

Memorial 42

Sacred to the Memory
of Mary wife of the
Rev^d Micaiah¹ Towgood who
Departed this life Feb 1759
Also
Mary daughter of –
Micaiah and Mary T
Who departed this life March 17—
Also of the said Micalah To good
Who departed this life
February 179—
----- To-good
----- above the

This was all that remained of the legible inscription on the Towgood family chest tomb in 2014. However, it is known that Susanna Towgood, Micaiah and Mary's youngest daughter was also interred within the tomb. In 1894 W. H. Hamilton Rogers noted that the two lower lines which were illegible when the 2014 survey was carried out, read '*Susanna Towgood daughter of the above, died 2 April 1805 aged 71*'.²

Many biographies of the Reverend Micaiah Towgood have been written; not all accurate but most include some correct details.³

Writing in 1840, the Reverend William Turner stated that Micaiah Towgood, '*Is a name which can scarcely fail to be familiar to every one who has taken the slightest interest in the history of Protestant Dissenters, as borne by a distinguished champion of their cause; to whom they owe one of the ablest and most satisfactory vindications, not only of their secession from the church of England, but of the grounds on which they disapprove of all civil establishments of religion, whatever may be their constitution, principles, or tenets*'.⁴

Micaiah was born in Axminster, Devon at the beginning of the eighteenth century to Doctor Matthew Towgood and his wife Mary née Davie.⁵ The first printed obituary, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, stated that he was born on 6th December 1700. According to the Reverend James Manning, Micaiah's biographer, he was born on the 17th of December 1700 to one Micaiah Towgood a Doctor of Medicine.⁶ However, there are various discrepancies over his actual date of birth, and it is a more commonly held fact that his father was Matthew Towgood.⁷

The entry in Axminster parish church register records that '*Micaiah the sson of Matthew Towgood and Mary his wife was born the 5th day off December 1699*'. There is no record of a baptism. The extant

¹ The name Micaiah has been spelt in numerous ways. This biography will use the spelling found on his Last Will and Testament (PROB 11/1215/128).

² William Henry Hamilton Rogers' handwritten notes, Devon Heritage Centre (DHC) www.swheritage.co.uk

³ See Appendix 1.

⁴ Reverend W. Turner (junior) as note 3.

⁵ Sometimes written Davy.

⁶ As note 3.

⁷ Chalmers' Dictionary gives his date of birth as the 6th of December 1700. Chalmers, Alexander. The General Biographical Dictionary. 32 volumes. London: J. Nichols and Son, 1812-1817.

records show that the minister's entries on the *verso* of an opening record births of Dissenting families, whilst baptisms of church attendees are recorded on the *recto*.⁸

Micaiah had at least four siblings, John Davie (?-?), Hannah (1698-?), Azariah (1702-1702), and Lemuell (1706 -?). As far as we know only John Davie, Hannah and Micaiah grew to adulthood. John Davie was to follow his father and become a doctor.

Micaiah's parents had been married on February 14th 1693 (St Valentine's Day) at Lyme Regis in Dorset.⁹ Micaiah's mother Mary came from Lyme Regis. Her father John Davie was a mariner there but at present we do not know the name of her mother, or when and where Mary was born. We do know however from her father's will, written in 1714, that she had at least two siblings Richard and Hannah. Although he was a mariner, her father owned more than one property in Lyme Regis¹⁰.

Matthew, Micaiah's father, was a medical doctor who just a year later in October 1694, supported by the vicar of Axminster, Joseph Crabb and Joseph Bond M.D., applied to the Archbishop of Canterbury for a medical licence. The letter certifies *'that Matthew Towgood of Axminster in the County of Devon Gent is a person of good life and conversation and well affected to their present majesties King William and Queen Mary and hath good skill in Physick and Chyrurgery having been a student therein and practiced the same with good success for several years last past and And wee conceive him fitly qualifed to have a Lycence for the practice of Physick and Chyrurgery.'*¹¹ There is no evidence that a licence was produced but Matthew continued to practice in Axminster until his death in September 1716. He was *'buried in ye Meeting House'* on the 29th of September.¹²

In his will dated 1715 he left, *'To son Micaiah all my books of history and divinity'*.¹³ Was he destined from an early age to become a Dissenting minister?

Although Micaiah's father was a physician, his grandfather Matthew Towgood (d.1669) had been a schoolmaster and clergyman in Wiltshire; and reputedly one of the 'evicted' ministers of 1662.

In 1662, the Act of Uniformity mandated that every parish minister must conform to the "39 Articles" of the Church of England or be ejected from their livings. As it happened, thousands of ministers refused to conform, leading to "Black Bartholomew's Day" in August 1662 and the ejection of over two thousand ministers. In 1665 a further act called the 'Five Mile Act' was passed prohibiting any dissenting minister from coming within five miles of their former living.

