

**CRADOCK GLASCOTT**  
(1742 – 1831)

**Vicar of Hatherleigh 1781 – 1831**

*Text of a paper read to the Hatherleigh History Society  
on 7 December 1981  
by Norman Hillyer (Vicar of Hatherleigh, 1979-1986)*

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I have in my hand a Minute Book. Every committee and organisation in the land has its minute book. But this one is something special. It is old. It dates back exactly 150 years. The pages are of parchment. The cost in 1831 was ten shillings, about £10 today. The Minute Book has been written up by *one* Hatherleigh Worthy concerning the erection of a monument to *another* Hatherleigh Worthy. The writing, now brown and fading, is in beautiful copperplate. It cannot with accuracy be described as *handwriting* since it is the work of the famous Thomas Roberts. As a boy in Nelson's navy, he lost both hands in a grenade accident. But afterwards, with the aid of various gadgets and helps, which he invented himself, learnt to acquire all manner of skills, including this one of fine calligraphy.

On one of the early pages Thomas Roberts has inscribed these words:

*On 25<sup>th</sup> day of August 1831, the following requisition was sent to the Churchwardens of Hatherleigh:*

*The undersigned<sup>1</sup> request that you will take an early opportunity to convene a general meeting of the inhabitants of this parish to consider of a plan for testifying the unfeigned respect and veneration entertained for our late lamented Vicar.*

The 'late lamented Vicar' was the Rev. Cradock Glascott, who had been buried just a week earlier after almost fifty years as the incumbent of Hatherleigh. Five days later a Public Meeting was held in the Subscription Rooms chaired by the Rev. W.H. Braund. It was resolved:

*That it is the opinion of this Meeting that every individual in the Parish at all capable of appreciating departed worth will be glad of an opportunity of testifying to future generations the unfeigned respect and high veneration entertained for our late lamented Vicar*

*That to afford every one such an opportunity, a subscription be entered into to erect*

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<sup>1</sup> Signed by George Pearse, Thomas Roberts, James Day, Rev. W.H. Braund, Jno. Fisher, Jno. S. Short, Chris. Palmer, Jno. Chudley, Robt. Rice

*in the Church a monumental tablet to his memory*

*That a Committee be now appointed to carry this design into execution.*

A committee of eight men was formed, with Thomas Roberts as Secretary and George Pearse as Treasurer. The meeting further agreed to print 500 copies of the two funeral sermons - the one preached by the Rev. T.H. Kingdon, Vicar of Bridgerule, Devon, on the day of the funeral, and the other preached in the Parish Church on the following Sunday by the Rev. G.P. Richards, Rector of Sampford Courteney.

Furthermore, a lithographic facsimile of part of the last letter written by Mr Glascott to Mr Kingdon was to be appended to the sermons, which were to be bound together and sold for one shilling (5p) to subscribers and one shilling and sixpence (7.5p) to others.

The committee promptly met and the eight members agreed that they would each suggest appropriate wording for the inscription. Their ideas were pooled and the final wording approved:

*Near the Communion Table in this Church lie the mortal remains  
of the Reverend Craddock Glascott M.A.  
Forty nine years Vicar of this Parish.  
A Christian and a Scholar,  
He consecrated all his talents to the work of the ministry.  
From the pulpit with peculiar eloquence and fervour,  
He displayed the Father's everlasting love;  
The atonement, righteousness and full salvation of the son;  
The satisfying grace of the eternal spirit;  
And all the joys and triumphs of a purifying faith.  
In the active discharge of his pastoral duties,  
He lived and laboured only to exalt a Saviour's love  
And to promote the salvation of sinners.  
Having uniformly evinced the purity and sincerity of his principles  
From early life to the age of 89,  
He departed in the full assurance of hope*

*And entered into glory August 11<sup>th</sup> 1831  
His grateful parishioners erect this monument.*

Two Exeter firms of statuariees were invited to tender for a marble monumental tablet, to be placed on the inside south wall of the Parish Church over the chancel door.

In due course the work was carried out by James Stephens of Exeter, for the sum of £38 (= £750 today) and the tablet put up on 29 May 1832.

All the details of the committee's labours of love are recorded in the Secretary's fine copperplate writing (and on parchment at that), as a witness to succeeding generations of parishioners to the sense of acute loss which the whole town felt at the passing of Cradock Glascott.

When any vicar has an incumbency of half a century, few parishioners at his passing will have known any other clergyman as their pastor. It is perhaps therefore no wonder that folk went to such lengths to commemorate this saintly man, who, under God, transformed Hatherleigh in so many aspects of its life.

