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**Three Generations of the Exley Family in Bristol Education and  
Methodism, 1805-1901**

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## Three Generations of the Exley Family in Bristol Education and Methodism 1800–1901

By C.J. SPITTAL

'Exley' as a place-name occurs three times in the West Riding of Yorkshire, once as a locality in the Southowram township of Halifax<sup>1</sup> where a William de Ecclesley died in 1260. Later there were sixteenth century Exleys in Dewsbury and seventeenth century ones in Kirkburton, Penistone and Wakefield; but it was in the southern part of the West Riding, in the village of Frickley near Doncaster, that a certain Matthew Exley married Elizabeth Moad in 1729. Their eldest son, George, baptized in Frickley in 1739, married Christian Dixon on February 23rd 1772 at Gowdall near Hull, where they brought up their family. This consisted of one daughter, Mary (1773–1846) who married a Joseph Lentz, and three sons, Thomas – the subject of this account (Fig. 1), who was born on December 9th 1774 – and George and Richard, baptized in 1777 and 1779 respectively.

Although described in church records simply as a blacksmith, George Exley senior was also a farmer and a manufacturer of specialized tools used in the cutting of dikes, in dredging, and in the draining and excavating of alluvial soils, all important operations in the Gowdall area situated on the broad flood-plains of the Humber. Thomas Exley clearly took an interest in this work and, later in life, incorporated in his *Short Treatise on the Deluge* (1844) an account of the local geology, the form and control of watercourses, and archaeological discoveries. However, a Methodist family background and a sharp intellect were to influence his career in other directions.<sup>2</sup> In his pamphlet *Wesleyan Methodism . . .* (1850) Exley speaks of 'having been sixty-one years a regular, continuous, uninterrupted member' and also for seventy years 'in intimacy with the early race of Wesleyan Ministers' for some of whom his father had provided hospitality on their preaching rounds 'one entire day and night every fortnight.'<sup>3</sup>

Thomas Exley's earliest schooling was received at the hands of a Mr. Thomas Young, an 'eminent teacher' of the parish of Gowdall. Young was so impressed by the aptitudes of his pupil that, with characteristic Yorkshire shrewdness, he advised George Exley to allow Thomas further educational opportunities on the grounds that, as the boy was capable of learning as much in a fortnight as most could only absorb in three months, no excessive expense would be involved. George Exley eventually agreed and late in 1791 or early 1792 Thomas set out on foot through winter snow to Barnard Castle to attend a mathematical and classical school for which he had seen a newspaper advertisement. This school was almost certainly one run by the Reverend Robert Barnes (1759–1801) who had come to Barnard Castle from the Cumberland village of Aikton.<sup>4</sup> Thomas was not the only remarkable intellect in the family: his brother George junior, who became a farmer in the Lincolnshire village of Legbourne, was 'a human curiosity . . . a mighty musician, an enthusiastic mathematician, and a fanatical student intent on testing the Babylonian numbers' who declared in 1842 that he thought Thomas fortunate 'to get a living somehow, for he could never be taught so much of farming as to load a cart.'<sup>5</sup>

Once his time at Barnard Castle was over, Thomas Exley returned home, but soon left again to seek a commercial career in Manchester. The quest for employment proved dispiriting,



