

## Memorial 6 (lower surface)

**JEFFERY, Nathan Sprigg**, died 5<sup>th</sup> January 1756 aged 9 months

On the underside of memorial stone 6 is an inscription:

Here Lyeth the Body of  
NATHAN SPRIGG JEFFERY  
(So)n of EDM<sup>d</sup>. JEFFERY of this  
(C)ity Who Died JAN<sup>y</sup>. Ye 5<sup>th</sup> 1756  
Aged 9 Months



Nathan Sprigg's father, Edmund Jeffery, was baptised at the Mint Meeting by Joseph Hallett on 16 October 1728 (Trinity parish, Exeter). Edmund's parents were William and Janefer. He was the youngest of five children<sup>1</sup>.

Edmund Jeffery was a Fuller and Hotpresser<sup>2</sup> who joined the Gild of Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen in 1753. His entry in the Sun Life Office record states: "JEFFERY, Edmund. 28 Feb. 1753. Household goods, stock in trade and goods in trust or on commission. His dwelling house, presshouse and rooms adjacent and communicating in Baker Lane, in parish of St. Mary, stone, timber and slated. £300. Ref. 101/134672."<sup>2</sup> Baker Lane no longer exists, but would have been close to the current Cathedral Yard. Edmund served as Master of the Gild in 1787. Edmund (of Exeter St Mary Major) married Mary Sprigg of St Martin's Exeter on 16 July 1754<sup>3</sup>. The witnesses were John Jerwood and James Bowden both of whom are buried in the Dissenters' graveyard.

Nathan Sprigg Jeffery(I) was born in 1755 based on the inscription, but no birth or baptism record has yet been found. His death is recorded on the stone in the graveyard and in the Bow Meeting House ledger. Rev. Micaiah Towgood officiated at his burial on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1756<sup>4</sup>. He was 9 months old.

A later son, also named Nathan Sprigg Jeffery, son of Edmund Jeffery of Exeter, matriculated from Oriel College Oxford on 7 May 1779 aged 18<sup>5</sup>, thus he must have been born c. 1761, although no baptism record has yet been found. He was apprenticed to John Stoodly an attorney in Exeter, payment made 15 January 1778<sup>6</sup>, and admitted to Gray's Inn on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1779<sup>7</sup>. Nathan Sprigg Jeffery(II) died in March 1782, aged 21, and his will<sup>8</sup> gives his residence as Barnstaple. A monument to Nathaniel (*sic*) Sprigg Jeffery Esq. dated 1782 was located in the Church of St Lawrence which was destroyed by bombing in 1942.<sup>9</sup> Beatrix Cresswell in her book on Exeter Churches (1908) wrote, "*There are three other tablets on the walls (of St. Lawrence Church). To the memory of Samuel Sprigg Jeffry (sic) of this city Esqr. who died 19<sup>th</sup> March 1782 aged 21. His natural abilities and acquired accomplishments and amiable disposition gained him the esteem of all, his filial affection and duty endeared him to his parents who erected this monument to testify their affection and soothe their sorrow by this memorial to his virtues*"<sup>10</sup>.

Edmund died in 1799 and payment of 3 guineas for a grave is recorded in the St Lawrence ledger<sup>11</sup>. His will<sup>12</sup> mentions a daughter (Elizabeth), but no birth/baptism entries have yet been found. Edmund's wife, Mary, died in 1800 and the purchase of her grave is recorded on the same page as her husband's<sup>11</sup>. Her will states that she, "*..desire to be buried in St Lawrence's Church in the City of Exeter with my late husband...*".

The main beneficiaries of Mary's will, which included several properties in St. Sidwell's parish, were her daughter Elizabeth Sprigg Kingsley (*née* Jeffery) and Elizabeth's children William Jeffery Kingsley, Mary Toler Kingsley and Eleanor Sprigg Kingsley who were all minors at the time of Mary's death.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, she left money for the benefit of the poor to the Corporation of South Molton, St. Lawrence's church Exeter and to the Dissenting Charity School in Paris Street, Exeter. Finally, the Revd. James Manning, a non-conformist Minister at George's Meeting House, Exeter, from 1776-1831, was one of the her two Trustees and Executors in Trust.<sup>13</sup>

It is not known why the inscription to Nathan Sprigg Jeffery(I) lies on the underside of the Bielfeld family tombstone. There does not appear to be a family connection. It seems that someone, presumably the child's parents, considered having a walled grave and commissioned a stone inscribed with his details. There appears to be space on the stone for more inscriptions. There is no mention that the child was buried in a walled grave or cave, and the stone would probably not have been suitable to mark an earth grave. It appears to never have been installed. Perhaps the stonemason was not paid for the work and he retained the inscribed slab, re-selling it to the Bielfeld's many years later. Perhaps the family simply decided in the end not to mark the infant's resting place. We will probably never know.

It is intriguing that Nathan Sprigg Jeffery(I) was buried in the Dissenter's graveyard and yet his parents and younger brother were buried in St Lawrence's Church. Is this a case of an unbaptised infant being denied burial in an Anglican churchyard, or did their friends and witnesses at their marriage, John Jerwood and James Bowden (who was a schoolmaster at the Dissenting Charity School in Paris Street) influence them? Mary, Nathan's mother, chose to have a Dissenting Minister, Revd. James Manning, as one of her Executors, but she was buried in St Lawrence's church.

## References

1. *Ancestry.co.uk*. Accessed 30-09-2016.
2. *The Devon Cloth Industry in the Eighteenth Century*. *Sun Fire Office Inventories of Merchants' and Manufacturers' Property, 1726-1770*. *Devon & Cornwall Record Society*, 23: 71 (1978).
3. *Find My Past* accessed 30 September 2016.
4. *RG4. Exeter Bow Meeting. Piece 0965*.
5. *Oxford University Alumni, 1500-1886*. *Ancestry.co.uk*.
6. *Ancestry.co.uk*. *UK Registry of Duties Paid for Apprentices' Indentures, 1710-1811*.
7. *Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn 1521-1889*. Folio 1,496.
8. *England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858*. 18 May 1782.
9. *Lysons, D. and Lysons, S. Magna Britannica*. Vol. 6., 1822, p.213.
10. *Cresswell, B.F. Exeter Churches. Notes on the history fabrics and features of interest in the Churches in the Deanery of Christianity Devon*. *Commin, James G., Exeter (1908), page 77*. *Cresswell refers to 'Samuel', but Lysons<sup>10</sup> refers to 'Nathaniel'*.
11. *St Lawrence Churchwardens Account Book*. DHC 300A/PW/1 page 33 (Easter 1799-Easter 1800).
12. *England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858*. 11 July 1799.
13. *England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858*. 2 May 1800.

Ian Varndell  
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