the subject of one of his better known books and of several television programmes.

On one occasion members of the Athenæum were invited to Wrangaton to meet Atlanta, a very engaging creature. "H.G." travelled widely around the world filming many animals in their natural habitat and frequently appeared on radio and television. At home in Devon he served as a J.P. for many years. He and his family were totally committed to Mutley Baptist Church, where he became a Deacon and an Elder. There are several Baptist Churches in the Plymouth area where the name of Hurrell appears on the Foundation Stone! In 1930, at the age of 29, he was appointed President of the Plymouth Institution, the youngest person ever to be so. He enthralled the members with his fascinating lectures on many occasions and in recognition of his service was awarded Honorary Life Membership. He delivered his last lecture in September 1980, 50 years after becoming President.

He was a member of the Plymouth Institution, later the Plymouth Athenæum for over 50 years.



### **Jackson, Sir John (1861 – 1919) Civil Engineer and Contractor**

Sir John Jackson's (*left*) contracting company became known the world over as did his shipping line which he founded principally to transport his machinery and materials to wherever his company was working around the world. His greatest work in Britain was the extension of the Keyham Yard at Devonport, which took from 1896 – 1907 to complete and cost nearly £4,000,000.

He and his family lived in Plymouth for the duration of this work. He represented Devonport as a Unionist Member of Parliament from 1910 – 1918 when he resigned.

Sir John Jackson was an Associate Member of the Plymouth Institution from 1897 – 1899.





### **Jameson, Professor Robert (1774-1854) Naturalist**

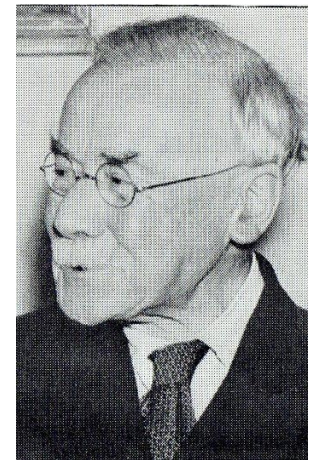
As Regius Professor of Natural History at the University of Edinburgh for 50 years, Robert Jameson () was notable for his advanced scholarship, his superb museum collection and for his tuition of Charles Darwin.

Darwin attended Robert Jameson's natural history course at the University of Edinburgh in his teenage years, learning about stratigraphic geology and assisting with the collections of the Museum of Edinburgh University, then one of the largest in Europe. At Jameson's Wernerian Natural History Association, the young Darwin saw John James Audubon give a demonstration of his method of using wires to prop up birds to draw or paint them in natural positions.

### **Judge, James Joseph (1869 – 1954) Journalist and Social Worker**

James Judge (*right*) was born in Dublin in 1869 and came to Plymouth in his early thirties. He was already an experienced journalist and worked on the Western Evening Herald and later the Western Independent until his retirement in 1946. For many of these years he worked closely with another well-known Plymouth journalist, R.A.J. Walling.

Right from the time he first came to Plymouth James Judge devoted a great deal of time and energy to social work. He was founder and first honorary secretary of the Civic Guild of Help, now known as the Plymouth Guild of Voluntary Service. He also did a tremendous amount of work for “crippled people” in the area, the establishment of day nurseries and for the aftercare of tuberculosis patients of which there were many at that time. His connection with social work soon brought him into contact with the Astors, with whom he formed a great personal friendship. When Lord and Lady Astor founded the Virginia House Settlement, Judge flung himself wholeheartedly into the development of this project.



James Judge was a valued member of the Plymouth Institution, serving on Council and as Curator of Anthropology. He was elected President in 1926-27. He also worked for the Plymouth Proprietary Library and the Old Plymouth Society. He devoted his life to the service of others. Although he showed true humility he had a strong personality and would fight for a cause he truly believed in. He died on 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1954.

James Joseph Judge was elected to the Institution in 1901 and remained a member until his death.



### **Lang, Rita F.R.C.O. L.R.A.M., A.R.C.M. (1899 - 1985) Musician**

Miss Rita Lang (*left*) was one of Plymouth's most qualified musicians and a much respected, devoted and long-standing member of the Athenaeum, joining in the early 1930s.