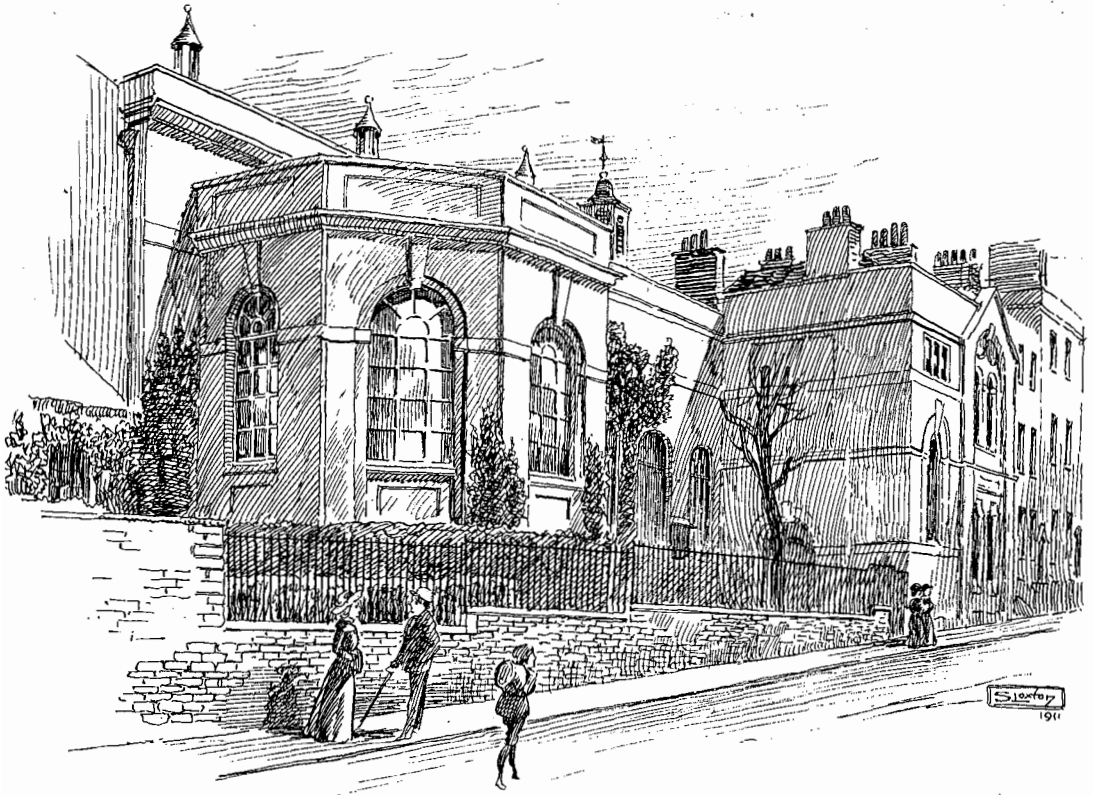


Fig. 2 Portland Street Chapel, Kingsdown, Bristol, by S. Loxton, 1911.

removed) and to 'converse with him also respecting the pews occupied by his pupils.'<sup>23</sup> That Exley was nominated for this confrontation reveals something of his standing and influence within the congregation. When a new Trust Deed was drawn up in 1843, Exley's name appeared first on the list of signatories, and he continued to attend trustees' meetings to the year before he died. He was also committed to the duties of class-leadership and local preaching, and his name can be found on preaching-plans for 1816 and 1840.<sup>24</sup> In 1816 he was also elected to the committee of the Bristol Methodist Sunday School Society, and in 1817 he became one of the trustees of the St. Philip's Chapel newly opened in Old Market Street.

His local reputation as a teacher was enhanced in a rather unusual way. During 1802 a Bristol newspaper conducted a mathematical puzzle competition. A problem was offered for solution and two answers subsequently printed; one of these came from a Mr. H. Clarke, 'teacher of the mathematics and philosophical lecturer', resident near by in St. Michael's Hill,<sup>25</sup> and the other from Exley. Clarke then proposed another problem which Exley answered, the whole affair proving, in the words of the *Imperial Magazine*, 'highly advantageous to Mr. Exley, who now becoming more generally known, had an additional degree of celebrity attached to his name [and whose] business from this time, began to increase',<sup>26</sup> no doubt assisted by Exley's good use of the exchanges as an exercise in public relations, incorporating in his contributions references to unspecified patrons and friends appreciative of his work.

left over he attempted a solution to the mathematical problem of squaring the circle. All this activity proved too great a burden, and his health broke down. In the last week of 1799 the Exleys left Huddersfield and came to Bristol. The move was the result of both family and professional considerations: John Clarke had died in 1798 and Adam was stationed in Bristol where his widowed mother travelled to join him; a second son-in-law, William Moore Johnson, who had married Mary Clarke, another of Adam's sisters, was also in Bristol.

The last decade of the eighteenth century had witnessed turmoils in Bristol Methodism which led to reductions in the established 'New Room' congregation – first by successions to Portland Chapel in Kingsdown in 1792, and then to 'Ebenezer', Old King Street in 1795. Sensibilities over these disruptions were still inflamed when the Exleys arrived in Bristol, and for a while – perhaps prudently – they attended each new place of worship separately before coming together in 1803 as members of 'Ebenezer', with Thomas in a class under the leadership of Benjamin Tucker. By 1808 Exley himself had become a class-leader.<sup>11</sup>

Exley's first teaching appointment in Bristol was at the 'Literary and Commercial Seminary' conducted in Kingsdown by William Moore Johnson.<sup>12</sup> By 1803 however he was again at work on his own account as a 'private teacher of the mathematics' resident at No. 19 St. James's Place.<sup>13</sup> The family he and Hannah started there bitterly disappointed parental hopes. The burial register of Portland Street records in tragically quick succession the names of Hannah (baptism not traced) who died at the age of three in 1804, Mary Clark (baptised Old King Street October 17th 1803) who also died in 1804, and Elizabeth Christine (baptism not traced) who died in 1808.<sup>14</sup> In 1810 Hannah Exley died, aged 33,<sup>15</sup> and was followed to the grave by a son, Adam (baptism not traced),<sup>16</sup> the following year, ten days before Thomas Exley was married by licence at St. James's Church to Rachel Thompson, a fellow-member of the Old King Street congregation.<sup>17</sup>

Two children however did survive.<sup>18</sup> These were a daughter, Anna Maria (baptized Old King Street February 14th 1805), who never married; and a son, Thomas (baptized Portland Street August 8th 1802), who in 1821 was on his way from England to the West Indies and later went to Colombo. He must have pre-deceased his father, whose will includes a reference to 'my grand-daughter Maria Eliza Exley, daughter of my late son Thomas by his wife Georgina.'<sup>19</sup>

After his re-marriage, Exley took up residence at 17 Portland Street, Kingsdown, where he opened another school. At that time Kingsdown was, like Clifton, a suburb of Bristol rising in social importance; but there was a sharp difference between them. Clifton took over from Hotwells an atmosphere which was elegant and gay, though more genteel and decorous than when Pope, Sheridan, Smollett, Fanny Burney and others had frequented the colonnade at the foot of St. Vincent's Rocks. By contrast, Kingsdown was a citadel of serious, pious, intellectual endeavour and the home of many locally esteemed Dissenters. It had no theatre and no assembly rooms, and did not provide the setting for any novels, as Hotwells had done.<sup>20</sup> Coleridge, during his stay in Bristol, preferred to live in Oxford Street, Kingsdown, instead of in Clifton where the Edgeworths, Walter Savage Landor and briefly Richard Harris Barham found their homes amongst the merchants and gentlefolk of independent means. The intellectual élite of Kingsdown, on the other hand, worked for their living and at nothing more strenuously than at educating the young; the district fairly bristled with exclusive private schools,<sup>21</sup> and in the local landscape the prestigious chapel in Portland Street (Fig. 2) was a characteristic symbol of the social milieu in which Thomas Exley was quickly to find his place.

