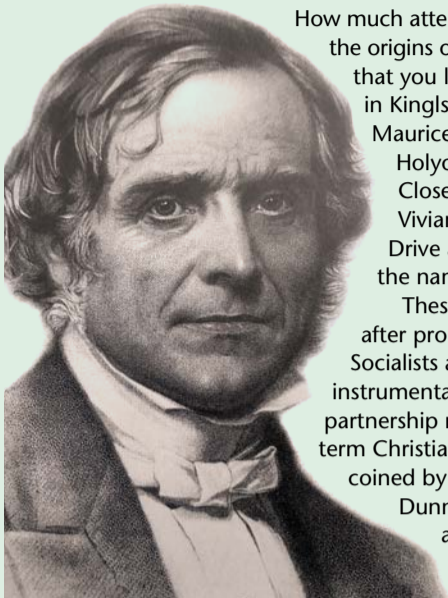


## Frederick Denison Maurice and the Christian Socialists



How much attention do you give to the origins of the street name that you live in? Do you live in Kinglsey Way or Close, Maurice Walk, Ludlow Way, Holyoake Walk, Denison Close, Neale Close, Vivian Way or Gurney Drive and wonder about the name?

These streets are named after prominent Christian Socialists and people instrumental in the co-partnership movement. The term Christian Socialist was coined by the curate C.B.

Dunn of Cumberworth and John Sabire of Birmingham in time for Frederick

Denison Maurice (above), Charles Kingsley and John Ludlow to form the first Christian Socialist movement. Inspired by poets and philosophers such as William Blake and Samuel Coleridge and prompted by social unrest, the aim was to rescue Christianity by being opposed to the view of the Bible being divinely dictated. On the contrary it was held to be a breathing organism and they claimed that Christianity had the legitimate authority to speak out on political and economical matters and re-asserted a faith bound into human life experiences but the first Christian Socialist Movement was short lived but had a renewal of interest in the latter half of the 19th century particularly in terms of co-partnership movements.

Interestingly, at Brentham Garden Suburb founded in 1901, several of the street names almost mirror some in Hampstead Garden Suburb with a Denison Road, Ludlow Road, Holyoake Walk (and Holyoake House), Brunner Road and Neville Road, so the Brentham names must have been the inspiration for naming these roads in the later developments in the Suburb. In this article there is only space to concentrate on the founders of the movement but I am grateful to the Brentham Society for permitting the reproduction of images from Aileen Reed's, Brentham, A history of a pioneer garden suburb 1901-2001.

John Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872) is one of two individuals to have two roads named after them using two different names. Denison Close and Maurice Walk got their names from Maurice, while Arthur Winnington-Ingram, who was Bishop of London when the Suburb was being built, gave his names to Winnington Road and Ingram Avenue.

Frederick Denison Maurice had a varied legal and controversial theological career. He was the fifth child and only son of Michael Maurice and his wife Priscilla. His father had been disowned by his own father for changing his theological viewpoint when he was preparing for the dissenting ministry, but then deciding to become a Unitarian preacher.

The family were always having religious disputes and, following the deaths of two of Maurice's sisters, two of his older sisters and his mother changed their religious convictions to the Calvinistic doctrine. These disputes led to Maurice's subsequent guiding principle in his belief in religious unity.

After a strict puritanical education, he went to study at Trinity College and Trinity Hall Cambridge. Whilst at Cambridge, and later in London he started various critical thinking magazines in which he demonstrated his praise for Coleridge. He also changed his beliefs from the Unitarianism of his upbringing and resolved on ordination in the Church of England. In 1836 he accepted the chaplaincy of Guy's hospital where he also lectured students twice weekly on moral philosophy.

'The Kingdom of Christ', which became one of his most significant works, was published in 1838. The book, expounds a firmly ecclesiastical theology grounded in scripture and tradition. It examines in turn the beliefs of a Quaker, an orthodox protestant, a Unitarian and a rational philosopher, revealing notable insight and understanding in each case and looks for signs of a "spiritual and universal kingdom" by which oneness could be transcended.



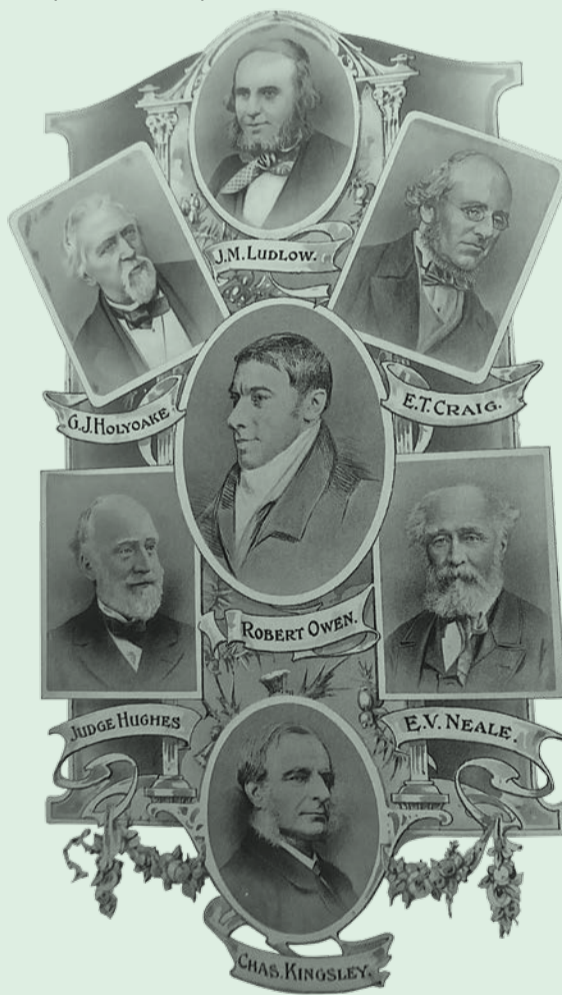
After various other academic appointments, in 1846 Maurice was elected Chaplain of Lincoln's Inn and resigned from his duties at Guy's hospital. His sermons were popular with young barristers and were constantly well attended. His hearers included Thomas Hughes and John Malcolm Forbes Ludlow (1821-1911) who soon both became involved with the Christian Socialist movement. He was already friends with the theologian, poet and writer Charles Kingsley (1819-1875 – best known for his book 'The Water Babies') whom he had met in 1844. Together with other members of staff at Kings College London they founded Queen's College for the higher education of women – something I am sure Henrietta Barnett would have approved of.

