

John Dann of Bexley, 1778-1832

The first mention of any persons of the name Dann in the Bexley parish registers is the marriage of Thomas Dann to Letitia Harris on 26 May 1777.

Then, on 5 April 1778, their first child was christened John. Letitia must have died young. She was buried on 10 February 1782 and next year her husband married Elizabeth Turner. They had several children.

John, the eldest of the family, followed his father's trade as a carpenter. Like his father, he had served for many years in one or other of the offices of the parish, as overseer of the poor, in the select vestry, as surveyor of the highways and as churchwarden. In 1817 he prepared a plan of some alterations to the parish church designed to increase its seating capacity. The vestry accepted it after taking advice of a local architect, John Shaw. Dann was also employed in 1821, under Shaw's direction, on repairs to church roof and steeple. Like many carpenters in those days, he combined undertaking with his building work. In 1824 he sent in bills for carpentry for £15.15. 1. and for burials for £6. 6. 0.

In 1822 the vestry employed three men from outside the parish to carry out a new valuation for rating purposes. Their proposals were found to be unsatisfactory and Dann was one of a small group appointed by the vestry to help to produce a revised list of valuations. For this work, he was presented with a silver cup by the parish. In the following years, he was asked to referee in cases where ratepayers disputed their assessments. Shortly before his death, he was appointed by Mary Mason, a major benefactor of the parish, as executor of her will. This would have entailed considerable responsibility and it is evident that he had the reputation of a competent man of affairs. He died in 1832, a comparatively young man.

From the rate books, we learn that he did not own a house in Bexley but rented one. It was assessed at £25 which means that it was one of the more expensive houses. It is not clear where it was but the present 57/59 High Street could well be it.

