

Executors and Trustees. Residue to said Trustees upon trust for son *George Dixon*.

Proved at Durham 5 August 1743.

[See PEDIGREE No. 9.]

In a Canvass Book of the Durham county election in 1732 *Dixon, Ra.*, Henknowle, is noted as "brother to *George Dixon* of Raby," and in an earlier Canvass Book (? 1722) as "brother to *Vane's Dixon*." Concerning the latter, "The Quaker Butler," see "Annals of Smith of Doncaster," etc., by H. Ecroyd Smith, pp. 191-3.]

1755, November 8. WILL of *George Dixon* of Cockfield, yeoman. To eldest son *George Dixon* my freehold House and garth, situate in Cockfield, after the decease of my wife *Mary*. I charge the above premises with the sum of £30 to my daughter *Elizabeth Dixon*. My freehold House with the appurtenances in Newgate Street, Bishop Auckland, to said wife for life, and after her death to my two sons *Jeremiah* and *Ralph Dixon*. My copyhold House and close, situate at Cockton Hill near Bishop Auckland, to daughter *Hannah Dixon* and her heirs. Residue to wife and son *George*, and appoint them Executors.

Proved at Durham 1759.—

[*George* (I.) of Cockfield, see PEDIGREE No. 9.]

1763, August 20. WILL of *Mary Dixon* of Cockfield. Whereas I did surrender on the 10<sup>th</sup> September 1756 to John Heighington of Durham, In Trust for the use of this my last Will, a copyhold estate called Benfieldside, also another copyhold estate, Tinkler Hill, also a leasehold estate, the Haughs, nigh Shotley Bridge. Now I devise the above Lands and premises to my son *George Dixon*, chargeable nevertheless with the following legacies: To my son *Jeremiah Dixon* £50. To my son *Ralph Dixon* £50. To my daughter *Hannah Chapman* £50. To my daughter *Elizabeth Dixon* £50. To my grandson *George Chapman* £20. To my granddaughter *Mary Dixon* £10. I appoint John Heighington of Durham and Hugh Watson of Raby Trustees. I appoint my daughters *Hannah Chapman* and *Elizabeth Dixon* Executrixes.

Proved at Durham 1774.

[Widow of preceding.]

1777, July 28. WILL of *William Dixon* of Staindrop in the county of Durham, shopkeeper. To wife *Sarah Dixon* my freehold lands and tenements situate at Bolron otherwise Bowron in the parish of Startforth in the county of York in the occupation of William Roper. I devise to said wife all the residue of my estate, together with my freehold housing and land in Staindrop, absolutely, and appoint her Executrix.

Proved at Durham 2 February 1778.

[See PEDIGREE No. 16, to which the following notes may be added, viz. :—

1684-5 Mar. 16 *Faith Dixon*, wife of *John Dixon*, buried in woollen only.

[*Rokeby, co. Y.*]

On the second page. *John Dixon* the miller was born in Chelsea Hospital circa 1809; his son's wife Harriet Edith was daughter of Thomas Gurney.]

1778, December 27. WILL of *Jeremiah Dixon* of Cockfield, co. Durham, gentleman. I devise my copyhold houses, garth, garden, dye-house, and premises within the

manor of Bondgate in Auckland to my good friend John Raylton and his heirs Upon Trust and for the benefit of Margaret Bland, and I further desire that any profits becoming due from these premises shall go towards the maintenance of the two daughters of the said Margaret Bland, namely, Mary and Elizabeth, until 21, at which age the said copyholds are to go to them equally. I devise unto my brother *Ralph Dixon* my freehold dwelling-houses, dye-houses, garden, and premises being in Staindrop. Residue to sister *Elizabeth Dixon* and her heirs, and appoint her sole Executrix.

Proved at Durham 1779.

[See PEDIGREE No. 9.]

