The cover photograph of the river Torridge was taken by the author in 2004. John Cocks was baptised in the Torridge, once he had decided to become a Baptist, maybe in that very spot with its small beach for easy access.

Acknowledgements

The author is very grateful to Graham Ward of the Strict Baptist Historical Society, Benjamin Schilperoort, and Michael Buckley, without whom this book would never have been finished.
December 2024

Contents

Introduction 1
Chapter 1 Wesleyan Beginnings 1803-1811 4
Chapter 2 Baptist Choice 1811-1817..... 7
Chapter 3 Calstock, meagre earnings1817-21..... 9
Chapter 4 Crediton, Baptist expansion 11
Chapter 5 Minehead, a rotten borough 13
Chapter 6 Highbridge, canal building 15
Chapter 7 Twerton, mill workers and temperance 17
Chapter 8 Amersham, the hungry forties 20
Chapter 9 Achievements 23
Postscript Descendants 25
End notes 26

Introduction

The Strict Baptist Historical Society website includes a superb database of nearly 3,000 ministers.[1] In 1790, when my ancestor John Cocks was a small boy there were fewer than 500 Baptist congregations in Britain, but by 1832, when he was nearly 50 there were over 1,000.[2] By 1851 there were over 2,500, so he lived during a period of significant Baptist expansion. However many new congregations were small, and relied on their own members and visiting preachers for their services. So there were fewer resident pastors than there were congregations. My 3x great-grandfather was not famous, but he was very typical of hundreds of pastors in country chapels. In his career (1817-50) he must have been in touch, mainly by post, with some fifty of his contemporaries, a few of whom he knew very well.

The Baptist Historical Society Transactions (1921) provides names some of the more notable ones. [3] John Cocks certainly knew Rev. Thomas Jenkins of London (1743-1819), Revd. John Ryland (Junior) of Bristol (1753-1825) and

Revd. Jabez Burns, of London (1805-76). Not so notable, but most important to him, were Revd. Samuel Kilpin (1774-1830) of Exeter, Brother Opie Smith (1751-1836) of Bath and Revd. William Salter (1812-1879) of Amersham. And he must have met or written to Revd. Richard Davis and Revd. W Wilcocks of Plymouth Dock, Revd. John Paul Porter of Bath (1759-1832) Rev Thomas Pulsford (1793-1871) of Great Torrington, Rev John Statham (1791-1863) of Bourton-on-the-Water and Rev Arthur Tidman (1792-1869) of London. [4] But it has been quite hard to discover more about them.

Searching contemporary Baptist magazines (even though they have now been scanned) is quite slow work. Obituaries were very long and focussed more on ministers' deaths than their curriculum vitae, and their careers have to be followed in small sections for each pastorship they held. I have not only searched magazines, but also visited and consulted historians of all his pastorships. And because John Cocks was my ancestor I have been able to use personal facts from family papers and three of his own letters. I have not given end note references for family papers. Some letters written by other clergy, either to John or about him, have also survived in libraries. I have also made contact with cousins via the Internet and learnt more about his descendants

So I hope this biography will not only bring John Cocks to life, but place his very varied career in its historical setting, thus adding a more compete knowledge of one Baptist pastor at that time..

John was born in Great Torrington in North Devon in the reign of George III when the Treaty of Paris had finally recognised American Independence. He was a schoolboy during the French Revolution, and died just before Prince Albert's Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace. He lived in exciting times. The Industrial Revolution was inspiring strong movements for civil liberty, increased franchise, and improved education for all. Britain was also threatened with French invasion for much of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. John's elder brother Walter joined the North Devon Militia in 1803 (John, still an apprentice at the time, was exempt from service) and his step brother James Chapman fought in the Grenadier Guards at Waterloo in 1815. Meanwhile many people, especially in rural areas, did not attend Church of England services at all, so non-conformist evangelists were preaching energetically to them. And cheap printing allowed bibles, prayer and hymn books and religious tracts to be published and sold for pennies to people newly able to read them.[5]

David M. Thompson (writing in the Oxford History of Protestant Dissent) set the theological scene. By 1800, (when John was 16) the future of dissent *seemed to lie with an activist and superficially orthodox Nonconformity - some distance from 17th century Puritanism.* Nonconformist growth led to a revival of concern for greater civil liberties, and the political involvement of Dissenters also *reflected a growing difference between the more comfortable atmosphere of London Dissent (of all shades) and the more exposed nature of Dissenters in the provinces.* [6] John experienced the arrival of dissent in Devon in his teens and and was bowled over in his twenties by its power in London.

Throughout this biography I have quoted from original sources in italics, and lightened the heavy style of some of the 19th century prose. I will begin with some extracts from his obituary in the Baptist Manual. [7]

> *The Rev. John Cocks was born at Great Torrington, Devon, 12 October 1783, of parents belonging to the Church of England. He was the youngest of nine children. His mother died when he was eight, and he seems to have had little instruction or restraint.*

After John finished his apprenticeship as a shoemaker, in 1804, *he left home for London. There he became friends with some devout young men, who took him to hear Dr. Jenkins preaching at Orange Street Chapel.* Immediately John realised how shallow his life had been so far, and *his need of salvation by Jesus Christ.* He stayed for a while in Dr Jenkins's Baptist congregation in London, but having *felt the mercy and love of God,* he wanted to share it, so he went home to try preaching himself.

Baptists had not reached North Devon then, but in his spare time after work, he (perhaps ambitiously) tried preaching in local villages, initially under the wing of Wesleyan Methodists. They were very unpopular in Torrington, so he *met with much opposition.* But he persisted *without shrinking,* and had *some success.*

Chapter 1 describes the difficulties of Wesleyan preachers at that time in North Devon. Chapter 2 continues with John's decision to become a Baptist. The following chapters describe his seven settled pastorships, all typical of their time, but each one presenting different problems.

John's obituary was not signed. The likeliest person to have written it was Revd. William Salter, who probably officiated at his funeral. They both arrived in 1842; Salter (aged 30) at the larger General Baptist Lower Meeting, and John (aged 58) at the smaller Strict and Particular Baptist Upper Meeting. They worked side by side happily, and it was Salter who officiated at the wedding of John's youngest daughter Jemima at the Lower Meeting chapel three months after her father's death.

This biography aims to add one more account of a Strict and Particular Baptist minister in the early 19th century as well as answering some questions about his life.

Why would a man from an established family building firm, not on the breadline, who became a shoemaker, decide to leave his parish church? And why would he choose a poorly paid life of exhausting preaching? What were the special talents he needed to ensure his success? How did the necessary frequent moves affect his wife and children? Did his Baptist colleagues appreciate his work? And when he was in his sixties looking back, did he feel that he had achieved what he wanted to?

Chapter 1. Wesleyan Beginnings 1783-1811

John Cocks was born in Great Torrington which was *most delightfully situated on the banks of the Torridge … one of the neatest towns in Devon.*[8] Devon's largest landowners, the Rolle family of Stevenstone, founded the charity Blue-Coat School where John's grandfather had been Master, and gave the town solid support.[9] Famous for its glove-making, with just over 2,000 inhabitants, it was only half a day's walk from Bideford (with coastal shipping to Bristol). John's father owned Torrington's chief building firm. There was good stone in local quarries, and four nearby mansions belonging to important Devon families, as well as town buildings, ensured plenty of work. The family were reasonably comfortable, leasing several plots of land in the town.[10]

The parish church was, in the 18th century, rather neglected by its patron, Christ Church College, Oxford. In 1744 the vicar reported *there is no vicarage-house. I came here in full expectation of one, as I was informed by the Dean & Chapter of Christ-Church; but when I arrived I found that the vicarage was blown up in Cromwell's time with the Church, and none provided ever since* [98 years].[11] In 1779 a subsequent vicar was still *living in the town,*because there had been *no parsonage* for 133 years.[12] John's father Roger was never a churchwarden, although his uncle James was parish clerk of the neighbouring church of St Giles in the Wood. Roger (aged 34 and married with two children) was prosecuted at the Quarter Sessions for *keeping skittles and permitting persons to play thereat being unlawful games.*[13] After his first wife (John's mother) died, the family were not particularly closely attached to the parish church. So it is no wonder that he gave his youngest son *little instruction or restraint.*

I can suggest three reasons why young John might have been ripe for serious religion.[14] Firstly, he had a strong wish for further education beyond school. Noticeably in pride of place on John's bible flyleaf (in his list of family) he put his educated maternal grandfather, Walter Browne, Master of the Great Torrington Blue-Coat School, who was also the Parish Clerk.[15] Grandfather Walter died before John was born, but John's mother's stories of him and his good reputation probably lived on. John himself left school at 14 to begin an apprenticeship as a cordwainer. [16] The shoe-making trade in those days only needed *reading, writing, and accounts,* but could allow some time for study. He would also have been making shoes for the sort of people who might lend him books.

Secondly, he may have had a deep need for affection and warmth. His mother and all three of his elder sisters died when he was small, leaving him bereft of close female relatives. From the age of eight he lived in a family of practical, but probably roughish, men with a new stepmother. Hopes of heaven (where believers expected to meet lost relatives) must have been a comfort to him. Thirdly, he seems to have had an ambition, perhaps typical of a child much younger than his brothers, to be heard.

Weaknesses in the Church of England were encouraging the growth of dissent. Many poorer people lived in total ignorance of public worship, and spent their Sundays playing football or skittles in the ale house. The parish churchyard was used as a general meeting place where auctions were announced from the tombstones.[17] As late as 1821 a Baptist magazine was still reporting gloomily that remote villagers *(to use the words of an intelligent local correspondent) were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.*[18] Travel was difficult there, especially in rain or frost. Although the turnpike roads had begun in the 1760s, steep hills in the whole area made wheeled carriages almost unknown. Local men took their wives and children riding pillion. It was quite common, if a horse stumbled, for everyone to end up in the mud. This happened one dark Sunday evening to a father with two children going home from church. Their family prayers before bed fervently thanked God they weren't badly hurt. Visiting travellers too had to ride pack horses laden with ingenious contrivances, so North Devon wasn't an easy county for evangelists.[19]

Around 1753 when the famous preacher Revd. George Whitefield visited Bideford, he was advised not to preach as his friend the rector feared he would meet real danger. [20] But in 1757 John Wesley the younger followed George Whitefield to Bideford, preached in the open street after a very uncomfortable journey, expected the same hostility, but was relieved that he was only heckled by one man *who was easily silenced.* John and Charles Wesley

made several more missionary visits to North Devon when their brother Samuel was headmaster of Tiverton Grammar School.

In those circumstances any branch of dissent would supply what John was looking for. Preachers were all telling their ignorant listeners about their need for repentance, faith and holiness, using words direct from the Bible. Historian Richard Heitzenrater wrote in 2017 that *the aim was a desire to be saved from their sins. The consensus among the various groups is that the Christian religion focuses on helping persons to understand what it means, in life and thought, to be a disciple of Christ.*[21]

The texts of the dissident preachers followed a contemporary move towards the hopeful appreciation of spiritual force more associated with New Testament writers and away from an Old Testament emphasis on physical force. They preached that Christ was not intolerant of others, but welcomed everyone who wished to come and follow him. Wesleyans in particular believed that we cannot *lose salvation but can only fall away from it* to go to hell. And they believed that toleration would favour civil peace and economic prosperity.

Local magistrates made matters worse in Torrington by clinging to the 17th century Conventicle acts (not repealed until 1812) which forbade religious assemblies of more than five people outside the Church of England. Allowing your house to be used for a non-conformist assembly risked a fine of 20 shillings, which was doubled for a second offence. In 1788, when John was still a small a boy, a Wesleyan preacher paid his first visit to Torrington. He had scarcely begun to speak in a cottage in Taddiport when he was interrupted by a local magistrate. *Pull him down from that chair* said the magistrate to the parish clerk. The clerk hesitated saying *let him alone, sir, let him preach it out*, but the magistrate pulled him down himself. Then others followed him, shoved the preacher through a bramble hedge, and threatened to throw him into the river.

