

No Memorial

Hirtzel Family

Ursula (?) Hirtzel (- 1776)

John James Hirtzell (1720 – 1778)

Clement Hirtzel (1750 - 1781)

The Hirtzel family originated from Winterthur, a city in Northern Switzerland. Johann Jacob Hirtzel was born on the 14th August 1720, the son of Klemens and Ursula (née Siegler) Hirtzel.¹

Johann Jacob travelled to Exeter sometime in the 1740s where he anglicised his name to John James. Like many immigrants from the continent, this was presumably for convenience.²

He married Catherine Dashwood in about 1744. An image of an extant Marriage Licence dated the 21st of December 1744 between John James and Catherine shows John James, a Gent and Francis Rossignol of St. Mary the Moor a cordwainer binding themselves to pay five hundred pounds to the Bishop of Exeter, Nicholas Clagett.³ The large sum of money pledged by the two 'witnesses' was said to underline the serious nature of their commitment, although they may not have actually possessed that amount.⁴ The couple had six or seven children and possibly more.⁵ Ursula (c.1749-1776), Clement (c.1750-1781), John James (c.1750-1815), George and Ann (twins; bap. 1756-1844, George), Nancy (?-?) and Catherine (c.1753-1845). It is possible that Ann and Nancy are one and the same.⁶

Both Ann and Nancy had died before May 1770 when John James wrote his Will and Ursula died before her father.⁷ By 1794 when Catherine Hirtzel wrote her Will she only had three children left, John James, George and Catherine.

Whether John James Snr was in the cloth trade before he arrived in England or he set himself up as a cloth merchant when he arrived, has not yet been ascertained. In 1755 he acted as a witness on behalf of Claude Passavant in a pew dispute at Holy Trinity church where he appears to have worshipped.⁸ On the 14th of January 1755, '*Witness Y^e John James Hirtzel of the City of Exon Merchant aged 36 years or thereabout*' was sworn in and examined. Here we find out more of John James' employment. '*To the ffourth and ffifth Interrogatorys he answers and says that he is a Clerk or Bookkeeper to the Producent but not under his direction or influence with regard to the giving this his evidence*'.

¹ Taken from a family tree supplied by David Hirtzel a descendent of John James and information supplied by Dr. Penelope Christensen via www.familysearch.org.

² It is interesting to note that many English merchants also took continental titles when trading with Europe, eg. fratelli Gibbs (The Gibbs brothers). see www.rammcollections.org.uk

³ <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/KZQB-6V2>

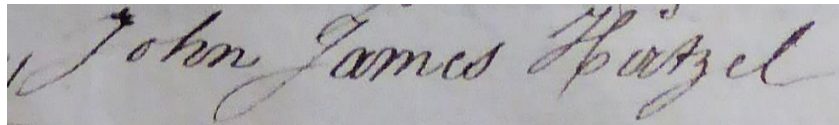
⁴ Article on marriage allegations, Bonds and Licences at [https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Marriage Allegations, Bonds and Licences in England and Wales](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Marriage_Allegations,_Bonds_and_Licences_in_England_and_Wales)

⁵ Numbers and names are taken from the family tree (see note 1), baptismal records and Wills.

⁶ Nancy is a derivative of Ann.

⁷ John James Hirtzel's Will (PROB11/1043/212) accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

⁸ Passavant V Heath, Pierce and Cannington pew dispute, 1754-1755 (DEX/9/a/1/ExeterHolyTrinity/1) at www.swheritage.org.uk



John James Hirtzel's signature in 1755

The Producent in the dispute was Mr Claude Passavant, also of Swiss origin, a cloth merchant and establisher of the Exeter Carpet Factory.⁹

Was John James just starting out as a merchant on his own but working for Claude Passavant? Had they known each other in Switzerland? In his Will John James leaves his wife, '*the enamelled gold ring I had given me for mourning Mrs Passavant*'. Frances Passavant, Claude's wife had died in 1746, so if it was given in remembrance of Frances, we have to assume that he had been in England since at least 1746. Frances died intestate so it is not possible to check her Will. Anna Philips Passavant the wife of Claude's brother John Ulric had died in April 1770, so theoretically it could be the latter, but nothing was mentioned in her Will regarding the leaving of mourning gifts.¹⁰

The first mention of John James Hirtzel in the Wharfinger's Bale book is on the 1st of July 1754 when he sent a box on The Eliz: (presumably the Elizabeth) with Captain Joseph Cope for Hambrough.¹¹ On the same vessel amongst others Claude Passavant sent two bales on Coads cockett,¹² Claude's brother John Ulric sent eight bales, Herman Kattencamp 11 bales, Abraham Kennaway 1 bale, John Holmes and Co 6 bales, Matthew Lee 2 bales, David Hillman sent 13 bales, Messrs Tremlett and Dawson 3 bales, Mr Samuel Tremlett and Co 2 bales and Thomas Heath 3 bales. Most of these names were Protestant dissenters who worshipped at either George's or Holy Trinity.