From the month of his marriage Exley began to rent a pew at Portland Street Chapel for 7s. 6d. a quarter, and on July 1st 1816 he was elected a chapel trustee. In 1818, along with a certain Mr. Jones, he was chosen 'to wait on Mr. Pocock<sup>22</sup> to converse with him respecting the organ' (an instrument which Pocock had provided on loan but which the trustees wanted

By 1813 his reputation was known in Banwell, about 14 miles south-west of Bristol, where a young man of seventeen, Joseph Wood, was in search of a tutor for himself. Wood saw Exley as a 'profound scholar and eminently pious man', all the more attractive because his fees were lower than those of other tutors. Wood stayed as pupil with Exley for about a year, and within four months they had 'finished spherical geometry'. Wood then asked Exley about further branches of study only to be told that, in his tutor's opinion, the pupil had too much to do already.<sup>27</sup>

This advice – not that of a relentless crammer – shows that Exley had no need to make his whole income by private teaching. There was also his work at the Baptist College, where he had been appointed in 1809 to succeed Benjamin Donne<sup>28</sup> in instructing the students in arithmetic, mathematics, geography, astronomy and natural philosophy. The salary of forty guineas a year was raised in 1810 to fifty, and presumably increased again after the College moved to new premises in 1811 when numbers started to rise and it was resolved to pay 'an allowance to the tutors [of] ten guineas per annum for each student'. Exley continued work at the Baptist College until 1825, when a review of the administration decided that the 'tutors should be fewer and should devote the employment of every day to the Academy'.<sup>29</sup> For that reason Exley resigned his post. For similar reasons he had earlier given up his place as superintendent of the Philosophical Society's room in Bristol though, when that body from 1823 became the Bristol Institution, Exley, as one of a select group of only ten nominees, was made an Associate of the Philosophical and Literary Society which formed part of the Institution.

Around 1809 Exley began work on the four volume *Imperial Encyclopedia* which was published in 1812. In the following year he received an honorary M.A. degree from the University of Aberdeen, proposed by Adam Clarke (himself an honorary LL.D. of Aberdeen) and by William Moore Johnson (an honorary M.A. of Aberdeen in 1806 proposed by Clarke).<sup>30</sup> In 1816 he was given the post of honorary examiner in mathematics at Kingswood School and in 1817 produced his *Vindication of Dr. Adam Clarke, in answer to Mr. Moore's thoughts on the Eternal Sonship of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, addressed to the people called Methodists*, the first of two contributions he made to that controversy. It is hardly surprising that in the same year his health broke down again. Even four years later in 1821 Adam Clarke was to write to him: 'I am glad that the Blessed God is returning your health. Beware of relapses and nurse yourself for a considerable time, as your constitution is not a strong one. . . .'<sup>31</sup>

The only portrait we have of Thomas Exley was engraved at this time of his life (Fig. 1). Dated 1819, it shows a man with an oval-shaped face, reflective deep-set eyes and with limp strands of straight hair falling into a fringe over his forehead. He is wearing a cravat, a gentleman's coat with small revers, close-fitting sleeves and a high collar. He is shown seated in an armchair and holding a pair of dividers; two books are set on an adjacent table. He does not look robust and indeed during his period at Kingswood School he was reported as having a 'thin wasted frame'. It was however his personality which gave students their most enduring memories of him. He was 'a fine gentleman and a profound mathematician [who] used to walk into school, clad in a swallow-tail coat, his face beaming with good humour and his tails bulging with examination papers'.<sup>32</sup> It was Exley's partiality for including, nearly every year, in those papers the question 'How many digits are there?' which earned him the nickname of 'Digits'. Another recollection of him was as a 'tall, stately, slim, kind old gentleman whose very smile was contagious. He hardly exhibited the judicial ways of a modern examiner for he was always ready to help with, or explain, some of the more difficult problems'.<sup>33</sup> At the time of his death the *Bristol Mercury* saw Exley as an 'aged tall mathematician . . . a familiar figure and the white flowing locks sweeping around his thoughtful benevolent countenance gave him a striking appearance'.<sup>34</sup>

Education in Exley's view had to be practical. There was little advantage in keeping boys at school a year longer if they were to find it more difficult to get apprenticeships; and examination results, which were not usually communicated to candidates, failed to stimulate effort or any faith in the importance of the examinations themselves. Likewise he saw no benefits accruing to boys allowed to opt out of classics, for he judged them to perform no better in other subjects as a result. Exley's 'philosophy of education' understandably accorded primacy of place to his own subject. In February 1839 he described himself as 'happy in having to report that the boys are making great advances in the very important sciences of number and magnitude, the proper foundation of the affairs of life, and the true key for mental improvement as far as it relates to the investigation of the work of God in nature'.

