

## THE DISSENTERS OF DEVIZES

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Protestants who objected to the established church – i.e. the non-conformist or free church people.

4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the Bishop of Rome claimed primacy over all other Bishops. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the eastern and western churches split with the Roman Pope as the undisputed head.

1350 - John Wycliffe founded the Lollards.

He was an early reformer who objected to corrupt priests. He did not believe in trans-substantiation and he also went as far as to say that pious laymen should be able to give the sacraments and act as priests. He also believed that people should be able to read the Bible in their own tongue.

1380 - He published the first ever translation of the Bible. He was protected by rich friends from a violent death.

1507 - **William Prior of Devizes**, was burnt as a heretic in Salisbury for accepting Lollardism.

1517 - Luther's 95 theses caused an outcry.

1521 - The Diet of Worms. Luther was invited and guaranteed safe passage back. He was told he had to retract many of his works including his 95 theses. "Here I stand – I can do no other ....." This was the beginning of the Reformation proper.

1523 - **John Brent was burnt at the stake in Devizes Market Place** – because he did not believe in trans-substantiation. Probably this was the old Market Place by Monday Market Street.

1528 - the first Anabaptists arrived in Britain. (ana meaning "again".) They also believed that all goods should be held in common.

1534 - Henry VIII split with the Church of Rome over his matrimonial situation – the next major stage as far as the Reformation was concerned.

1557 - **John Moundrell from Rowde** was burnt at the stake in Salisbury.

1572 - 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian church in England. "Super Elders" made decisions for the church as a whole instead of Bishops – otherwise it was pretty much in line with the C of E.

1611 - 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist Church set up in Spitalfields, London. Also the year that the King James Bible was published.

1620 - Pilgrim Fathers sailed

1646 - **Baptists' House Meeting in Devizes.**

1647 - Long Parliament recognised Presbyterianism

1649 - Cromwell came to power as Lord Protector.

1652 - George Fox formalised the Quaker Movement. **Devizes was a prominent town in the Quaker Movement.**

1654 - **The Baptists tried to have a baptismal service at the Crammer – broken up by the Devizes Mob.**

1661 - Corporation Act – anyone who wasn't C of E could not be a communicant – led to many imprisonments.  
**Up to 60 Quakers in Devizes were put in prison. Bishop of Salisbury said he found Devizes people “not good”**

1662 - Quaker Act – everyone had to swear an act of allegiance to the King (Quakers did not swear oaths”)

- Act of Uniformity (also 1662) had to swear allegiance to the bishops.
- Many vicars etc lost their livelihoods.

1664 - The Conventicle Act – you couldn't meet in groups of more than 4 if for religious purposes.

1665 - Five mile Act – forbade dissenting ministers from preaching within five miles of their last parish.

1665 - **Quaker Burial Ground purchased.**

1669 - Independence and **Quakers established house meetings in Devizes.**

1670 - Avebury Congregational chapel built because more than five miles from all local towns.

1670 - Charles II took control over Parliament and granted royal indulgence.

1673 - **Baptist meeting place at 22 The Brittox (where Clarks Shoes is now)**

1689 - Act of Toleration – Parliament caught up with the King's Royal indulgence of 1670.

1689 - **James Webb, pastor of the Baptist church in Devizes, signed Baptist Declaration of Faith in London.**

1702 - **Original Friends Meeting House built at 22 High Street.**

1717 - **the Presyterian chapel opened in the High Street – then moved to the back of Long Street somewhere.**

1740 - the rise of Methodism – John Wesley – forced out of the established church by intransigence.

1747 - **John Wesley preached at Devizes – the mob actually stopped to listen.**

1748 - **Charles Wesley came – he was chased by the mob and had to flee.**

**Seriously in danger of his life.**

**Fled after 2 days towards Seend. Set on by dogs.**

**Mr Innes of St John's was cheering on the mob, telling them they were doing the right thing etc.**

1776 - **St Mary's Chapel built by the Independents** – the Countess of Huntingdon (became a congregational church and is now apartments) The congregational church then became merged with the Presbyterians to become the United Reformed. Now linked with the Methodists at St Andrew's

1777 - **the Methodists established a house meeting.**

1780 - **the Maryport Baptist church was established.**

1791 - **New Presbyterian chapel built in Sheep Street** – no longer there.

The Presbyterians in Sheep Street called a man who had been trained in Bristol Baptist college – half the Baptists left to join them.

1815 - **Baptist chapel opened in the High Street**

1819 - **Wesleyan Chapel Founded.**

1823 - Baptists and Presbyterians formed the United Society

1830 - **Baptist meeting in Devizes made first call for the abolition of Slavery**

1837 - **Another secession from Maryport Baptist to Salem Chapel (now the Lighthouse)**

1848 - United Society formally merged

1852 - **Merged church built in Sheep Street – the New Baptist Chapel**

1898 - **St Andrew's built in Long Street**

Devizes had become rich by the cloth trade and had a huge amount of influence in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Corn Exchange was the largest in the West of England.

The Plymouth Brethren started in Devizes at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A reluctant break away from the Church of England.

The Salvation Army also were in Devizes.