Mark used on Hirtzel's Box

We know that John James was in business with John Holmes the younger.¹³ The first mention of their partnership as Messrs Holmes and Hirtzel in the Wharfinger's book was in 1759 when they sent '*2 bales of hides, one bale and one bale end of woolen*' on The Ruby to Genoa and Leghorn with Captain Thomas Whitewood. John Holmes junior, like his father before him, was elected Master of the Incorporation of

⁹ The Exeter Cloth Dispatch Book 1763-1765, Ed. Todd Gray, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 2021.

¹⁰ Anna Phillips Passavant's will (PROB11/975/209) accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

¹¹ An older name for Hamburg.

¹² Cockett is a customs seal or a certificate given to merchants warranting that goods have been duly entered through customs and all duties paid.

¹³ As note 5.

Weavers, Fullers and Shearmen in 1761.¹⁴

In 1763 they sent a total of 104 bales of cloth, 30 ends and 3 hides to the continent. Over the years records show they traded in cloth to Genoa, Leghorn and Civitavecchia (Italy), Bilboa (Spain), Lisbon (Portugal), Hamburg and Amsterdam. Sometime between 1770 and 1776 their partnership dissolved, and the records show 'John James and Sons' trading after his death in 1778.

When John James died in May 1778, he left strict instructions regarding his burial. *'As to my body I desire it may be exposed to the open air in the room where I shall die during the full space of three days and three nights and then to be buried in a plain and decent a manner in the cave I built in December in the year 1767 at the burying ground in Magdalen Street purchased some years before by the Dissenters.'* Ten shillings was paid on the 8th of May to open his cave for his interment.

The accounts book recorded that they *'Rec'd from Mr Hirtzell for making a cave 15/- 8 Jan 1768.'* Had this been for a burial? Was it for Ann and/or Nancy? The cave had been opened again in 1776 when ten shillings was paid on the 17th of April, presumably for Ursula. Exeter Bow Meeting Burial Register has a gap between 1756-1776 when no burials were recorded.

He wanted his wife to have the use and enjoyment of his *'dwelling house counting house packing shop and garden together with a piece of Land called the Barbican held by a Lease from the Mayor Bailiffs and Commonalcy of this City'*. However she could, *'if she think fit to let them out to rent the Income and Benefit thereof to be applied to her own use and benefit as long as she lives'*. After her decease he wanted the house and gardens to remain in the male line *'as long as there are any in being the eldest son or his lawful issue'*. He mentions that the house or at least the garden adjoins the town wall.



¹⁴ Minutes of the Incorporation of Weavers, Fullers and Shearmen 1730-1774 accessed at www.swheritage.org.uk

It appears that he also had property in Teignmouth, a house called 'Meer Plat', situated on the beach



near East Teignmouth church. A year after his death Catherine advertised it for sale or rent.¹⁵ It was only five years old at the time.

Catherine never remarried, living just long enough to see in the new century. The newspaper notice of her death stated that, '*Yesterday died, in advanced age, Mrs Hirtzel, widow of the late, Mr Hirtzel, of this city, Merchant.*'¹⁶ She was buried on the 5th of January 1800 inside Holy Trinity church. After Catherine died the contents of her house in Meeting House Lane were sold for 183 pounds 18 shillings and 1 penny and her house for £400 which included 47 pounds 18 shillings and 7 pence in Land Tax.

EXETER.
TO be SOLD at AUCTION, by Mr. Joseph Bickford, on Monday the 10th Day of March next, and the following Day, all the FURNITURE, PLATE, CHINA, GLASS, BOOKS, &c. of the late Mrs. Hirtzel, deceased; at her Dwelling-House in Meeting-House-Lane, in this City; consisting of Four Post and other Bedsteads, and Furniture, Mattresses, Feather Beds, Bolsters and Pillows, Quilts and Blankets, Mahogany Wardrobes, Chest of Drawers, Night and Wash-hand Stands, Dining, Card, and Tea Tables, Chairs, Pier and Dressing Glasses, Carpets, an Eight Day Clock, Grates, and Fire Irons, Kitchen Grate, and other useful Furniture; Table, Tea, and ornamental China, Glass, Plate, Books, &c. with a Variety of other Articles.
Also, a capital refracting Telescope, on a Brass Pedestal, (by Dollond), with different Glasses for viewing the celestial Bodies.
The Sale to begin at Eleven o'Clock in the Forenoon each Day.
March 3, 1800.

¹⁵ Bath Chronicle and Weekly Magazine, 13 May 1779. accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

¹⁶ Exeter Flying Post 2 Jan 1800. accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

A year after her death her three remaining children came to an 'agreement' regarding her inheritance.¹⁷ It is here that we learn that the house in Teignmouth was not sold but the value was taken into account with a view to its subsequent sale.