According to Manning, Micaiah was initially educated at home and at Mr Thomas Chadwick's in Taunton, Somerset, probably in his house at Shuttern on the High Street in Taunton¹⁴.

In 1717 he went on to study at the Taunton Dissenting Academy under the tutelage of the Reverend Henry Grove and Reverend Stephen James.¹⁵ Students were taught Ethics, theology, pneumatology

⁸ Axminster Parish Register 1648-1707 (Ref:406A/PR/1/2) DHC.

⁹ Lyme Regis Parish Register accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

¹⁰ Will of John Davie of Lyme Regis 1715, Probate 1720 (D1/10537). Release of land in Lyme Regis (D1/10525) Dorset County Archives.

¹¹ Reference VX IA/10/285 Lambeth Palace Library

¹² Axminster Parish Records PR3, #8 DHC.

¹³ Abstract of the Will of Matthew Towgood, Physician, 1716 MUR1 (Oswyn Murray Collection of Wills) available at DHC <https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/DEV/DevonWillsProject/MUR1>

¹⁴ Now the site of Shire Hall the Taunton Crown Court.

¹⁵ A Sketch of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Micaiah Towgood, By James Manning 1792.

(study of the holy spirit) and moral philosophy as well as mathematics, physics, and the classics.¹⁶

Micaiah's handwritten list of many eminent ministers including Micaiah and Nehemiah, his cousin, who had studied at the Taunton Academy from about 1715 can be found in the minute book of the Exeter Assembly (1652-1794).¹⁷

On the 11th of July 1721, just before taking up the Ministry at Moretonhampstead in Devon he took the oath of allegiance under the Toleration Act.¹⁸ *'These are to certify that Mr Michaia Towgood of Axminster in the County aforesaid a protestant dissenting teacher of a congregation Did at this present session take the oaths a required by law to be taken by such teachers and did take and subscribe the Declaration mentioned in a statute made in the thirtieth year of the Reigne of King Charles the Second entitled An Act to prevent papists from sitting in either house of Parliament and did also declare his consent and approbation of & subscribe the Articles of Religion mentioned in the statute made in ye thirtieth year of Queen Elizabeth except the thirty fourth thirty fifth thirty sixth and these words of the twentieth Article (vizt.) The church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies & authority in Controvercys of faith and yet.'*¹⁹

In 1722 Micaiah became Minister for the congregation at Cross Street Meeting House on the site where the present Unitarian chapel lies.²⁰ He was ordained there on the 22nd of August.²¹ Ordination was by examination of a thesis, the subject given to Micaiah was *'An Baptisma infantum sit validum?'* (Whether the Baptism of infants is valid?), followed by a ceremony consisting of the laying on of hands and fasting by the Presbyters (ministers).²²

John Withers, one of the ministers for the United Congregations in Exeter, conducted the sermon at the ordination. He charged him to study Church history and ecclesiastical antiquity to be better armed for the future, stating that the character by which the holy scriptures described a gospel minister, was that of an overseer who needed a good eye, light and distance to see. The Light being the Word of God and the distance as knowing the 'condition of his people' and not placing one above the other.

He went on to guide about temperance, zeal, social virtues, justice, and mercy; and on the style, matter, and manner of delivering his sermons. *'Your office bespeaks you to be a fisher of men, and not of fame or silver.'*²³

It appears that Micaiah followed exactly the guidelines for a new minister during his incumbency there and in his future calling. *'He rose at an early hour throughout the year and had often spent a busy day before others began to enjoy it. In this practice he continued through life, and thereby secured to himself*

¹⁶ Revd B. Kirk, The Taunton Dissenting Academy, Taunton, 2005.

¹⁷ Minute Book of the Exeter assembly (1652-1794) 3542D/M/1/1 DHC www.swheritage.co.uk

¹⁸ The Toleration Act of 1688 allowed freedom of worship to nonconformists who had pledged to the oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy and rejected transubstantiation. Nonconformists were allowed their own places of worship and their own schoolteachers, so long as they accepted these oaths.

¹⁹ Original in the authors possession.

²⁰ <http://www.moretonhampstead.org.uk/gaz/crossst.shtml> accessed 12/09/2022.

²¹ Ordination among Dissenters of the early Eighteenth Century, Dodderidge. https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/bq/24-3_126.pdf accessed 12/09/2022.