Staff committee meetings were, however, a less congenial commitment. During thirty years when Exley might have attended 120 such gatherings he appeared at only one, though he had a slightly better record for sub-committee meetings held in Bristol itself, rather than Kingswood. Nevertheless, he was re-appointed annually and repeatedly thanked for his 'gratuitous services' and such recognition appears to have been all he wanted. In 1842, the committee made a more tangible expression of their appreciation in the form of a purse containing ten sovereigns. Exley long hesitated whether he should keep the money, sought advice from the committee representative who had given it, and even when reassured still remained unconvinced that he should retain it. Finally, afraid that his conduct might be misunderstood, he penned a delayed letter of thanks explaining his vacillations of mind in full.

It is perhaps hardly surprising that one in this respect so concerned for the feelings of others should only rarely have passed any adverse comment on his examinees. A generous, benevolent and optimistic assessment of their progress is as characteristic of his Kingswood reports as it was for his Baptist College pupils. The handwriting of one, H. Jones, provoked a rare outburst of acerbity (though even there tinged with humour), when Exley declared, 'H. Jones seems to have been in retrograde motion'. Twelve years later Exley's duties were extended to examining in 'the different branches of commercial education' – something which is not generally recognised as an important component in the curriculum of Kingswood School. In 1843 his examining duties were interrupted by another period of serious illness when he judged himself to have been 'in the jaws of death, death without a sting' but, as he later wrote to the committee, 'the Lord spared me to have the pleasure of examining the boys once more'.<sup>35</sup>

Exley's duties at Kingswood came to an end in 1849, by which time he had also retired from private teaching. His old address at 17 Portland Street had been given up in 1843 for a new 'Classical and Mathematical Academy' at 23 Dove Street, Kingsdown, and his private residence was now No. 1 Cotham Road, in a newly-developing suburb of Bristol built on part of the former Cotham Lodge estate sold off piecemeal in 1838.<sup>36</sup> The 'Academy' is listed in the local directory in 1846, but the 1847 issue, while still showing Exley as resident at the Cotham Road address, makes no mention of him as a teacher. His second wife died in 1848, and in the 1851 census he appears as a 'retired teacher of mathematics'. He died on 14 February, 1855, as a result of a chill which turned to pneumonia.

The new house had been named 'Gowdall Villa' after Exley's Yorkshire birthplace, and it was left in his will to his daughter, Anna Maria. To his prodigy brother George, by this time a 'gentleman of Leyburn',<sup>37</sup> he left his copy of Barlow's *Philosophical Dictionary*; and to Charles Hill, manager of a distillery in Cheese Lane, Bristol, his copy of Chateaubriand's *Travels* in two volumes, and of Prideaux's *Connexions* in four. His will is confusing over the disposition of his other books, for while Anna Maria received 'all books', another clause mentions the bequest to his son John Thompson Exley (the only child of his second marriage) of 'my philosophical and mathematical apparatus and instruments and mathematical books and my gold watch'.<sup>38</sup>

Presumably therefore some of those books were included in the collection given by John Thompson Exley to University College, Bristol in 1899.

Thomas Exley had owned a piece of land in Gowdall after the death of his mother in 1822, and on August 13th 1853 he had made his final act of service to Methodism by providing there 'a cottage, chapel &c. at the parish of Snaith for Wesleyan Methodists'.<sup>39</sup> This building stood near the Pound in Gowdall and remained until a new chapel was built in 1868.

J.W. Etheridge in the second edition of his *Life of the Reverend Adam Clarke* paid a touching tribute to Exley whose passing 'to the Methodists in Bristol, among whom he had been a member, leader, and local preacher for half a century, growing in grace, and turning many into righteousness . . . was like the going out of a lamp in the temple of God'.<sup>40</sup>

Apart from his publications already mentioned Exley produced forty other works, as well as unpublished lectures to the Philosophical and Literary Society. There were papers on physical and chemical subjects for the Reports of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and others on elementary arithmetic for the *Imperial Magazine*. He once achieved publication in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London* and on another occasion in the *Philosophical Magazine*, commenting on the work of an Italian physicist who (as he confided in a letter to his niece, Mary Ann Smith) he believed, was guilty of plagiarism and of recapitulating 'a theory of my own disguised with two or three non-essentials',<sup>41</sup> – a remark which illuminates the intellectual introspection which damaged both his theological and scientific writings.