Men and boys used to gather outside meetings and disturb the worshippers with shouts and groans. *Then they let loose sparrows into the rooms, which flew to the lights and put them out, leaving the congregation in darkness.* One Wesleyan service in a cottage in Mill Street was assailed with *hooting and yells, blowing of horns and the clatter of kettles.* Windows were smashed, and stones thrown in. The people inside were forced to leave. But out in the street it was worse because

> *the mob formed a line on either side and continued to attack them with stones and mud. One woman received a dangerous wound in her head. Her shrieks brought the preacher to help, and she was carried (with clothes saturated with blood) to the nearest friendly house, where medical aid was sent for.*

That particular riot was encouraged by the family of another local magistrate, claiming, wrongly, that Wesleyans were Jacobites in disguise. Anti-papist feeling was still so strong in England throughout the 18th century that one Frenchman wrote *Before the English learn there is a God to be served, the first words they utter are curses against the French, the Pretender and the Pope.*[22] When the preacher visited the Mayor afterwards, he persuaded him to prosecute the ringleaders and some were fined at the next quarter sessions. But little changed. Many people still thought that religious diversity was a recipe for anarchy. John himself may even have joined those *rude mobs.* In later life he wrote about the *rough music* which was made when local people disapproved of their neighbours' actions. *Amersham has been in agitation for several nights this past week, with rough music (by a set of idle fellows) for Brooks the Relieving Officer and his servant.*[23]

In those circumstances John can hardly have heard any evangelical preaching until, after finishing his apprenticeship around 1803, he went to London. All young men enjoyed a trip to London, and work as a journeyman shoemaker there would have been easy to find.[24] And one day *he became acquainted with some pious young men* who took him to hear a life-changing sermon by Dr Jenkins, a Baptist, at Orange Street Chapel. [25] He was captivated to be shown *the mercy and love of God for himself.* Here was his chance to improve the world. He continued to attend that church regularly, but only stayed a couple of years in London before wanting to *tell that love to his friends* at home. His father died in 1805, and perhaps bequeathed him capital - £100 would be enough - to set up his own shop. [26] Or perhaps he worked for another Devon shoemaker as a journeyman, earning £15 - £30 a year. And, in

spite of *much opposition,* he started preaching himself. He might easily have been the inexperienced *"Johannes"* who wrote this letter to the Evangelical Magazine in 1804.

> *Query to the Editor. Sir, it would relieve the mind of a youth from much anxiety (about his call to ministry) if some of your correspondents would lay down a few scriptural evidences a person ought to possess, before he begins that solemn work.* [27]

Early evangelism in North Devon was almost exclusively Wesleyan. [28] And it was so unpopular in Torrington that probably John found shoe-making work in Bideford where, around 1805, there was an enthusiastic group of Wesleyans. That guess is supported by the fact that his future wife, Mary Heay was born there. Mary was the eldest daughter of William Heay, Bideford mariner and grocer. She was 30, six years older than John and a childless widow. Probably her first husband was also a mariner who died at sea, because no record of any burial survives for him. She had also lost her parents and brother before 1803, and may have inherited money to help finance their marriage. [29] Mary had two married sisters in Bideford, one of whom, Ann, the wife of shipbuilder John Evans, certainly supported the Wesleyans. [30] *Mrs Evans was an earnest Christian. She took her children to the Parish Church in the morning, and in the evening she also brought the again to the chapel service. Wesleyans always received a cordial welcome to her house.* [31] Mrs Evans died in childbirth in 1811, *but the many and earnest prayers she had offered for her children were answered, all of them being brought in early life to a knowledge of the truth.* Her widower survived until 1833. Their son Thomas expanded the family business, became a JP and served as Mayor of Bideford in 1850.

John and Mary were married in Bideford in 1807. One of their witnesses was another shoemaker, John Rendle, who probably worked with John Cocks. Rendle was a *tireless lay preacher credited with much of the success of the Wesleyan church in Bideford .* [32] Rendle's dedication was to be a model for John Cocks.

> *He was plain and simple in his language, but delivered his message of mercy with a heart overflowing with Christian love.* He often walked *18 or 20 miles to fill an appointment, going on the Saturday afternoon, preaching two or three times on the Sunday, and returning to his home and work on the Monday morning.*

John and Mary settled, at first, back in Torrington, where *Mr Cocks of Great Torrington* was among the *kind friends who cheered* Mr Beal, the new Wesleyan minister in Bideford, *amidst the anxieties of his ministry.* [33] In 1808 the first of their children, Japhia, was christened in Barnstaple Wesleyan church. A second boy, Elijah, followed, and then, around 1811, they moved to Hammersmith. John was then 28 and the reason for the move must have been that he was aiming for a settled pastorship, and could more easily acquire the necessary religious education nearer London. The family seem to have been Wesleyan at that time, but perhaps John had not forgotten his initial inspiration from Dr Jenkins.

Chapter 2 Baptist Choice 1811-1817

It was probably after he moved to London, in his late twenties, that John, certainly with his wife Mary's blessing, chose to become a Baptist. It was quite usual then for people who had first been *awakened to faith* by Wesleyans, to become persuaded of the rightness of Baptist principles, especially adult believer's baptism by immersion.[34]

Both churches shared belief in the Trinity, the virgin birth, the divinity and humanity of Christ, the resurrection, the Bible as the infallible word of God, and the necessity for repentance and a personal relationship with God. And taking a further step, John joined the the Strict and Particular (Calvinist) Baptists who added more rules for their members.

Firstly, being a Baptist meant adult baptism by total immersion, which followed the example of St John the Baptist and the early church, where *much water* was used. Adult baptism symbolises a complete break from one's past life which cannot of course be achieved by *infant sprinkling*. Before being baptised, adult candidates made public confession of the sin they were putting behind them.[35] Baptism marked the death of their sinful old life and transition to a new life, with a new fellowship of friends.[36]

Secondly, Strict (restricted) Baptists believed that the Lord's Supper was restricted to those baptised as adults, and their Communion was not open to anyone outside their own small group. Finally 'Particular' refers to the theological position of 'particular redemption' or 'limited atonement.' But John himself seems at some stage to have diverged from the Calvinistic belief that salvation was pre-ordained by God and unaffected by human action.

The Strict and Particular Baptist churches at the beginning of the 19th century were influenced by the moderate Calvinism of itinerant preachers like William Gadsby in 1790s. [37] It was agreed with other evangelists at the time that God's judgement might depend on the good deeds people had done in their lives. Otherwise people might ask why they should lead righteous lives, if they had never been chosen as one of God's elect, and were destined for hell anyway. In softening the Calvinistic belief, John held that salvation depended on faith, and was a gift from God made available to everyone through the death of Jesus Christ. He made this clear when he wrote to his second daughter *what a mercy to feel our need of a Saviour, and to possess any hope of interest in him.*[38]

Ministers' children, if not rebelling, probably reflected their parents' beliefs. So it is revealing to read the last words of John's daughter Julia who tragically died, aged 18, from a sudden lethal infection. Her mother, nursing her, asked her if she *hoped to be saved because she had been dutiful and obedient to her parents and attentive to the external duties of religion.* Julia replied *Oh, no; I know that I am a great sinner, but I know also that Jesus died for my sins.*[39] Two days before Julia left home John had also asked her about her hopes for heaven or hell. She said that *she felt herself to be a poor guilty sinner,* but her hope of heaven was *in Jesus Christ the friend of sinners.*[40] The essence of John's faith was *his great desire for the salvation of souls.*[41] In 1822, after he had spent long hours with a condemned man before his execution, Revd. Samuel Kilpin wrote to him *Who can tell but God may give you this lost soul.* [42]

It is impossible to know exactly when John decided to train to be a Baptist minister. Baptists had also been teaching young men how to preach for much longer than the Wesleyans. In the 17th century, Baptist minister John Piggott said *you must not expect that Preachers will drop down from Heaven but care must be taken for the encouragement of humble men that have real gifts. Let them be trained up in useful learning that they may be able to defend the truths they preach.*[43] Young preachers were urged to write out a manuscript as well as using their memories. It was also possible to use extracts from printed sermons which could be bought at affordable prices. They should *pray about the art of speaking, which is a gift from God.* Like Isaiah, a good preacher should *lift up his voice like a trumpet.* And they were warned to avoid *rhetorical flourishes which are like painted glass in a window that makes a great show, but darkens the light.*[44]

Traditionally, the preaching ministry in Baptist circles had involved men from fairly humble social groups, not treated as noticeably different from ordinary church members, but further education was necessary to become a pastor. The nearest Baptist Academy to Devon, begun in 1720 in Bristol, was designed for single young men. So around 1811, with two little boys, John and Mary moved to Hammersmith. Mary must have supported his wish for education and she may even have contributed financially, if her mariner father had left her a share in a Bideford ship. London was the best place to find suitable help and John may have rejoined the congregation of the man who first inspired him, Dr Jenkins, who remained pastor of the Particular Baptist church in Walworth until 1818. Also in 1810 a new Particular Baptist College had opened in Stepney Green, nine miles east of Hammersmith. By 1812 *the number on the books of the institution was seventeen; six living at the academy house under the care of the Revd. William Newman, and eleven under the care of other ministers.*[45] Was John one of the unnamed eleven? Married men could borrow books and attend some of the lectures while still working at their normal trades to support their families.

A very small group of Baptists had begun in Torrington, but records are vague. Around that time Revd. George Charles *Boatswain* Smith, a Baptist sailor from Penzance, preached in Torrington market place to a very unfriendly reception.[46]

John and Mary stayed in Hammersmith for about four years, returning in about 1815. Once back, John, being *convinced of the obligation of believers' baptism,* was baptised *in a river near the town* and now he could look out for a settled pastorship. Baptists had been established earlier in Cornwall than in Devon, and in 1817 he began a probationary year as a Strict and Particular Baptist pastor at Calstock, near Plymouth.[47] In a mining area the challenges would be enormous, but in a small closed church community he might hope to find warmth and friendship. Baptist faith was nurtured within community life, as members promised to build one another up, look after one another, and care for the needs of one another, spiritual and material. It would hopefully be the warm comforting sort of life described in Isaac Watt's Hymn written 100 years earlier in 1709.

We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;
A little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness.[48]

Chapter 3 Calstock, a poor minister 1817-1821

Once John had studied, he was accepted on probation as Baptist pastor at Calstock in Cornwall.[49] Both Calstock and Saltash churches were offshoots of the church in Plymouth Dock, approached by boat from Plymouth up the river Tamar. In 1816 the Plymouth Baptists minuted that *We have a branch of our Church residing at Calstock, 14 miles distant. The Friends of Calstock have purchased a piece of ground there on which they have erected a place of worship, which will accommodate, when finished, say 300 persons at the expense of £300.*[50] But it seems that the Calstock Baptist finances were shaky. Soon after the Calstock chapel become financially independent from its mother church, the Plymouth Dock chapel members carried a motion (by 16 votes to 7) that *it is not now expedient that this Church should interfere in the pecuniary concerns of the people of Calstock*.

Calstock itself was not a poor place. Originally, as an inland river port on the Tamar, market garden produce grown there supplied Plymouth. But new metal mines were being discovered and opened. The Gunnislake Sett had been developed for copper in the late 18th century.[51] Then in 1811 the Wheal Duchy Silver Mine was opened, and in 1813 silver from it was used to make an elegant silver snuff box for the Prince of Wales.[52] But Cornish miners worked in appalling conditions. Although steam engines were used to lift the metal ore, the workers were disgracefully neglected. They had to climb wet wooden ladders down hundreds of feet to work. At the bottom the heat could be intense, climbing up again was exhausting, and floods could be sudden. Miners' health was often badly affected, and if they couldn't work they had no income.[53] So church members might unexpectedly become poor. And their pastor, although seen as possessing god-given authority, depended entirely on the generosity of those same people for his income.[54]

The charitable part of the Baptist ministry was much needed, but how could a minister who was not paid enough himself afford charity for others? The problem of maintenance for dissenting ministers had been discussed in the Evangelical Magazine in 1805. *It is a scripture canon that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel. But why should any one expect to enjoy the labours of gospel ministers for nothing, any more than lawyers or physicians? In the Church of England there are stipends, tithes, and offerings. Surely the labourer is worthy of his hire?*[55]

In the early 19th century the poorest Church of England clergy – curates, mostly single men - were expected to earn £50 a year (with free living quarters and various other benefits in kind). They could request their bishop for help if paid less than £20 a year.[56] £50 a year was very little to support a family. A calculation of the annual maintenance cost for a Manchester cotton spinner, his wife and six children, in 1806, was £80 a year (£70 plus £10 rent).[57] Any skilled artisan earned more than £50, with teenage children possibly contributing too.[58] John's family at that time consisted of two adults and five children all under nine.

No record survives of John's starting salary, but he was optimistic and anxious to get settled, believing that God would provide. The post was probably found for him by his first mentor, Revd. Samuel Kilpin whose ideas about money were even more careless. He said *money has no charms but for God's service, and if He will give me enough to feed the body and to clothe it, that is all I want.*[59] Amazingly, in 1821, he reported (*to remove worries about the expense of large meetings*) *Recently, from Tuesday evening to Thursday evening 72 people dined, drank tea, or supped at my house, and the whole expense didn't amount to three guineas and a half.*[60] Checking his figures, the total was 73 shillings and sixpence, so he was claiming that each guest had been satisfied for an impossible 4d.