As well as training many pupils privately in singing and playing, she taught music at St Dunstan's Abbey. She was very dedicated member and official of the Plymouth Organists Association, the Plymouth Madrigal Society and Plymouth Society of Music.

During the Second World War, she arranged a number of lunchtime concerts in the Abbey Hall. Later, she founded and directed the Plymouth Singers. Her musical standards were always high, but she brought enjoyment as well as enlightenment to many.

Her father, who owned a jeweller's shop in Plymouth, was at one time organist of Greenbank Methodist Church.

Rita Laing was President of the Athenaeum from 1949 – 51 and awarded Life Membership in 1979.

### **Leach, Dr William Elford (1791 - 1836) Zoologist and Marine Biologist**

Leach was an early Plymouth Institution member. Born at Hoe Gate in the then town of Plymouth, he brought British zoology back to the cutting edge of the subject in the first third of the 19th Century.

Consequently, the next generation of British zoologists were on much firmer ground. The next generation included Charles Darwin and his contemporary evolutionist, Alfred Russel Wallace.

Darwin's correspondence with Charles Spence Bate and fellow Plymouth Institution member, John Edward Gray, among others, contain many references to Leach's work in the field.

Born in 1791, Leach had been elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society by the age of 25. He worked in the Natural History Department of the British Museum, where he had responsibility for the zoological collections.

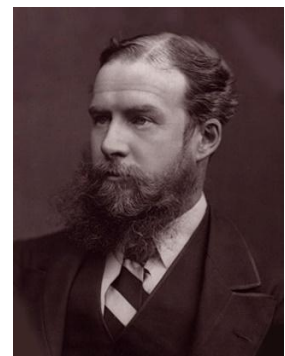
But Leach suffered a nervous breakdown due to overwork in 1821 and became unable to continue his researches. He resigned from the museum in March 1822 and his elder sister, Jane, took him to continental Europe to convalesce. They lived in Italy and, briefly, Malta and he died from cholera in San Sebastiano Curone, near Tortona, north of Genoa on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1836.

If Leach is remembered now, it is for the scientific names of the many species that honour him. In the years up to 1850 alone, 137 new species were named after him: leachii, leachiana, leachella, elfordii, elfordiana and multiple other variants.

### **Lubbock, Sir John (1834-1913) Liberal MP and Scientist**

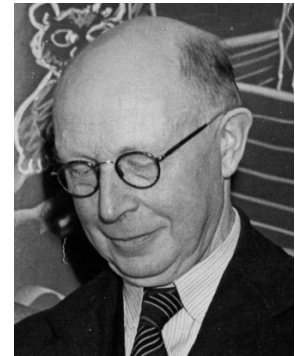
Sir John Lubbock (*right*), Baron Avebury, made significant contributions in archaeology, ethnography, and biology and was influential in 19th century debates on evolution.

Brought up near Downe, he was a frequent visitor to Down House, becoming the closest of Charles Darwin's younger friends. Their relationship stimulated Lubbock's passion for science and evolutionary theory, and he helped Darwin spot crucial errors in his calculations. He introduced the first law to protect the UK's archaeological and architectural heritage.



### **Monk, (Sidney) Gordon (1889 – 1963) Electrical Engineer**

Sidney Gordon Monk (*right*) came to Plymouth in 1919 when he was appointed to the staff of the Plymouth Technical College after War service in the London Electrical Engineers. The following year he was appointed Head of the Electrical Engineering Department of the College, a post he held for 34 years until his retirement in 1954. Mr. Monk had a very distinguished professional career, many highly trained electrical engineers passing out from his department into their own careers. He devoted much time to the professional bodies associated with his own studies but also had the ability and inclination to become involved with the cultural and community life of his new home.



Gordon Monk joined the Plymouth Institution shortly after his arrival in Plymouth and very soon commenced the series of lectures which he delivered throughout his long membership. These lectures were very popular because of his ability to explain complicated technical matters in simple language, also because of his use of interesting apparatus and models to illustrate his talks, many of which he had designed himself. He was a Council Member for some years, and was elected President in 1933 – 35. Prior to 1939 he concentrated on providing facilities in the Lecture Hall to make it suitable for the production of plays. He hoped by this to widen the appeal of the Institution to a larger number of Plymouth people.