The debate on the Eternal Sonship of Christ which Exley carried on in collaboration with Adam Clarke was 'lost', though neither of them ceded their positions.<sup>42</sup> This in fact was Exley's only adventure into theological controversy, except for the pamphlet on '*Wesleyan Methodism: an address, respecting the present disturbances, to persons interested in this important subject*' (1850).<sup>43</sup> All anyone so interested would have found in it was an inflexible defence of official Wesleyan attitudes, coupled with a pedagogic chiding of those whose reformist opinions the author not only viewed as totally unacceptable, but also seemed to think had been formed for no other reason than one of purposefully inflicting malicious injury. Exley was equally unprogressive in his scientific thinking. His Huddersfield speculations on squaring the circle led him later into 'considerations on the property of the cycloid' during which, according to the *Imperial Magazine*, he 'discovered several properties of that curve, which, though known to [other] mathematicians, as he afterwards learnt, were till then unknown to him'.<sup>44</sup> His limitations were revealed in an even more startling way in his *Short Treatise on the Deluge* and two related short books published together in one volume in 1844. In these he relied heavily on interpretations of Hebrew words in Scripture supplied to him for forty years by Adam Clarke, and in his introduction claimed that 'long study of the subject' had led him into a 'train of thought entirely new'. In fact, it had arrested him in one all but totally obsolete. In discussions over the process of Creation and the biblical accounts of it, arguments based on linguistic cruces had been supplanted by strictly scientific thinking, and Exley's work is conspicuous for its failure to take any account of the discoveries revealed by fieldwork in palaeontology, stratigraphy and fossil-collecting within the 'Heroic Age' of geology (c. 1815–1840) which had passed during the time he had been assembling his material. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in 1846 he was pressing James Everett to find him fresh commercial outlets for the book, and complaining that out of the total stock only 'about fifty or sixty are sold, chiefly in Bristol and its vicinity, very few have been sold elsewhere'.<sup>45</sup>

The *Imperial Encyclopedia* had also been outmoded by the time it was published. The title-page of the work credits William Moore Johnson with collaboration though, according to the *Imperial Magazine*, it was Exley who compiled by far the larger part of its 3,200 pages of entries prefaced by a long history of previously published encyclopedias. But, though the range of

entries is extensive, the definitions are brief even by the standards of the time. It is more of a dictionary than an encyclopedia, as the form and content of such works had already been determined by *Chambers' Cyclopaedia*, first produced in 1728 and still esteemed over a hundred years later, and by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (like 'Chambers' the product of a panel of contributors) which first came out between 1768 and 1771. The *Imperial Encyclopaedia* is not even mentioned in a lengthy mid-century review of such works<sup>46</sup> and a modern librarian has declared that 'it made a poor showing'.<sup>47</sup>

### *John Thompson Exley*

John Thompson Exley, Thomas Exley's only child by his second marriage, was born on October 19th 1815. He entered St. John's College, Cambridge (where, unlike Oxford, matriculation did not have to be accompanied by acceptance of the thirty-nine articles) on June 23rd 1834. He became a Platt Scholar (co. Gloucester) on November 7th 1837, joined the Philosophical Society and emerged from the university as 23rd Wrangler in the mathematical tripos of 1838. The record of his subscription in 1838 certifies him to have been a 'bona fide member of the Church of England as by the Law Established'.<sup>48</sup>

In the same year his name first appears in the records of 'Bristol College' which had been opened on August 14th 1830.<sup>49</sup> Management was vested in a body of shareholders, any one of whom could nominate one pupil for each fifty-pound share they held. The 'Bristol College' was a non-denominational addition to the number of Bristol schools with an intake from the prosperous middle class, and a catchment area extending well beyond the Bristol region. It was situated in Park Row, and maintained a roll of about thirty pupils at any one time, and a staff of six or seven. Its alumni included Walter Bagehot, the political economist, and George Gabriel Stokes, later Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, and President of the Royal Society in 1885. When Exley came to the College, its vice-principal was John Edward Bromby who was later acting-principal before the appointment as principal in 1840 of James Booth of Trinity College Dublin. Bromby's name disappears from the surviving records after June 25th 1840, and, presumably disappointed in expectation of promotion, he later ran a school of his own at Mortimer House, Clifton, before taking up a post in Australia in 1847.<sup>50</sup> His departure benefited Exley who, when he married Eleanor, daughter of the Reverend Thomas Eden (formerly of Whitehall, Bristol) at Kennington, Surrey on July 6th 1841,<sup>51</sup> described himself as 'Vice-Principal of the Bristol College.'

His period of office was to be a short one, troubled by developments both external to the 'Bristol College' and within it. From its early days, the policy of admitting nonconformists, who were exempted from the religious syllabus prescribed for Anglican pupils, had angered prominent Church of England figures in Bristol; and in 1840 they opened a rival 'Bishop's College'. The appointment of James Booth to the 'Bristol College' had clearly failed to give satisfaction. Latimer speaks of his holding his post for only 'a few months', and the last two entries (unfortunately undated) in the Regulations Book specify first that 'the Principal should be present during the whole of College hours' and later that the superintendence of the institution 'be placed in the hands of the vice-principal and classical tutor until the 31st day of December next'. Latimer records that the 'Bristol College closed its doors at Christmas 1841' and, consequently, John Thompson Exley lost his job.