²² A Little Friendly light: The candour of Bourn, Taylor and Towgood: Part II by Alan F P Sell M.A., B.D., Ph.D., F.S.A. published in the Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society Vol. 4, No. 10, May 1992 <https://biblicalstudies.gospelstudies.org.uk/pdf/jurchs/04-10.pdf> accessed 10/10/2022.

²³ A charge given to Mr Micajah Towgood, at his ordination in Moreton Hampstead, Devon, August 21 1722. Published at the request of the Congregation of that town. By John Withers. London 1722 accessed via the Wellcome Collection Library 13/10/2022

*a portion of leisure for study and composition, which the charge of a large congregation without such economy of time, will seldom allow.*²⁴

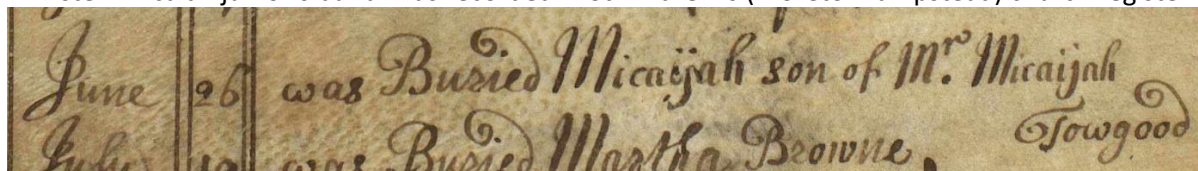
He was to remain minister in Moretonhampstead for fourteen years. Less than a year after moving there in 1723, he married Mary Hawker. They were married in the cathedral church of St. Peter in Exeter. The entry in the register reads that *'Micha Towgood of Moreton Hampstead in y^e County of Devon and Mary Hawker of Loopit in y^e same county were married y^e 28th day of May 1723'*.²⁵

Mary was the daughter of James and Sussana Hawker from Luppitt, just north of Honiton in Devon.²⁶ On Benjamin Donne's 1765 map of Devon, *Hawker Esquire* is visible as an inhabitant of Shaugh. In fact, the Hawker's owned considerable property in and around Luppitt but Shaugh (Shaw, Shave) was where a Presbyterian congregation met and many of the Taunton Academy students attended this meeting. Was that where Micaiah first met Mary?

In his Will of 1727, James Hawker asked that his *'son William Hawker shall permitt and suffer the meeting house att Shave/Shaw to be continued for the same purpose that now it is as long as the meeting shall be kept there And my will is that the said William Hawker my son shall repaire the said meeting house in walling and thatching when and as often as need shall require.'*²⁷

No extant marriage Indenture has been discovered for Micaiah and Mary, but we do know that she inherited land from her father in 1727. *'I give and bequeath unto Mary Towgood my daughter and to her heires for ever my Land called Sharcombe and Shalcott in the said parish of Loopit'*²⁸

Micaiah and Mary's four children were all born in Moretonhampstead; Micaiah (1724-1724) their first born died soon after his birth (see burial ledger entry below), **Mary** (1725-1771)²⁹, **Matthew** (1727-1791) and **Susanna** (1729-1805) followed (see more information later in this biography). All except Micaiah junior are recorded as being baptised at Moretonhampstead Cross Meeting where Micaiah was the minister. Micaiah junior's burial was recorded in St. Andrew's (Moretonhampstead) church register.³⁰



In 1736 Josiah Eveleigh the minister of Bowden Hill Meeting in Crediton died and a year later Micaiah left Moretonhampstead to become minister in his place.

An account of Bowden Hill written in 2004 stated that until the mid-1960's it was believed to have been the largest single span cob building in the country.³¹ Built in 1729 on land bought from Josiah Eveleigh by thirty-five of the hearers. An Indenture dated 1729 stated that *'a new meeting house to be erected and built on the said lands and premises or any part or parcel thereof and after such new meeting house shall be erected and built completed and finished do and shall from time to time and at all times then after*

²⁴ As note 15.

²⁵ Exeter cathedral register accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

²⁶ Mary's Aunt another Mary Hawker married the Reverend Stephen Towgood, Micaiah's cousin. See Stephen Towgood biography www.edgt.org.uk

²⁷ Probate and Will of James Hawker of Luppitt, senior, 10 August 1727 (DD/HLM/Box 7 Somerset Heritage Centre.

²⁸ As note 27.

²⁹ Those names in bold are commemorated on this Memorial.

³⁰ Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

³¹ Typed page written by Mrs Mary Blamey of Crediton (Ref: 8429D) DHC.

*peaceably and quietly permit allow and suffer the said new meeting house for the assembling and meeting of the people commonly called presbyterians for the worship and service of God there.*³²

Sixty-seven of the Bowden Hill congregation subscribed to Mr Towgood by contributing between three pounds and four shillings. With the addition of rents received from various properties it amounted to sixty pounds. Micaiah was paid this sum yearly for the whole of his thirteen years at Crediton, without any increase.