After the Blitz in 1941, Mr. Monk worked very hard to ensure the survival of the Society and he was one of those responsible for securing the temporary premises in Alexandra Road. He took a prominent part in the planning of the new building and was foremost in pursuing the idea that the new building should contain a theatre. He also asked if space could be provided to exhibit engineering models and offered to meet the cost, which, when later estimated, was £1,000. There is a plaque on the wall of what has always been known as the Monk Room, which reads:- “Plymouth and District Society of Model and Experimental Engineer’s Room, provided and furnished from funds donated by the Society’s Founder President, Sidney Gordon Monk”.

Mr. Monk never waived in his determination that the Institution’s new home would be a worthy one and contribute much to the cultural life of Plymouth.

During his very busy retirement he showed his versatility by editing Volume XXIII of the Transactions and also writing a history of the Baring-Gould family and Lewtrenchard House.

Mr. Monk’s death in 1963 ended an association of over 40 years during which he had devoted an extraordinary amount of time and energy to the life of the Plymouth Athenæum.

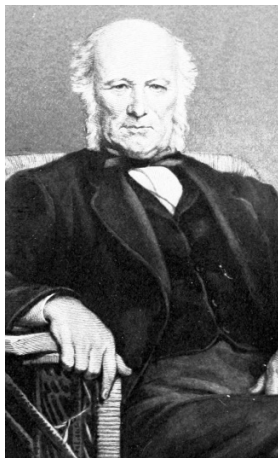
### **Munday, Sir William Luscombe (1865 – 1952) Solicitor**

William Munday was born in 1865 and educated at Kelly College. He served his Articles in London and on returning to Plymouth joined the well-known Plymouth firm of Bulteel and Rowe. He later set up in separate practice in Westwell Street and was there for many years. He married Mary Shelly, the daughter of John Shelly himself a well known Plymouth solicitor and a long standing member of the Plymouth Institution and President in 1875 – 76. William Munday was prominent in local and national politics, representing the Mutley ward for many years and becoming an Alderman. His main interest was in education and he was Chairman of the Plymouth Education Committee; from 1929 – 1939 he was Vice President of the University of the South West, Exeter and for many years was Governor and Chairman of Plymouth College. He was knighted for his public services in 1935. He was elected a Lecturing Member of the Plymouth Institution in 1913, becoming President in 1825 – 26. Vice President in

1936 – 29 and a member of Council in 1916 – 1922 and 1927 – 1932. Honorary Membership was bestowed upon him in 1945.

William Munday was a highly erudite man mainly interested in classical and medieval Italian subjects on which he gave many lectures to the Institution. Later his lectures tended to be on the prevailing tendencies of the times and the possible outcome of these tendencies. He was always willing to use his legal expertise for the benefit of the Plymouth Institution particularly when questions regarding land arose. Examples of this were the proposed purchase of the forecourt of the Athenæum by Plymouth Corporation, the lease of land to Messrs. Andrews and revision of the Articles of Association.

He died on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1952, having been a member of the Institution for 39 years.



### **Pengelly, William (1812-1894) Geologist and Archaeologist**

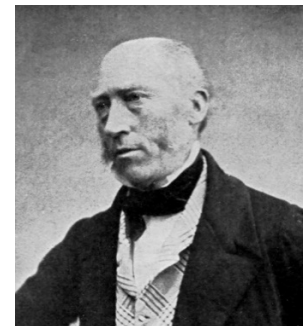
William Pengelly () was another of Charles Darwin's global network of correspondents. Pengelly, whose interests included geology and archaeology, asserted that traditional biblical chronology did not appear to match research he and others had gathered. Pengelly was a regular lecturer at The Athenæum.

In 1861, he advocated the establishment of a local organisation modelled on the British Association for the Advancement of Science but concentrating on Devon and covering all areas of scholarly enquiry. He put the idea to two friends – Spence Bate and Plymouth Institution Curator of Geology, Rev William Harpley, when walking along Millbay Road on a geological excursion. The result was the formation of what would become the Devonshire Association at a meeting at The Athenæum in April 1862.