He quickly followed in his father's footsteps and became a tutor at the Baptist College where the appointing committee in 1842 could not 'speak too highly of Mr. Exley's obliging manners' – something perhaps not so remarkable in the circumstances, and in interesting contrast to the

tactful conduct of similar interviews which Thomas Exley had found it so difficult to handle in Manchester. After three months lecturing at the Baptist College 'on chemistry and undertaking the preparation of students for matriculation', Exley then began private teaching at 'The Cottage, Cotham New Road', next door to his father's home (the site was later occupied by Western College), where accommodation of manner, when it served his best interests, was replaced by authoritarian bullying from a position of exclusive authority. A volume of biographies of well-known nineteenth century Bristolians recorded that he 'made the hair fly' when he was 'fairly on the job',<sup>52</sup> an inelegant but highly suggestive remark to be set aside J.A. Venn's comment in *Alumni Cantabrigienses* that Exley was a 'schoolmaster who did not believe in sparing the rod'.<sup>53</sup>

For all that, the school acquired a high reputation. By 1846 it was being advertised as a 'Classical and Mathematical Academy' (taking the title of Thomas Exley's establishment in Dove Street) and came to attract the sons of the Bushes, the Frys, the Sturges and other well-known families of the commercial élite of Bristol. One pupil became Chief Constable of Bristol, and of others Sholto Hare and Lewis Fry both became members of parliament. The school's most illustrious pupil did not however conform to pattern. Edward William Godwin (1833-1886) was the son of an Old Market painter and decorator, whom his parents intended for a future in engineering; however, he found his first vocation as an architect in a thriving local practice with Henry Crisp, whilst in his off-duty hours he acted as theatrical correspondent for a Bristol newspaper, and so first met Ellen Terry. Their subsequent life together in London brought Godwin into the very centre of the Aesthetic Movement, and to a new career in theatrical costume design and the creation of 'archaeological' stage sets. The theories he developed and published were to exert a strong influence first over Oscar Wilde and later W.B. Yeats. He should be considered the first theatrical 'producer' in the modern sense of the term.<sup>54</sup>

For nine years following the death of Eleanor Exley on February 24th 1850,<sup>55</sup> John Thompson Exley remained a widower, until in 1858 the death of James George, twice Lord Mayor of Bristol and a member of a well-known family of brewers, brought him new neighbours when the widowed Mrs. Harriot [*sic*] Purnell George, and her spinster daughter of forty, Harriot Thorne George, came to live at No. 5 Cotham New Road. Not only did every member of the George family have shares in the business but also, by her mother's will made in March 1859, Harriot Thorne George was to inherit half her parents' real estate, as well as income from a large rented farm at Kewstoke, and a private income of her own which, should she marry and pre-decease a husband, would continue to be paid to him. The course of true love was never set to run more smoothly, and on September 28th 1859 John Thompson Exley and Harriot were married at Westbury-on-Trym parish church. Then in 1864, at the age of fifty, he retired from teaching. He died on September 7th 1899 and was buried at Redland Green Chapel,<sup>56</sup> leaving estate valued at £34,928 19s 7d. His will provided for the donation of his library to the infant University College of Bristol and, in addition to the mathematical books, makes mention of his 'classics' in Latin, Greek, French and German as well as books intended for the Medical School.

The collection was mostly distributed to various departmental libraries. The biggest undispersed part remains today as the nucleus of the 'Exley Collection' in the Queen's Building Library, comprising 262 volumes (230 titles) dated before 1855 when his father Thomas Exley died. A few bear a stamp 'J.T. Exley M.A.' but that cannot be taken as proof of original ownership. There are about a dozen volumes which, from their date of publication, only John Thompson Exley could have acquired, so it may be assumed that the bulk of the collection was put together by Thomas. Sixty-two volumes date from the eighteenth century, and the

whole library gives good representation of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century mathematical interests (e.g. fluxions and probability theory), and includes a good working collection of the productions of the principal mathematicians of the time both in England and abroad.<sup>57</sup>

The most remarkable component of the library was, however, the extensive range of mathematical journals it incorporated, both in English and other European languages and all current. Their presence is all the more noteworthy since John Thompson Exley never produced any scientific papers himself. The Royal Society's *Catalogue of Scientific Papers 1800–1900* (1867–1925) lists nothing by him; and though he imitated his father in 1871 by joining the British Association he made no contributions to its reports. The University College was not slow in appreciating the value of what it had received and immediately voted the sum of £1,800 (investment income from a capital sum of money bequeathed to it by another benefactor) for the maintenance of subscriptions and binding.

It may be suggested that perhaps John Thompson Exley's purpose in subscribing to these journals was influenced by the interest being shown in Bristol about the time of his retirement in providing a university for the city. Anglican churchmen and members of those prominent commercial families who had sent their sons to Exley's school were in the forefront of this campaign to establish a place of higher education in a city unprovided for after the closing of the 'Bristol College' in 1841 and the 'Bishop's College' twenty years later.<sup>58</sup> He must have known that a collection of scholarly periodicals, complementing one of mathematical textbooks, could find an appropriate home in a newly-established university and might well have formed such a collection as an act of previsional philanthropy.

### *Thomas Eden Exley*

John Thompson Exley's only son was born in 1842. He attended his father's old college at Cambridge but left without taking a degree. Very little is known of him in Bristol except that he was 'a capable musician'. He was still in the city in 1866 spending some of his time as a choir leader and flautist.<sup>59</sup> He left home, supported by an allowance from his father, went to Trowbridge and took up employment with a firm of cabinet-makers, carpenters and undertakers. He married twice and continued his musical interests as organist to the parish church of nearby North Bradley.

In the year he died, 1901, Thomas Eden Exley was involved in a dispute over a seat he had won on the Bradford and Melksham Rural District Council. Success at the poll was followed by disqualification on the grounds that he was a partner in a firm having contractual agreements with the local authority. With £30,000 from his father's will, he turned to making extensive improvements to the structure and gardens of a property he had purchased in Horse Road, Hilperton Marsh; but the matter of his rejection from local government service continued to rankle, and he persisted in efforts to overturn what he considered an act of injustice. The affair and his reaction to it may have contributed to the onset of the cerebral haemorrhage from which he died on April 17th 1901.

