

TUCKER, TREADWIN and RIDGE

Memorial 52

In 1894 the inscription on this stone read:¹

Near this stone was buried Nathaniel Tucker formerly of Thorverton, Devon. Late of this City, Sley and Shuttlemaker. 8 Oct 1817 79. Ann his wife 1 March 1825 67. Also, the undermentioned children:

*John 23 Dec 1796 – 9
Ann 22 May 1803 – 19
James 21 Nov 1804 – 11
Charlotte 13 July 1814 – 21
Mary wife of John Treleaven² 6 Sept 1825
Nathaniel 2 May 1833
Eliza wife of John Ridge³ 12 March 1844 – 45
John Treadwin of this City Bookseller
17 April 1827 – 37
Samuel Ridge 7 Feb 1837 – 2y 8mo*



Some of the inscription remained in 1984 but by the 2014 survey it was totally illegible.

Nathaniel and Ann Tucker

Little is known of Nathaniel Tucker Senior (1738-1817). The stone tells us that he was formerly of Thorverton a small village eight miles north of Exeter; that he was a Sley and Shuttle maker;⁴ that his wife's name was Ann and that seven of his children are buried with him and his wife.

There is no clear baptism record for Nathaniel in Thorverton itself, so it is possible he was not born there or was baptised somewhere else. Tucker is a common Devon family name. However, we do know that he was the son of John Tucker (1697-1777), a serge weaver and brother to John Tucker (1730-1807), a clock and watchmaker working in Tiverton.⁵ No apprenticeship records relating to Nathaniel have been found.

Two possibilities for Ann, Nathaniel's wife are evident, Ann Burge or Ann Graves.

Ann Burge married a Nathaniel Tucker at Exeter St David's on 20th July 1777 with a Thomas Shnell(?) and Edward Keen as witnesses.⁶ She would have been nineteen and he twenty years older.

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

² Mistranscribed, should read Treadwin.

³ Mistranscribed, John should read Joseph

⁴ A sley is the rigid comb through which the warps were threaded on a loom. A shuttle is the wooden boat made to carry the weft thread bobbin from side to side across the warps.

⁵ Information supplied by Ian Stoye, Thorverton. Private correspondence 19/3/2019 and 'Time in Exeter' by Clive N Ponsford, Exeter, 1978.

⁶ www.findmypast.co.uk accessed 1/11/2018.

Ann Graves married a Nathaniel Tucker on 17th April 1784 at St. Mary Major with a Nicholas Parsons and James Cloade as witnesses.⁷ If Ann Graves was his wife, she was heavily pregnant with their first child Ann who was born on May 17 - just a month later.⁸

An extant signature of Nathaniel Tucker Senior remains in the Minutes of meetings from Georges Meeting House.⁹ The date is uncertain but it pertains to collections made for erecting a new vestry behind the old one at Georges Meeting House so it is probably between 1800-5.¹⁰ Looking at the signatures on the two wedding records it appears that the Nathaniel Tucker who married Ann Graves is the more likely.¹¹ So, we know that Nathaniel was living, or at least worshipping, in Exeter by 1784. In 1812 when Henry Ellis Senior was writing to his son, he mentioned that, "I saw Old Mr Tucker, of Sun Lane on Sunday Last".¹²

By 1813 Nathaniel "appears in a bad way and looks very unwell".¹³ Did he have a long illness or, as can be seen from the memorial stone, he died of old age? His death was mentioned in '*The Monthly Magazine*', 'Died at Exeter, 79, Mr Nathaniel Tucker'.¹⁴ Another mention of his passing was in the *Exeter Flying Post*, "Died last week, aged 79 Mr Nathaniel Tucker, of this city, shuttle and slea maker."¹⁵

Ann died in 1825 also noted in the *Exeter Flying Post*, "Tuesday 22nd ult. Aged 67, Ann, widow of the late Mr Nathaniel Tucker, Shuttle-maker, of Sun-Lane, in this city."¹⁶

John, Ann, James and Charlotte Tucker

Ann and Nathaniel had seven children in Exeter that we know of; Ann (1784), Nathaniel (1786) and John (1788) were all baptised at Bow Meeting. Mary, Charlotte, James and Eliza all born after 1790 do not appear to be baptised. Only Nathaniel, Mary, Charlotte and Eliza grew to adulthood.

John died in 1796 aged nine, Ann the eldest died in 1803 at the age of nineteen followed a year later by James in 1804 aged only eleven.