John James and Catherine's children.

Clement Hirtzel (c.1750 - 1781)

John James's son Clement unfortunately died just three years after his father in December 1781. He never married. We know very little of Clement's life apart from the fact that he was probably one of the 'sons' in business with his father. His Will was written on the 4th of December 1781 just days before he died.¹⁸ He was buried on the 13th of December in a new cave in the Dissenters' graveyard for which fifteen shillings was paid just a few days after on the 19th. In his Will he mainly remembered family, with fifty guineas left to his nephew Clement Hirtzel Kingdon.¹⁹ He also left money to Mr John Holmes and his wife, presumably his father's partner in business.

John James (junior) (c.1751 - 1815)

John James served an apprenticeship with Joseph Hillman as a fuller and on the 28th of September 1780 was admitted and sworn a freeman of the Incorporation of Weavers, Fullers and Shearmen '*on payment of the usual fees*'. He was admitted an assistant and became Master of the Guild in 1785.²⁰

On the 3rd of May 1788 he married Sarah Glass at St. Martin's church, Exeter.²¹ Hannah Lee, Jane Mary Lee and George his brother were witnesses. Sarah's sister, Anna Cooch Glass had married Thomas Kennaway exactly one month earlier, thus linking the Kennaway's and Hirtzel's both Merchants of the City of Exeter.

John James and Sarah produced seven children Cecilia (1789-1836), Charles (1790-1817), Eleanor (1793-1866), Emily (1795-1885), Francis (1796-1799), Catherine (1797-1857) and Francis (1801-1824).

In 1791 John James and his brother George were listed in the Universal Trade Directory as being Merchants in Holloway Street. It has not been established whether this is the house mentioned in their father's Will?

The French Revolutionary Wars started in 1792. John James became a Captain in the local volunteer militia and all prepared for war. Trade with the continent became increasingly affected, not only with France but also eventually Holland, all the places with which the Hirtzel's traded. A letter sent to the '*Cambridge Intelligencer*' in April 1798, revealed that '*a partner from each of the mercantile houses in this city*' (Exeter) had presented themselves to the Commissioners for the execution of the Contribution Act.²² The Hirtzels were represented. They said that in the last year they had lived mainly on their capital and therefore could not pay the tax asked of them.²³

¹⁷ George Eyre Evans Documents (222) National Library of Wales: Department of Collection Services.

¹⁸ Clement Hirtzel's Will (PROB 11/1086/55) accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

¹⁹ see Kingdon biography www.edgt.org.uk

²⁰ As note 12.

²¹ St Martin's parish records accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

²² Pitt's Aid and Contribution Act or the Triple Assessment of 1798 exempted people with incomes below £60 a year, taxed those with incomes between £60 and £200 at increasing rates and collected not more than 10 per cent from the notional incomes of those with £200 a year and above.

²³ The Triumph and Denouement of the British Fiscal State: Taxation for the Wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, 1793-1815, Patrick Karl O'Brien. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/Economic-History/Assets/Documents/WorkingPapers/Economic-History/2007/WP99.pdf> accessed 20/09/2021.

When George died in 1844 the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*'s death notice remarked that, 'Aug 4, at his residence in James's Street, in the 89th year of his age, George Hirtzel, Esq., one of the oldest merchants of this city.'³⁰

In the *Exeter Flying Post* about a week later his son Frederick Dashwood Lake Hirtzel thanked the numerous friends of his father's for their support during nearly half a century, 'in which he conducted his business of a wine and spirit merchant in Exeter....under the old firm of Hirtzel and Sons.' He also informed the public that he would be continuing with this business at James's Street.³¹

George was buried on the 10th of August 1844 at Holy Trinity. His wife Grace died just seven months later and was buried with him on the 18th of March 1845. Some years later they were re-interred at Higher Cemetery.



George and Grace Hirtzel's gravestone (right) in Higher Cemetery, Exeter. Image A. Amosford.

Catherine (1753 – 1845) see Kingdon Burials.³²

Holy Trinity and George's Meeting

When John James first came to Exeter he may have worshipped at Holy Trinity. However, in 1756 George and Ann his two youngest children were baptised at Bow Meeting. No records of their siblings' baptisms have been discovered. Did John James move to Bow or James's Meeting after the dispute over the pews at Trinity?

In 1759 John James subscribed towards the new Meeting House on South Street (George's). His sons John James and George, however, worshipped at Holy Trinity where all their children were baptised. Catherine who married Joseph Kingdon worshipped at George's Meeting.³³ It will probably never be known why Catherine was buried within Holy Trinity in 1800 and not with her husband in the family vault in Magdalen Street.

A. Amosford

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³⁰ Exeter and Plymouth Gazette 10th August 1844 accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

³¹ Exeter Flying Post 15th August 1844 accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

³² See Kingdon biographies www.edgt.org.uk

³³ As note 30.

HIRTZEL Family Tree (simplified)