*Jeremiah* and his brother *George* (II.) were both mathematicians, pupils of John Kipling of Barnard Castle. *Jeremiah* was on intimate terms with William Emmerson of Hurworth and John Bird of Bishop Auckland, two men of kindred genius, through whose instrumentality he was selected by the authorities of the Royal Woolwich Academy as a fit person to be sent, under Nevil Maskelyne (subsequently Astronomer Royal), to Bencoolen in the Island of Sumatra, to observe the transit of Venus in 1761. (The observations failed owing to foggy weather.) It is related that the examiners at Woolwich asked *Jerry*, "Did you study mathematics at Cambridge or Oxford?" His simple reply was, "At neither place." "Then at what public school did you get your rudiments?" "At no public school," he answered. "Then at what particular seat of learning?" "In a pit cabin upon Cockfield Fell," replied the humble scholar. Though a Quaker, he donned the long red coat and cocked hat of the Royal Engineers of that day, and wore them to the day of his death.

In 1763-67 *Jeremiah*, associated with Charles Mason (late Assistant-Observer at Greenwich), was employed by Lord Baltimore and Sir William Penn to measure a degree of longitude, and to set out the boundary between Maryland and Pennsylvania. This, still known as "Mason and Dixon's Line," was a cutting through the forest (in latitude 39° 43' 26.3") eight yards wide and 245 miles long, with each of the first 132 miles marked by a stone, each fifth stone bearing the arms of Lord Baltimore and Penn. The progress of the surveyors further west was stopped by the Indians. The free state north of the line was termed by the negroes "Dixie's Land," and this originated the song so popular at the time of the War of the Secession.

*Jeremiah* returned to Cockfield 27 January 1769, but set off again for London 8 February of the same year, on his way, with William Bayley, to Hammerfest, near the North Cape, to observe another transit of Venus. This expedition was also organized by the Royal Society, but again the weather was against them.

It is a curious coincidence that among the names associated with the earliest observations of transits occur:—

*Jeremiah* Shakerley (Mercury, 1651).

*Jeremiah* Horrox (Venus, 1639).

*Jeremiah* Dixon (Venus, 1761, 1769).

Lanchester Common or Moor, the largest in the county of Durham, was surveyed and admeasured by *Jeremiah Dixon* in 1773.

Like many members of the family *Jerry* was a fine draughtsman. There still exists (or lately was) in the possession of Mr. Ernest Lingford of Bishop Auckland a very fine piece of penmanship on vellum, entitled "A Plan of the Park & Demesnes at Auckland Castle, Belonging to The Right Rev<sup>d</sup> Father in God, John [Egerton], Lord Bishop of Durham. Taken in 1772 by *Jere. Dixon*."

Some of the above facts are taken from letters of members of the family in the writer's possession, but there is much about the two brothers in "Smith of Doncaster," pp. 197 and 202.]

1785, November 28. ADMINISTRATION of goods of *George Dixon* of Cockfield granted to John Raylton of Cockfield, gentleman, a creditor and administrator (by Decree of Court) of the goods of the deceased, for the benefit of *Sarah Dixon*, widow, the relict, *George Dixon*, *John Dixon*, and *Sarah* (wife of John Greenwell), three of the natural and lawful children of the deceased. Said *Sarah Dixon* being elected curator and guardian of *Elizabeth Dixon*, spinster, and *Thomas Dixon* (respectively minors), two other children of the deceased, and the only other next-of-kin of the said *George Dixon*.

The proxy of renunciation by *Sarah* the relict, dated 14 November 1785, recites *inter alia* that *George Dixon* died in the month of October last past intestate; also that his daughter *Elizabeth* was aged 17 and upwards, and his son *Thomas* 12 and upwards.

[*George* (II.) of Cockfield and brother of *Jeremiah*, see PEDIGREE No. 9.

When a young man he went to London, and running short of money, took to painting china at the celebrated works at Chelsea. The first week he earned but half-a-crown by very hard work, but later earned several guineas a week. The author has a coffee-pot painted by him.