The mid 19th century saw much disquiet amongst the working classes both in Europe and in the United Kingdom. The Chartist movement formed in the United Kingdom existed from 1838 to 1857. It took its name from the People's Charter of 1838 and was a national protest movement. Support for the movement came to a peak on 10 April 1848 when petitions signed by millions of working people were presented to the House of Commons after a demonstration on Kennington common.

Kingsley and Ludlow were both sympathetic to their cause and present at the demonstration. The Chartists used the scale of support, which these petitions and the accompanying mass meetings demonstrated, to put pressure on politicians to concede manhood suffrage. Kingsley realized that the Charter would not go far enough to secure genuine freedom and reform and that politics and religion needed to be re-united.

Maurice saw the need for society's moral and social regeneration because of the "spiritual destination" of the times. Ludlow had first-hand experience of socialist and revolutionary groups when living in Paris and was far more practical than Maurice, understanding the requirements of effective political action. Thomas Hughes, the author of Tom Brown's School Days and Edward Vansittart Neale (1810-1892) also followed the movement, and they all looked to Maurice as their spiritual leader. With Ludlow he edited a newspaper, 'Politics for the People', which was first published on 6 May 1848 and rose to a circulation of about 2000 copies

The term Christian Socialist was officially taken up by Maurice for his movement in 1850, which he declared committed him "to the conflict we must engage in sooner or later with the unsocial Christians and the unchristian socialists." Maurice himself believed hierarchy was essential to society. He disliked competition as unchristian and wished to see it replaced by co-operation, as expressive Christian brotherhood.



With Ludlow he set up co-operative societies inspired by what Ludlow had learned of French associations and Christian communism from a recent trip to Paris. They were subsidized by Edward Vansittart Neale (1810-1892) and helped by the subscriptions of middle-class sympathisers.

Unfortunately the Christian Socialist Co-partnership workshops were not profitable, which brought about friction amongst the founders. Neale also founded the first co-operative store in London, and advanced capital for two builders' associations, both of which failed. In 1851, he started his own initiative, the Central Co-operative Agency, similar to the later Co-operative Wholesale Society. Maurice was more interested in education, Kingsley did not gain approval for his outspokenness with his fellow churchmen, and Maurice himself was eventually dismissed from his post at Kings College London for not disowning Kingsley's utterances. By 1854 the Christian Socialist movement was over.

Maurice continued to write theological essays and to be Chaplain at Lincoln's Inn. He continued to express his concern for the education of the working classes and in February 1854 drew up a scheme for a working men's college which opened on 31 October 1854 in Red Lion Square, London with 120 students and Maurice as its principal. It was a product of Christian socialism and an expression of its ideals. He was assisted with teaching by notables such as Vansittart Neale, Tom Hughes, John Ruskin and the painter and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

In the 1860's he was elected to an academic theological professorship at Cambridge, but later, due to ill health, he had to give up being the principal at the Working Men's College. He continued to write widely and accepted the offer at St Edward's Cambridge for pastoral work at Trinity Hall. This he resigned from on 30 March 1872 and died two days later.

Although it was suggested that he should be buried in Westminster Abbey, his family's view was that he would not have wished it and he is interred in the family vault in Highgate Cemetery.

The Christian Socialist movement may have failed in its aims in the earlier part of the century, but there was a revival in interest in co-partnership organisations in the 1880s. With Henry Vivian (1868 –1930) as secretary of the Labour Co-Partnership Association, and the idea that co-partnerships could extend to housing, we can see how the basic ideas of Christian socialism could be applied to the housing schemes of the early Suburb.

George Jacob Holyoake (1817-1906) was greatly involved in the movement and often organised Co-operative Festivals. From 1911 the festival was re-invented as the Co-partnership Festival and was held that year in Hampstead Garden Suburb. A pageant, Three Scenes from History, was performed by Suburb resident Kate Murray, herself a close friend of Sybella Gurney, who was an activist in the Co-Partnership and Garden City movement.

Marilyn Greene, Trustee, Garden Suburb Archives

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Frederick Denison Maurice Founder of the Christian Socialist Movement, Hutton Getty Picture Collection  
Seven of the most prominent and early co-operators and co-partners Hutton Getty Picture Collection  
Photos from Hampstead Garden Suburb and of the Holyoake memorial in Highgate Cemetery by Marilyn Greene



**The Hampstead Garden Suburb Archives Trust**

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