

# Turner Family History

## Part 1: John Turner (c1797 - 1857)

Very little is known about **John Turner**. He was born c1797 in or around Halifax, Yorkshire, England, most likely in Hipperholme, a village between Halifax and Bradford with a population of about four thousand. A possible baptism record shows a John Turner, son of Thomas Turner, baptised 05 November 1797 at St John the Baptist Parish Church, Halifax. (The church is now known as 'Halifax Minster'.) Subsequent generations of Turners and related families were baptised or married there.

John married **Sarah Schofield** (c1798 - 1861) 03 April 1820 at St John's. Almost nothing is known of Sarah except that she was born c1798 in the Halifax area and was not able to sign her name at her marriage, unlike John. A possible baptism record shows a Sarah Schofield, daughter of Thomas Schofield, baptised 06 July 1800 at St John the Baptist Parish Church, Halifax.

John and Sarah lived in Hipperholme. There were numerous stone quarries in the area which were major employers for the local men in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. John worked as a delver: after the stone had been blasted free, delvers loosen and split blocks of stone and reduced them to whatever size was needed. The work was regarded as 'unskilled' and involved using picks and shovels. John later worked as a stone dresser. This work required more finesse and involved carving the stone or cutting it into smaller units for sale, mostly to use in walls. [1]

Working with stone sometimes led to diseases caused by inhalation of the dust and for a 10 hour working day men would only earn about 3 or 4 shillings (£9 to £12 in today's money). It is difficult to put a relative value on the money earned but a 2lb (1kg) loaf of bread would have cost about tuppence – and one loaf of bread would not have gone far. A shilling would have bought six loaves of bread which would probably have been all eaten up by a large family in a day! In this area of Yorkshire, however, poorer people tended to eat oatmeal, which was cheaper than wheat. An oatcake cost a penny and was quite thin but the size of a dinner plate. Water was not safe to drink so people tended to drink beer or tea (where the water had been boiled). Two pints of beer (about 1 litre) would have cost about 5 pence. [2]

Working-class men were the main breadwinners and as such could command the lion's share of food (for example any small amount of meat the family could afford). If their work was seasonal or weather-dependent, or they became ill, unemployed or simply spent the money on gambling or drink, it would fall to their wives and children to do what work they could. However, women's work (paid or otherwise) was not always recorded by officials on census returns.

By 1851, John was the recipient of parish relief, so the family must have come upon hard times with John possibly not able to work. The family had also taken in a lodger to supplement the small amount the local parish had provided them to live on. The family was lucky: after 1834, parishes were discouraged from giving relief as they had done for centuries and instead the workhouse was the place a family had to go. [3] The Turners managed to avoid that dreadful fate it seemed. They also had their grand-daughter Susyann Green living with them at the time, but it is not certain who her parents were.

John and Sarah had thirteen children: Maria, Elizabeth, Mary Ann, Ruth, George, Abraham, Joseph, Catherine, twins Joyce and Martha, Amelia, Martha and Thomas. All known baptisms took place at Coley Chapelry, Hipperholme. (The dates of birth were recorded in a family Bible by a later descendent of the family and took place before civil registration so cannot be verified.) John died 21 October 1857 of lung disease, and Sarah died 06 July 1861, also of lung disease. They were both buried at Mount Zion Chapel, Lightcliffe.

**Maria** (1821 - c1885) was born 10 January 1821 and baptised 22 April the same year. Maria probably had no schooling as she was unable to sign her name when she married **David Greenwood** (c1832 - 1879), who was ten years her junior, 23 February 1851 at St John the Baptist Parish Church. He was a joiner and they went to live with his grandparents initially. Maria and David had four children: Thomas (c1852 - ?), Sarah Jane (1854 - 1918), John William (c1856 - ?) and Mary Louisa (c1860 - ?). After David's death in 1879, Maria lived with one of her children. She listed herself on the 1881 census as 'nurse' (possibly as her grandchild had been born only a fortnight earlier and she was helping look after him). Maria died c1885.

**Elizabeth** (1822 - 1881) was born 18 April 1822 and baptised 23 June the same year. She married **Richard Hargreaves** (c1822 - 1884) a clogger (a maker of clogs) 24 December 1850. She could not sign her name, either. They had three children: Mary Hannah (c1852 - ?), George (c1854 - ?) and Sarah (c1859 - ?). They lived in Wood End, Wadsworth, northwest of Halifax. Elizabeth died in 1881 and was buried 06 April 1881, aged 58. Richard died three years later.

**Mary Ann** (1823 - ?) was born 09 August 1823 and baptised 16 May 1824. There is no confirmed record of her after 1841.