Next was Charlotte who died in July 1814 at the age of twenty-one. In a letter written by Henry Ellis to his fiancé Mary White in 1814 he says, "Poor Charlotte Tucker is in a deep consumption. I am sincerely sorry for her, but from all I hear there is but little chance of her recovery. Her friends will deeply regret her loss." Nathaniel her brother had been staying in Dawlish but returned to Exeter, "barely in time to see his sister before she breathed her last." Henry Ellis also writes, "Poor Charlotte she will long be lamented by all who knew her.... Her mind has been tranquil and resigned during a most trying illness

⁷ www.findmypast.co.uk accessed 1/11/2018.

⁸ Exeter Bow Meeting (Presbyterian), 1687-1823, accessed via Ancestry.co.uk, 31/5/2019.

⁹ Minutes of Meetings from 1791-1813 (Ref 3693D/O/M/4) SWHT.

¹⁰ The list of signatures includes John Bowring who was Clerk of Georges Meeting House 1805.

¹¹ St Mary Major was also the Parish Nathaniel was living in.

¹² Henry Ellis Memoirs, (Ref 76/20/1-9) SWHT. Sun Lane was in the South Ward of Exeter joining on to the north end of Preston Street.

¹³ As above note 12.

¹⁴ The Monthly Magazine No 304 Nov 1, 1817 4 of vol 44, accessed via Google Books.

¹⁵ Exeter Flying Post, 16 October 1817, accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk 31/5/2019.

¹⁶ Exeter Flying Post, 3 March 1825, accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk 31/5/2019.

which she bore with truly Christian fortitude. Thus Alas! In the flower of youth and beauty has the cruel and invidious grave claimed his prey.”¹⁷

Mary (née Tucker) and John Treadwin

Mary married John Treadwin at St Mary Major on 25th March 1819 witnessed by her brother Nathaniel, sister Eliza and John’s half-sister Ann Davey. John’s profession was Stationer.¹⁸

We know little of Mary until she is mentioned by Henry Ellis in his memoirs in connection to his friend John Treadwin.

John Treadwin was the third and only child to survive into adulthood of John and Mary (née Smith) Treadwin of Kilminster on the outskirts of Axminster. His father was keeper of the Old Inn, a pub which still survives to this day. John and Mary married in the Parish Church of St Giles on 2nd October 1784.¹⁹ John was from Lincomb and Widcomb (Lincombe and Widecombe) Parish within Bath. The name Treadwin is unusual and its origins unclear although it could be a derivative of Tredwin or Tredwen.²⁰ Apart from the information at his wedding and a memorial stone in the graveyard of St Giles to him and his first son we know no more of his birth or background. The stone reads ‘Treadwin John, April 20, 1797, aged 59; John, his son, 1789’.²¹

After John died Mary was left with a seven-year-old son, John²². She remarried a year later in September 1798 to William Davey a widowed farmer from Heavitree near Exeter.²³

In 1805 aged fifteen John was apprenticed to James Penny a bookseller and printer in Exeter. John lived with his mother and stepfather at ‘Cottage green’, Heavitree, apparently somewhere near Livery Dole.²⁴

John was friends with Henry Ellis, Nathaniel Tucker and various other young men in Exeter. He was something of a poet with many published verses.²⁵

¹⁷ As above note 12.

¹⁸ www.findmypast.co.uk accessed 19/11/2019.

¹⁹ www.findmypast.co.uk accessed 19/11/2019.

²⁰ ‘Mr John Treadwin, established as a jeweller in Exeter in the middle of the last century believed he was the last bearer of the name ‘Treadwin’ in which case the surname is now extinct.’ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* 9th February 1926. www.findmypast.co.uk accessed 19/11/2019.

²¹ The book of the Axe: Containing a Piscatorial Description of that Stream and Historical sketches of all the parishes and remarkable places upon its banks by George Philip Rigney Pulman, 1875. <https://archive.org/details/bookaxecontaini00pulmgoog/page/n7>

²² It has been noted that the same name was often used numerous times within a family after the death of a child.

²³ www.findmypast.co.uk accessed 19/11/2019.

²⁴ The exact location has not been ascertained yet. An extant letter from John to Henry Ellis contains the address; as above note 12.

²⁵ The Weekly Entertainer; or Agreeable and Instructive Repository: containing a collection of select pieces both in prose and verse; curious anecdotes, instructive tales and ingenious essays on different subjects.’ Printed by J. Langdon, Sherborne.