There were no children from either of Thomas Eden Exley's two marriages. His will contained legacies of £1,000 each to the Bristol Infirmary, the Bristol General Hospital and the Bristol Children's Home. He also remembered the family links with Methodism by giving a new organ to the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Trowbridge.<sup>60</sup> These were the final services of an interesting and talented family which had served education, Methodism and Bristol well for a period of just over one hundred years.

*A note on William Moore Johnson*

William Moore Johnson was born in 1771 or 1772 in Northern Ireland, the son of Arthur Johnson, gentleman of Lisburn, Co. Antrim. He married Mary Clarke, sister of Dr. Adam Clarke, at Bitton near Bristol, on August 18th 1795. In *Mathew's Bristol Directory* for 1799/1800 Johnson is shown as conducting a 'Literary and Commercial Seminary' in Kingsdown and the record continues to 1809. In 1803 he matriculated at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, but there is no record of him having taken a degree in that university. However, in 1806 he was made an honorary M.A. of Aberdeen University, proposed by Adam Clarke. In 1810 he was ordained priest, and appointed curate at Henbury near Bristol, and within the years 1811 to 1815 served both as chaplain to 'the Right Honourable the Lord Hutchinson' and as chaplain of St. Pancras parish in Middlesex. In 1815, assisted by the patronage of the Trevelyan family, Johnson left Henbury to become rector of the parish of Perranuthnoe in Cornwall. In his declaration of acceptance of the living he described himself as 'William Moore Johnson LL.D.' though no record of where he obtained that distinction has been traced. He died at Perranuthnoe on July 19th 1849 when his age, as stated in G.C. Boase's *Collectanea Cornubiensis* (1890), was 78. The same source states that a plaque to him was set up in the church, but it is no longer there.

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*Notes & References**Abbreviations*

ACL: Avon County Library  
 CBRO: City of Bristol Record Office  
 JRULM: John Rylands University Library of Manchester

1. A.H. Smith, *Place names of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, 3 (English Place Names Society 32, 1961) 92. The earliest citation of the form 'Exley' is for 1555.
2. *Imperial Magazine*, 1819, 1 cols. 577-584. This is the source of most of the information given in this paper for Exley's career up to 1802 and of the engraved portrait (Fig. 1). The magazine was first edited in Liverpool by Samuel Drew, a religious convert of Adam Clarke who procured him the post.
3. T. Exley, *Wesleyan Methodism: an address respecting the present disturbances to persons interested in this important subject*. (Bristol, 1850), 3.
4. For details of Barnes and his educational work see F.J.G. Robinson, Trends in education in Northern England in the eighteenth century: a biographical study (Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1972).
5. B. Gregory, *Benjamin Gregory D.D.: autobiographical recollections* (1903), 327.
6. *Imperial Magazine* loc. cit., col. 580.
7. 'I do not think the worse of those who differ from [me], although I pity them'. Letter to his niece Mary Ann Smith, daughter of Adam Clarke, March 17th 1851; JRULM PLP 38.58.2.
8. [J.M. Hare], *The Life and labours of Adam Clarke LL.D.* (1842 edn.) 3, note, gives details of the school curriculum and fees.