*George* (II.) of Cockfield claims to have been the first to use coal-gas for illuminating purposes, but he was a quiet, retiring man, and did not push his discovery to a practical result. In 1779 he established coal-tar works, making about six barrels a week, besides "coal-oil." He abandoned the business in 1783 in consequence of the heavy cost of the carriage of the tar to Sunderland, where it was used by the ship-builders. John Bailey of Chillingham, draughtsman and writer on agriculture (his wife's nephew, see PEDIGREE No. 8), was sometime tutor to *Dixon's* children. Concerning the coal-gas experiments Bailey writes:—

"I remember being much amused when a little boy\* by his filling an old tea-kettle half full of coals and setting it in the fire, and luting a tobacco-pipe with clay to the spout, and to this several others round the end and side of the room. After a certain time he put the flame of a candle to the end of the furthest pipe, and immediately a bright flame issued from it, where nothing was perceptible before. He then made small holes with a pin through the clay that luted the pipe heads and shanks together, and applying the flame of a candle to each, there were as many flames as pipe-heads. He only made this discovery a little before, and this was probably the third or fourth exhibition of illuminating rooms by gas light.

"This mode of lighting rooms was for a long time a favourite project with him, and he had thoughts of lighting his collieries with them, but was cured of it by the following experiment, at which I was present: Wanting to know the quantity of tar produced by a ton of coals, he erected a furnace with a large cast metal boiler, and to this were fixed two large cast metal pumps.† One of them passed through water in order to condense the oil and tar. The end of this was filled by a wooden plug, with a small hole to let out the tar, etc. Towards the conclusion of the experiment he placed the flame of a candle to this hole; the inflammable gas immediately burned with a large bright flame. To extinguish this he struck at it with his hat, the flame was driven inwards, the gas in the inside of the apparatus took fire as quickly as gunpowder, and exploded with a report like a cannon, driving out the wooden plug to a

\* Bailey was born about 1752 or soon after. William Murdoch lighted his own house and offices at Redruth in 1792.

† The iron pipes forming portions of the long barrels of the pumps used in mines are sometimes called by the miners, "pumps."

great distance, and exhibiting a cylindrical body of fire of several yards in length; the heavy cast metal pumps were removed from their places. From this time he considered his project of lighting collieries or rooms with gas as dangerous, and I record this experiment with a view that it may probably be a useful hint to those who are at present engaged in similar projects of lighting manufactories and great towns with a material so subject to explosion.”]

1796, March 24. WILL of *Sarah Dixon* of Cockfield, widow. To son *Thomas Dixon* the messuages and lands which I late purchased of *Thomas Waistell* the elder and *Thomas Waistell* the younger, situate in *Hespaby Lane* in the said county. To sons *George Dixon*, *John Dixon*, and *Thomas Dixon* the following properties, subject to several legacies which I direct shall be paid thereout, namely: 1. My interest and share in the Colliery or Coal-mine called *Greenfield Colliery*, held by Lease from the Bishop of *Durham*; 2. My share and interest in the Colliery or Coal-mine called *Humberbeck*, otherwise *Bildershaw Colliery*, held by Lease from the late *John James*, deceased; 3. My share and interest in the Coal-mine and seams of Coal called *Railey Fell Colliery*, held by Lease from *Richard William Peirse*, Esquire; 4. Also my right, title, share, and interest in the Colliery called *Bitchburn Colliery*, held by Lease from the said *Richard William Peirse*, Esq.; 5. And also my interest in all those mines and quarries in the townships or places of *Bondgate*, *Hamsterley*, and *Ricknal Grange*, held by Lease from the Bishop of *Durham*. To daughter *Elizabeth*, the wife of *George Langstaff*, the sum of £100. I charge my estate with £10 each to my fifteen grandchildren, namely: *Hannah*, *George*, and *Sarah*, son and daughters of my said son *George Dixon*; to *Mary*, *Sarah*, *Ann*, *George*, and *Elizabeth*, son and daughters of my said son *John Dixon*; to *George*, son of my said son *Thomas Dixon*; to *Mary*, *Hannah*, *John*, and *Elizabeth* [*Greenwell*], and *Sarah* [*Langstaff*], son and daughters of my daughter *Sarah Langstaff*; and to *Sarah*, daughter of my said daughter *Elizabeth* [*Langstaff*].

Whereas I am possessed of a promissory note, dated the 5<sup>th</sup> day of June 1794, given by my said daughter *Sarah Langstaff* by her then name of *Sarah Greenwell* for the sum of £50. Now I direct my Executors to deliver the said note to my said daughter *Sarah* without asking for payment of same. I give to my said daughter *Sarah Langstaff* the sum of £50. To my two daughters *Sarah Langstaff* and *Elizabeth Langstaff* my household furniture and linen in my house at *Cockfield*. Executors, the said sons *George Dixon*, *John Dixon*, and *Thomas Dixon*.