But money or no money, all began well, and on New Year's Day 1818 the Calstock deacons told their mother church in Bath *we have had Mr Cocks with us nearly six months. We highly approve of him and he is well received everywhere he goes. He is indefatigable and fervent in preaching the Gospel. Our congregation has increased, and it is our earnest desire that he be ordained Pastor over us.*[61]

On 1st Oct 1818 John was formally installed.[62] But soon he was writing to ask for financial help, and it took over a year for a very small contribution to materialise. In January 1821 £3 finally arrived via Plymouth with a note from Revd. John Ryland at the Bristol Baptist College, who explained the delay to Revd. Wilcocks at Plymouth Dock;

> *Last Tuesday I got our deacons to grant £3 out of our collection for poor ministers to Mr Cocks of Calstock. I applied last year, but having mislaid his letter, I couldn't state his case, so they objected that they knew nothing of him. I could only tell them that you and Mr Davis had recommended him. I have since laid my hands on his letter, and read it to them, when they voted in favour.* [63]

£3 was only about a month's income for an agricultural labourer.[64] As well as being short of money, wider family support was far away. Calstock must have been hard for Mary who was pregnant when they arrived and give birth to a son in November 1817. The baby only survived the winter, and died aged 5 months in April 1818. Calstock Baptist church had no burial ground, but Saltash did, so John probably had the sad task of carrying his dead baby eleven miles to be buried – walking, or perhaps by boat down the Tamar.[65]

In those days over 15% babies died before their first birthdays, so everyone knew they were fragile.[66] But in July 1818 Mary was pregnant again, and a second baby John was born in April 1819. Two months after receiving that belated £3 from the poor minister's fund, our family were trying to move back to North Devon. Japhia, then 13, was to become a shoemaker like his father, so if John didn't have the time to teach him, they needed to find another master – perhaps in Bideford - to start his apprenticeship.[67]

Luckily Revd. Samuel Kilpin had discovered a much better post in Crediton, which was assisted by a basic annual salary from the Baptist Home Missionary Society. After two years and nine months the family moved from Calstock to Crediton on Lady Day (25th March) 1821.

Chapter 4 Crediton; Baptist expansion 1821-1825

Crediton was, at that time, about three times the size of Torrington. It was linked to Exeter by the rivers Creedy and Exe and held fairs in May, August and September, with a great cattle market in April. Baptists there needed a new chapel, and a country preacher who would reach out to no fewer that *eight surrounding villages.* The intention was that *the bright beams of the glorious gospel* would *dispel the gloomy shades of moral darkness that have long enveloped this part of our beloved country.*[68] The Baptist Home Missionary Society, always looking out for funding, having received an extra sum, had decided to give the post 30 guineas a year.[69] It was still rather a small income, since John had to find his own accommodation and pay for it, but Crediton Baptists, better of tha Calstock ones, would probably contribute more generously. So John, Mary and the children moved directly from Calstock to Crediton on 25th March 1821.

Country preachers usually sent their listeners home at the end of their sermons with short (cheap or free) religious tracts to remind them of their gospel message. John's listeners were estimated to be *a village population of 20,000 souls,* so he must have needed large quantities of tracts. Happily, Revd. Samuel Kilpin in Exeter was storing them for the Tract Society who *had accepted his gratuitous services and committed to his care a large assortment of their tracts.*[70] In the Exeter newspaper in December 1819 Mr Kilpin advertised that *he would respectfully recommend, to the seriously disposed, the distribution of suitable well-written carols at this season of the year, to oppose that horrid trash of the worst of Popish Legends that are scattered abroad by hawkers.*[71]

Mr Kilpin had arranged John's move, and he was very hands-on about it.

> *My Dear Brother Cocks, I am glad you are so much encouraged in your work. My dear wife said it appears that no <u>man</u> sent Mr Cocks to Crediton, but God only. If so, Brother, you will prosper. I hope I shall succeed in the application for a little help for the removal of your family etc. but don't depend upon it; if it comes it comes. I admire your ideas about the house – but I did not say so, because if you and your prudent wife wished it; I would not oppose you. I think you might look out for a house - yet be prudent.* [72] *Believe me dear Brother yours any way I can serve you, S.K. It is the Committee's wish that all should pass through my hands – you will be no loser by that* [73]

At that time chapels (without accommodation for the minister) were being built for about £200-300. In 1816 the chapel at Calstock had cost £300 and, in 1819, *a plain house 26 feet by 30* at Highbridge in Somerset cost £230. In Crediton the chapel finances were being helped by Mr Opie Smith, a wealthy retired brewer, who lived near Bath. He was described (much later) as *a good holy man who extended large sums of money upon the building of Baptist chapels in order to extend the denomination*.[74] Mr Kilpin wrote to John at Crediton

> *I think Mr Smith would advance the money upon security of two or three. But I know he will not any otherwayes. He will not mind what he does upon a push, but he will do nothing unless he sees the people striving to do what they can. I will make any communication upon the subject the friends wish, but it must be upon the plan of several of them joining together as bondsmen.*

Since Crediton was only eight miles from Exeter the two ministers probably grew closer. *On Monday evening at the chapel in Mr Kilpin's garden in Exeter, which was thronged with people, Mr Cocks, a home missionary living at Crediton, gave out the hymns.* [75] Then, one Saturday in 1822, Mr Kilpin wrote John a much more urgent letter.

> *To Revd. Mr Cocks Bapt Minister, Crediton To be delivered immediately as it is on business concerning the poor man that is to be executed on Monday. Dear Cocks, Providence appears to point out your duty to come in to Exeter either this evening or tomorrow morning, and spend a good part of the Sabbath with the poor condemned wretch. Your earlier visit is mentioned in the Papers this morning very respectfully. Mr Sturgess shall come and preach for you. Who can tell but God may give you this lost soul. Yours indeed S.K.*[76]

The poor wretch was Philip Chappell, a 19 year-old glover's apprentice from Torrington. He was being tried at Exeter Lent Assizes for the murder of Mary Stevens, a servant in his master's household. John had already visited him in prison once, and he was badly needed again.

In court, friends of the Chappell family vouched for Philip's good character. But witnesses also described how they had, during the previous autumn, talked (and even joked) about Mary Stevens' obvious pregnancy. They had encouraged Philip to maintain the child when it was born and marry Mary when his apprenticeship was over. But although fond of Mary, she was 16 years older than he was, and he did not want to marry so young. Then, in November, while walking beside the river, the two of them had an argument. She fell in and drowned, and he didn't save her. In court he pleaded not guilty to murder. When he was called upon for his defence he said, shaken and tearful, *My Lord, I am as innocent as anybody in the court. I loved her too well to murder her.* He was found guilty on a Friday, and his execution was due on the next Monday.[77] It must have been a formidable challenge for John to be comforting a 19-year-old about to be hanged. John remembered it 25 years later, after reading an Exeter paper report that Philip's elder brother had been drowned – as an inside passenger trapped in a coach that tipped off the edge of the Bideford quay behind a restive horse.[78] *I fear John Chappell was not better prepared for eternity than his poor brother that I attended at the gallows at Exeter.*

Meanwhile John was working hard and preaching *regularly in Crediton's eight villages. The attendance is truly animating. Schools have been established and are prospering. A building has been found which will easily convert to a chapel. The purchase and alterations will amount to about £360, towards which the friends have, with difficulty, raised £50.* [79] Finally, by the end of 1822, some of the remaining £300 had been found.

> *On 1st January 1823 a new Baptist meeting was opened at Crediton. Having to leave the previous rented room, they had to open it unfinished. Three sermons were preached on the occasion, two of them by Mr Kilpin, the affectionate father of this little church. Messrs Cocks, Orchard and Mitchell (Baptists) and Pool and Spink (Independents) engaged in the devotional services.* [80]

The work in Crediton still needed to be finished, because the Home Missionary Society paid John to stay on there for another two years. Then they continued to pay his salary when they decided to move him to Minehead in Somerset on Christmas Day 1825. His next pastorship was to be his second longest (6 years 10 months) and his second hardest.

Chapter 5. Minehead, a rotten borough 1825-1832

For his next pastorate the Baptist Home Missionary Society sent John to Minehead in Somerset where the chief landowners, also MPs, strongly resisted dissent. At various times three short-lived dissenting chapels had existed *but they were built on leasehold ground. When they fell into the hands of the lord of the manor, he refused to grant a renewal, and no dissenting minister could rent a house in the town.* In the 18th century religion had only been a small facet of politics in most parliamentary boroughs. In Parliament dissenters had been numerically insignificant too, but by 1830 things were changing.[81] Dissenters (and enhanced rights for them) were supported by the Whigs as part of a broader anti-Catholic coalition. Whereas the Tories were strong supporters of the Church of England and the interdependence of Church and State.[82] Most Minehead property was owned by the Luttrell family (Tories) of Dunster Castle, 3 miles to the east. And the town, although it was a thriving port at the beginning of the 18th century had, by 1800, all sorts of problems. Lucrative herring shoals nearby had shrunk, the harbour needed dredging, and the woollen trade was failing. There was a great deal of poverty.[83]

The Luttrells had occupied two seats for Minehead in Parliament since the 1560s, almost entirely unopposed, but in 1796 there had been a rare contest.[84] John Fownes Luttrell, standing with his son of the same name, was causing resentment by *overbearing conduct,* so William Davis, a neighbouring Quaker merchant, led some opposition to him. Shortly before the election, Davis claimed that *several gentlemen of property and spirit have stood forward with the people of Minehead, in support of their just rights and liberties. It is hoped to revive the fallen trade of this ancient commercial town.* Minehead voters were invited to *free themselves from the shackles and abuses of tyranny and corruption.* And an election jingle ran *Shall Britons bold be bought and sold, slave-like, mere traffic in a fair?*[85] But nothing came of it, and in 1812 the two Luttrells were elected again.

Minehead, unusually, was a *householder* or *potwalloper* franchise, where relatively poor people had the vote. It included all male heads of households with a hearth large enough to boil a cauldron (or *wallop a pot)*. That made it very easy for candidates to bribe the voters. And that practice was publicised in a local newspaper whose editors firmly believed in freedom of religion, politics and the press, and were not afraid to speak their minds.[86] In 1830, before the General Election at the beginning of the reign of William IV, the Sherborne Mercury reported *upwards of 200 poor families in Minehead were supplied with two bushels of coal and two quartern loaves each, the gift of John Fownes Luttrell of Dunster Castle Esq. their MP.* Bribery, but stingy, since a bushel of coal would only heat a very small hearth for about 10 days, and a quartern loaf weighed roughly 4 lb.[87] It was also reported that among the poor Luttrell tenants who owed rent, there was a man who had sold his only bed to pay it, leaving his family sleeping on straw.

After the Reform Act in 1832, Minehead lost its MPs altogether. When the younger John Luttrell tried to stand for the new constituency of West Somerset instead, his candidature provoked a number of ferocious character attacks. One extraordinary poster even described scenes of moral depravity at Dunster Castle where *every servant was prostituted to his lust and the wives of honest tradesmen assailed and seduced.*[88]

But John and Mary, with Julia (14) Hephzibah (12) Jemima (10) and John (6) somehow managed to find a home. Japhia (17) and Elijah (15) had almost certainly left home for apprenticeships as a shoe-maker and a tailor respectively. Meanwhile John was doing his very best to help support and educate poor Luttrell tenants and, in 1826, *started the Minehead school supported by subscription.*[89] But hope lay nearby. Four miles west at Holnicote lived Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, a tolerant philanthropist and humanitarian who argued that *no practical evil would arise from the removal of a legitimate grievance.*[90] And he owned land in Minehead called The Parks.[91]

John appealed to Sir Thomas for a lease of some land in The Parks for a new church building, with a minister's house, *being as needful as the chapel.*[92] He was also supported by an unknown Anglican clergyman, who said *oh, let them have the land, let them have as much as they want, Sir Thomas.* So a 99 year lease on a suitable plot was granted. In March 1831 the Taunton Courier reported that *Sir Thomas Dyke Acland has generously given a large piece of land on which is about to be erected a Baptist Chapel at Minehead.*[93] *Large numbers attended the*

laying of the first stone and *addresses were delivered by Revd. Sutton and Revd. J Cocks. Friends of religion in the neighborhood now hope the gospel will be perpetuated to the end of time.* Sir Thomas's *keen interest in religious progress* was a great help to John, but he had sadly incurred great personal hostility from the Luttrells.