### **Phillips, John (1800-1874) Geologist**

John Phillips (*right*) was an English geologist and member of the Devon & Cornwall Natural History Society. In 1841, he published the first global geological timescale based on the correlation of fossils in rock strata, thereby helping to standardise terminology including the term Mesozoic, which he coined.

Phillips spent time studying the Palaeozoic fossils of Devon, Cornwall and West Somerset, of which he published a descriptive memoir in 1841.



Darwin and Phillips were regular correspondents. In November 1859 Charles Darwin sent a copy of *On The Origin of Species* to Phillips, but feared he would 'fulminate anathemas' against it. Darwin asked him to read it straight through, otherwise it would be 'unintelligible'.

### **Rowe, Brooking Samuel (1793 – 1853) Topographer**

He was born at Brixham and educated at Plympton Grammar School. Apprenticed to a Kingsbridge bookseller, his father then purchased a bookselling business in Plymouth for him. His leisure was devoted to study and literary pursuits. In 1830 he was elected a member of the Plymouth Institution becoming Vice President in 1835. He gave up bookselling to become ordained, afterwards serving in several Plymouth churches. Of his writings the best known is his "Perambulation of.....Dartmoor", 1848, which was long regarded as the definitive account. It was later revised by his descendant, J. Brooking Rowe, but still remains a classic. He was a member of the Plymouth Institution until 1851.



### **Saunders, William (1823 – 1895) Newspaper Proprietor and Politician**

William Saunders (*right*) was born on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 1823 at Market Lavington, Wiltshire and educated at Devizes. Initially on leaving school he worked for his father, a mill owner, but moved away to open his own quarries supplying stone for the construction of the Great Western Railway. In 1860, with the journalist William Hunt and his brother-in-law Edward Spender, he founded the Western Morning News in Plymouth. The paper began as politically independent but Spender's Whig sympathies gradually dominated giving an anti-radical and anti-home rule bias.



Saunders disapproved and gradually severed all connections with the Western Morning News. He went on to found other newspapers in the north-east of England and in 1868 he founded the Central News Agency, the first of its kind making him a pioneer in syndicating news, although only to his own newspapers. Saunders' sympathy and advocacy of a variety of radical causes gave him great prominence in local and national affairs. In 1885 he entered Parliament for East Hull, but lost the seat in 1886. In 1892 he was returned to Parliament for Walworth (London) a seat he held until his death. He once more demonstrated his passionate radicalism, advocating among other things an eight hour working day. He died at Market Lavington on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1895, having been a member of the Plymouth Institution from 1858/9 – 1875. He was Vice President in 1861 – 62.

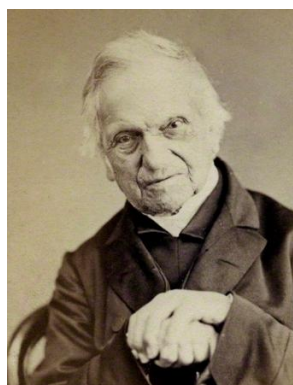
### **Scott, Emma Headmistress**



In April 1917, Miss Emma Scott (*left*) was the first woman to be elected President of the Athenaeum, then known as the Plymouth Institution and Devon & Cornwall Natural History Society.

On 11<sup>th</sup> October 1917, Emma Athenaeum delivered her President's Address entitled 'WOMAN'S WORK'.

Emma, a headmistress who lived in Lockyer Street, was elected to the Society in 1900 and had served as a Vice President for a number of years. She is one of 11 women who have served as President of the Society.



### **Sedgwick, Professor Adam (1785-1873) Geologist and Priest**

Adam Sedgwick (*left*), who was a member of the Devon & Cornwall Natural History Society, is one of the founders of modern geology, proposing the Cambrian and Devonian periods on the geological timescale.

He guided the young Charles Darwin in his early study of geology in 1831. Darwin accompanied him on a field trip to Wales that summer. The two kept up a correspondence during and after the Beagle voyage.

