

Charles Towsey of Henley upon Thames in the County of Wexford Gentleman

Mary Harriet Sparks

A. B. Moorhouse

TOWSEY TALES

John Sparks

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NAME: John Sparks

BIRTH DETAILS: 4 July 1820 St.Sepulchre, London

DEATH DETAILS: 2 Dec.1888 Arundel House, Eastbourne

CHART REF: Towsey Chart C9

MARRIAGE DETAILS: 28 Oct.1851 Colaba, Bombay, India

SPOUSE: Jane Dyke

We do not know anything about John William Thomas Sparks' second son, John's early years. The problem is that 'John Sparks' is by no means an uncommon name, so identifying our boy amidst the many is difficult.

There is a John Sparks on the 1841 census who might well be ours. The age is about right (though on that census they annoyingly showed ages to the nearest five years). He was assistant to a chemist named Mordon (or something similar), at 19 Southampton House, Bloomsbury.

Our first definite record of John is from ten years later, at 31 years of-age getting married in October 1851, in Bombay, where he was a merchant with the East India Company. He married 26 year-old Jane Dyke, youngest daughter of John Dyke, a lawyer who had been associated over the years with the Sparks and Cooper families.

John Dyke was probably well into his sixties by then and living in retirement with his family, in Paris. He died there within a year of Jane's marriage.

How and when the marriage of John Sparks and Jane Dyke was arranged, we do not know, but she seems to have travelled to India unaccompanied by any family member, as none of the

nine marriage witnesses are obviously close relatives of either the bride or groom.

We also do not know how long John Sparks had been based in Bombay by the time he married, but he could have been there for some years.

Knowing that the influential secretary of the East India Company and Sparks family friend, Peter Auber, had helped his elder brother in 1835, it is reasonable to assume that he also helped John Sparks to get established in the company.

Peter Auber was already sixty five years old in 1835 and seems to have been with the East India Company for many decades past. He lived on until 1866, dying at 96 years of-age.

John and Jane Sparks stayed in Bombay long enough to have their first child, in December 1852, but possibly because of Jane's father's death during that year, they moved to Paris at some time in 1853, where they stayed for about one year, having their second child in April 1854. Then, by August 1854, they were in Henley, where they stayed for at least a year, but had moved to Islington, in London, by the start of 1858.

John was still an East India merchant and continued as such until the 1870s.

Probably in 1857, John moved back to London, to a large house at 37 Arundel Square, Islington.



At the same time he went into partnership with his brother, Charles Terry Sparks, as East India Merchants and agents.

It is worth noting, that this was the time of the Indian Mutiny, when the British government took over control of India from the East India Company, so the new partnership between John and his brother might be somehow related to that new order. It was though, also the year in which Charles married.

Up to 1857, David Cooper and his rapidly expanding family, had occupied numbers five to seven in Shoe Lane. In 1857 John and Charles Terry Sparks took over number seven for their business, working together there until 1863, at which time their partnership was dissolved, with Charles staying on at Shoe Lane, as an East India Agent, until about 1869.

John continued as an East India Merchant until the late 1870s, though there are no directory entries for his office

after 1862. This was either because he did not need an office or, more likely, because the nature of his business: arranging deals with long-term clients, rendered it unnecessary to advertise.

John also went into business in Eastbourne as a publisher and bookseller and died there in December, 1888.

His wife, Jane, stayed on in Eastbourne until her death in 1907.

Unlike so many members of the Sparks, Cooper and Towsey families, all three of Mary

Harriet Towsey's brothers managed to produce enough surviving offsprings to ensure the continuation of their branches of the Sparks family. In John's case, he and Jane produced nine children who, in turn spawned about twenty grandchildren.

