

Frost family

No memorial

Between 1829 and 1847 at least eight members of the Frost family are known to have been buried in the Dissenters' graveyard. This biography commences with the tragic death of John Frost in 1848, as reported in local newspapers.

FOUND DROWNED. – On Tuesday morning, about seven o'clock, when the persons in the employ of Messrs Worthy, woollen-manufacturers, Exe Island, in this city, were about to resume work, they had, as preparatory to this, for the introduction of water in order to setting the machinery in motion, to lift the fender. They, however, discovered there was something that impeded this, and proceeding to examine, found the dead body of a man laying close against the grating. This being taken out, it was recognized to be that of a man named John Frost, about 63 years of age, by trade a shoe-maker. According to the statement of the wife, they had latterly no home, nor had she seen him since Thursday last. An inquest will be held on the body this day, but up to this morning there is an absence of evidence as to where he has been since. Exeter Flying Post, Thursday 23 November, 1848.

There is no evidence that John Frost was buried in the Dissenters' graveyard, and no record of his burial in Exeter has yet come to light.

John Frost was born c.1775 and he married for the first time on 16th July 1804 in Exeter Cathedral.¹ His bride was Sarah Smith. They were married by banns, were both recorded as being “of the Close” and they signed the register. It is likely that Sarah was the daughter of George and Charlotte Smith, who was born on 19th November 1787 and baptized at Bow Meeting House on 22nd December of the same year.² She would have been sixteen at the time of her marriage, but the Clandestine Marriages Act of 1753 required those under the age of 21 to have parental consent if they married by licence, whereas marriages by banns were valid as long as the parent of the minor did not actually forbid the banns. It seems likely that Sarah was pregnant when they married as their first child, John Thomas, was born on 23rd February 1805 and was baptized at George's Meeting House, South Street, Exeter by Revd James Manning on 10th March 1805.³

Charles, their second child for which a record exists, was born on 2nd December 1811 and baptized on Christmas Day 1811 at George's Meeting House.⁴ He died, aged 20, on 16th September 1832 – during the *cholera morbus* epidemic in Exeter, and was buried in the Dissenters' graveyard.⁵

Their first daughter, Margaret, was born on 8th February 1815 and baptized at George's Meeting House on 26th February.⁶ A Margaret Frost, spinster, of the Precinct of the Close was married in Exeter

¹ Devon marriages and banns 1804; Exeter Cathedral. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

² RG4/965 England & Wales Non-Conformist Births and Baptisms; DEVON: Exeter, Bow Meeting (Presbyterian): Births, Baptisms & Burials. 1787. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

³ Ibid. 1805. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

⁴ Ibid. 1811. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

⁵ RG4/1085 England & Wales Non-Conformist Births and Baptisms; DEVON: Exeter, Georges Meeting (Presbyterian): Births, Baptisms & Burials. 1832. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

⁶ RG4/965 England & Wales Non-Conformist Births and Baptisms; DEVON: Exeter, Bow Meeting (Presbyterian): Births, Baptisms & Burials. 1815. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

Cathedral on 1st March 1836 to George Nuthall Lincoln, a builder of St Thomas parish.⁷ It is considered likely that this was John's daughter.

John and Sarah's second daughter, Caroline (I), was baptized at George's Meeting House on 4th June 1820.⁸ She died in June 1822 and was buried at St Sidwells, Exeter.⁹ Her age was given as 2 years 9 months in June 2022, but why she was buried in the Anglican parish graveyard is not known.

A third son, William – named after John's father who was a woolcomber, was born on 6th August 1823 and baptized at George's Meeting House by James Manning on 24th August 1823.¹⁰ Sadly, he died aged 5 years in January 1829 and was buried in the Dissenters' graveyard.

A third daughter, also named Caroline (Caroline II), was born on 6th December 1825 and baptized on Christmas Day 1825 at George's Meeting House by Revd James Manning.¹¹ In December 1846 she married William Holmes, an accountant, at St David's Exeter.¹² William's father had been an Inn-Keeper. In the 1851 Census they were shown as living at 35 Commercial Road, St Mary Steps, Exeter and William was stated to be a coal merchant.¹³ According to the Census they had two children and a house servant.