During his fifty years here, Cradock Glascott occupied the pulpit of the parish church three times every Sunday and preached 7500 sermons. We meet tonight (7 December 1981) two hundred years to the day when he was instituted to the living of Hatherleigh.

Cradock Glascott was born in Wales in 1742. After schooldays were over, he went up to Jesus College, Oxford, where he took his Arts degree. His godly father and mother were close friends of John and Charles Wesley and other well-known figures of the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century – Whitefield, Hervey, Rowlands, Toplady, Venn. So from an early age, Cradock Glascott came to know many of the outstanding Christians of the day, at a time when they were thin on the ground in England. At 22, he himself came to know the Christ whom these famous people were serving so wholeheartedly and often at great cost.

Cradock Glascott was converted, it is said, by reading a little book called *Young's Night Thoughts*. To our ears, that title has a dated ring about it. But it suggests a quiet and still hour when a man is on his own – a time when his soul faces the question ‘What about Jesus Christ? What does he mean to me? What *should* he mean to me?’

When Cradock's father heard the glad news of his son's conversion, he at once told his friend John Wesley. That great preacher took time out to write a letter to Cradock:

Newcastle-upon-Tyne

11 May 1764

*It is an unspeakable blessing that God has given you to taste the power of the world to come, and he is willing to give always what he gives once. You need lose nothing of what you have received; rather, expect to receive more every moment, grace upon grace, and be not contented until you are a Christian altogether, till your soul is all love, till you can rejoice evermore, and pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. Above all, be much in prayer, and God will withhold no manner of thing that is good.*

*I am, your affectionate servant,*

*J. Wesley*

Cradock Glascott took Wesley's letter to heart. From that time, in the words of his favourite text, he determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. It was an attitude which did not please everybody, not least the vicar of Chieveley, a village near Newbury in Berkshire, where Cradock Glascott went to serve as curate after receiving Deacon's Orders at Christchurch, Oxford, in 1765 (he was 23). Being a Welshman, Cradock Glascott had a way with words. His preaching was with what the Welsh call *hwyl*, and the vicar failed to appreciate it.

But people were converted to Christ by the curate and not only *in* the church. When Cradock Glascott called on one sick person, most of the family – and it was large – came into the bedroom while he prayed. Without exception, the whole family was greatly moved. More than twenty years later, Cradock Glascott had the satisfaction of hearing that that they were all leading Christian lives. Not that he stayed in that parish

for twenty years. *Two* years were as much as the vicar could stand of this young man's Christian fervour, and Cradock Glascott found himself turned out of his curacy.

Before that shock unexpectedly deprived him of roof and income, he received a signal honour to sustain and encourage him. Cradock Glascott went to London to be ordained priest and took the opportunity to call on George Whitefield, the silver-haired and silver-tongued preacher.

When Cradock Glascott explained the purpose of his visit to London, Whitefield asked him a question. 'Where (he wanted to know) are your canonicals?' (i.e. proper clerical dress according to canon law). 'I am not aware (replied Mr Glascott) that it is necessary for me to appear in them.' 'Certainly!' said Whitefield, then added, 'You shall have *my* gown. The olfactory nerves of the bishop are not so acute that he will smell heresy in my gown' (alluding to a saying of Bishop Bonner in Queen Mary's reign that he could always smell a heretic).

Mr Glascott robed accordingly and in due course presented himself to the bishop. The bishop, far from smelling heresy, paid him marked attention, for there were few, if any, of the other candidates who were thus attired. The fact that the other young clergymen had not bothered illustrated the lax and lifeless condition of much of the Anglican Church in the eighteenth century. Cradock Glascott was to find it so even in the parish of Hatherleigh. But that day was still many years in the future.

Deprived of his curacy, where was he to go? How was he to live? And how was he to do good? Three important questions. The answers soon came. He was introduced to one of the great Christian ladies of the eighteenth century, Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, who spent her life and her considerable fortune in urging forward the great movement known to history as the Evangelical Revival.

Cradock Glascott was made one of her chaplains. She paid his salary. He travelled all over the country for fourteen years, proclaiming wherever he could the unsearchable riches of Christ, sometimes in church, sometimes in chapel and very often in the open air, after the example of his Master, Christ.

As was the case with all the evangelical preachers at that time, who were taking the message of Christ to their fellow-countrymen, Cradock Glascott's reception varied from a warm welcome to hot antagonism – which could include physical violence. As he rode towards one town in the north of England, a mob met him and pulled him off his horse. Having dismounted him, they seemed not to know what to do with him next. Various measures of insults and violence were proposed. At length a man arrived with a bucket of blood from the local slaughter-house. 'Baptise him!' went up the cry. There were shouts of approval and the contents of the bucket were tipped over his head. The sight satisfied the mob and they left him to ride on into their town. Which he did, quite undisturbed in mind at what had happened.