A CHARADE by J Treadwin²⁶

A Maiden's name, ye gents. of fame,
I pray you'll first declare;
A metal then, desir'd by men,
Which misers hoard with care:
Those parts, when you have right combin'd,
A flow'ring potherb bring to mind.

It appears the 'Devonshire Lads' or the 'Devonshire Boys Squad'²⁷ got up to many antics including the publishing of a handbill lampooning the Mayor of Exeter. Written by John Treadwin and titled "An infallible potion for a Mad Mare!" it landed them in rather hot water with the authorities. Eventually they owned up, Nathaniel Tucker taking all the blame, but the Mayor deemed it prudent to 'let the affair drop'.²⁸

After John finished his apprenticeship in 1812, he worked in London for a few years, first at a large book binding establishment, collating Rees's Cyclopaedia.²⁹ Initially, he lodged with Henry Ellis who was also in London. Henry wrote that "We generally met and dined together during the week, after which I seldom saw him until bedtime, my engagements after leaving work, calling me in a different direction."

His next employment was to the company of Coles and Galpin, legal stationers at 21 Fleet Street.

The winter of 1814 was particularly cold, and in London a 'Frost Fair' was established on the frozen Thames for four days in early February. Henry Ellis, writes that John, "The poor fellow has had a narrow escape of his life – in crossing the Thames during the Fair, the ice gave way, and had he not been a good swimmer he most certainly would have been drowned."³⁰

It appears his sights were set on Mary Tucker from as early as 1813 when Henry Ellis writes that John was "sighing for home and 'the girl he left behind him'".

The lure of London waned and John returned to Exeter sometime between 1815 and 1819, lodging with Nathaniel Tucker and Mary. He started a bookbinding business but began working for the trade in one of the back lanes, opposite the Alms houses known by the name of the ten cells.³¹



By 1819 he had set up as a 'Bookseller, stationer and Bookbinder at 217 High Street, Exeter, and, in addition, had opened a reading room where subscribers met to read Treadwins' Reading Rooms are listed in 1821 as being in Fore Street.³²

²⁶ Marigold

²⁷ Henry Ellis Senior's nickname for the boys. Henry Ellis Junior, Nathaniel Tucker Junior, John Dinham Osborn, George Osborn, Henry Rossiter, John Walter Tothill Tucker and others.

²⁸ As above note 12.

²⁹ Andrew Strahan operated as king's printer with Charles Eyre at 8 East Harding Street, Shoe Lane, off Fleet Street, and ran separately his private printing business in nearby Little New Street and New Street Square.

³⁰ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-25862141> The Frost Fair started on February 1st and lasted for four days.

³¹ As above note 12.

³² A concise account of the city of Exeter, its neighbourhood and adjacent watering places by S Woolmer, 1821.

John and Mary had two children. "They were however a sickly family – the last child, a girl did not long survive her birth, and poor Mrs T succumbed to the malady which had carried off her sister; leaving her husband at an early age in very delicate health."³³ John died only a couple of years later, leaving his son John aged seven in the care of his Uncle Nathaniel Tucker.³⁴ The *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* of 14th April 1827 reported that 'On Sunday, Mr John Treadwin, of this city, bookseller, aged 37, much respected and regretted.'³⁵

Nathaniel Tucker Junior

Nathaniel Junior had continued in the sley and shuttle making business after his father died.³⁶ It appears that he had a recurring problem with one of his knees. In the 1803 Exeter Militia List the only Nathaniel Tucker listed is in the 1st Class column, that is 17–30 years, unmarried, no children under 10 years, a shuttle maker and infirm.³⁷ It is through his friendship with Henry Ellis that we learn the most about Nathaniel, his family and character. They were friends from at least 1808 when Henry mentions him in his Memoirs, "cheerful though sedate, was a philosophic turn of mind and proved a real and sincere friend." Proving himself "warm and zealous in his regard towards me." "He was a great invalid, and suffered much from a disease of the knee, which had been of long standing, and now assumed a fearful character, threatening the loss of his leg, and probably his life. His resignation under this affliction was truly exemplary; he was never heard to murmur or complain, and his cheerful and contented disposition remained unaltered through life."