Micaiah Towgood's signature and seal (1741).

On 14th August 1743 a fire broke out in the town, *'the number of houses burnt is supposed to be between 800 and 1000 and people missing more than 30; tho' it's hop'd all these are not lost; eleven or twelve are all that are yet found dead.'*³³ It is now believed that about sixteen people lost their lives, and 460 houses were destroyed. Not only did people lose their houses and livelihoods but many of the wealthier tradesmen and merchants were left in financial ruin.

According to James Manning in his biography of Micaiah, *'His house, his purse was open to their relief, In connection with the Rev Mr STACEY the Minister of the Established Church, he solicited subscriptions, and was particularly successful in procuring a very considerable sum of money.'* Matthew Lee of Ebford wrote in his account book on January 23rd 1743 (Julian Calendar) *'given the Crediton sufferers £5'*.³⁴ The following Sunday Micaiah's sermon declared that the fire was the will of God, *'As it hath pleased Almighty God, the wise, the just, the good, to visit this town with a calamitous stroke by laying its principal part in ashes...We have seen a flourishing town sunk in a few hours into a ruinous heap.'*³⁵

Whilst he was in Crediton he started to publish several pamphlets on both religious and secular topics (see Appendix 2).³⁶

In early 1750 Micaiah moved from Crediton to Exeter to become one of the four dissenting ministers within the city. Between them they served the three United Congregations of Presbyterians namely Bow, James' and Little Meeting. The vacancy at James' was occasioned by the death of James Green in January 1750; Micaiah now joined his cousin Stephen Towgood and John Walrond as joint ministers there.³⁷

Micaiah and his family were helped with moving costs. At a meeting on the 3rd May in 1750 the treasurers

³² An attested copy of the deed of settlement for the New Meeting House in Crediton 1729 (Ref: 2011D) DHC.

³³ Derby Mercury 25th August 1743 accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

³⁴ Matthew Lee's diary and account book 1733-1767 (2889Z/F1) DHC.

³⁵ *'Afflictions Improved: A Sermon preach'd at Crediton in Devon, Aug 21 1743 Being the Lord's Day after the dreadful fire, which consumed the greatest part of that large and populace town. To which is prefixed, A short account of that terrible conflagration.'* By Micaiah Towgood

³⁶ See bibliography of main publications Appendix 2.

³⁷ See biography of Stephen Towgood www.edgt.org.uk

of James's Meeting were ordered to 'pay £20 a piece to the three Ministers Reverend Mr Walrond, Mr Lavington and Mr S Towgood and £15-8 to the late Mr Green's executors being deducted out of the usual £20 due to the fourth Minister for the carriage of Mr M Towgood's household goods.' The cost of 'carriage....from Crediton £4.12.00' was paid two days later.³⁸

Ministers were paid quarterly. Starting out with £20 per quarter Micaiah appears to have been paid a similar salary right up until he retired. Minutes of James's Meeting show that on July the 26th 1750 the committee ordered this first payment of twenty pounds 'a piece to ye Reverend messrs, Walrond, Lavington, S Towgood and to Mr M Towgood lately elected our fourth.'

In early 1759 Mary, Micaiah's wife died (see separate biography attached).

In 1760 James Meeting closed and moved to the newly built George's Meeting in South Street. Micaiah preached here for the next 22 years until in 1782 at the age of eighty-two he retired.



In the same year that George's Meeting was built a Dissenting Academy was opened in Exeter 'for the purpose of educating young persons for the ministry and other learned professions'.³⁹ This was the second academy to have been started in the city (the first closed in 1722).⁴⁰ It opened in Paris Street where 'a valuable library which had belonged to the academy at Taunton was removed hither for the use of the students and was increased by that of Dr Hodge of London', in 1767.⁴¹ Micaiah Towgood, Samuel Merivale, John Turner and John Hogg were the tutors. 'The province assigned Mr Towgood was the delivering once a week a critical Lecture on the Scriptures a department wherein he had scope for the exertion of all his abilities and an opportunity of opening to his pupils his ample stores of scriptural knowledge by which he made his learning more extensively useful'.³⁹ According to Brockett he also taught Greek Literature.⁴²

Micaiah Towgood sketched by John Downman R.A. in 1779.

© British Museum

³⁸ James Meeting Minute Book 1687-1760 DHC.

³⁹ As note 15.

⁴⁰ English Education under the Test Acts, H. McLachan, 1931.