John Thomas, John and Sarah's first child, married by banns in Alphington near Exeter on 24th December 1826.¹⁴ He married Martha Spark and both of them were shown as 'sojourners' in the parish, though she was recorded to be "of Alphington". John Frost Snr was a witness. Their first child, Sarah, was born on 10th August 1827 and baptized at George's Meeting House by Revd James Manning.¹⁵ John's occupation was stated to be a plumber. They went on to have several more children – John (b. December 1829), Eliza (b. October 1832), Martha (b. November 1834), Louisa Charlotte (b. February 1837) and Charles (b. 1840). Only Eliza, Louisa and Charles appeared on the 1841 Census with their parents – John (died May 1835 aged 5), Sarah (died May 1836 aged 8) and Martha (died January 1838 aged 2) were all buried in the Dissenters' graveyard.¹⁶ Sadly, Charles also died in infancy (died September 1841 aged 1 year). They later had another son, John born c.1843.¹⁷

⁷ Devon marriages and banns 1836; Exeter Cathedral. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

⁸ RG4/965 England & Wales Non-Conformist Births and Baptisms; DEVON: Exeter, Bow Meeting (Presbyterian): Births, Baptisms & Burials. 1820. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

⁹ Devon burials, Exeter St Sidwell, 1822. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

¹⁰ RG4/965 England & Wales Non-Conformist Births and Baptisms; DEVON: Exeter, Bow Meeting (Presbyterian): Births, Baptisms & Burials. 1823. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

¹¹ RG4/1085 England & Wales Non-Conformist Births and Baptisms; DEVON: Exeter, Georges Meeting (Presbyterian): Births, Baptisms & Burials. 1825. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

¹² England & Wales Marriages 1837-2005. 1846. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

¹³ 1851 England, Wales and Scotland Census HO107/1869 Exeter St Davids. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

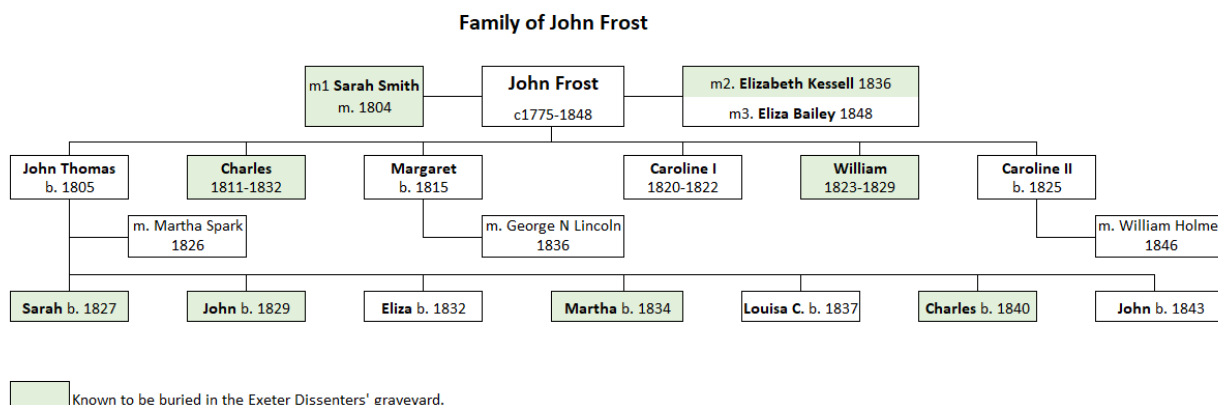
¹⁴ Devon marriages and banns 1846; Alphington, Devon. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

¹⁵ RG4/1085 England & Wales Non-Conformist Births and Baptisms; DEVON: Exeter, Georges Meeting (Presbyterian): Births, Baptisms & Burials. 1827. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

¹⁶ Exeter Dissenters' Graveyard report and account book (DHC 3693D/0/B/1).