But at other places, his welcome was cordial and the response to his preaching deep and long-lasting. For example, in his *Journal* for 1781 (his last tour before settling in Hatherleigh) he writes:

*I am engaged to preach this week at Darlestone, Walsall, Bromwich and Birmingham. In almost all these places, if the weather is favourable, a table will be my pulpit and the canopy of the heavens my sounding board.*

Later, he adds:

- *At Darlestone we had at least 1500 poor colliers and nailers. In the streets of Dudley the congregation was computed to be 2000. At Nottingham at 8 o'clock in the morning we had at least 2000, and in the evening at Market Cross at a moderate computation there were not less than 5000.*

For fourteen years Cradock Glascott travelled the length and breadth of the country. Then, as he approached his fortieth birthday, he was offered the parish of Hatherleigh. The living of Hatherleigh had belonged to the Yeo family who owned Fishleigh. But it had been sold about this time to a friend of the saintly Fletcher of Madeley, James Ireland of Brislington Hall, Bristol, and it was he who presented it to Cradock Glascott.

Much to the Countess of Huntingdon's annoyance (she was a lady with a mind of her own), he gave up the life of a wandering preacher and settled for the rest of his days – almost fifty years – in this Devon market town, just two hundred years ago today.

What was Hatherleigh like then? Two itinerant preachers had passed through Hatherleigh in 1780, the year before Cradock Glascott arrived. 'A poor village (they recorded in their journal). It was evening before we arrived, and not knowing any one person here, nor perceiving any door open for preaching, we remained in the inn and departed next day.' They wrote off Hatherleigh as hopeless.

Cradock Glascott found that the parish was in a state of great poverty and depression, materially and spiritually. For over half a century, it had been declining in every respect since the more prosperous days of the wool trade.

The new vicar at once stirred things up with his zealous preaching. He met violent opposition. But he was used to that. The choir resigned, though there was no *News of the World* to publish the story. Some parishioners, not wishing to be woken up in this scandalous fashion, wrote to the Bishop of Exeter to complain of this 'Methodistic' parson that he brought to their ears strange doctrines which neither they nor their fathers were accustomed to hear. But the bishop, to his credit, was only too glad that he now had an energetic man of God in the parish. 'Would that there were more!'

Soon after coming to Hatherleigh, Cradock Glascott married a widow from Bath, Mary Arthur. They had five children<sup>2</sup>, one of whom was tragically killed as a toddler.

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<sup>2</sup> The five Glascott children were: *Mary Ann*, born 29 January 1785, baptised 6 March 1785, married an Exeter surgeon, Samuel Walkey, 6 July 1811;

*Cradock John*, born November 1786, baptised 17 November 1786; clergyman at Exmouth;

*William Vawdrey*, born July 1789, baptised 26 July 1789;

*Thomas*, born July 1792, baptised 29 July 1792, Curate of Stokeley Pomeroy, 1815-1818, Curate, then Rector, of Rodbury, Stroud, Glos. 1818-1876, died 20 December 1876 ;

*Selina* (named after the Countess), born April 1794, baptised 20 April 1794. When just two years old, she fell out of a window at the east end of the vicarage (then a thatched house) and was killed. Buried 1 May 1796.



Cradock Glascott weathered the storms of life and half a century later died full of years amidst the universal love and respect of his people. He even won Lady Huntingdon's forgiveness. For twenty years after he came to Hatherleigh, he preached for six weeks every summer in her chapels in London and Bath.

It was in December 1781 that Cradock Glascott mounted the pulpit of Hatherleigh church for the first time. The text of that sermon is inscribed on his memorial on the south wall of this parish church. It was the keynote of his fifty-year ministry here: *For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2)*. It was a text he not only preached, but lived.

An English Presbyterian Chapel had been built behind Market Street in 1712. But after a succession of faithful ministers, it gradually became Unitarian and closed in early 1781. Cradock Glascott arrived in Hatherleigh in December of that year. His first sermon was on a text hardly conducive to those of Unitarian opinions. In fact, the Nonconformists welcomed him as a messenger from God.

Cradock Glascott was endowed with a fine voice. A mathematically-minded listener to one of his open-air addresses calculated, by walking backwards until he could no longer clearly hear his words, that Cradock Glascott could reach 30,000 people without straining his voice.

He had a noble figure. On all sides we are told this by his contemporaries. He was very strong and healthy and was never prevented by illness from taking services the whole time he was in Hatherleigh. This he did until his death, still full of vigour, at the age of 89.

