

Memorial 23

Elizabeth Clarke 1749

Mary Clarke 1761

Richard Clarke 1761

William Clarke 1783

Little of the inscription remains on the flat stone that seals the chest tomb commemorating the family of William Clarke. The 1894 transcription by W. H. Hamilton Rogers is somewhat confusing but it tells us that it marks the resting place 'of William Clarke 1760, the wife – children, Mary 22 December, Richard 1756, Mary 11 May 1760, the said William Clarke 16 Sep 1783, 63'.¹

Who the occupants of the tomb are becomes clearer when we look at the burial register, which shows



us there are four members of this family contained within. The first was for Elizabeth, when 15s was received from William Clarke for a 'cave' on 27th December 1748. Next came Richard and Mary when 10s was received for 'opening his cave twice' paid on the 29th of January 1761 and finally in 1783, 10s was received for opening the cave to bury William.²

We know more about William's family and ancestors than we know of William himself but what we do know is that he was a worshipper at George's Meeting in South Street, Exeter, a subscriber to the original cemetery in 1748 and a subscriber to the new building in 1759.³

We also know that William was a 'Linnen Draper' by profession, stating so in his will of 1783.⁴ Linen was one of the mainstays of the economy and widely worn by all ranks and ages of society. *Drapers*, or *linen drapers*, were at that time supervisors of the makers of both woollen and other types of cloth. They were allowed by law to buy cloth directly from the manufacturers or to import it.⁵

William's paternal family can be traced back to the 1630s in Stoke Canon near Exeter, *via* Halberton, Uffculme and Holcombe Rogus. They were staunch Presbyterians. William was one of four children

¹ 1894 Transcription by W. H. Hamilton Rogers. South West Heritage Trust (SWHT) www.swheritage.org.uk

² Report and Account book of Dissenters Burial Ground 1748-1832 (DRO3693D/0/B/1) www.swheritage.org.uk

³ Information supplied by Tessa Varndell, Exeter Dissenters Graveyard researcher.

⁴ Will written 16th March 1778, possibly after his brother Thomas had died. (PROB 11/1109/281) accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

⁵ 'The Fabric of Life: Linen and Life Cycle in England, 1678-1810' Alice Dolan, June 2015, PHD submission University of Hertfordshire.

<https://uhra.herts.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/2299/17196/14074801%20Dolan%20Alice%20Claire%20-%20Final%20submission.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> accessed 14/1/2021.

born to Richard and Mary Clarke of Bridwell in Halberton. Richard the eldest (- 1776), William (- 1783), Thomas (- 1778), and Elizabeth (- 1798). Richard being the eldest inherited Bridwell Estate when their father died in 1728.⁶

William married Mary Waldron and they had two children, both died in infancy.⁷ Many questions arise from this union as no record has been found showing when and where it occurred. Mary died in 1761 the same year as their son Richard.

Mary's age at her death is unknown but we do know she was one of four sisters (Elizabeth, Katherine, Mary, and Anna) born to James Waldron of Wellington in Somerset, a serge maker, and Elizabeth (née Musgrave). James and Elizabeth were married on 4th November 1718 in Hemyock, Devon.⁸ Elizabeth their mother died in May 1728 and was buried in St. Johns, Wellington on the 23rd of May.⁹ It is possible she died in childbirth as there is a burial entry on 30th May for '*John son of James Waldron*'. This left James their father caring for his young children but not for long as James died just a few years later in 1731. He was buried on the 22nd of October 1731 also in St John's Wellington.¹⁰

In his will James asked his brothers Henry and Clement to '*have the guardianship and tuition of all my said daughters persons desiring that they may have a Religious and Virtuous Education suitable to their fortunes and circumstances.*' The girls were still children under the age of thirteen and they were to be looked after '*untill they shall attaine their respective ages of twenty one years or be married with such consent.*'¹¹ Katherine appears to have died as further documents only mention her three sisters.¹²

Both Henry and his brother Clement were yeoman farmers. Henry lived in Hartswell House (The Waldron's) in Wiveliscombe and Clement in Wellington.¹³ Henry who died in 1770 did not mention his nieces or their families in his will. Clement died in 1775 and mentioned his niece Elizabeth Berry and her children Thomas, Elizabeth, and Ann.¹⁴ We know the Elizabeth Berry mentioned was Mary and Anna's sister as she is also mentioned in William Clarke's will and by 1775 was the only survivor.