¹⁷ 1851 England, Wales and Scotland Census HO107/1868 Exeter Holy Trinity. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

Sarah, John Frost Snr's wife died and was buried in the Dissenters' graveyard on 11th October 1835, aged 48 years.¹⁶ Less than a year later, John re-married. His second wife was Elizabeth Kessell and they married at St Pancras Exeter on 25th June 1836.¹⁸ She was living in Pancras Lane Exeter at the time of her death from inflammation of the kidneys on 19th September 1847.¹⁹ Elizabeth was buried in the Dissenters' graveyard on 23rd September 1847.¹⁶



On Saturday 25th September 1847 a short article appeared in the *Western Times*.

TO READERS AND CORRESPONDENTS. We cannot insert the letter of John Frost, Pancras-street. His complaint that his landlord had distrained on him for rent whilst the corpse of his wife who had just died, lay in the room, shows great want of feeling on the part of the landlord, but it is hardly within the province of a newspaper to insert his letter. We hope that the landlord, Thorn, will withdraw the bailiff will the corpse is buried.

It seems that John Snr, then around 62 years old, had fallen on hard times – perhaps he was no longer capable of carrying out his trade as a cordwainer/shoemaker or was simply considered too old for employment.

On 13th July 1848 John Frost Snr married for the third time. His bride was Eliza Bailey, an unmarried laundress 22 years his junior. Their marriage was solemnized at George's Meeting House.²⁰ Their address was given as Brook Green, St Sidwells. Less than five months later John was dead. The report of the inquest into his death appeared in the *Exeter & Plymouth Gazette* on 25th November 1848.

EXETER - Death From Drowning. - On Wednesday an Inquest was held at the Cattle Market Inn, in this City, before John Warren, Esq., Coroner, on the body of JOHN FROST, aged 62 years, which had been found in the Mill-leat in the Bonhay. It appears that the deceased had been in the Exeter workhouse for some time, but came out and married a woman named Bailey about five months ago. Since his marriage he has tramped about the country in search of work, but having returned to Exeter he was allowed 2s. weekly by the Corporation of the Poor. On Thursday last he was met by his wife (who did not live with him) as he was going to the office of the Corporation, in Castle-street, for his pay. She told him that she was living with her parents, in Lemon's Court and asked him to call upon them in the evening. They then parted and this was

¹⁸ Devon marriages and banns 1836; Exeter St Pancras. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, 6th June 2022.

¹⁹ GRO 1847 September; Exeter Vol. 10 page 57.

²⁰ GRO 1848 May; Exeter Vol. 10 page 166.

the last time she saw him alive. After receiving his pay he went to a lodging-house, in King-street, kept by a person named Way, and asked for accommodation for the night, which he obtained. On the following morning he did not come down at the usual hour and stated himself to be unwell. The mistress of the house gave him some tea and on Saturday supplied him further with necessaries. He remained there until Sunday and between four and five in the afternoon of that day went out, which was the last time he was seen alive. On Tuesday morning, between seven and eight o'clock, a man named Vanstone, who lives in Bowring's Court, in Exe Island, at the back of which runs the Mill Leat, whilst dipping up some water from this stream, observed the body of a man floating in it. Vanstone ran to Mr Worthy's factory and getting assistance, went to the washing bridge across the stream, where the body was taken up as it was floating past. It was conveyed to Gudridge's receiving house, in Rosemary lane, but life was extinct. The Jury returned a verdict of "Found Drowned," and accompanied it with a strong representation respecting the danger arising from the unfenced state of the Mill Leat, and requested the Coroner to communicate their opinions to the proper authorities.

Why John Snr ended up in the Mill Leat was not determined, though the mention of it being unfenced suggests that his death could have been accidental. Given his dire personal circumstances, it is equally plausible that John Snr could have taken his own life. Whether John Snr was buried in the Dissenters' graveyard with two of his wives, two of his children and at least four of his grandchildren, is not currently known.

Ian Varndell

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