In 1830 John had one of his legs amputated, presumably in Bristol. He was lucky to survive death from infection. At St Bartholomew's Hospital in London the death rate was one in four. There is no way to discover why that amputation was necessary. Perhaps it followed an accident, or possibly it was necessary to stop diabetic gangrene.[94]

> *Speed was the only determinant of a successful surgeon. Most patients were held or strapped down - some would mercifully faint from their agony - many died, either on the table or immediately post-surgery. The suffering was intense. Before the use of anaesthesia* [ether was not used for a British operation until 1842] *surgeons got the patients blind drunk, gave them opium, or administered a sharp tap on the head with a mallet enough to render the patient unconscious.*[95]

He would soon have been fitted with a wooden leg. In 1830 Northampton hospital recommended that *persons who had had a leg amputated should be given their first wooden leg, if they desired, on leaving.* He was to manage with a wooden leg for 20 years, and his recovery, without any of today's dressings, painkillers or antiseptics, probably took about a year. [96]

Meanwhile, soon after John's operation in 1830, Julia, aged 18, had completed her apprenticeship in dressmaking and found a job in a *respectable establishment* in Bristol. She wrote home saying she had arrived safely and was happy there. But only a week after that her mistress sent a letter to say she was dangerously ill. Mary went immediately to Bristol to nurse her, but Julia only lived a few days after her mother arrived, and died on 8th July. A very sad obituary appeared for Julia (which will be described in more detail in a later chapter) in the Baptist Magazine for 1831.[97]

The new chapel was opened on 12th October 1831. John preached from the text *behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believes shall not make haste.*[98] The building cost £750, and included a *large lobby inside the door to keep the chapel warm.*[99] It was a great achievement *for the persevering efforts of the minister, Mr Cocks, and a few friends. In no place could such exertions be more necessary. The moral aspect of the town is as dreary as its situation is delightful.*[100] Finally, after seven years of really uphill work, great pain and agonising family tragedy, in October 1832 John was finally *compelled to leave Minehead.*

A month after John left, the minutes in the Minehead chapel book ran *we extremely regret that our beloved pastor Mr. John Cocks should be compelled to leave us. We believe the cause of his removal was the decided interest he took in the cause of civil and religious liberty. For this he was persecuted, both by the professors and open enemies of the cross of Christ.*[101] *We bear testimony to his diligent, faithful and pious labours amongst us during seven years, and having been the instrument of erecting in Minehead a chapel and dwelling house for the minister.* John left a congregation of 27 members; of which 26 were communicants.[102]

The Baptist Home Missionary Society were still gloomy. Their secretary wrote in the 1841 magazine *Minehead is the only station belonging to our society at present in a languishing state. The cause affords matter for serious deliberation. When prosperity is in abeyance with any church, ground is afforded for serious examination, as to why the windows of Heaven appear to be shut.* The Luttrells were of course unchanged, but before the end of the 19th century Minehead had become a holiday resort, and Baptists have flourished there ever since.

After leaving Minehead, John, again supported financially by the Baptist Home Missionary Society, was given another pastorship 33 miles east in the hamlet of Highbridge on the Somerset levels.

Chapter 6. Highbridge, canal building 1832-1833

The Cocks family arrived in Highbridge in the "Golden Age" of British canal building. Highbridge was a village on the Bristol Channel between Minehead and Bristol on the outskirts of Burnham-on-Sea parish. The initiative for a Glastonbury canal came from local businessmen who decided it would be a good investment. Coal from Wales and other heavy goods could be carried more cheaply inland by water.[103] Highbury was the place where the canal, begun in 1827, and partly following the course of the river Brue, became tidal as it joined the Bristol Channel.[104]

The canal digging work, dangerous and hard, was done by navvies, some possibly local and some recruited from far away. There must have been a great number of them to dig out 14 miles of canal by hand. A good navvy shovel 18 tons a day, which is about the volume of a large single-decker bus. If the soil was wet it was heavier, and lifting was done on a shovel over the navvy's head into a wagon. Each wagon held 2.25 cubic yards of muck and 14 of them were filled by two men in a day.[105] Since the Glastonbury canal was seriously underfunded and often delayed, there may have been problems with paying the men. Most navvies were single men living in *shanty towns* lacking even the most basic of amenities or comfort. Outbreaks of typhus, cholera and dysentery could also devastate the workforce which could be rowdy and prone to drunkenness.

Highbridge didn't have a parish church until 1859, but Baptists were already active there, and had built a chapel in 1819. It was initially supplied by visiting preachers, but the Home Missionary Society paid two newly-ordained young ministers for about two years each around the time the canal was being built, when there were large number of navvies living locally.[106] And in 1832, when the canal works were nearing completion, they were *succeeded by Mr Cocks of Minehead, who commenced his labours 4th November .*[107] Maybe Highbridge was chosen for John as a smaller and less stressful pastorship than Minehead where he could get used to having only one leg. But, being John, he was soon travelling nine miles to help the Baptist Church in Axbridge. Did he walk or did someone lend him a horse? The author of a book on amputation written in 1858 (a surgeon) said that one of his patients, a young woman, managed afterwards to walk ten miles on a wooden leg.[108]

> *Rev. John Cocks (agent of the Baptist Home Missionary Society) preached a sermon at the 9th anniversary of the Axbridge Baptist Sabbath School.* His text was *from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*[109] *The congregation was large, and the collection liberal.* [On another occasion] *the Axbridge Baptist Sabbath School tea-party held their annual meeting in the Town Hall (kindly lent by the corporation) when the subscribers, committee, teachers and scholars cordially united in Christian affection. The Rev. J Cocks presided, and delivered an appropriate address.*[110]

There was no minister's house at Highbridge, so John had to find lodgings again, but their three eldest surviving children had left home by then.[111] Japhia (24) was a journeyman shoemaker, Elijah (22) a journeyman tailor, and neither of them would be able to find work in Highbridge. I am not sure where they were, but Hephzibah (19) was back in Torrington living with her Cocks uncle and aunt and working as a straw hat maker.[112] Jemima (17) and John were still with their parents. Jemima would have helped her mother run the house and Sunday school. John probably made new friends at Bridgewater Grammar School seven miles away, which, in 1816, had over 300 boys. In the summer of 1833 Mary received the financial boost of a £10 bequest from her Bideford shipbuilder brother-in-law John Evans.[113] Life must have been a little easier for them than it was in Minehead. But nine months after they arrived in Highbridge, a second devastating family tragedy hit them.

On Monday 30th July 1833, their 14 year old son John joined a local farmer's family for dinner at Churchland Farm, Huntspill, about two and a half miles up the river Brue from Highbridge. Afterwards *he went into the hay field with some others. But soon after getting into the field, he left them and went to the river, got in to bathe, and having got out of his depth, and not being able to swim, was drowned.*[114] Two weeks later, surely an agonising day for John, Mary and Jemima, the Glastonbury canal was opened *with joyous celebrations.*

> *About seven am the Company's barge and the beautiful yacht the Water Witch, filled with the most respectable persons of the neighbourhood, set sail for Highbridge accompanied by a band of music and bells ringing a merry peal. On Monday last as early as five in the morning, the barge again, together with a new yacht the St Vincent having on board nearly 150 persons (principally of the respectable trading classes) took another trip to Highbridge and returned in the evening amidst the ringing of bells and firing of canon*. [115]

Its impossible to imagine how John and Mary must have felt, losing fourteen year old John two years and twenty days after Julia's sudden death in Bristol. It is probable that young John's body was never recovered. A passage of Genesis in John's bible is underlined. *Darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*[116] No matter how deeply John and Mary believed in salvation, the loss of two well loved, happy and promising children must have been shattering. On 5th October 1833 John resigned from Highbridge. It was his shortest and saddest pastorship, but they were rescued in their grief by John's kind benefactor Opie Smith (then 82) whom they had known for over twelve years. John was 50, and Mary was 56, but they couldn't afford to retire. They continued to be Opie's guests at Westfield House near Bath until another pastorship could be found for John.[117]

Chapter 7. Twerton, mill workers and temperance 1833-1842

Twerton was a village of about 2,000 people on the river Avon, about 3 miles downstream from Bath. In the 1790s new spinning and wool-combing machinery was being used there to make coarse woollen cloth. By 1816 Messrs Charles Wilkins and Co. were employing 111 adult employees and 56 children, which was a sizeable operation.[118]

In 1824 Charles Wilkins took over the whole enterprise which consisted of two mills, and by the 1830s he employed 800 staff making broadcloth, and about 250 more in their own homes.[119] He was an enlightened employer who believed church and chapel encouraged moral lives and made better workers.[120] He insisted that his workforce should attend public worship at least once every Sunday, either at the Parish Church or the Strict and Particular Baptist chapel in Mill Lane, to which he had contributed funds.

Powerful machinery needed sober men to operate it, so Wilkins needed sobriety in his workers. The temperance movement, strongly supported by churches, was only just beginning in the 1820s, although in 1743 John Wesley was proclaiming that buying, selling, and drinking of liquor, was (unless absolutely necessary) an evil to be avoided. And in the 1790s an American physician Benjamin Rush believed that abstinence was the only solution.[121]

In 1830 the Beerhouse Act was passed to encourage people to drink beer instead of spirits, increase competition between brewers, and lower beer prices. It had mixed success, and Charles Wilson found that in Twerton it made matters worse. In his response to a Factories Act questionnaire he reported that *there were formerly only two public-houses and two retail breweries in Twerton, but directly on the passing of the Beerhouse Act no fewer than 20 new beer-shops were opened in addition to the two regular public-houses.*[122] And Wilkins, a teetotaler himself, was already docking a shilling from the weekly wage of any female worker seen in a local alehouse, in or out of working hours.

The man who introduced John to the Twerton chapel was his kind mentor Opie Smith, who was a member of the committee looking for a pastor for it.[123] John and Mary had lost two teenage children in three years and must have been in great distress, needing to move away from Highbridge, dominated by the river where their youngest son John had drowned. So Opie invited them to stay with him at Westfield House to recover before looking for another pastorship.

In 1808 a Strict and Particular Baptist Chapel seating 300 had been built in Mill Lane, Twerton.[124] Its trustees included included seven substantial Baptist businessmen who lived in Bath, and eight mill employees, two of whom were deacons. [125] For the first 25 years the deacons had been running it pretty much their own way, without a pastor, relying on visiting preachers. Their proximity to Bath, which had many churches and visitors must have made that easy, but they thought that a settled pastor would *be instrumental in doing much good in this benighted village.*[126] Benighted might sound strong, but Twerton had a large undisciplined population and it was likely to be a tough pastorship. Three candidates had refused the post before they offered it to John.[127] It seems that Elijah was working as a tailor in Weston, so his nearness and John's gratefulness to Opie, plus the likeable Twerton deacon James Cadby, must have made it seem suitable.

The problem was aggravated because the Twerton Chapel was a Strict and Particular Baptist church. The Strict (restricted) part followed St Paul's letters to the Corinthians *if any man that is called a brother be … a drunkard, with such an one do not eat.* All the members, most of whom worked at the mill, were supposed to be sober in order to take communion. Furthermore the original trust deeds stated that the members could *appoint or remove a minister without interference from the trustees.* That put the minister's job at risk because if he became unpopular there would be no steadying influence from experienced outside Baptists. Not only that, but the minister's annual salary had, for the first time, to be raised.

The senior deacon James Cadby, secretary of the chapel, was worried that income from annual pew rents of about £35 would be *very little to support a Minister.* [128] But on 25 September 1833, he wrote to John at Opie's home. *At our Church meeting last evening it was decided that Mr Cocks should be invited to supply us for one year,* offering £40 a year which John accepted. It was maybe enough to support just three family members, John, Mary and Jemima (18), because Hephzibah (20) was by then staying in Torrington with her Cocks uncle and aunt. [129] And John was expected *to see where and how the work would prosper in his hands.*

In October 1833 John began by organising the Church routine. There would be Sabbath sermons in the mornings and evenings, and a prayer meeting in the afternoon. Communion would be taken on the first Sunday of every month, with a meeting for minister and deacons on the preceding Friday evening. There would be a member's meeting on the first Wednesday evening of every month, and a new meeting on the last Monday evening of every month for conversation and *to lead them forward in the good old way.* All seems to have gone well at first, but the chapel was expanding quickly. Two new side galleries, and a back gallery for children had already been planned, which eventually cost £113.5s.9d. So when John asked after a while for another £10 to bring his salary to £50, James Cadby replied *respecting money matters, I can't see under our present circumstances that we shall be able, after other expenses, to pay more than £40 per annum for the Minister. Your affectionate friend, James Cadby.* However in July 43 of the 50 members agreed to the increase. Signs of internal disagreement were emerging, which cannot have been happy.

After a short closure for building work the chapel reopened on Easter Day in 1834. *The Revd. John Cocks, Pastor, preached in the morning and Messrs Cadby and Butterworth helped with the services. The congregations were large and the collection was liberal.* [130] An inspiring preacher like John was a great financial asset, and worth a £50 salary, but soon they were to learn that his high standards for chapel members were not negotiable. In July 1834 the members themselves agreed to emphasise, more firmly, that Twerton chapel was still a closed communion church.