**Ruth** (1825 - ?) was born 18 January 1825 and baptised a month later on 27 February. It is unclear what happened to Ruth after 1851. There were two Ruth Turners, of the same age and both from Hipperholme who on their marriage certificates signed their name and stated that their father John Turner was in the stone industry! The first Ruth Turner married widower James Bairstow in 1852. They lived in Ovenden, had eight children and she died in 1889. The second Ruth Turner married greengrocer Edward Seymour in Bradford in 1871. They had been living together since at least 1851 (the nature of their relationship changing on each census as to who was the servant!). Ruth had four children and Edward was their likely father. It is not known when she died.

More information about **George** (1827 - 1896) appears in Part 2.

**Abraham** (1829 - 1903) was born 05 March 1829 in Gardener's Square (off Denholme Gate Road) and baptised 27 November 1831, the same day as his younger brother Joseph. He married **Elizabeth Bower** (c1835 - ?) 26 December 1853 at St Paul's Church, Manningham, Bradford. They had two children, Annie Mary (1855 - 1879) and Samuel (1861 - 1875), but Samuel died as a teenager. Abraham had had some schooling and started out in the warehouse industry. After his marriage, however, he became a stone merchant and was able to do well enough to send his daughter to board at a privately-run school. After his wife's death in the 1860s, he returned to live in Hipperholme and a succession of housekeepers looked after Abraham. Sadly, his daughter died aged 23 and his grand-daughter Bertha later came to live with him until his death. Abraham had been able to retire in his late 50s or early 60s and probably sold his business as he left £15,517 in his will to Bertha and her brother Charles, worth almost £800,000 in today's money.

Abraham became involved in local affairs and stood for election, along with 29 other candidates, for the Local Board for Hipperholme in 1869. Unfortunately, he polled only 78 votes (putting him in the bottom half) so was not one of the nine chosen. Abraham helped found the Hipperholme Conservative Association and by 1871 he was eligible to vote in parliamentary elections. He was one of hundreds of men who declared themselves for a committee to successfully elect a local Conservative MP in a by-election in 1872. In 1888, Abraham was elected to the Local Board with 419 votes, the second-highest total, and rose to the position of Vice Chairman. Following the Local Government Act 1894, the Board became an Urban District Council in January 1895 and within a year Abraham was Chairman. [4] He lived at 'Till Carr House' for over twenty years then moved to 'Rose Mount' on Leeds Road, Hipperholme (between The Avenue and Holly Bank Drive), where he died 25 June 1903, aged 74. He was buried four days later in St Matthew's Cemetery, Lightcliffe, in grave plot K68, where a large memorial was erected by his grandchildren. Abraham had been a churchwarden at St Matthew's and a family story hinted that he may have donated some church bells. [5]



**Joseph** (1831 - 1857) was born 12 September 1831 and baptised the same year 27 November, the same day as his brother Abraham. He worked as a wall stone dresser but died 30 September 1857, aged 26, and was buried with his parents.

**Catherine** (1835 - ?) was also known as 'Kitty'. She was born 12 March 1835 and baptised a month later on 19 April. She married mechanic **William Henry Rigby** (c1834 - ?) at Bradford Cathedral, 28 July 1856 and was able to sign her name. They appeared to have had no children and Catherine worked as a cook in a warehouse. There is no record of them after the 1871 census. One possibility is that they emigrated to the United States.

Twins **Joyce** and **Martha** were born 12 May 1837, according to a note made in the margin of Joyce's baptism record 22 October 1837 (though 22 May sounds more plausible). Martha died two days after her birth and was buried 28 May 1837 in St Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe. Like girls of her time and situation, Joyce was put to work young and was known to be a card setter. This work involved using wires bent into flat pieces of wood to manipulate fibres so that they were arranged more or less parallel. This was the type of work children did in the textile industry and Hipperholme had both a cotton and a silk mill. Joyce died 25 June 1851, aged 14, and was buried four days later in St Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe.

**Amelia** (or 'Emealey/Emelia ') (1839 - 1840) was born either 12 March 1839 (as recorded in the margin of her baptism record) or 18 April 1839 (as recorded in a family Bible). She was baptised 05 May of the same year but sadly she died a year later and was buried 30 August 1840 in St Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe.

**Martha Anderson** (1840 - 1842) was born 12 January 1840 and appeared on the 1841 census. It is likely she was never baptised, and she died in 1842, aged 2, and was buried 22 May in St Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe.