Elizabeth's husband's first name is not known but it is possible she married a relation. Her father remembered his Uncle, Mr Humphrey Berry, a dissenting minister in Wellington in his will and we know his son John was minister at Bowden Hill meeting in Crediton from 1751 until his death in 1782. It is believed Elizabeth and her family may have lived in Crediton, but further research needs to be undertaken to ascertain the exact link between the two families.

Anna Waldron, Mary's other sister, married George Lee the son of Matthew Lee of Ebford House near

⁶ Richard Clarke Will 1728 (PROB 11/625/144) accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

⁷ See inscription above, note 1.

⁸ England Select Marriages, 1538-1973 accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

⁹ Burial Register for St. John's church, Wellington. accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

¹⁰ Somerset, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1531-1812, St. John's Parish Register. accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

¹¹ James Waldron will 1731, (PROB 11/648/70) accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

¹² Assignment of demise for 500 years for £106 15s. 5 Feb 1741 (DD/X/CK/24) Somerset Record Office.

www.swheritage.org.uk

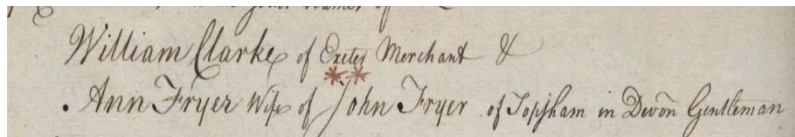
¹³ <https://ancestralhistoriesofwiveliscombe.weebly.com/waldron-family-of-wiveliscombe.html> accessed 7/1/2021.

¹⁴ Clement Waldron's Will (PROB 11/1006/77) accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

Lympstone and of St. Leonards in Exeter.¹⁵ George died in 1750, a year after their daughter Joanna, leaving Anna with a young son, also George, who followed his father to the grave in 1753. All three are buried in a 'cave' in the Dissenters graveyard.¹⁶ Many of George's wider family are buried in the family vault in Gulliford Burial Ground at Lympstone.¹⁷

Anna's second marriage was with John Gifford her second cousin.¹⁸ Both families originated from Wellington in Somerset where they were acquainted.¹⁹ Anna and John's two sons John and George are also mentioned in their uncle William Clarke's will. Anna, John, her husband, and John their son are commemorated on Memorial 45 in the graveyard.²⁰ George, died in 1820 in Exeter but there is no record of him also being buried there.

William Clarke is mentioned by William Gifford (John's father) in his will of 1758 (written in 1753), in which William became a trustee to William's daughter Ann Fryer.²¹ Ann had married John Fryer, William Gifford's apprentice, in 1752 in Topsham.²² By 1756 they were in Oporto, Portugal.²³ At some point they returned to Topsham where they were both buried in the Meeting House there; Ann in 1773 and John in 1774.²⁴ After Ann died William Clarke received £150 'in Right of Survivorship'.²⁵



Thomas, William's brother is listed in the family tree published by his great nephew John Were Clarke as the Reverend Thomas Clarke.²⁶ Although the dates are incorrect for Thomas he lived in Woodbury and Lympstone for most of his married life where it appears, he was involved with Gulliford meeting.²⁷ When he died in 1778, he was buried at Gulliford his second wife Elizabeth (née Smith) was buried with him when she died in 1783.²⁸ Thomas's land in Ottery, Lympstone and Woodbury went to his

¹⁵ 'Woodbury, a view from the Beacon', Ursula W. Brighthouse. (Family tree of Matthew Lee of Ebford, p.103).