> *If any members absent themselves from the Lord's Table three successive ordinance days, they shall be visited by two of the deacons, to ask the reason. Unless that is satisfactory they shall be suspended for three months. After which they shall admit their fault and be restored: but if they refuse they shall be cut off.*

But soon two members were suspended. Henry Bowering, who had missed communion on three Sundays left, saying he would go to the parish church. George Mitchell, *repeatedly guilty of drunkenness,* repented and returned, but seven months later had to be excluded again for *moral misconduct.* [131]

On October 23rd 1834, there was a happy Cocks family event. Elijah, who was working near Bath for a tailor in Weston, married Sarah Parsons at All Saints Church.[132] Sarah was the daughter of Abraham Parsons, a well-to-do Baptist, a dry salter in Weston.[133] John's probationary year was then over, and new members were joining the chapel fast, with baptised members numbering about 75. But discipline was still slack and John soon found it necessary to dismiss five more existing members and exclude another for immoral conduct. Then he needed to dismiss another three members and suspend one. He must have been unpopular, but how could a relatively new pastor hope to cope with a flock whose motivation for goodness was so shallow? On Christmas Day 1835, after two years and two months, he resigned, explaining that *in consequence of the many unpleasant things which have occurred in the Church, I have come to the conclusion of giving up my charge over you. I intend resigning the Pastoral Office four months from today* [April 25th 1836] *and I will not preach in the chapel during that period.*

By refusing to preach he removed the thing they valued most: his ability to bring in money from large audiences. No doubt there were still outstanding bills for building work to be settled, but the members' response was unanimous, immediate, and unnecessarily vindictive. On 6th January 1836, they met and decided that *the Revd. John Cocks be no longer a member of our Church. The Church deeply regrets the necessity for this measure. The*

reasons for it are best known to the parties hereby separated from us. Furthermore they decided that *all the members unlawfully dismissed by the late Pastor are invited to return, and be received in full communion as before.* Ten months and nine days later, in November 1836, there was a further insult. The Twerton deacons, discovering something missing, wrote to John to request the return of *three long stools and two baptising gowns,* threatening legal action. John sent them back the next day.[134]

Mary, Jemima, Elijah and Sarah, all innocent members, were suspended for three months, but replied with a note dismissing themselves. It was a sad ending. John took a few loyal members to the Independent Prospect Chapel at the Bath end of the village. Mill Lane records noted that Elizabeth Alderman *left to join Mr Cocks*. Elizabeth's will, written three years later, includes this bequest *should any of my old books be worth his acceptance, I bequeath them to the much respected pastor Mr. John Cocks.* Also *if it be thought proper to say anything by way of funeral sermon I will that it be preached by John Cocks.* [135] Another woman who followed John was Elizabeth Gane who, in 1840, nursed Elijah, who had in those four years developed consumption.[136]

In 1836, Elijah and Sarah, who lived nearby, had a baby daughter, and sadly John's friend and benefactor, Opie Smith, died aged 85. Then in 1839, a second family wedding, on 7th January, took place at the Independent Chapel in Torrington, when Hephzibah was married to George Heanes Youatt, a Torrington cabinet maker who had moved to London to make pianos. Elijah (taking Sarah perhaps) took time off work to travel 115 miles westwards to be a witness, but John, Mary and Jemima missed the wedding. However John's family bible notes that a few days after the wedding on their journey to London, George and Hephzibah called in on them and then *left her parents at Bethel Chapel near Bath* on 10th January 1839. Afterwards they travelled another 122 miles to their new home near Regents Park. Elijah cannot then have been so very ill, but he had consumption, and only a year and ten months left to live. And soon after Elijah's death in November 1840, John and Mary finally moved away much further than ever before.

For a short time John held the pastorship of the Old Calvinistic Baptist Church, Lessness Heath, Belvedere, in north Kent .[137] He and Mary took their granddaughter Julia with them because her mother, Elijah's widow Sarah, was working in Islington for a religious bookseller Mr George Rivington.[138] Maybe they wanted to be in easier reach of Sarah so that she could come and visit her little girl sometimes. The chapel, which conveniently had minister's rooms attached, was about two miles from the Thames at Erith. Erith was about 15 miles from Tower bridge and reached from London by river. The railway station opened in 1849, but planning must have been underway by 1840. In 1831 Erith's population was 1,533, and it was described in 1840 as being *composed chiefly of two streets, one leading down to the water side, the other branching off to the left towards the church.*

Lessness Heath attracted large crowds for races and perhaps the Cocks family arrived in time for them.

> *The scene of rustic sport was the source of attraction in all the villages between Bexley, Crayford, Erith and Welling. The races and fair are held annually on Whit Tuesday ...the race course is upon the famous Lessness Heath ... the course marked out as usual by white posts, forming a distance of less than a mile ... a delightful scene - the spot glows in all the beauty of nature ... the Eardly Arms on the heath affording refreshment.* [139]

But John, Mary and Julia only stayed in Kent for about a year. Perhaps they found access to London too difficult. By January 1842, John had accepted the unanimous invitation to be pastor of the church *assembling in the Upper Meeting, Amersham,* another Strict and Particular Chapel. And there John *entered upon his labours, on 2nd January 1842.*[140]

Chapter 8 Amersham, The Hungry Forties 1842-1850

When John and Mary arrived in Amersham in 1842 (with their 6 year old granddaughter Julia) John was 58 and Mary was 65. After a stormy career of struggles, such a pleasant town, with a long tradition of dissent and congenial neighbours must have been very welcome. Three surviving letters which John wrote to his daughter Hephzibah tell more about their life there. In this, his seventh pastorship – during the *Hungry Forties* at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign – the main problems were economic, shared by everyone. Bread prices had risen after a bad harvest in 1839, further bad harvests followed, and in 1845 potato blight ruined much of the English crop, spreading to Ireland. A hard winter in 1846/47 ended with severe frosts and heavy snow in February.[141] In March 1847 John wrote *many of our members are ill and feel the pressure of the times. Because of this severe weather our congregation has been small. Collections have fallen off. It calls for humility and prayer.* And five months later things had not improved. *I am sorry to say the cause of Christ in Amersham is very low, both with us and at the Lower Meeting. Trade is dead and that affects the cause of God.* [142]

The largest trade in Amersham was chair-making, using Chilterns wood. Lumbering carts, piled high with chairs set off daily for London. Small chair-makers used simple treadle-operated pole lathes, set up cheaply by individuals (turners) in the crudest wooden lean-to buildings. Women and children helped by making cane seats.[143] In 1822 the town had five master chair-makers who provided *considerable employment making chairs for exportation.* [144] In 1841 there were 48 chair-makers, large and small, in the town. Five large chair-makers included Mr Sampson Toovey (employing 14 men in 1851) who was the same age as John, a friend, and probably one of his deacons.[145] In 1847 John wrote to his family *Mr Toovey has been ill several weeks, but is better.* By 1849 Mr Toovey's people were *clearing out today: it has been a bustling week.* Later that year Mr Toovey was *in a poor state of health and depressed in spirits. He had been at great expense in moving to Coleshill, and has made several losses*.[146]

John's last pastorate seems to have been arranged by his Bath friends. His predecessor at the Upper Meeting, Revd. James Cooper, who had grown up in Bath, was a pupil of the Revd. John Paul Porter.[147] In April 1819, the elderly Mr Porter had travelled to Amersham to celebrate Cooper's installation. In his diary he wrote *I met the ministers assembled at Amersham to set apart Mr James Cooper to the Baptist church in that town. The part allotted to me was to offer the ordination prayer and to give the charge to the minister. It was a good day. Many ministers were present, and the service occupied four hours and a quarter, although it was curtailed as much as possible.*[148] Although James Cooper was a Strict and Particular Baptist, he was then installed at the Lower Meeting, succeeding the Revd. Richard Morris. His strictness was not appreciated there, so he took a small group to the Upper Meeting and the Lower Meeting appointed Revd John Statham in 1830. [149]

In 1839, James Cooper left Amersham for Leighton Buzzard, and the Upper Meeting was *for some time in a depressed state.* But that only lasted for two years, and after John's arrival many people were *inquiring the way to Zion.* [150] John always increased congregations by his preaching, and in this pastorship he had rooms very near his chapel, so could avoid too much walking with his wooden leg.

The two Baptist chapels in Amersham are only a few hundred metres apart, on the south side of the High Street, connected by a footpath and garden. The older Upper Meeting (now a private house), more southerly at the Platt, funded in 1677 by John Harding, had a school room but no minister's rooms. [151] The Lower Meeting (now King's Chapel) was built in 1785, on land belonging to Revd. Richard Morris. He owned a brush-makers shop on the High Street, and land behind the shop, approached by a footpath through an archway.[152] John and Mary lived between the Platt and the High Street, in upstairs rooms in one of two tall houses behind the the shop. Their windows looked across the River Misbourne to a field where religious martyrs were burnt in 1509. John wrote *I often look at the field with mingled emotions of grief and indignation.*

The names of John's deacons at the Upper Meeting have been lost, but it seems to have been a happy church, and they were all good friends. In 1844, John baptised four people, and commented that one of them was *the sixth of a family of nine, two of whom are deacons of the church.* Disappointingly he did not name them. But guesses about the other deacons might be made from his family letters. One probable deacon was John Saunders, two years older than John, a tanner living in High Street.[153] In 1847 John wrote *old friend Saunders is gone to his eternal rest.* Another was Sampson Toovey, the chair-maker, whose son was married to Revd. James Cooper's daughter. Possibly another was William Spratley, a butcher who died in 1849. John wrote *old Mr Spratley is dead & John has the business.*[154] And Thomas Dumbarton, John's landlord, a furniture broker, was probably a deacon. His daughter Sarah was married to Sampson Toovey's son Henry.[155] it was definitely a close knit group, and a *garden walled around.*

At last John had more time to study and write. He contributed to the Baptist Reporter Magazine *(adapted for cottage readings, price monthly twopence*). The editor was J.F. Winks, a Baptist printer in Leicester, a *stalwart supporter of religious and civil liberty, and universal suffrage, fighting for the abolition of war, slavery, and intemperance.*[156] John sent his approval: *I am much pleased with your Reporter magazine and have sold twice as many as last year.* [157] He began sending reports of baptisms at the Upper Meeting like this one: *recent baptisms at Amersham by Mr Cocks numbered three, all children of devout parents;* then *two baptisms at Amersham by Mr Cocks; a man and his wife.* He followed those by an longer story about a master bricklayer who had been a heavy drinker for 25 years and ruined his health. The man had heard a lecture on total abstinence at the Upper Meeting, and was so impressed that he signed the pledge.[158] *In three months he felt the beneficial effects of total abstinence, lost all pain, recovered the use of his limbs, and became a strong robust man.* John baptised him in 1844. The bricklayer's wife and three children joined the Upper Meeting too. It was a *change of heart by the operation of the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the gospel.* [159]

John was not only reviving the Upper Meeting, but at last being properly appreciated himself. By this time he must have collected a small library, the keystone of which was his own Bible. It was a stereotype edition printed in 1817 by George Eyre and Andrew Strahan (Printers to His Majesty) for the British and Foreign Bible Society.[160] It included both old and new testaments, and was conveniently portable (8½" x 6¾"). Perhaps it was a present when he began his first pastorship in Calstock. It has not survived complete, but the front pages on which he wrote family events and a few pages of Genesis are still in the family. In his articles he quoted from Foxe's Book of Martyrs *(Edition 1583),* and from John Strype's Ecclesiastical Memorials about the Protestant reformation.[161] He also quoted from Revd. Adam Taylor's History of the New Connection of General Baptists, published in 1818.[162] And he quoted from A Treatise of Baptism: by Henry Danvers, originally published in 1674, which was about the establishment of adult baptism from Scripture.[163] Very soon *the teachers of the Sabbath school in the Upper Meeting,* no doubt knowing how much he enjoyed his books, *presented Mr Cocks with £3 to buy books, as a token of their esteem for his help superintending their weekly meeting for Biblical Research.*[164] Coincidentally that was the same amount he had received 20 years earlier, from the Bristol fund for poor ministers, to ease his poverty.

In 1846, John began writing about Amersham history in The Baptist Reporter, which purposely gave *ample space to all evangelical Baptists.* It was about the Amersham Martyrs, Lollards, of whom there were a *godly and great company* in Amersham from about 1495. After the Act for the Burning of Heretics became law, they were first examined in church courts about Transubstantiation, and if they denied it they were burnt to death. One of them was *William Tilseley, or Tilsworth, called then Doctor Tilsworth,* who was burnt in Amersham. Like most of the magazine articles at that time John's were long, repetitive, seemingly unedited and rather emotional. Soon his opinions were criticised by a writer who signed himself P.G.J. [165] John was hurt, hit back, and again seemingly unedited, he made that obvious.

> *Dear Sir, as P.G.J. has again referred to the Amersham baptists, I beg the favour of a small space to make a few remarks. P.G.J. may think I am very confident in my tone, and tenacious of my sentiments. But I repeat that, in my opinion, the followers of Wickliffe were Baptists, and conclude that Wickliffe was a Baptist. This is evident from the following extract from Wickliffe's works, which I*

quote from Danvers on Baptism. P.G.J. seems to exult that his eagle eye has spotted J.C. being caught in the meshes of his own net. From the confident tone in which P.G.J. writes, one might think he is the keeper of the records of all the Baptist churches in Great Britain! He sits down in his easy chair and seems to think he has enlightened the intelligent reader, and corrected the ignorant scribbler. J.C.