⁴¹ Magna Britannia: Being a Concise Topographical Account of the several counties of Great Britain, Volume 6, Devonshire. 1822 Daniel Lysons and Samuel Lysons

⁴² Nonconformity in Exeter 1650-1875 by Allan Brockett 1962.

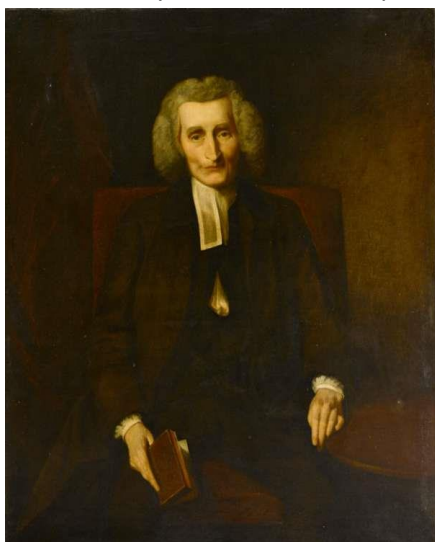
A total of 48 students were educated there before it closed in 1771.⁴³

During his years in Exeter, Micaiah, who was considered an Arian in his beliefs saw a transition from orthodoxy in the acceptance of the Trinity; that God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit were one, to a more controversial belief that Jesus Christ was the Saviour but not God himself.⁴⁴ Manning wrote that *'As many of the society with which Mr Towgood was connected considered all worship of Christ as improper though he himself thought it defensible he did not think it a duty and very seldom if ever practiced it in public considering it as an obligation to conduct the religious addresses of a mixt society in such a manner as would be conformable to the sentiments of all his fellow worshippers'*.³⁹

When he retired the two United Congregations in Exeter presented him with a silver vase inscribed:

*In Testimony
of
Respect for the eminent
and
Faithful Service
of
The Rev MICAIAH TOWGOOD
Pastor to the two United
Congregations of PROTESTANT DISSENTERS
in the
CITY of EXETER
during the course of more than
Thirty years This PIECE of PLATE
is most affectionately and respectfully presented 1782*

In the same year he sat for his portrait, painted by James Opie.⁴⁵ It appears he was not happy to sit, *'It was with great difficulty his friends could prevail on him to suffer his picture to be drawn His objection was similar to that of Erasmus on the like occasion And he was not even pleased with his own face, and was forced by the entreaties of his friends to allow himself to be painted.'*³⁹



The portrait now in the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery in Exeter shows Micaiah sitting in a chair with a half open book in his hand. He is dressed, in a brown frockcoat over two waistcoats and wearing clerical bands at his neck. His powdered wig is typical of that of a cleric. The portrait shows a sallow complexion, (although the varnish may have yellowed) and a thin drawn face. At the age of eighty-two he may well have lost some

Portrait of Micaiah Towgood by Opie (courtesy of RAMM, Exeter).

⁴³ Handwritten list by Micaiah Towgood in Minute Book A of the Exeter Assembly of Divenes, 1652 – 1794 (3542D/M/1/1) DHC.

⁴⁴ For a more detailed account of the transition to Unitarianism see *Nonconformity in Exeter 1650-1875* by Allan Brockett 1962.

⁴⁵ *Opie and his works: being a catalogue of 760 pictures by John Opie, R.A., preceded by a biographical sketch by Rogers, John Jope, 1816-1880 Publication date 1878.*

teeth. Apparently as a youth he appeared consumptive but exercised daily by riding. He also suffered early in life with a speech impediment *'but he almost entirely conquered this defect.'*³⁹

James Manning also showed us an insight into his nature. *'His person was above the middle size and extremely slender his eye lively and penetrating his whole appearance venerably pleasing so that the beholders were insensibly drawn to love before they knew how much reason there was to admire him.'*

Micaiah had ten years of retirement before his death on Wednesday 1st February 1792. *'This evening died, after a lingering illness, and in a very advanced age; the Rev. Micajah Towgood, one of the dissenting ministers of this city, and author of several books which have appeared in his name. He was a man who, both in public and in private life, was most universally respected, and whose loss is as generally lamented.'*⁴⁶

His interment took place a week later. The burial register notes that, *'Revd M Towgood buried Feby 8th 92'*.⁴⁷ Ten shillings was paid on the day of his burial for opening his 'cave' so he could be placed near his wife and daughter.⁴⁸

In his Will Micaiah left his Sharcombe estate in Luppit to his daughter Susanna for her natural life. He also specifically mentioned money that had been left to him in trust for charitable purposes. It amounted to *'six hundred and seventeen pounds and four shillings which sum is now standing in my name.'*⁴⁹ He left his daughter Susanna to administer the trusts during her life and then in trust to four others.