However, Sedgwick, a firm believer in causation by God's will, never accepted the case for evolution made in "On the Origin of Species".

### Smith, Charles Hamilton (1776 – 1859) Soldier and Natural Historian

Charles Hamilton Smith (*right*) was a career soldier, retiring in 1820. From a very early age he sketched and collected information on a wide range of topics including history, zoology, archaeology and topography.

During his military career use was made of his topographical notes of the Ardennes and Canada by the Government which led to him being regarded as a spy in some quarters. On retirement he settled in Plymouth, joining the Plymouth Institution where his lectures made him very well known. Many of Hamilton Smith's volumes of manuscript notes, letters and papers were deposited in the Institution but sadly were destroyed during World War Two.



President of the Devon & Cornwall Natural History Society, he was initially a Corresponding Member of the Institution becoming a full member in 1833 until his death. He was Vice President in 1834 – 35 and an Honorary President 1851 – 59.

### Towson, John Thomas (1804 – 1881) Scientist and Photographer

Towson was born at Fore Street, Devonport and educated at Stoke Classical School. He initially followed his father's trade as maker of chronometers and watches. When the daguerreotype process was introduced in 1839 he and Robert Hunt spent much time studying the process. It was with the aid of Towson's article published in the Philosophical Magazine in November 1839 entitled "On the proper focus for the daguerreotype" that the American, John William Draper took the first sunlit picture of a human face in 1840. Towson went on to devise the method of taking a photograph on glass and using the reflecting camera and with Hunt he developed the production of highly sensitive photographic papers.

In 1846 Towson developed an interest in navigation and became an instructor in the Naval Dockyard. Following Towson's investigations Sir John Herschel persuaded the Admiralty to publish two volumes of his navigational tables. Between 1850 and 1873 he held the post of Scientific Examiner of Masters and Mates at Liverpool. He retired in 1873 still holding the post of Chief Examiner in compasses. In 1853 he spoke to the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society on the subject of the deviation of the compass on iron ships. With the help of William Scoresby he later drew the attention of the British Association to this matter. Shortly afterwards the newly formed Liverpool Compass Committee produced three reports, largely compiled by Towson, which were presented to both Houses of Parliament. In 1857 he was handsomely rewarded for his services to navigation by the Liverpool Shipowners. In 1863 the Board of Trade asked him to prepare a "Manual on the deviation of the compass on iron ships" and in 1870 he prepared a syllabus for examinations in compass deviation which was adopted by the Board of Trade. Although Towson wrote widely on geography and photography it is his writings on navigation for which he is remembered. He died on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1881.



### Weldon, Walter Frank Raphael (1860 – 1906) Zoologist and Biometrician

Walter Weldon (*left*) was born at Highgate, London, the second child of wealthy parents. Educated privately he then matriculated at University College, London, with the intention of pursuing a medical career. He was admitted to St. John's College, Cambridge in April 1878 where he subsequently gave up his medical studies for zoology, obtaining a first class degree in the Natural Sciences Tripos in 1881.

He then moved to the Zoological Stazione in Naples to begin the first of his studies in marine biological organisms. In 1887 Weldon was one of the founding members of the Marine Biological Association station in Plymouth. For the next four years he divided his time between Plymouth and Cambridge. From 1887 Weldon's work centred around the development of a fuller understanding of marine biological phenomena, concentrating on the relationship between various organs of crabs and shrimps including the Plymouth shore crab.

His studies identified changes in the shore crab after environmental change following the building of the Breakwater which caused the fine china clay brought down by rainy weather from Dartmoor to settle in the Sound. Also the expansion of the Dockyard brought an increase in population and therefore the additional sewage caused pollution of the sea.

In 1890 Weldon was appointed to the Jodrell Chair of Zoology at University College, London.

In 1899 he moved to Oxford to take up the Lineacre Chair of Comparative Anatomy. Despite his high offices he continued working on all his various projects up to a week before his early death on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1906.

Walter Weldon was a Lecturing Member of the Plymouth Institution for the four year period he worked at the Marine Biological Laboratory.