**Thomas** (1842 - 1899) was born either 09 June 1842 (the date written in his baptism record) or 09 July 1842 (the date written in a family Bible and on his gravestone). He was baptised 28 November 1843. He worked as a stone cutter but soon became a stone merchant and quarry owner (at one point employing 37 men and 6 boys, according to the 1881 census). He married silk twister **Mary Brook** (1840 - 1883) in 1861. They had eleven children: John William (c1863 - 1939), Lillie (1864 - 1946), Sam (1865 - ?), Harry (1867 - 1934), Amy (1868 - 1946), Clara (1870 - ?), Annie (1872 - 1949), Herbert (c1874 - ?), Hetta (1887 - ?), Ethel (c1882 - ?) and Edith (c1883 - ?). The family lived in Hipperholme for a decade before moving to Heaton, Bradford, in the late 1860s where Thomas was a Sunday School Superintendent and Deacon at the Baptist church.

The family later returned to Hipperholme to live in Victoria Terrace. Mary died 02 March 1883, aged 42, and was buried in Brighouse Cemetery. It is possible her death was linked to the birth of their last child, Edith. A few months later, Thomas married Mary's sister **Hannah Brook** (c1844 - 1923). Hannah had been married to **Joshua Holt** (c1842 - 1974) and they had two daughters: Ada (1867 - 1933) and Clara (1871 - 1941). After Joshua's death Hannah worked as a waitress and lived with Mary and Thomas. Thomas and Hannah's marriage was actually illegal as the Marriage Act 1835 expressly prohibited marriage between a man and his deceased wife's sister. How Thomas and Hannah were able to get around this law is not known. The law would only be revoked by the Deceased Wife's Sister's Marriage Act in 1907.

Thomas was a member of the Lightcliffe Congregational Church and also represented the district as a County Councillor. He died 02 June 1899, aged 56, in Leeds, though he was living at 1 Rock Terrace, Hipperholme at the time. He left his family well-provided for at the time of his death, leaving effects valued at £12,700 (about £725,000 today). News of Thomas's death was reported the following day, 'The Yorkshire Evening Post' stating on p3: "Quite a painful sensation was created in Brighouse and Hipperholme districts this morning when it became known that Mr Thomas Turner ... had died". Thomas was so highly regarded that details of his funeral, which took place 06 June at Brighouse Cemetery, filled almost an entire column of p9 'The Halifax Courier' 10 June. Half of the column repeated the words that Reverend Howarth of Heaton Baptist Chapel had said when paying tribute to Thomas, who some 22 years earlier had paid off Howarth's debts, incurred while training to be a minister.

“The life of our friend and brother was so true, so beautiful, so harmonious, so fruitful in benevolence and Christian helpfulness, it would be easy to say much about him... I think I have never known a more affectionate and conscientious husband and father. In his business he was prosperous and deserved to be. His industry, commercial integrity, his loyalty to principle, his application of the golden rule in his dealings with others, won him ... confidence and esteem. I have no doubt that he ... discharged with diligence and faithfulness the duties with which he was entrusted [as County Councillor].”

The other half of the column was devoted to recording the names of those who walked preceding the hearse, the two sets of coffin bearers, the fourteen carriages of relatives, friends and work colleagues, and the procession of people from church, work and local life who had admired Thomas. Two months after his death, ‘The Halifax Courier’ reported 12 August p6 that a ‘splendid’ portrait of Thomas had been unveiled in the Hipperholme and Lightcliffe Liberal Club with a gilt plate proclaiming: ‘As a token of respect for his faithful work in connection with this place. Subscribed by his friends and admirers.’ Hannah continued to live in Rock Terrace and died 03 November 1923, aged 78.

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The Friends of St. Matthew’s churchyard are very grateful to Shivaun for allowing us to publish her research into this Turner family.

Turner Family History Part 1 **John Turner (c1797 – 1857)** and Part 3 **Abraham Schofield Turner (1861 – 1915)** are also on our website.

D.M.Barker  
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More information about families related to the Turners but not connected with St. Matthew’s churchyard can be found at the website :-

<http://johnsmithfamilytree.co.uk>

[1] Quarrying information from the Huddersfield Geology Group  
(<http://www.huddersfieldgeology.org.uk/locgeoquarry.html>)

[2] How much was a loaf of bread? (<http://www.johnhearfield.com/History/Breadt.htm>)

[3] Peter Higginbotham’s Workhouse website (<http://www.workhouses.org.uk/intro/>)

[4] Hipperholme Urban District Council History ([www.lightcliffehistory.org.uk](http://www.lightcliffehistory.org.uk))

[5] A short biography of Abraham appears in ‘Lightcliffe Cemetery and some of its residents’, a presentation by Chris Helme (2014) (<https://www.slideshare.net/LIMASSOL/lightcliffe-st-matthews-old-cemetery-by-chris-helme>)