In a letter of 1813 Henry Ellis Senior writes to his son Henry saying, "Nathaniel Tucker better, slept at some time past in St Sidwell's, for the change of air, not being able to go by the sea as they are very busy." And in another "N tucker's knee is again very bad, being a return of his old complaint. I am very sorry at his affliction." In 1814, 1815 and again 1819 Nathaniel visits Dawlish for his health. By 1823 Henry Ellis notes that, "The disease in his knee had ended in confirmed lameness, but his happy and cheerful disposition never forsook him." When Henry Ellis opened his shop at 263 High Street in Exeter Nathaniel made decorations and display fittings for the window.

Nathaniel was an active member of Georges Meeting. In 1825 he was one of three applicants for the post of Clerk. 'All of whom were most respectably recommended as to their Character and Qualifications for the Office, each of them having read to the Committee 2 Hymns from the Clerks Desk it was their unanimous opinion that M^r Tuckers reading was superior to that of the other Candidates.'³⁸ The duties of the Clerk included collecting subscriptions for the Ministers pay, seat rents including those from the Galleries and subscriptions for the Sunday Schools. He was to attend all Public Meetings with the necessary books and act as Secretary to such meetings. The committee appointed to look into the duties of the Clerk recommended in 1825 that his annual salary should not

³³ As above note 12.

³⁴ John Treadwin Will 1827. www.swheritagetrust.org.uk

³⁵ Newspaper accessed 19/11/2019 via www.findmypast.co.uk

³⁶ Listed in Exeter Itinerary and General Directory June 1828 and in Pigots Directory of 1830, accessed via Google Books 6/6/2019.

³⁷ Exeter Militia List 1803, W.G.Hoskins, Phillimore and Co. Ltd, 1972.

³⁸ Minute book of the Contributors of the Two United Congregations of Protestant Dissenters, 1815-1834 (Ref 3693D/0/M/5) SWHT.

be less than Twenty Pounds. It was 'recommended that an annual voluntary contribution should be solicited from each individual subscriber which if found inadequate to the above amount your

Committee recommend that the Trustees be requested to make up the deficiency from their funds'. In the end it was recommended that £25 was to be his yearly salary.³⁹

Nathaniel died on 2nd May 1833. His friend and executor Henry Ellis, *"was called on by Mr Orchard, who resided with my friend Nathaniel Tucker, to bring me acquainted with the melancholy intelligence of his sudden and alarming illness. He had been attacked, it appeared during the night with Apoplexy, and little or no hopes were entertained of his recovery. As soon as I could be relieved and leave the shop, I hastened to his house, and found indeed that the news was too true: my poor friend was lying in a deep sleep which his stertorous breathing but too plainly indicated his dangerous situation. A surgeon had been called in and the usual means on such occasions were had recourse to his head had been shaven, and leeches applied; but all in vain – he was lost to the world and his friends forever: his sleep was the sleep of death!"*

"The following notice of this sad event appeared in the Exeter Gazette 'Died May 2 Mr Nathaniel Tucker of Exeter, sleamaker, in the 48th year of his age. His sterling integrity and mild and cheerful character endeared him to a numerous circle of relatives and friends, and his loss will be sincerely regretted by all who knew him.' Not long before his death my friend had desired me to become his executor conjointly with Mr Stoneman, thus the management of his affairs in some measure devolved on me at a time when I was but ill able to attend to them. By his will he bequeathed the principal part of his little property (consisting of the house in which he resided and two others adjoining) to his nephew John Treadwin. His only surviving sister had married rather contrary to his wishes and having had some money from him at that time he left her only a small legacy. His will there was good reason to believe he intended altering, had he been spared, for he was too just, and too generous and forgiving not to have done so. But the iron grasp of death arrested him so suddenly that the opportunity was not allowed him. His remains were interred in Magdalen Street with those of his family in the burying ground belonging to the Unitarian Chapel, of which for some time past he had been the clerk. I followed his corpse with his sorrowing friends to 'the house appointed for all living.'"

After Nathaniel's death, John Treadwin junior, who was being schooled at Mount Radford School under the sponsorship of Mr John Madgwick Wilcocks, a Trustee of the school and executor of John's father's will, now became the ward of Henry Ellis. It appeared his handwriting ability was poor.⁴⁰ So, it was agreed that he would remain at Mount Radford but board at Messrs Ridgways house where he was taught writing and arithmetic.⁴¹

Walter James Kelland Tucker, a watchmaker and son of John Tucker, cousin of Nathaniel Tucker junior, in Exeter took John on as an apprentice watchmaker. In 1841 the apprenticeship expired, and he headed off to London gaining employment with Charles Pace at 128 High street, Whitechapel.⁴² However he was not happy there and reading Henry Ellis' memoirs it appears that John was not a grateful ward. Henry wrote that, 'although I had given him letters of introduction and

³⁹ As above note 39.