In spite of economic pressures and declining health, John's nine years in Amersham seem to have been secure and happy. The Upper meeting was small, but flourishing.[166]

He died in 1850, and a note in his Bible, probably in Mary's writing, says that he was buried at Amersham. Sadly his grave is, with several others, now lost. They were spread out in a grass-covered burial ground bought in 1676, above what is now the Kings Chapel, at the top of the path from High Street uphill to the Platt. Now the headstones, used as paving, have all been moved, and some are lost. John's funeral was probably conducted by his fellow minister, Revd. William Salter. [167] After John's death, Mary stayed for a while in Amersham, lodging with Miss Jane How in the High Street. But eventually she went to live with Jemima in Bourton-on-the-Water and died in 1857. Her grave, which she shared with her infant granddaughter, is marked Mary Cocks, widow of the late Revd. John Cocks of Amersham, 14 Oct 1857, aged 80.

Chapter 9 Achievements

In each of his seven pastorships, John tackled a different social problem which was prevailing in England at the time. But his career didn't suffer from any of the particular local setbacks he encountered. Calstock members found that John was *well received everywhere.* He also acquired two enthusiastic and loyal mentors, Samuel Kilpin and Opie Smith. Mr Kilpin wrote *My Dear Brother Cocks, I am glad you are so much encouraged in your work. My dear wife said it appears that no man sent Mr C to Crediton but God only.* Mr Smith invited John and Mary to stay in his home to recover after his youngest son was drowned.

Frequent moves were typical for non-conformist ministers at that time. Small incomes were also common, and John's salary was never enough to do more than support Mary and their seven children very simply. But within all but one of his small Strict and Particular Baptist churches the members were friends, who pulled together, supporting each other in all sorts of ways.

After each pastorship (including his most difficult one in Twerton) he kept some loyal supporters who were sorry to see him go. The Minehead deacons, after he left, minuted that they regretted that their *beloved pastor* had been *compelled to leave them.* They believed that *the cause of his removal was the decided interest he took in the cause of civil and religious liberty, and for this he was persecuted, both by the professors and open enemies of the cross of Christ.*

It seems he was a sanguine optimist, prepared (with God's help) to tackle any project, however difficult. But he stuck rigorously to very high standards. In only two years at Twerton, he dismissed no fewer than fourteen chapel members for drinking or immorality.

Preaching was John's earliest and enduring strength, and he found it rewarding to inspire audiences who were *enquiring the way to Zion.* He was

> *indefatigable and fervent in preaching the Gospel: our congregation has increased. Mr Cocks labours with unwearied devotion; preaching, visiting house to house, distributing tracts, and educating the rising generation*.

He also travelled to preach in neighbouring chapels, albeit, after 1830, hampered by a wooden leg. In Axbridge, which was nine miles from his home in Highbridge, *the congregation was large, and the collection liberal.* And at the age of 66, he wrote *I am happy that I was able to preach twice yesterday. I am a little fatigued today, with a slight hoarseness, but I went through the services better than I expected.*

The Baptist Home Mission Society certainly appreciated his work, trusted him, and paid him a basic salary for over 12 years. John was in touch by post with a large network of other ministers, not only in the country churches around him, but in London as well, and must have been on good terms with them. The well known Dr Burns preached for him in Amersham for *our anniversary sermon, the 18th of July.* [168]

Family records show that *s*ome of his children found work through those connections. In 1841 his widowed daughter-in-law Julia was working for George Rivington, printer and publisher of religious books and tracts.[169] And later, in the 1840s, his daughter Jemima was, he supposed, *still at Mr Tidman's.* Revd. Arthur Tidman was pastor of the Barbican Chapel, and Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society.[170] He must have been proud of Jemima, who seems to have been a very good school teacher. She was still living with her parents when she was 20, but after that seems to have been in service in London, perhaps as a children's nurse. In 1841 she was working for a cabinet maker's family with four children in St Pancras. In 1847 she had moved to Finsbury Square where Revd. Arthur Tidman, Pastor of the Barbican Chapel, had five children, and John wrote to Hephzibah *Jemima I suppose is still at Mr Tidmans.*[171] Two years later she was still in London and John told Hephzibah *I have enclosed Mrs How's letter to Jemima. I replied to it the day we received it.* But in the Summer of 1849 she was

appointed schoolmistress of the British School at Bourton-on-the Water. The post was arranged by Revd. John Statham, who had moved to Bourton from Amersham, and John wrote *Mr and Mrs Statham are very kind to her.* [172] *The Baptist Church at Bourton is a very respectable Church, and she has some superior companions so she has an opportunity of improving herself.* [173] Five months later her parents heard from her, and John wrote to Hephzibah *she seems to succeed in the school. They numbered 40 when she went and now they have 81 that she improves in writing and diction.*[174] *The instruction she received from Miss Greenfield was of great service to her, and I don't doubt but she will become an efficient teacher.* [175]

John's most important asset was his *prudent wife.* For 43 years, in which life must often have been difficult, she never seems to have collapsed. Samuel Kilpin, who knew her fairly well, wrote *I admire your ideas about the house – but I did not say so, because if you and your prudent wife wished it; I would not oppose you*. The picture of their marriage is one of successful teamwork. In 1849, it seems they both had influenza; *we have both been very ill. I was laid aside a few weeks, and just able to get down, when your Mother was confined to her bed. We are thankful we have been able to wait on each other.* And when Mary was 72, John told Hephzibah *your dear Mother is just as usual, sometimes pretty well, and often languid and in pain, but we have cause to be thankful.* Possibly Mary's intermittent pain and tiredness was arthritis. She outlived John by nearly seven years, living with Jemima's family at Bourton-in-the water, and she died aged 80.

When he was in his sixties looking back, John wrote to Hephzibah and George (who had lost two infants of five themselves); [176]

> *It is true that we have had distressing bereavements of dear children. But we have hope in their death, and trust that all things work together for good. What a mercy to feel our need of a Saviour, and to possess any hope of interest in Him.*

And in 1849, during a cholera epidemic, he wrote *God has done much for you and preserved you, and I trust he will still provide. What a mercy that you are not seeking your happiness in earthly things, but in the supreme good.*

He trusted wholly in Christ, saying *what is life with all its joys if once compared with Him.* It was, in many ways, a hard life, with much tragedy, and poor health at the end. His death notice in the Baptist Magazine reported that in his nine years at Amersham he *was often afflicted.* But the report carried on to say that

> *His great desire was for the Salvation of souls and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. His only theme during his affliction was his precious Saviour. He has now laid down his arms and gone to receive his reward*
>
> *Soldier of Christ, well done!*
> *Praise be thy new employ*
> *And while eternal ages run*
> *Sound forth thy Saviour's joy.*[177]

Postscript; John and Mary's descendants

Japhia married in Falmouth, and emigrated to South Australia. He and his Cornish wife had six children, of whom two died infants, and two more in their teens.[178] Two sons who survived to adulthood became well known in Australian Baptist circles.

Elijah married Sarah Parsons (c.1815-82), from Weston near Bath, and they had one daughter Julia. After he died, Sarah was matron of a boarding school for orphan girls in London. Granddaughter Julia (1836-99) lived with her grandparents until she was about 15, then helped her mother at the school. She and her husband had two daughters, embroideresses, neither of whom married.

Hephzibah and George Youatt lived in Oppidans Road, Primrose Hill near George's piano shop in Regents Park Road.[179] Three of John's letters to them from Amersham (from which the author has quoted) have survived in their family. Six of their children grew to adulthood. The eldest, John, named after his grandfather, became one of the first chartered accountants in Manchester. George and Rhoda, neither of whom married, were both school teachers. Victor was a pianoforte maker. Mary and Hephzibah married in their 20s, and all of them lived in London and Manchester.

In Bourton on the Water Jemima met her future husband William Wilkins, and they had a son Thomas Sylvanus Wilkins, born in 1852, who survived to adulthood and became a solicitor's clerk in Devizes. [180]

Later generations of John and Mary's descendants returned to the Church of England. Four 4x great grandsons boys were cathedral choristers at Canterbury and Rochester between 1977 and 1994, and one of them was ordained in Hereford Cathedral in 2023.

The author (born in 1943) has met two fourth cousins; Graham Cocks (1946-2019) from Australia and Richard Youatt (born in 1949) who lives in United States. She visited Great Torrington with Graham in 2012.

[1] Strict baptist Historical Society Pastors and Chapels database, an ongoing project. https://www.sbhs.org.uk/pastorchapels/

[2] Horace Mann, the compiling Registrar of the The Religious Census of 1851 presented a picture of Baptist growth: in 1716 Neal records 247 churches in England; whilst a 'Baptist source' for 1772 gives the enhanced figure of 404 congregations. Rippon's figure for 1790 is given as 332. By 1832 Mann, using the Baptist Magazine, offers a figure of 1126 "Editorial," Baptist Quarterly 35.1 (January 1993): pp 1-2.

[3] Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society 1921

[4] https://talltalesfromthetrees.blogspot.com/

[5] In 1819 the Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor issued, for free distribution, over 240 bibles, 153 Prayer books and 3,319 Christian tracts. Exeter Flying Post. There were other societies too.

[6] Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, The Long Eighteenth Century, Congregations and Living, Theology and the bible, David M. Thompson, 2017

[7] Baptist manual 1851 pp 42-3 . Copy from a library in Oxford

[8] Survey of the County of Devon, Risdon, Tristram, 1811

[9] John Rolle (1712-79) was Recorder of Torrington, 1739-79 and his brother Denys (1720-97) was Mayor twice and Recorder 1781-97.

[10] In 1783 Roger Cock (1731-1805) paid £2:14s [54s] a year in rent to the Torrington Almshouses for a house in Mill Street "late Merrills." The author thinks it was the family home.

[11] Great Torrington's parish church (St. Michael) was blown up in February 1646, while some 200 royalist prisoners lay inside after the defeat of Lord Hopton by Sir Thomas Fairfax. https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/DEV/GreatTorrington/Doe1894

[12] Devon Episcopal Visitation Returns, 1744 and 1779 https://www.foda.org.uk/visitations/intro/introduction1.htm

[13] From 1757 The Obtaining Money by False Pretences Act was an offence if any person licensed to sell liquor knowingly suffers any gaming with cards, dice, draughts, shuffleboards, Mississippi, or billiard-tables, skittles, ninepins, or with any other implement of gaming by any journeymen, labourers, servants, or apprentices. On 3rd June 1765 Roger Cocks [then 34] was presented at the Quarter Sessions with William Gorwall (presumably the licensee of a public house in Torrington) for owning skittles.

[14] The Boot and Shoe Trades in London and Paris in the Long 18th Century Riello, G, 2002

[15] The Torrington Blue-Coat school, in Well Street, was established in 1709, by Denys Rolle, Esq., who gave a messuage and lands, with the sum of £200, for the gratuitous education of forty boys. Walter witnessed marriages by Revd. Henry Younge at St Michael's parish church 1754 – 1767 two years before he died. Walter Browne held both posts for about 13 years and died 14 years before John was born.

[16] A cordwainer made new shoes. Customers had their own special lasts and needed to visit often for fittings.

[17] History of Methodism in North Devon, Hayman, JG. 1889. John Gould Hayman (1813-1900) was a Barnstaple journalist who owned the North Devon Journal for decades

[18] The Baptist Magazine 1821 *Two thirds of these reside in adjacent villages at from two to seven miles distant.*

[19] A list of Baptist chapels in Devon in 1811 only includes places in South Devon. Ashburton, Bampton, Bovey Tracey, Brixham, Collumpton, Dartmouth, Exeter, Modbury and Kingsbridge https://edintone.com/chapels_ministers/directoriesand_lists/baptist-magazine-1811/

[20] George Whitefield (1714-70) was visiting Revd. Samuel Lavington.

[21] The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, Vol II The Long Eighteenth Century, Thompson, A.C. (Ed) 2017 Chapter 5 Methodists, Heitzenrater, R.P.

[22] George I (Penguin Monarchs): The Lucky King, Blanning T, 2017

[23] Rough Music was an English folk custom in which a raucous punishment was dramatically enacted to humiliate one or more people who have violated, in a domestic or public context, standards commonly upheld within the community. https://southdownsgenerations.org.uk/rough-music/ William Brooks, the Amersham Relieving Officer was unpopular, possibly for an affair with his servant girl.

[24] John's obituary states *after a dissipated youth, he left home for London*. John's step-brother James working as a plasterer in Essex in 1803 when he enlisted in the Grenadier Guards, signing up for unlimited Service in the First Regiment of Foot Guards. He fought at Waterloo. If they left Torrington together, John's London *conversion* was between 1803 and 1805.

[25] Dr Jenkins was born at Wrexham, Denbighshire, the son of Evan Jenkins (1712–1752), former pastor of the Old Meeting at Wrexham. He was sent to London 1759 at sixteen to learn Greek and Hebrew under Mr Walker. In 1761 he was awarded a scholarship to King's College, Aberdeen, where he graduated in 1765. He was pastor of the Particular Baptist church in East Street, Walworth from 1798 to 1818.