Dressed in the costume of the time – shoes, stockings, buckles, knee-breeches, open cut-away coat, shovel hat, and so on – his people saw him walking about the parish, weeding-iron in hand (for he farmed his own glebe and was an enemy of all weeds, literal or figurative).

At first sight, he was apparently stern. But when he unbent, he had a sweet smile and a beautiful countenance. His erect and straight figure and noble bearing caught the

eye, a man people looked at twice, a man people respected. In short, a Christian man who was a living reminder of his Master.

Jesus was concerned with men's physical needs. Cradock Glascott began The Sick Man's Friend Society, a local charity. Jesus was concerned with men's spiritual needs. Cradock Glascott had his Master's skill in turning conversations to spiritual ends. Going through the churchyard one day, he saw a man reading *The Spectator*, which had been founded not long before, in 1828. He greeted him and began a conversation. Finally he expressed the hope that he read something better. The man was won by his charitable manner, became a Christian and went to the South Seas as a missionary. This was Lancelot Edward Threlkeld, a fellow-worker with the famous John Williams.

Cradock Glascott's own interests in spreading the Word of God far and wide led to his opening the very first branch of The British and Foreign Bible Society, in 1824. At his prompting, the parish sent five pounds per annum for six years to the Church Missionary Society. This was for the education and training of an African youth in Sierra Leone, named after him. A branch of that society was begun here, the first in the world, on 18 October 1824.

When Cradock Glascott arrived in Hatherleigh the only education on offer was at dame schools. Cradock Glascott himself taught in them and paid for some scholars. Then he set up a school for poor children, open both on Sundays and on weekdays. Thus began in Hatherleigh one of the very first Sunday Schools in the land.

Each year Hatherleigh still celebrates Holy Thursday (Ascension Day) in traditional Hatherleigh fashion. That was the brain-child of Cradock Glascott. When he came to Hatherleigh, he discovered that an unseemly revel took place on Ascension Day at Saint Mary's Well, Lewer. The gathering was ostensibly held so that people might avail themselves of the water for healing diseases of eyes and skin. In practice, the event had degenerated into an orgy with dancing, bonfires, feasting and drink. Cradock Glascott provided a counter-attraction with a procession, games and a tea, with a great service completed by all the congregation girdling the church, i.e. holding hands in a great circle around the church building, while an appropriate

hymn was sung. The symbolism was clear: God's people linked together and their fellowship centred on Christ's church. It was difficult, to say the least, for one to quarrel with another if each was holding his neighbour's hand.

Cradock Glascott determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. He preached that faith and lived it out in his own life so fully that men and women, boys and girls of all ages and classes responded to the love of Christ which they saw in their minister.

He so filled the parish church Sunday by Sunday that additional accommodation had to be provided by the erection of galleries.

There was already one gallery (the Singers' Gallery) at the west end of the middle aisle in front of the tower, when Mr Glascott came to Hatherleigh. In 1812 a new gallery was erected by subscription at the west end of the north aisle. This one was put up at the expense of Thomas Roberts the schoolmaster for the accommodation of his 80-100 boarders. Still more room was needed and steps were taken to provide it by building a fourth gallery, also by subscription, outside the north wall of the church, where the ground was sufficiently high to admit of a vestry being made underneath the gallery - a facility the church had lacked until then. The east end of the south aisle had previously served that purpose.

Cradock Glascott rarely left his parish, apart from the preaching he did for the Countess of Huntingdon. But one sermon outside his own pulpit brought a dramatic response.

At Shebbear Parish Church the curate (the Rev. Daniel Evans) invited Cradock Glascott to preach. As a result, the Thorne family at Lake Farm were much moved and especially Mary Thorne. On 9 October 1815, William O'Bryan (1778-1868), a fervent Cornish evangelist and keen Methodist, visited Lake Farm and persuaded those gathered there to form a religious society. This brought the Bible Christian movement to mid-Devon, and our own Hatherleigh Methodist Church, as an inscription there still proclaims, was a Bible Christian Church, until the movement merged with the Methodists in 1907.

The Sunday preceding his death Cradock Glascott preached with his usual energy, taking as his text the words of Jesus in John 6:53, 'Verily verily I say unto you, except that ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you have no life in you', and afterwards he administered the Sacrament. The following Thursday (11 August 1831), he 'entered into rest'.

A week later, he was buried in the chancel before a packed congregation. The sermon was preached by the Rev. T.H. Kingdon, Vicar of Bridgerule, Devon, on the text Luke 12:42-43, 'The Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward whom his lord shall make ruler of his household to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.'

'I desire (Cradock Glascott once said) to have all my affairs in such a state that when my Master sends his chariot to the door, I may have nothing to do but to step in.' From all accounts, it was a wish abundantly fulfilled.