The Trusts were for the support of four main beneficiaries. Namely the charity school of the Protestant Dissenters in Exeter; for the *'Minister for the time being of the Congregation of Protestant Dissenters of the presbyterian denomination in the town of Falmouth in the County of Cornwall'*; two pounds annually (while a certain minister was alive) for the Congregation of Presbyterians in Newton Abbot and *'for assisting in the education of any young person in classical or academic learning to prepare him for the office of a Minister of the Gospel amongst the Dissenters and also for the benefit or relief of any poor Dissenting Ministers or of their widows or orphan children.'*

Mary Towgood (née Hawker) Micaiah's wife died according to the headstone in February 1759. There is no mention of the occasion in the burial register as there is a gap of twenty years (between 1757 and 1776) in the record.

As mentioned before, she was the daughter of James Hawker, a clothier from Luppit. Mary was one of five children born to James and Sussana (née Calpin/Galpine) his wife. Mary had one sister, Elizabeth (? - 1777) and three brothers, James (? -1728), John (? -1780) and William (1701-1738).

Elizabeth was the first of the sisters to marry, one Nicholas Munckley a prominent cloth merchant in Exeter. Unfortunately, Nicholas died in 1730 leaving Elizabeth with two children Nicholas and Samuel. In 1733 she remarried John Duntze, a merchant and cloth manufacturer originally from Bremen but naturalized in February 1730/1. She went on to bear two more boys; the oldest would eventually become Sir John Duntze.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ The Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser 2 Feb 1792 accessed at DHC.

⁴⁷ Burial Register accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

⁴⁸ Report and Account Book of Dissenter's Burial Ground 1748-1832 (3693D/0/B), DHC www.swheritage.co.uk

⁴⁹ As note 1.

⁵⁰ <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/duntze-john-1735-95> accessed 25/10/2022.

John Hawker also settled initially in Exeter and was a Linen Draper or sometimes called a haberdasher of hats. He had been elected one of the 'Committee of Thirteen' who administered the Minister's funds within Exon in 1743 but by 1748 he had moved to Trowbridge in Wiltshire.

Micaiah and Mary's children

Mary Towgood (1725-1771)

Mary, Micaiah, and Mary's eldest daughter, as mentioned above, was born in about 1725. Cross Street Chapel register states that on 4th August that year *'was baptized Mary Daug^t. of Mr. Towgood.'*⁵¹ We get occasional glimpses of Mary, for instance, when he died in 1768, John Duntze her uncle by marriage left her and her sister *'two hundred pounds a piece'*

James Manning wrote *'In the beginning of the year 1771, Mr Towgood had the affliction of losing Miss Mary Towgood, his eldest daughter, and a very amiable lady.'*

According to the inscription on the tomb she died on 17th March 1771 at the age of forty-six. Her father paid ten shillings for 'opening his cave' on 13th May that year. As with her mother before her there is no record in the burial register.

Matthew Towgood (1727-1791)

Matthew was the only child not buried in the Exeter Dissenters' graveyard.

He was also baptised at Moretonhampstead Cross Street Chapel on 5th July 1727. The register states that on *'July 5th was bapitized Matthew son of Mr Towgood.'*

Ed Pope has collated much about Matthew's life on his website *Ed Pope History, a Dictionary of the Forgotten.*⁵²

Matthew initially followed his father into the ministry at Bridgwater but then turned to banking.⁵³ As early as 1777 he is mentioned as being in business with 'Langston, Polhill, Towgood and Amory' of Clements Lane, London.⁵⁴

On 23rd June 1752 Matthew married Mary Mills at Bedminster St. John, Bristol.

Matthew died on 2nd February 1791 at his house in London Field, Hackney. Newspaper reports stated he was a *'Banker of Clement's Lane.'* He was buried in Bunhill Field's near to his two first born children; Matthew Mills Towgood (1753-1757) and Mary Towgood (1755-1757).⁵⁵

In his will he bequeathed to his father and sister Sussana *'fifty pounds a piece.'*

Mary his wife died in 1799 and was also buried in Bunhill Fields on 19th January.⁵⁶

Sussana Towgood (1729-1805)

Sussana the only child to outlive their father and mother, was born according to the records about 1729.

⁵¹ Accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

⁵² <https://edpopehistory.co.uk/entries/towgood-matthew/1000-01-01-000000> accessed 03/10/2022

⁵³ A History of the Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England, Jerom Murch 1835

⁵⁴ Plan of the London Dispensary 1777 <https://collections.nlm.nih.gov/ext/dw/2701934R/PDF/2701934R.pdf>

⁵⁵ Bunhill Fields records accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

⁵⁶ As note 53.