[26] Devon wills proved in Exeter did not survive bombing of the record office in the second world war.

[27] Evangelical Magazine 1804,

[28] A report published in The Baptist Magazine of 1821 claimed that 12 years ago (1809) *there were not a dozen baptists there.* By 1821 Bideford had just opened its first Baptist church, and there were three others in Brayford nine miles south of Barnstaple, Barnstaple itself, and Torrington.

[29] Her parents died in their fifties and her only brother died in his twenties

[30] John Evans's will in 1829 was prove in London PROB 11/1815. It included "*I also forgive all the interest that may be due to me at my decease from the trustees of the Methodist Chapel in Bideford and the sum of £20 towards the support of the said chapel to be laid out on books for the use of the Sunday School.*

[31] One daughter was married to a Wesleyan Minister, the Rev. W. Hill, and finished her course with joy many years since. The eldest was converted to God in very early life, and became a member of the Wesleyan Society. She was married to the late Mr. John How, in 1826. She was a pattern of good works, and lived in the affection and esteem of all who knew her. Mr. Thomas Evans, J.P. ,in whom the cause of Methodism has ever found a consistent and unflinching friend and supporter.

[32] John Rendle (1780-1864) was three years older than John Cocks. Barnstaple Methodist historian JG Hayman, who wrote about Rendle must have been able to talk to older people who remembered those early years, believed that the name of John Rendle *should never be forgotten.* John Rendle (1780-1864) was born in Polperro in 1780 and was christened in Talland. He became a Cordwainer and married Mary Jeffery in 1806, in Lansallos, Cornwall. The couple settled in Bideford where he *followed his trade for the rest of his life.*

[33] John Cocks' other brothers, especially his elder brother Walter seem to have continued faithful to the Parish Church, where Walter repaired the tower in 1830. Also it was only John who added an "s" to the family surname Cock.

[34] Oxford History of Protestant Dissent, The Long 18th Century 2028 Part III Baptists, Dr Karen Smith. Unlike General Baptists, English Calvinistic Baptist congregations were not open to the Arminian views of salvation proclaimed by Wesleyan preachers.

[35] https://www.centerforbaptistrenewal.com/blog/2017/6/29/the-place-of-testimony-in-baptist-worship

[36] https://www.drtimwhite.net/blog/2017/11/15/why-do-we-baptize-by-immersion

[37] William Gadsby (1773–1844) was a Baptist pastor. He is often seen of a father of the Strict and Particular Baptist movement in England. He wasn't formally educated, but regarded by his contemporaries as an excellent preacher and pastor. Wikipedia.

[38] 1847 letter from John Cocks to his daughter Hephzibah Youatt

[39] Baptist Magazine 1831 Julia Cocks's obituary

[40] Luke Chapter 5 verse 32 Jesus said… *I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.*

[41] The Baptist Reporter 1851 p.44 John Cocks's death notice

[42] Letter from Revd. Samuel Kilpin 1822 He addressed it *Revd. Mr Cocks Bapt Minister Crediton To be delivered immediately as it is on business concerning the poor man that is to be executed on Monday.*

[43] John Piggott (1670-1713) was an English Particular Baptist.

[44] Preaching in Early C18 England, Brown R., Baptist Quarterly, 1985

[45] Baptist Magazine 1812 p.184. Students who had families didn't live in but had part-time arrangements made for them.

[46] One contemporary account of his visit reported that he narrowly escaped being burnt to death. The Particular Baptized Church of Great Torrington was eventually formed in 1820 under Revd. Thomas Pulsford who came to Torrington from the Particular Baptist Church of Bath, under the Pastoral care of Revd. John Paul Porter. Before that 16 people had been baptised in the river Torridge by Revd. Isaiah Birt.

[47] John's Obituary. Revd. Isaiah Birt (1758-1837) was based at Plymouth Dock from 1789-1813. There were clearly links between Birt, Pulsford and John Paul Porter which may explain why John was chosen for the Calstock pastorship.

[48] The church, the garden of Christ. Isaac Watts, Book 1, Hymn 74

[49] 1817 1 October Family moved to "supply" Calstock Baptist Church. (John's Bible) Also a letter from Calstock to their mother church at Plymouth 1816 June 2 copied in the Church Book, Morice Square Baptist Church, Devonport.

[50] Church Book, Morice Square Baptist Church, Devonport Minutes of the Church Meetings commencing January 1814 to 1853 (references to Calstock Baptist Chapel)

[51] https://www.calstockhistory.org.uk/mining-in-calstock-parish.html When prospecting for copper ore, silver ore was found, and Wheal Duchy was opened in 1810. It closed in 1816, but reopened in 1833. The silver deposit consisted of native silver, pyrargyrite, acanthite, galena, siderite, grey and black sulphides of silver and antimony. Wheal Duchy was closed in 1816, but was reopened in 1833, and called Wheal Brothers. https://www.mindat.org/loc-885.html

[52] The Prince of Wales was of course also the Duke of Cornwall, so the mine was on his land

[53] Mines and Miners of Cornwall, Burton Anthony, 2020 Quoting from The Royal Commission into mines chaired by Lord Kinnaird in 1864. 280 fathoms is 1680 feet.

[54] Oxford History of Protestant Dissent The Long 18th Century, 2017 Part III Baptists, Dr Karen Smith.

[55] Evangelical Magazine 1805

[56] Clerical Incomes in the 18th Century England, James F. G. Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church Vol 18 No.3 1939

[57] "Tax on Labour", Manchester Mercury, 29th July 1806; quoted in Hindle, G. B. Provision for the Relief of the Poor in Manchester, 1754-1826; Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1975) https://history.pictures/2020/01/22/3-3-family-budgets/

[58] 1803 estimates of average annual income from Colquhoun's Treatise on Indigence

[59] Memoir of Revd. Samuel Kilpin, American Tract Society. Kindle Edition.

[60] The Baptist Magazine 1821

[61] Letter from Calstock Baptists to Revd. Richard Davis of their mother church at at Plymouth Dock.

[62] After having supplied them twelve months. (John's Bible)

[63] Letter from the Isaac Mann collection, Osborn Collection, Yale University Library.

[64] 1797 Agricultural Labourer £30 Teacher £43 pascalbonenfant.com/18c/wages.html In 1803 Colquhoun's Treatise on Indigence gave an annual yearly incomes in 1803 of £31 for an agricultural labourer, and £55 for an artisan. Wages in the UK in the 19th Century, Bowley, AL 1900 John was born in April 1819.

[65] Saltash had a Baptist graveyard from 1780. In 1807 when the first Wesleyan Chapel in Saltash opened, the Vicar of St. Stephens, Revd. John Dawson, was claiming that Saltash *abounded with dissenters.*

[66] Office of National Statistics. https://www.ons.gov.uk/ No autopsies were carried out on babies at that time. An examination and appraisal of more than 300 19th century medical tracts, reports, conference papers, and journal articles done for this study failed to show a single reference or remark about an infantile autopsy. Major Medical Explanations for High Infant Mortality in 19th century Europe. Knapp, V.J. University of Toronto 1998

[67] An suitable master was usually found amongst friends and relations or by personal recommendation. A seven-year term was usual, and in the better trades, such as cabinet makers, saddlers and silversmiths, apprenticeship usually started at the age of fourteen https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Apprenticeship_in_England

[68] The Baptist Magazine 1822. Two thirds of them lived in villages from 2 to 7 miles from Crediton.

[69] The Baptist Magazine 1821

[70] Mr Kilpin gave away about 10,000 publications a year. When travelling, he often disposed of 100 every 5 miles.

[71] Exeter Flying Post 23 Dec 1819

[72] John's "Master" was, of course Jesus Christ.

[73] Kilpin letter 1821

[74] Dray, Stephen, By Grace to Glory, 2013 The description written by Mary Eliza Godfrey, aged 89, in a letter dated 1884.

[75] The Baptist Magazine 1822.

[76] Letter from the Isaac Mann collection in Yale University Library

[77] London Evening Mail 25 March 1822 Half a page of evidence was printed. Only a fragment is included here.

[78] John Chappell had been one of the passengers waiting on the Torrington bus, drawn up on Bideford Quay, when the horses became restive and backed the cab into the river, drowning all the occupants. Four years earlier in 1843 he bought a leather dressing business in Torrington. John himself would have used Torrington leather for new shoes.

[79] The Baptist Magazine 1822

[80] The Baptist Magazine 1823

[81] Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism Bradley, J E 1990

[82] Toleration, Dissent and the State in Britain Chapter 13 Thompson, A C

[83] A huge fire in 1791 destroyed over 80% of the buildings in Lower Town.

[84] https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/fownes-luttrell-john-ii-1787-1857

[85] https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/constituencies/minehead

[86] https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/sherborne-mercury

[87] 1 kg coal gives 8 kWh heat , so 30 kg gives 240 kWh. A quartern loaf weighed 4 pounds, just over 2 kg

[88] John Fownes Luttrell (1787-1857) The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1820-1832, Fisher, D.R. 2009

[89] There were 29 pupils in 1833 when John left Minehead, and 38 in 1851 under his successor Charles Elliott. [Victoria County History Somerset, D. Jackman, Baptists in the West Country (Dorchester, c.1953)

[90] https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/acland-sir-thomas-dyke-1787-1871

[91] The Parks is a quiet area of Minehead, on the coastal edge of Exmoor National Park.

[92] Two neighbouring local landowners Lord King, and Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, were happy to let land for chapels Sir Thomas Dyke Acland 10th Baronet (1787~1871) was a politician and philanthropist who was very interested in religious movements. He was educated at Harrow and Christ Church Oxford and MP for Devon 1812~18 and 1820~30 and North Devon 1837~57. In 1817, with the kind permission of Lord King, a very small Church where two men and four women, accustomed to meet in private homes , was built in Periton." Today it is a private house. https://www.minehead-baptist.com/about/history-archives/

[93] Taunton Courier, 1831 Mar 16

[94] John died 20 years later of diabetes, but few people survived the disease for so long. So it was probably not an amputation to stop diabetic gangrene.

[95] https://www.uphs.upenn.edu/paharc/tour/tour5.html

[96] Even nowadays hospitals give no estimated recovery time, but a year is not unusual.

[97] Baptist Magazine 1831 p. 443

[98] Isaiah, Chapter 28 verse 31

[99] A letter to Sir Thomas Acland

[100] Baptist Magazine 1831

[101] John Fownes Luttrell was probably the chief "open enemy" of the cross. His brother Revd Thomas Fownes Luttrell, Rector of Minehead from December 1821, was probably the chief "professor." The former was rich. He died in London in 1857, leaving £60,000. Liverpool Echo 1857

[102] The lease of land in The Parks was bought 60 years later, and in 1902 the Chapel was enlarged.

[103] The Glastonbury Canal, Body, G. and Gallop R., 2001 The canal was initially successful but later suffered from financial and engineering problems. Most of it was abandoned as a navigation in 1854, when a railway was built along the towpath.

[104] https://www.canalboat.co.uk/ https://www.captureburnham.co.uk/

[105] 36 miles of the Manchester Ship Canal took 16,000 navvies to dig it. https://archive.waterwaysireland.org/

[106] Mr Elliot and Mr Stephens, Baptist Magazine 1832

[107] The Highbridge Hope Chapel book (new in 1838)

[108] On Amputation by a Long and a Short Rectangular Flap, 1858, Thomas Pridgin Teale, p.32

[109] Baptist Magazine 1833 From St Paul's second epistle to Timothy

[110] New Baptist Miscellany 1833, May 28

[111] A Baptists minister's house was built in 1894 https://www.stjohnshighbridge.org.uk/ https://capturehighbridge.wordpress.com/

[112] Hephzibah Cocks joined the roll of Torrington Baptist Church in 1835

[113] £10 in 1833 was about £1,500 now. John Evans (1785-1833) was the widower of Mary's sister Ann. He also left Japhia, Elijah, Hephzibah, Jemima and John £1 each (about £150 now) The North Devon Journal of 25 April [p1 c5] carried an announcement for the death, *on Monday last [April 22] 1833, at Bideford, of "Mr. John Evans, formerly ship-builder in that place.*

[114] Inquest report from a newspaper cutting from Somerset Archives sent before FindMyPast began. The Coroner was Mr Caines and the inquest was at Huntspill. Searches have not found a burial record for John. The farmer was Mr Thomas Ralls. He was still at Huntspill in 1841 (aged 40) with his wife (35) and three children aged 10-14. In 1844 he went bankrupt. Perry's Bankrupt Gazette 29 June 1844.

[115] Bristol Mercury, 31st August 1833

[116] Genesis Chapter1 verse 2

[117] John's postal address in 1833 was Opie Smith's home, Westfield House for Twerton letters

[118] von Behr, Nicholas - The Cloth Industry of Twerton from the 1780s to the 1820s PDF (historyofbath.org)

[119] Wilkins (1791-1851) was also Captain of the Bath Militia, gave the chapel extra for an extension, assigned to John Wadham, Deacon for 500 years at an annual rent of £1.

