

John Tucker 1834-1835, 4 months

No Memorial

James Kelland Tucker 1844-1845, 14 months¹

John and James Kelland were the two young sons of Walter James Kelland Tucker and Elizabeth (née Melhuish). No report of John's death exists but mention of James Kelland Tucker appears in the Western Times of 3rd May 1845, '*April 27, aged 13 months, James Kelland, youngest son of Mr. Walter Tucker, watchmaker, High Street.*'

The children's father, Walter James Kelland was the second son of John and Sarah (née Tothill) Tucker. John (1760 - 1829) was a clock and watchmaker of Exeter and Tiverton.² The Tucker's had worshipped at Bow Meeting in Exeter until c. 1794 when John along with a handful of other orthodox worshippers split from Bow and founded Castle Street Meeting.³ Walter was baptised there on 17th April 1802 about 3 months after he was born.⁴ Walter's two older siblings were baptised at Bow Meeting whilst his younger siblings were also baptised at Castle Meeting.

Walter's early life was perhaps not the easiest. A few months after the birth of his youngest brother Richard Pearsall, his mother was sent to St Thomas Asylum for a short while.⁵ Could this have been post-natal depression? Henry Ellis who was an apprentice of Walter's father "discovered that my master, although professing to be very religious, was possessed of an ingovernable temper, totally at variance with the mild precepts of the Divine Founder of the Christian Religion: He was indeed a bitter sectarian, a radical reformer, almost a revolutionist.... in his heart a very tyrant whose word was law, ruling his wife and family with a rod of iron, while he continually exclaimed, 'I will reign supreme in my own house'. He had a sort of hesitation in his speech and was a great stammerer which made the matter worse, it added to his fury."

Sometime in 1805 the Tucker family moved to Tiverton. Walter's father took over his father's clock and watchmaking business. Walter's grandfather, also John, was by then well into his seventies and was retiring.⁶ He died in 1807. The Tiverton household was a busy one, young children, apprentices, and lodgers. Tiverton was a parole town for many Napoleonic prisoners.⁷ One of their lodgers was a Monsieur Macé a Lieutenant of Infantry and a portrait painter in miniatures, he painted all the Tucker children and gave French lessons. Other lodgers over the years included a bookseller from Bath, a Dissenting Minister, an actress who had her bags embargoed until she could pay for the room and an artist.⁸

In October 1805 Walter's younger brother Richard Pearsall died. Walter's grandfather, Walter Tothill, also died in early 1805. The Tothill's lived in London but were originally from Thorverton just outside Exeter. His will written on 24th October 1804 named both John Tucker and his son John Walter Tothill Tucker (Walter's older brother) as executors and Walter's grandmother Sarah Tothill as executrix. Leaving fifty pounds to John (Senior), the wording was quite specific, "I recommend him to employ (it) in his trade and business in the most prudent and advantageous way as possible for

¹ Georges Meeting burial register records James Kelland Tucker's age as 14 months when he died.
www.swheritage.org.uk

² See other related Tucker's on stone 52

³ 'Nonconformity in Exeter 1650-1875' Allan Brockett 1962

⁴ Exeter Castle Street (Independent) 1798-1817 Baptism Register accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

⁵ Henry Ellis memoirs Vol. 1 'Mrs Tucker started to show some signs of insanity whilst suckling a young infant.'
www.swheritage.org.uk

⁶ Walter's grandfather, John Tucker was the brother of Nathaniel Tucker Senior commemorated in Stone 52.

⁷ Anglo-French Encounters: The Integration of French Prisoners of War and Émigrés into British Society 1789-1815 Katherine STEVENS, MA by Research, Kingston University September 2017.

⁸ As note 5 above.

the benefit of himself and family".⁹ A codicil written less than two months later removed both the Tucker men from the responsibility of executors; what had happened within those two months?

There was obviously a dispute over the will. Notices over 'Tucker and others versus Tothill and others' were published in May 1805.¹⁰

Walter's father had money problems all his working life. In 1810 he and his sister Mary, a milliner, was declared bankrupt and all his stock in trade, household goods and effects including paintings and books were auctioned off.¹¹ It became evident he had been 'drawing bills', this is where a blank bill of exchange can be used to secure receivables whose amount or date of payment are not yet known at the time the bill of exchange is drawn. A Certificate of Discharge was never given to John.¹²

Walter started his apprenticeship as a watchmaker with his brother John Walter Tothill Tucker in Tiverton also a clock and watchmaker in about 1815. John Walter had been apprenticed to his father. It is probable that Walter then worked with his brother until his marriage to Elizabeth Melhuish in Tiverton on 15th March 1828.

Elizabeth, and her sister Anne, had been born in Silverton and were both baptised there. Elizabeth in 1801 and Anne in 1803. Anne went on to marry one Henry Rossiter a miller in Tiverton and brother of Elizabeth Rossiter who married Walter's brother John Walter Tothill Tucker.¹³ It is more than likely that Walter got to know Elizabeth through his brother's first wife who was sister to Henry Rossiter.

Walter and Elizabeth moved to Exeter and from 1828 until 1831 he had a shop at 41 High Street, Exeter (now Laura Ashley). In 1835 he moved to 29 High Street, two doors down from St Stephens Church.¹⁴ He is still there in the census of 1841 and in the 1844 Pigot's Directory. They had a total of six children born between in Exeter between 1829 and 1844 (two are commemorated here).

In his professional life Walter took on John Treadwin his second cousin as an apprentice in about 1834.¹⁵ It also appears that he gave work to his father who had moved back to Exeter.¹⁶

By the time of the 1851 census the family was living in Belmont Place, Exeter. Walter was retired. He died eight years later in 1859. The Western Times of 12th February reported, '*Feb. 9, at his residence, 3, York Buildings. Of consumption, Mr. Walter J. K. Tucker, aged 57.*' Elizabeth remained in York buildings until her death in 1884.

Of Walter's remaining children, Elizabeth moved to London where she became a principal of a Ladies School in Islington with a Miss Rebecca Salmon.¹⁷ After the ladies retired, they still lived together until Elizabeth's death in 1893. She never married. John carried on in his father's footsteps as a watchmaker finisher, also moving to London and his brother Tothill Melhuish emigrated to Canada.¹⁸

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⁹ Walter Tothill's will 1805, England and Wales Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills, accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

¹⁰ www.thegazette.co.uk

¹¹ Trewman's Exeter Flying Post Thursday 12th April 1810. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

¹² Bankruptcy, Discharge, and the Emergence of Debtor Rights in Eighteenth-Century England, Carlos, Kosack and Penarrieta, Enterprise and Society, Vol 20, issue 2, June 2019.

¹³ Edward Rossiter John Walter Tothill Tucker's brother in law is also buried in the Exeter Dissenters graveyard.

¹⁴ Western Times 4 April 1835

¹⁵ See Stone 52 biographies www.edgt.org.uk

¹⁶ Henry Ellis memoirs

¹⁷ 'Streets with a story' – Islington Council www.islington.gov.uk

¹⁸ www.ancestry.co.uk