¹⁶ Exeter Bow Meeting, 1687-1823 burial register accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

¹⁷ Friends of Gulliford Burial Ground <http://fogbg.org.uk/>

¹⁸ Anna and John shared a great grandparent Philip Norrish. Their wedding was on December the 12th 1753 at St. David's church, Exeter, Devon Marriages and Banns. accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

¹⁹ As note 11.

²⁰ see Memorial 45 www.edgt.org.uk

²¹ William Gifford's will (PROB 11/835/363) accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

²² See Memorial 1 www.edgt.org.uk

²³ It is possible that John was trading in Port wine. In 1755, a daughter Elizabeth was baptised to John Fryer and his wife at the British port Factory. Was this John and Ann? 'Oporto, old and new : being a historical record of the port wine trade, and a tribute to British commercial enterprize in the north of Portugal' by Charles Sellers, 1899. Accessed via google books 18/01/2021.

²⁴ Topsham Meeting House Burial Register, Topsham (Presbyterian) 1744-1837, accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

²⁵ Bank of England Wills Extracts 1717-1845, accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

²⁶ Diary of a Devonshire Squire 1844, The journal of John Were Clarke, Esquire, of Bridwell, Uffculme. Edited and annotated by W. P. Authers, 1982.

²⁷ A History of the Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England By Sir Jerom Murch 1835. Accessed via google books 8/1/2021.

²⁸ Listed as tomb 25 the transcription reads, 'William ? & Elizabeth ? d Dec 22 1782, aged 51 – relict to William, the clarke and daughter of Thomas Smith of the City of Exeter'.

brothers Richard and William.²⁹

When William died in 1783 his brother Richard was already dead, leaving his two children Richard Hall and Mary as his heirs. All William's property '*in the several Parishes of Woodbury Lympton and Uffculme*' went to '*my niece Mary Clarke*' and that '*in the several Parishes of Wellington in the County of Somerset Dunckerswell Halberton Muxbear and Otterys St. Mary in thye County of Devon and in the said City of Exeter*' went to '*my said nephew Richard Hall Clarke who is my heir at Law.*'³⁰

Richard Hall Clarke married Mary Were, a minor on the 18th of November 1773 at Halberton, Richard was described as 'of St Mary Major in Exeter, Esq.'³¹

The couple had nine children that we know of and although they may have lived at Bridwell we believe they worshiped or at least had eight of their children baptized at George's Meeting in Exeter. Mary Were (1777- 1778), Eliza Were (1780 -1804), Richard Were (?-1782), Richard Were (1783-1784), John Were (1784-1847), Mary Ann Were (1787-1879), Laura Were (1789-1791), Anna Sophia Were (1793-1831) and Thomas Were (1795-1820).³² No record for the baptism of the first Richard Were has been found. The connection to George's Meeting ends there as their four children, Mary Were, Richard Were (2) and Laura Were who died young, were buried at Halberton, the parish where Bridwell is located.³³

Mary Clarke married her cousin, the Reverend John Rowe on the 17th of April 1788 in Halberton.³⁴ They lived in Shrewsbury where John preached at High Street Chapel before moving in 1798 to Lewin's Mead Chapel in Bristol. Mary died in 1825 and John in 1832 in Sienna, Italy.³⁵

Bridwell House stayed in the Clarke family until 1980.³⁶

Anne Amosford

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²⁹ Thomas Clarke Will (PROB 11/1039/120) accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

³⁰ As note 4.

³¹ Halberton Parish Register, Devon Marriages and Banns, accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

³² As note 16. Although the title of the record is 'Bow Meeting' Richard Hall Clarke's children were baptised by Ministers associated with Georges Meeting.

³³ Halberton Parish Register, Devon Marriages and Banns, accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

³⁴ Halberton Parish Register, Devon Marriages and Banns, accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

³⁵ Lewins Mead Burial register, 1820-1901 accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk and Dictionary of National Biography [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Rowe,_John_\(1764-1832\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Rowe,_John_(1764-1832)) accessed 20/01/2021.

³⁶ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000688> accessed 12/1/2012.