[120] There were two chapels, Wesleyan and Baptist, as well as the Parish Church, and all three had large Sunday schools. The Established Church Sunday-school has nearly 200 children. And infant daily-school, run by Established with nearly 100. Wesleyan Methodists Sunday-school has rather more than two hundred children. The Baptist Sunday-school has also about 130 children.

[121] The temperance movement was inspired by an Irish Presbyterian minister who poured his stock of whisky out of his window in 1829 and wrote to the Belfast Telegraph advocating temperance.

[122] Charles Wilkins deposition to the Factories Commission, 1833 May 23

[123] Another of Opie's protegees had been Benjamin Godwin (1785-1871) born into a Baptist family in Bath, orphaned young another shoe-maker whose early career he had funded.

[124] Waters of the Son, Baptists in Georgian Bath, Birch, Revd. Kerry BA (Hons) M Litt 2009, p.132 In November 1828 the Twerton Baptist Church, led by John Cadby and John Wadham (who died in 1831) split from the Somerset Street congregation in Bath and held their first independent meeting at which Cadby and Wadham were elected deacons.

[125] Seven Bath businessmen were trustees but not members. James Grant Smith Esq. (nephew of Opie Smith), Richard Harris Builder (Another Baptist), Ebenezer Smith, Printer of Bath, James Dyer, Tailor of Bath, Thomas Shepherd, Cabinet Maker of Bath, Joshua and Benjamin Arthur, Bakers, of Bath. Twerton Trustees were Cloth workers James Cadby, John Butterworth, Joseph Batten, John Butcher, William Wickham, Samuel Tanner, and John Savage. The fifteenth was a Twerton member who was a carpenter.

[126] Birch, Kerry p.180 On 25 September 1833 Cadby wrote to John Cocks at Westfield House. ... at our Church meeting last evening it was considered advisable that Mr Cox should be invited to supply us for one year and then he would be able to see where and how the work would prosper in his hands ... we do sincerely trust should Mr Cox be inclined to accept of us there was not the least opposition against him in any way at our meeting we should live in his affection and him in ours. P.S. We the undersigned do agree if Mr Cox accept ... to allow £40 for the year specified. James Cadby, James Harris, John Hayter.

[127] In 1833 Mr Henry Crook joined them on probation but was not liked enough to stay, and Mr Evans of Somerset Street and Mr Eacott were approached, but refused.

[128] James Cadby was a clerk at the Woollen Mill. Fairly senior, because, by 1839 he was calling himself and Accountant. He wrote all letters for the chapel. https://somerset-cat.swheritage.org.uk/records/BNES/BC/6/2/9/74/16

[129] In the 1830s, as a rough guide, a skilled artisan family (a carpenter or printer) could live on about £75-£100 a year. A labourer might earn £15-£25 a year, but a figure closer to £40 was needed to keep a family in any comfort. In 1835 Hephzibah Cocks (22) a straw bonnet worker, joined the roll (No.269) of the Baptist Church in Torrington. She was probably living with her father's brother and sister-in-law Walter and Margaret Cock, who had two daughters (Sophia and Eliza).

[130] Baptist Magazine 1834

[131] Waters of the Son, Birch, Kerry (2009)

[132] Weston was 2.5 miles NW of Bath, and about 2.5 miles from Twerton. The witnesses at the wedding were Elijah's employer John Brook, a tailor in Weston, and his wife Sarah. John Brook had been apprenticed to his father there in 1807, and was still listed in the 1844 Somerset Directory.

[133] When he he died in 1853, Abraham Parsons left bequests amounting £175, including £30 to the Bath Baptist Minister William Cromwell, 20 religious books, pictures and silver. His will was proved in London PROB11/2196

[134] Kerry Birch, who studied the chapel minutes for his MA in 2009, told me that the next two pages the book had been removed. He thought that they contained the deacons view of the *unpleasantness*, and he thought that James Cadby and the other deacons were in the right and John was wrong.

[135] Elizabeth Alderman's will was written in 1837. Somerset Heritage Centre DD/ED/1839/17

[136] Elijah died of consumption in Twerton on 3 November 1840 aged 30, (leaving Sarah a widow with one daughter Julia aged 4). Elizabeth Gane, who was present at the death, registered it.

[137] The 1841 Census HO 107/482 / 12 Belvedere chapel was built in 1805. In 1841 John was 57 and Mary was 64

[138] George Rivington (1801-58) belonged to an influential family printing firm which published religious books and tracts. In 1841 he lived in Hornsey Lane, Islington

[139] Morning Advertiser June 1841 p.2 *Lessness* Races, Saturday 1st June 1841

[140] They arrived in Amersham 2nd January 1842 – December 1850 (8 years 11 months).

[141] https://www.pascalbonenfant.com/18c/geography/weather.htmlSun (London) 09 February 1847

[142] There was a slump in the furniture trade in the 1840s, which affected the Amersham chair making trade. It was caused by fewer purchasers in a period of poverty, plus easily imported competition.

[143] https://www.coleshill.org/history/industries/chair-making.html

[144] Pigot's Directory Buckinghamshire, Amersham 1822

[145] 1844 Kelly's Directory for Amersham listed Climpson & Son High St, Line W.W. Wilden St, Toovey Sampson, Wilden Street, Willieline Wm, Wilden Street, and Sampson's son John Toovey (1807-1873).

[146] Samson Toovey, a Chair Manufacturer who was probably one of the Deacons of the Upper Meeting, was listed in the 1841 Census in Wieldon Street with his large family. By the 1851 Census he was at Coleshill Green, aged 68 employing 14 men. Near him in Coleshill were living two sons, Samuel 38 and John 44, both chair makers, with their wives and young families. Coleshill is two and a half miles south west of Amersham.

[147] Revd. James Cooper (1794 – 1871) came to Amersham, his first pastorship, in 1819 and stayed for 20 years. He left Bath in 1819 aged 25 for his first pastorship in Amersham. His daughter Angelina married Amersham chair-maker Samuel Toovey. Four years after he arrived he led a small separating group away from the main Baptist congregation to the old Upper Meeting chapel. He left for Leighton Buzzard in 1839.

[148] Cater, Revd, Memoirs of the Revd. John Paul Porter, Bath,1835

[149] Revd. John Statham left Amersham for Penzance in 1839, and afterwards went to Bourton on the Water.

[150] Baptist Reporter 1843

[151] Church attendance figures collected in 1850 as part of the 1851 Census. The Upper Meeting house seated about 80. It is now a private home and the old layout can still be seen.

[152] The author researched Revd. Richard Morris (1747-1817) for Amersham Museum. https://amershammuseum.org/history/people/17th-18th-centuries/richard-morris/

[153] John Saunders, born in 1781, was a tanner living in High Street

[154] The Amersham directory for 1844 listed William Spratley the Butcher in High Street. In 1851 John Spratley had taken over, and was employing William Statham aged 19 as his assistant and William Pursey aged 16 as an Errand Boy. John's wife Harriet employed Mary Ann Humphrey aged 16 as her domestic servant. Next door to his shop was a Corn Dealer and next to that a Grocer. On the other side there were private houses.

[155] Thomas Dumbarton (1797-1863) a furniture broker, lived at 49 High Street (now the Amersham Museum).

[156] Wilkes was also unpaid pastor of a chapel in Leicester. The magazine absorbed the Baptist Tract Magazine [25] in 1838. https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/bq/27-2_050.pdf English Baptist Periodicals, 1790-1865 Taylor, Rosemary

[157] The Baptist Reporter and Tract Magazine 1843

[158] The 1841 and 1851 censuses suggest this man might have been Thomas Lee, bricklayer. His wife was Hannah.

[159] John's article – at greater length – is in the 1844 Baptist Reporter Feb. 4,

[160] A stereotype plate was a copy of a plate made with single letters. First plaster was poured to make a copy mould then molten metal poured into the plaster mould.

[161] Fox was first published in 1559 and in John's day it was available in 12 volumes at 14 shillings a volume. John Strype (1643 – 1737) English clergyman, and historian, made transcripts of the papers of Lord Burghley which gave him

material for Ecclesiastical Memorials (5 vols., 1721; 3 vols., 1733).

[162] Adam Taylor 1818 2 volumes

[163] anvers on baptism p.283

[164] Baptist Reporter and Tract Magazine 1843

[165] P.G.J has been discovered to be Peter Johnson, the Baptist Town Missioner of Saffron Walden.

[166] Figures collected in 1850 and published in 1851 recorded services and attendance figures at all the places of worship in Amersham. The Parish church, which seated at least 600, had services and Sunday schools morning, afternoon and evening. The Methodist church had two services but no school. The two Baptist meeting houses provided the same services as the parish church, without evening schools. The two Lower Meeting Sunday Schools (morning and afternoon) catered for about 150 children, and the Upper Meeting schools had about 30 each.

[167] Revd. William Salter officiated at the Amersham marriage of John's daughter Jemima three months later. Jemima, a schoolmistress in Gloucestershire, probably returned to Amersham immediately after her father's death to comfort her mother. Then she married Thomas Wilkins of Bourton on the Water on 11th March 1851. John hadn't been replaced at the Upper Meeting on August 10 1851, when the Baptist Magazine printed a report that Mr Sexton of Tring baptized three young people there. William Salter resigned from the Lower Meeting in 1855 because of his wife's poor health.

[168] Revd. Jabez Burns (1805-76) of Aenon Chapel, New Church Street, Marylebone, was the first clergymen of any denomination to preach teetotalism from the pulpit. He had preached at the Upper meeting before.

[169] George Rivington (1801-58) belonged to an influential family printing firm which published religious books and tracts. In 1841 he lived in Hornsey Lane, Islington

[170] In 1847 when Jemima was 32. Revd. Arthur Tidman (1792-1868) was Pastor of the Barbican Chapel.

[171] Revd. Arthur Tidman was Pastor of the Barbican Chapel, from 1846, Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society. He lived at 27A Finsbury Square with wife Ann, and 5 children, the only Tidman in the Court section of the 1846 PO Directory.

[172] Bourton on the Water was, like Amersham, a notable centre of Non-conformism. Revd. John Statham (1790-1863) was born in Amersham and served as Baptist minister in Reading 1839-46, after which he and his wife Mary moved to Bourton on the Water.

[173] About 3 years after her move to Bourton-on-the Water, and 3 months after her father died on 11 March 1851 (aged 35) Jemima was married in Amersham to William Wilkins of Bourton on the Water by Mr Salter at the Lower Baptist Meeting which had been licenced for marriages for several years. William was a widower 14 years older than Jemima who already had 8 children, but her son Thomas Silvanus Wilkins was born in 1852.

[174] Jemima, still unmarried at 34, had, by the good offices of Mr Benjamin How or Mr John Statham, both Baptist Ministers at Bourton on the Water, in Gloucestershire, been appointed mistress of the school attached to the Baptist Chapel there. Jemima must have been in London, either visiting the Youatts or Revd. Arthur Tidman.

[175] Mary Jane Greenfield (1828-1907) was the daughter of a plasterer in Shoreditch had been at the Kingsland British School for four years as a scholar, followed by two years as assistant teacher. To add to her experience she had been a Sunday School teacher for four years. In September 1847, aged 19, she applied for admission to the Borough Road Teacher Training College. A friend wrote a recommendation for her It strikes me that she will be found more than ordinarily eligible. She is quick of apprehension, has a fair knowledge of music; is good tempered and pious. In those days students spent only a few months at the college learning how to use the monitorial system in model schools. She arrived in Amersham in late 1847 or 1848 and took over the British School from Miss Robjons. In 1851 Mary Jane, aged 22, Schoolmistress at the British School. was lodging with Ann Potter, a widow, in Union Street, Amersham next door to Mary Robjons aged 37 Daily Governess. She must have explained the monitorial system to Jemima. https://amershammuseum.org/history/schools-and-education/the-british-schools-amersham/6-schoolmistresses-and-schoolmasters/

[176] Their first child Rhoda died aged three in 1842, and their third baby, a boy, died aged 6 months in 1845. But in 1849 when John wrote that they had three children who all reached adulthood and three more were born after 1850.

[177] The last verse of a poem written in 1819 by James Montgomery (1771-1854) after the sudden death of the Revd. Thomas Taylor, who declared in his last sermon on a preceding evening that he hoped to die as an old soldier of Jesus Christ, with his sword in his hand.

[178] The Hebrew word yā·p̄î·a' (יָפִיעַ) means "shining" or "splendid" Japhia son of David, was one of 8 sons born in Jerusalem.

[179] Tenants of Eton College.

[180] On 11 March 1851 Jemima was then 35. The Amersham Lower Meeting had been licenced for marriages for several years. William was a butcher, a widower 14 years older than Jemima who already had 8 children.