⁴⁰ As above note 12.

⁴¹ In 1841 Ridgway School was in Maddocks Row, Exeter, now the Harlequin car park area, Tutors were James and Simon Ridgway. Simon Radford Ridgway, L.L.D., (Boarding) Magdalen House, Magdalen Street, Listed under academies in 1852 Slater's Directory. Both buildings now gone.

⁴² Thomas, Henry and Charles Pace produced good quality bracket and longcase clocks.

recommendations to several persons in London in the trade with a view of procuring him employ he had never the good manners even to write to me, and I knew nothing of him during his absence but by hearsay I could not but consider such conduct strange if not ungrateful, not only from the friendship formerly subsisting between his father, and more particularly his uncle and myself but from repeated acts of kindness shewn to him individually including such minor attentions as those of associating him with my family, and frequently inviting him to dine on a Sunday and spend the day at our house.’

By 1847 he had returned to Exeter and set up shop at 26 Cathedral Yard, next door to Miss Charlotte Elizabeth Dobbs, Lace Manufacturer. In 1850 they married, and the rest is really another story.⁴³ He died at 27 Cathedral Yard, Exeter on November 24th, 1864.⁴⁴

Eliza (née Tucker) and Samuel Ridge

Nathaniel Tucker’s ‘only surviving sister’ Eliza had married a widower, Joseph Ridge, on 9th October 1831 at Allhallows, Goldsmith Street, Exeter.⁴⁵ Joseph was a Master Tailor, born in 1790 in Cadbury just North of Exeter. It is possible that Eliza, marrying ‘rather contrary to his wishes’ was because Joseph had at least five children by his former wife Susanna, and was nine years older than her. An obituary for Susanna appeared in the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* of the 3rd November 1827, ‘On Thursday, aged, 45, Mrs Ridge, wife of Mr Joseph Ridge of Fore street, draper and taylor, leaving six children to lament the loss of an excellent mother’.⁴⁶ It appears she died shortly after giving birth and her infant child died within 24 hours of the birth.⁴⁷ The Ridge family worshipped at Castle Street Meeting which although non-conformist might have caused some friction too.

Eliza entered an already established family. They had four more children, Samuel, William, Mary and Anne. Samuel died in 1837 just two years and nine months after his birth. Eliza died just seven years later in 1844; a death notice appearing in the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, ‘March 12, Eliza, the beloved wife of Mr Joseph Ridge, tailor and draper, Broadgate’.⁴⁸ Her death certificate states that she died of ‘water in the chest’. Henry Ellis writes that his wife called on her. ‘The poor woman was pleased and cheered by this little mark of kindness and attention. But it was the last time Mary saw her, she grew rapidly worse, and we heard with much pain on the following day that she was no more.’

Mary and Joseph’s daughter, Mary never married. She moved to London and opened a shop at 43 Craven Road, Paddington running it for many years with her half-sister Elizabeth. It was listed as a Bookseller, stationer, printer, bookbinder and Library from 1870 until her death in 1889 when her niece Kate took over.⁴⁹ The shop was still there up until about 1940. Anne married Thomas Bartle Hart a Brewers agent and moved to Cornwall where she died in 1876 childless.⁵⁰

⁴³ ‘Mrs Treadwin Victorian lace maker, designer and historian’, Carol McFadzean, 2009.

⁴⁴ Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, 25th November 1864. www.findmypast.co.uk accessed 30/11/2019.

⁴⁵ www.findmypast.co.uk accessed 1/11/2019.

⁴⁶ www.findmypast.co.uk accessed 20/11/2019.

⁴⁷ Castle street burials, www.ancestry.co.uk accessed 19/11/2019.

⁴⁸ www.findmypast.co.uk accessed 19/11/2019.

⁴⁹ www.ancestry.co.uk accessed 19/11/2019.

⁵⁰ As above note 50.

William their son has not been traced after the 1851 census when he was in Exeter as an apprentice Nurseryman.⁵¹

It seems that this side of the Tucker lineage died out but mainly thanks to Henry Ellis and his memoirs we have been left with an amazing insight into the more human side of this Tucker line.

Anne Amosford
December 2019

⁵¹ As above note 50.