Proved at *Durham* 30 May 1797. Effects sworn under £1000.

[Wife of preceding.]

1799, June 2. WILL of *Elizabeth Dixon* of *Cockfield*, spinster. To brother *Ralph Dixon* £100. To niece *Elizabeth Langstaff* £5. To niece *Sarah Chapman* my silver Pint. To nephew *George Chapman* a silver watch which did belong to my brother *Jeremiah*. To *George Moody* £10. Residue of my estate, freehold lands, etc., whatsoever (after all just debts paid and the accompts between me and *Margaret Bland* being also first settled) I give to my nieces *Sarah Chapman*, *Hannah Chapman*, *Mary Chapman*, and *Ann Chapman* equally. I appoint the said *Sarah Chapman* sole Executrix.

Proved at *Durham* 2 May 1800. Effects sworn under £300.

[Sister of *Jeremiah*.]

1804, December 9. WILL of *John Raylton* of Cockfield, gent. I give, devise, and bequeath my copyhold customary lands and tenements at Lynesack, and all my freehold tithes arising from same, to my nephew *George Dixon* (III.) of Cockfield, gent., chargeable nevertheless with the following payments, namely: To my sister *Barbara Haswell* of Cockfield an annuity of £10, such annuity not to be subject to the control of her husband *Martin Haswell*. To my nephew *Robert Waysman* [sic], now of Cockfield, a legacy of £15. To *Jonathan Stephens* the elder, now of Cockfield, an annuity of £10. To my nephew *George Raylton* (now an officer of Excise) £60. To my nephew *John Raylton* (now, I believe, in the East Indies) £50. To my niece *Ann Raylton* (now at London) £30. To my nephew *Thomas Dixon* (now of Cotherstone) £50, and I also give to the said *Thomas* the Garth called Waistell's High Garth in the township of Cockfield. To my nephew *John Dixon* of Cockfield £140. To *Barbara Errington* (wife of *Robert Errington*, now of Brignal in the county of York) £20. To *Sarah Bond* of Broom Lands House near Cockfield (now my present housekeeper) £30. To *Daniel Turner* the elder, now of Hilton, £10. To my cousin *George Moody*, schoolmaster, of West Auckland, £10. To my niece *Sarah Langstaff* (wife of *Thomas Langstaff*, now of the city of York) £30. To my niece *Sarah Langstaff* (wife of *George Langstaff*, now of Shildon) £100. To *Sarah Langstaff* (only daughter of *George* and *Elizabeth Langstaff* of Shildon) £100 when she attains 21. To my nephew *George Langstaff* of Shildon £100, also my garden tools, rakes, barrows, etc. To *Mary Dixon*, *Sarah Dixon*, *Nancy Dixon*, and *George Dixon*, the daughters and son of my nephew *John Dixon* of Cockfield, £40 each when they attain 21 years. To my niece *Elizabeth Langstaff*, wife of *George Langstaff* of Shildon, all my household furniture, goods, and plate, also my manuscript writings, accounts, manuscripts, and papers. My library of books to my nephews *John Dixon*, *Thomas Dixon*, and my niece *Elizabeth Langstaff*. Residue to said nephew *George Dixon*, and appoint him Executor.

Proved at Durham 28 December 1805. Effects sworn under £450.

[The *Thomas Langstaff* of York named in the will was the author's grandfather; *George Langstaff* of Shildon was *George* (IV.) of PEDIGREE No. 3. Their wives were sisters. See PEDIGREES Nos. 8 and 9.

*George* (III.) of Cockfield and his brother *John*, known locally as "Maister Geordie" and "Maister Jackie," were great arguers, and used to argue when travelling (as was then the rule) on horseback. They got so absorbed as to forget their horses entirely, so that latterly a servant always rode with them to prevent accidents!

They were lessees of the Black Boy Colliery at Bishop Auckland and were wealthy, but left the working of it in the hands of their viewer, who for some years (unknown to them) carried the workings under another man's land. A Chancery suit followed; they lost, and had to pay excessive damages, a blow that they never recovered from.]

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