She was baptised, like her sister, at Cross Street Chapel in Moretonhampstead. *'Ffeb'. 1st was baptised Sussana Daug^t. of Mr Towgood.'*

She was possibly named after her maternal grandmother Sussana Hawker; however, it was her Aunt Elizabeth Duntze who in her will (1777) affectionately called her Sukey. She left *'my niece Mrs Sukey Towgood ten pounds for books or what she please'* and left her a bag containing money to distribute to the poor, as she felt best.⁵⁷ This perhaps shows us an insight into Sussana's character. She was possibly close to her aunt as she also aided her in the writing of her will.

In 1792 after her father's death, the Reverend James Manning presented her with a copy of his biography of her father in which he wrote eloquently of her in respect of her caring for her dying father; *'his paternal care was repaid by the tender assiduities of his affectionate daughter who had always lived with him and who now listened to his broken accents to catch the least intimation of her Father's wishes and watched with anxiety every look to learn his wants.'*

The transcription above states that Sussana died on 2nd April 1805 at the age of seventy-one. According to the *Exeter Flying Post* she died on the 24th of April and if we believe her baptism record, she would have been seventy-six. *'Wednesday last died, at her house in Bartholomew's Yard, Mrs Sussana Towgood, daughter of the late truly reverend Micaiah Towgood, of this city. The mind of this excellent woman seems to have been blessed, both by nature and education, with a disposition to recommend all the virtues of genuine piety, and universal benevolence; she was religious without bigotry, pious without enthusiasm, charitable without ostentation; she lived the life and died the death of a christian.'*⁵⁸

There is no burial record for her although we know that ten shillings was paid on the 2nd of April *'Rec'd for opening the late Reverend Mr Towgoods cave to bury his daughter.'*⁵⁹

Sussana's Will, written in 1804, mentions a companion.⁶⁰ She left *'to my worthy and highly esteemed friend and companion Mrs Elizabeth Green the sum of ffifty pounds and a good suit of mourning and also the Marane bed in which I usually sleep with all the bedding and furniture belonging to it and the window curtains and Mahogany double chest of drawers and the press bed and bed and bedding in the library.'*⁶¹

After her death, the house she and her father had lived in for so many years was put up for sale by her executors. An advertisement in the *Exeter Flying Post*, offering the brick-built house with a good garden behind in Bartholomew Yard, appeared on 6th June 1805, a couple of months after her death. Just a week later another advertisement appeared to say it had been sold. *'The dwelling house, situate in Bartholomew's Yard, in this city, lately in the occupation of Mrs Towgood advertised to be sold at the Bear Inn on Wednesday the 19th of this instant June, is disposed of by private contract, Exeter June 12th 1805.'*⁶²

The portrait of Micaiah Towgood was handed down through the family until John Towgood in his Will of 1878 stated *'I desire that the portrait of my great grandfather the Reverend Micaiah Towgood be offered to the Trustees of Dr. Williams's Library'* (the library of Protestant Dissent) however it remained in the

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Duntze Will 1777 (PROB 11/1034/86) accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

⁵⁸ Exeter Flying Post 2 May 1805 accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

⁵⁹ As note 46.

⁶⁰ A lady's companion was a woman of genteel birth who lived with a woman of rank or wealth as retainer.

⁶¹ Sussana Towgood Will (PROB 11/1429/28) accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

⁶² Exeter Flying Post 13 June 1805 accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

family until it was donated to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in 2006.⁶³

Anne Amosford
November 2022

Appendix 1

The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle, for the year 1792, Volume 62, part 1, Sylvanus Urban, gent, London. pp. 185-6.

https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ra9JAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA185&lpg=PA185&dq=doctor+towgood+axminster&source=bl&ots=C_aGYd2niD&sig=ACfU3U0XyTTVK_RW3JdOZzC1xxF4bpPQgg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiKnNefxPb4AhWOQUEAHXBSBowQ6AF6BAgfEAM#v=onepage&q=doctor%20towgood%20axminster&f=false

'A sketch of the Life and writings of the Rev. Micaiah Towgood', James Manning, Exeter 1792.
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=FctbAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA1&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false

Chalmers, Alexander. The General Biographical Dictionary. 32 volumes. London: J. Nichols and Son, 1812-1817. Accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

'A History of the presbyterian and General Baptist churches in the West of England, with Memoirs of some of their Pastors,' Jerom Murch, London, 1835.