### **Weymouth, Richard Frances (1822 – 1902) Philologist and Biblical Scholar**

Richard Weymouth (*right*) was born at Plymouth Dock (now Devonport) and after attending school and university he ran a successful school in Plymouth. A devout Baptist, Weymouth was a Deacon of the George Street Baptist Church for a long period. In 1869 he was appointed head of Mill Hill School, Middlesex, a non-conformist foundation and recognised as a public school. He continued with his philological writings and worked on the Greek New Testament for the remainder of his life.



Weymouth was elected a member of the Plymouth Institution in 1849 to 1869. He was Curator of the Library 1851 – 1853; Vice President for six separate periods; President twice, in 1857 – 58, 1868 – 69. He was elected an Honorary Member in 1872 until 1899.

### **Wightwick, George (1802 – 1872) Architect**

George Wightwick (*right*) trained as an architect on leaving school but had difficulty in obtaining permanent work. However, he gained some employment by writing. After a short period with Sir John Soane he moved to Plymouth and after establishing himself John Foulston invited him to join his practice. Foulston retired not long afterwards leaving Wightwick with a very busy flourishing practice here in the West Country. In 1852 Wightwick retired and moved to Bristol. During his working life as well as in retirement he was a prolific writer and must be considered one of the first architectural journalists.



George Wightwick was a member of the Plymouth Institution from about 1828 to 1851. He was Curator of the Athenæum Building for 18 years, Vice President 1839 – 40 and 1849 – 50. President in 1848 – 1849. He was elected an Honorary Member from 1856 until his death.

### **Wilson, Dr Alison (1903 – 1978) and Wilson, Dr Douglas (1903 – 1991) Marine Scientists**

There have been some unique members of the Athenæum but the Wilsons were unique in a different way in that they were only the second couple where both the husband and wife held the office of President.

Alison was a keen conservationist, contributing records to the Atlas of British Flora and to a mapping scheme for the Devon Flora. She was responsible for the preservation of the “Plymouth Pear” a tree that could have been lost when its sole habitat in Britain, at Estover, was threatened by industrial development. She was Athenæum President in 1963 – 64. She died on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1978.

Douglas obtained a government grant to study the development of polychaete worms at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Plymouth. In 1928 he was appointed Assistant Naturalist and remained at the Laboratory until he retired in 1969 as Senior Principal Scientific Officer. He was appointed Deputy Director in 1958.



After the war the Wilsons were among those who pushed for the reconstruction of the Athenæum and in 1961 as President he presided over the opening of the building. The Vice President's badge of office was presented to the Athenæum by Douglas in memory of his wife in 1980.

Douglas Wilson died in December 1991, bringing to an end an association of over 60 years.

### **Wright, William Henry Kearley (1844 – 1915) First Borough Librarian of Plymouth**

William Wright was born in Plymouth and remained here all his life. He was educated at Plymouth Public School and worked for the Bank of Deposit and then the South Devon Railway Company. At the same time, he was honorary Librarian of the Plymouth Working Men's Association and the Railway Servant's Library which gave him a good introduction to library work and management.

Plymouth Corporation adopted the Public Libraries Act 1850 in 1876. This necessitated the appointment of a Borough Librarian and Wright was chosen. It was he who was mainly responsible for persuading Andrew Carnegie to give £15,000 towards providing the library buildings in Tavistock Road. He was a founder member of the Library Association and council member and Vice President for some years.

He was elected to the Plymouth Institution in 1878 becoming a council member in 1897 – 98, Vice President in 1894 – 95 and President in 1898 – 99. It was largely due to his persuasion that the Drake statue and the Armada Memorials were erected on the Hoe. William Wright died on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1915, having been a member of the Plymouth Institution since 1878.

### **Yonge, Dr. James (1792 – 1870) Physician**

James Yonge was born in Devon, a direct descendent of James Yonge (1647 – 1721), a naval surgeon and medical writer. After his schooling followed by Oxford, Yonge studied at Edinburgh. On qualifying he worked in London moving to Plymouth in 1832 where he became Physician to the Plymouth Dispensary. In 1840 he became Physician to Devon and Cornwall Hospital. He was for many years one of the most prominent physicians in the west of England. Yonge was appointed an Associate member of the Plymouth Institution in 1830.