9. Microfilm MSPR 40 in Archives Department, Manchester Central Public Library.
10. [A. Clarke and M.A. Smith] *An account of the infancy, religious and literary life of Adam Clarke* (1841 edn.). The same source also states that Hannah Clarke joined the Methodists 'with him' (i.e. Adam Clarke), but this must not be understood as meaning that they joined at the same time: J.W. Etheridge, *The Life of the Rev. Adam Clarke LL.D.* (1858 edn.), 38 mentions Clarke's annotation of a copy of the Methodist 'Minutes of Conference' in his possession with the words 'I joined the Society in the year of our Lord 1778 at Mullihical near Coleraine' [Mullaghacall, townland, parish of Agherton, Co. Londonderry about 3½ mi. NW of Coleraine]. Hannah, when she died in 1810, was aged 33, which makes her date of birth 1777.
11. CBRO 40304/CI/ (a). Tucker was a signatory to the 1794 deed of separation from the New Room.
12. *Mathew's Bristol Directory 1799/1800*. Cf. p. 211.
13. *Mathew's Bristol Directory 1803*. It is now 101 Kingsdown Parade.
14. CBRO 21780/21a(i) nos. 253, 256, 402.
15. CBRO 21780/21a(i) no. 440.
16. CBRO 21780/21a(i) no. 467.
17. CBRO P/St.J./R/3h 138 no. 31.
18. Confirmed by *Imperial Magazine* loc. cit., col. 582 which describes the second Mrs. Exley as 'an affectionate mother to his former children'.
19. CBRO EP/J/4 (Bristol wills 1855).
20. The first part of Smollett's *Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* and the last section of Fanny Burney's *Evelina* are much concerned with Hotwells.
21. Apart from Exley's own school and the 'seminary' of William Moore Johnson, the eminent Unitarian John Prior Estlin ran another school only a short distance from one managed by the Reverend Samuel Seyer, historian of Bristol, near the Royal Fort. Montague Street in 1802 was the address of an 'academy' conducted by Benjamin Donne, cartographer, one-time City Librarian and a fellow-member of the Old King Street congregation. Further down St. Michael's Hill was the school run by Mr. H. Clarke; and at the bottom was the Prospect Place Academy under the superintendence of the 'impulsive and at times somewhat capricious' George Pocock, pioneer aeronaut, inventor of a mechanical caning machine, and again a Methodist. Earlier in the same area Robert Southey had spent an unhappy pupilage in a school run by a Baptist called Foot, and later Charles Kingsley was to be educated by a future incumbent of St. Michael's Church.
22. See note 21.
23. A.J. Lambert, *The Chapel on the hill* (Bristol, 1930, priv. pub.), 50–51.
24. *Ellacombe MSS 7*, 138 in ACL; R. Burroughs, 1895 *Ebenezer 1795–1895* (Bristol, 1895), illus. opp. p. 62.
25. Cf. E.G.R. Taylor, *The Mathematical Practitioners of Hanoverian England 1714–1840* (Cambridge, 1966), 257–8.
26. *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal 1802* February 27th, [3] col. 5; March 13th, [4] col. 3; March 20th, [4] col. 2; March 27th, [2] col. 2; *Imperial Magazine*, loc. cit., col. 582.
27. H.W. Williams, *The Life of the Reverend Joseph Wood* (Wesleyan Conference Office, 1871) 12–13.
28. See note 21.
29. 'Account of the Bristol Education Society 1809–1826' in the library of Bristol Baptist College. However, Exley remained an examiner until 1832.
30. P.J. Anderson (ed.), *Roll of alumni in arts of the University and King's College Aberdeen 1596–1860* (Aberdeen, 1900), 197–8. See also D.B. Johnson, 1987 'All honourable men? The award of irregular degrees in King's College and Marischal College in the eighteenth century' in J.J. Carter, and J.H. Pittock (eds.), *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment*. (Aberdeen, 1987), 136–45.
31. JRULM PLP 25.5.13.
32. A.G. Ives, *Kingswood School in Wesley's day and since* (1970), 121.
33. 'Three Old Boys' [A.H.L. Hastings, H.B. Workman, and G. Eayrs] *The History of Kingswood School* (1898), 114–15.
34. *Bristol Mercury 1855* February 24th, 8 col. 3.

35. Kingswood School Committee Minute Books 1808–1860 (3 vols.) in Kingswood School, Bath.
36. *Bristol Evening Post* 1940 April 5th. [C.K. Hudleston], 'More about Cotham and its one-time residents', 4.
37. The name is a latter-day corruption of 'Legbourne'.
38. See note 19.
39. *Minutes of the Methodist Conference* 1855 460, 525: 32nd. *Annual Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records 1871–2* (Appendix 2) [C 374–1] 370.
40. J.W. Etheridge, op. cit. 381–2.
41. Archives of Wesley College, Bristol.
42. For further information on Exley's position in this controversy see I. Sellers, *Adam Clarke controversialist* (Wesley Historical Society Lecture 1975). (St. Columb Major, 1976), 10.
43. The 'present disturbances' of the title were secessions from the body of Wesleyan Methodists during 1849–1851 brought about by what was perceived as oppressive autocracy in its governing body, the 'Legal Hundred', all ordained ministers. Reformers, who published a series of anonymous 'fly-sheet' attacks on the governing body, wanted more democracy and greater lay participation in the making of decisions.
44. *Imperial Magazine*, loc. cit. col. 581.
45. JRULM PLP 38.58.1.
46. *Quarterly Review* 1863 113, Anon., 'History of cyclopedias', 354–87.
47. R. Collinson, *Encyclopedias: their history throughout the ages*. (New York, 1964), 176.
48. Cambridge University Archives, Subscriptiones VII (1825–1838) unfoliated.
49. *Bristol Mirror* 1830 August 14th, 3 col. 2 provides an advertisement and brief prospectus.
50. J. Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the nineteenth century*. (Bristol, 1887), 140–1: College Regulations Book in ACL.
51. *Gentleman's Magazine* 1841, N.S. 16, 313.
52. A.B. Freeman, *Bristol worthies (Second Series)* (Bristol, 1909), 29.
53. J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Part 2.2 (1752–1900) (1944), 447.
54. J. Stokes, *Resistible theatres: enterprise and experiment in the late nineteenth century*. (1972), 36–58 provide a good account of Godwin's theatrical work and influence.
55. *Gentleman's Magazine* 1850, N.S. 33, 450.
56. *Western Daily Press* 1899 September 13th, 3 col. 6: *Bristol Observer* 1899 September 16th, 8 col. 1.
57. M.I. Williams, *A Directory of rare book and special collections in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland*. (Library Association, 1985), 9–10 gives fuller details.
58. J.H. Percival, then headmaster of Clifton College, was prominent in this campaign. His pamphlet *The Connection of the universities and the great towns* (1873) set forth his views on the value of 'local' and 'liberal' establishments for higher education.
59. *Western Daily Press* 1866 February 7th, 2 col. 5; December 24th, 3 col. 1.
60. *Wiltshire Times* 1901 April 20th, 5 col. 7; April 27th, 8 col. 6.