

West face: **SAMUEL KINGDON** died 13th October 1797 aged 52
JANE KINGDON died 16th March 1816 aged 69

North face: **JANE KINGDON** died 12th February 1783 aged 11 months
(No longer visible) **THOMAS KINGDON** died 6th Sep 1789 aged 16 months
ZACHARY KINGDON died 16th May 1795 aged 25 years

East face: **WILLIAM KENT** died 10th December 1802
FRANCES KENT died 6th September 1814 aged 79

Samuel Kingdon's family had lived in Thorverton from the 17th century, and were recorded as sergemakers for several generations. The Sun Fire Office insurance inventories show that in 1733 his grandfather Zachariah Kingdon, sergemaker, had a dwelling house in Thorverton, household goods and stock in trade, and an adjacent property, worth £300. In 1745 it was insured for £500, and his son Samuel was in part of the adjacent property. By 1753 no stock in trade was mentioned, so perhaps he had retired. In 1758 his son Samuel was insuring all his property for £400, including his stock in trade, and the neighbouring property, let to a farmer.

The Samuel on the memorial, and buried here, was born in 1745, the son of Samuel Kingdon and his wife Susanna, nee Page. As the eldest son he might have been expected to join the family business in Thorverton, but Samuel was apprenticed to Richard Coffin, a haberdasher in Exeter.

On 20th June 1768 Samuel was made a freeman of the city, by virtue of having served the apprenticeship to Mr Coffin. In the same year he took over an established business in Fore Street, Exeter. He dealt in ironmongery and haberdashery. He married Jane Kent, daughter of William Kent, on 17th October 1768, at St Petrock's church in Exeter.

Samuel and Jane had nine children. The eldest son was named Zachary, no doubt after Samuel's grandfather, but he died in London at the age of only 25. He is buried here with Jane and Thomas, who died as infants.

Samuel later expanded the business and had further premises in Theatre Lane. The ironmongery side of the business gradually became more important and he manufactured grates and ranges, and other ironwork. Like many businesses at the time he issued a token for people to use as money, worth a half penny at the time.

In 1797 Samuel died, at the relatively young age of 52. In his will most of his property was left to his widow Jane, including the premises in Fore

Street and Theatre Lane, property in the Pig Market in Exeter, and other property in Bradninch and Christow. His son Samuel was left Hole, a farm in Thorverton. His other sons, William and Thomas, were each left £1000. Daughters Elizabeth, Susanna and Jane were also left money, and there were bequests to servants. After he died Jane ran the business until Samuel junior and William were able to take over. Thomas, the youngest son, had become a soldier. After Jane retired she went to live in Exmouth, dying in 1816. A portrait of her is at the Royal Albert Museum, Exeter. Sadly Thomas died near Madras in India in 1817, aged only 26.

Samuel junior, generally known as “Iron Sam”, was very successful in expanding the family firm, particularly on the iron founding side. When a fire destroyed the premises in Theatre Lane (now Waterbeer Street) in 1826 the foundry moved into other premises in the same street. In 1836 the Exeter Flying Post newspaper described S & W Kingdon as “the most extensive ironmongers and founders in the West of England”.

While his parents had been dissenters, Samuel had joined the Church of England, and gave money towards the re-building of St David’s church in 1816. He was then living in Southernhay. In 1835 he bought Duryard Lodge, described as a mansion house when it was sold in 1866. He had married Sarah Eyre in York in 1805, and they had five sons and three daughters. He died in 1854. His brother William never married and died in 1858. The company was sold in 1849 when Samuel and William retired, Samuel’s sons having pursued different careers.

The William and Frances Kent, who are commemorated on the obelisk were probably the brother and sister of Jane Kingdon, nee Kent. Without knowing William’s age at death it is difficult to find information about him because there were several people called William Kent at the time, probably all related. Frances Kent was baptised on 13th July 1735 at one of the Exeter non-conformist Meeting Houses, the daughter of William Kent. The Kent family were prominent members of George’s Meeting, a William Kent having been on the committee in 1776.

Some sources:

Chapman, S D: The Devon Cloth Industry in the C18 (1978) Devon & Cornwall Record Society.

Rowe, M M & Jackson, A M: Exeter Freemen 1266 – 1967 (1973) Devon & Cornwall Record Society.

Sutton, Iris – Notes on the Kingdon family.