'Lives of the eminent Unitarians,' the Rev. W. Turner, Jun., MA., London, published by the Unitarian Association, 1840. pp.391-417.
<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2001.05.0300%3Achapter%3D16%3Apage%3D391>

'Micaijah Towgood,' Alexander Gordon, Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900, Volume 57.
https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Towgood,_Michaijah

'A Little Friendly Light: the Candour of Bourn, Taylor and Towgood, Part I.' Alan P.F Sell, MA., B.D. Ph.D., FSA. The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society (incorporating the Congregational Historical Society, founded in 1899, and the Presbyterian Historical Society of England founded in 1913). Ed. Dr. Clyde Binfield, M.A., F.S.A. Volume 4, No. 9 December 1991, p.517.
<https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jurchs/04-09.pdf>

'Religion and the Enlightenment, 1600-1800: Conflict and the Rise of Civic Humanism in Taunton', William Gibson, pub. William Land 2007.
<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ouyiW8s3jUoC&pg=PA277&lpg=PA277&dq=stephen+Towgood+exeter&source=bl&ots=4vxdthBQLT&sig=ACfU3U2yGW4U4WZq8H-ONFOezPzawTxu3A&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiZ2ZeY7sj4AhU-S0EAHdyxCyUQ6AF6BAgmEAM#v=onepage&q&f=false>

'Selected Pen Portraits of Prominent and Interesting Residents of Axminster'
<https://axminsterheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Pen-portraits.pdf>

The Axminster Ecclesiastica, 1660-1698, 1874 (Ed K.W.H.Howard, 1976).

⁶³ <https://rammcollections.org.uk/object/146-2006-1/>

Appendix 2

Main publications by Micaiah Towgood

1737 - *High-flown Episcopal and Priestly Claims freely examin'd in a dialogue betwixt a country gentleman and a country vicar. Wherein church-authority, confirmation, Absolution, burial of dead, Power of Bishops, etc . are particularly Consider'd* reprinted 1746 1748

1739 - *The Dissenter's Apology: Or Their Principles and Conduct Justified, from the Groundless and Severe Censures Lately Set Forth Against Them by the Editor of Dr. Warren's Sermons.*

1741 - *Spanish Cruelty and Injustice, a justifiable plea for a vigorous war with Spain, and a rational ground for hopes and success: Being a collection from authentic authors, of their inhuman barbarities exercised upon Pagans, Jews, Mahometans and Christians.* (Reprinted 1811)

1742 - *Recovery from sickness: a present to one lately raised from a dangerous disorder: Containing serious reflections, resolutions and devotions, suitable to that occasion.* Reprinted 1761.

1743 - *Afflictions Improved: a sermon preach'd at Crediton in Devon, Aug. 21, 1743, Being the Lord's Day after the dreadful fire, which consumed the greatest part of that large and populous town. To which is prefixed, a short account of that terrible conflaguration.* London printed by J. Noon at The White Hart in the Poultry and Aaron Tozer, Bookseller Exeter.

1748 - *An essay towards attaining a true idea of the character and reign of King Charles the First and the causes of the civil war : extracted from and delivered in the very words of some of the most authentic and celebrated historians viz. Clarendon, Whitelock, Burnet, Coke, Echard, Rapin, Tindal, Neal, &c.* (London : Printed for John Noon ..., 1748)⁶⁴

1750 - 1751 *The Baptism of Infants a reasonable service: founded upon scripture and undoubted apostolic tradition: In which it's moral purposes and use in religion are shewn. supplemented by Dipping not the Only Scriptural and Primitive Manner of Baptizing. And supposing it were, yet a strict adherence to it not obligatory on us.* London J. Waugh.

1752 - *The dissenting gentleman's answer to Mr. White's Three letters, in which a separation from the establishment is fully justified; the charge of schism is refuted and retorted, etc.* (London, printed for J. Waugh).

1758 - A sermon preached at Exeter, August the 27th, 1758: the Lord's day after receiving the account of the taking of the islands of Cape-Breton and St. John / (Exeter [England] : Printed for J. Noon, ... and sold by Aaron Tozer, ..., [1758?])

1765 - *A Dissent from the Church of England Fully Justified, and Proved to be the Genuine and Just Consequence of the Allegiance Which is Due to Jesus Christ, the Only Lawgiver in the Church: Being the Dissenting Gentleman's Letters, etc. in Answer to the Letters of the Rev. Mr White on that subject.* Tenth edition Published by B. Flower for T. Conder., London, 1807

1784 – A sermon '*The grounds of faith in Jesus Christ briefly stated; and shewn to be solid foundation for peace and joy unspeakable: with An earnest recommendation of Catholic Christianity, and the communion of saints: Addressed to a candid society of Christian's at the close of their Pastor's ministrations amongst them.*'

⁶⁴ Marked contentiously the centenary of the death of Charles I of England.