

*JOHN DURRANT (1844-1905)*  
*BY RICHARD HORN*

John Durrant was born in Frithelstock a small village close to Torrington, Devon sometime towards the end of 1843 or 1844. His birth registration shows that he was born in the period Oct-Dec 1843, however the 1851 census suggests that his birth year was 1844. His father was also called John and he was born in 1815 in Torrington. The 1851 census records his occupation as miller and the 1861 census as a farmer of sixty acres employing one labourer. His wife Anne is recorded as being born in Frithelstock in 1818. I was unable to determine her maiden name.

John Durrant junior had two sisters; Isabella born 1841 and Norah born 1850 and one brother Thomas born in 1848. I have not been able to determine the occupations of John's siblings.

There is a marriage record for John Durrant and a Matilda Grace Vanstone in the district of Bideford in the period October-December 1869. The 1841 census records that her father was Samuel Vanstone, a farmer, born in 1806 and her mother Elizabeth was born 1816. They lived in West Putford. Matilda Grace Vanstone is recorded as being employed as nursemaid in the 1851 census in the family of William Bridgman of North Petherwin, Devon. At that time she was just eleven years old and her birth year is given as 1840. Her birth year is variously given as 1840, 1841 and 1843 in subsequent censuses. Matilda Grace Durant died in Bideford Devon, Oct-Dec 1914, aged seventy-four years.

The 1871 census shows that both John and Matilda were employed as servants in the household of the Vicar of Frithelstock, the Rev George A Brine and his sister Caroline. John was then aged twenty seven and Matilda thirty. The Brines also employed a third servant one Mary Ball. By the time of the 1881 census John Durrant was employed as a rural postman and the couple were living at 2 Sydenham Place, Bideford. Also living at this address was a lodger, James Sellock aged twenty-three a carriage painter.

Census records show that John and Matilda had two children. Montague J Durant, a son, was born 1876 in Bideford, Devon. He was recorded as being the clerk to the Superintendent Guardian in the 1901 and 1911 census returns for Bideford Devon. Their daughter Anne, also known as Annie, was born 1879, in Bideford, Devon. Their two children were still living with their parents at the time of the 1891 census at a different location in Bideford, at 1 Victoria Terrace, a house that remains today. They also had two lodgers living with them at that time; a Thomas Burton, twenty-four, a grocer's manager and James Carnish twenty-four, an ironmonger's assistant.

In 1901, after twenty four years of service, the Post Office records show that John Durrant retired aged fifty-seven, following an “accident on duty”. He was granted a pension of £38 12s 10d. He died at 1 Victoria Terrace on the 27th June 1905 aged sixty-two years from cerebral haemorrhage and cerebral degeneration. His son Montague was present at his death. There is a funeral report in the *North Devon Gazette* for the 4th July which states that he had been in ill health for some time and that he passed away peacefully.

Savill’s medical textbook (1909) states that the victim of a cerebral haemorrhage might experience a headache or vertigo prior to the haemorrhage which could result in a coma or paralysis, usually on one side of the body. He states that treatment is not hopeful but he recommends a swift purge followed by an enema if necessary. If the pulse is full and bounding he states that it is good practice to bleed to the extent of 3, 5 or even 10oz and adds that such patients nearly always do well. Haemostatics such as ergot, gallic acid and acetate of lead may be given. He states that blisters applied to the neck or soles of the feet were useless. It is likely that the term cerebral degeneration refers to senility which was recognised as incurable.

## Sources

Books and other printed material

- Savill, Arthur, *A system of clinical medicine, dealing with the diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment of disease*, ( Thomas Dixon: Royal College of Physicians of London, 1909)

## John Durant Fact Sheet

Pensioner Details
Pensioner name: John Durant
Person ID: DV1006
Your name: Richard Horn
U3A group: Islington
Part One: Birth and Family
1: When and where was your pensioner born?
July-September 1843 -Torrington Devon
2: Who were your pensioners' parents? Record any details you can find out about them here (e.g. occupation, religious affiliation, whether they could read or write)
John Durrant born Torrington Devon, 1815. Miller and later (census of 1861) a farmer of 60 acres employing one labourer.  Ann Durrant born Frithelstock Devon, 1818.
3: Did your pensioner have any siblings? What were their names, and how old were they in relation to your pensioner? Use this space to record anything else you have found out about them (e.g. occupation)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isabella Durant born Frithelstock Devon, 1841</li> <li>• Thomas Durant born Frithelstock Devon, 1848</li> <li>• Rosa Durant born Frithelstock Devon, 1850-also known as Norah</li> </ul>
Part Two: Marriage and children
1: Did your pensioner marry? What was their spouse's name, and when and where did they marry them? Use this space to record any extra details you can find out about their spouse (e.g. when/where they were born, their occupation)
Matilda Grace Vanstone born 1838(?), West Putford, Devon daughter of Samuel and Elizabeth Vanstone as recorded in the census for 1841. No birth record found. Married John Durant in Bideford Oct-Dec 1869. There was a report of the wedding in the North Devon Gazette for Tuesday 16th November 1869.  Matilda Grace Durant died Bideford Devon, Oct-Dec 1914 age at death recorded as 74. Shown as nursemaid aged 11 living at Brindon Farm, Sutcombe, Devon in the 1851 census. Her birth year is variously given as 1840, 1841 and 1843 in subsequent census years
2: Did your pensioner have any children? What were their names, and when they were born? Use this space to record any extra details you can find out about them (e.g. occupation, where they lived later in life)
James Henry Austin born 1866 in Millbrook Cornwall. In the 1881 census he is listed as a paper finisher. I can find no subsequent records for him.

Maud Amelia Austin born 1871 in Lynmouth Devon. In the 1891 census she is recorded as being a dressmaker. In the 1911 census she is listed as Maud Amelia Baker daughter, living with her daughter Eva Maud, at her father's address.

William Samuel Austin born 1873 in Lynmouth. In the 1891 census he is recorded as being a post office clerk. I can find no subsequent records for him.

### Part Three: Work

1: What occupation was your pensioner recorded as doing in census years? Please make sure to state clearly which year you are referring to

1851-Scholar  
1861-Farmer's Son  
1871-Servant  
1881-Rural Postman  
1891-no census record found  
1901-Retired Mounted Rural Postman

2: What occupations were people living with your pensioner (e.g. spouse, children, boarders) doing in the census years? Please make sure to state clearly which year you are referring to

1851-John Durant (father) Miller, Ann Durant (mother) Isabella Durant scholar, Thomas Durant child at home, Norah Durant child at home, John Adams aged 79 Miller's Servant, Henry Baker aged 20 Miller's Servant, Henry Clements aged 26 Miller's Servant, Sarah Main aged 12 house servant.

1861-John Durant (father) farmer of 60 acres, Ann Durant (mother) wife, Isabella Durant farmer's daughter, Thomas Durant scholar, Rosa Durant scholar, Richard Juss aged 22 general servant.

1871-George A Brine (Head) Vicar of Frithelstock, Caroline A Brine Vicar's Sister, Matilda G Durant domestic servant, Mary Ball servant.

1881-Matilda G Durant wife, Montague J Durant scholar, James Sellock (boarder) Carriage Painter.

1891-Not found

1901-Matilda G Durant wife, Montague J Durant Clerk of the Guardian Superintendent, Thomas Burton (boarder) Grocer's Manager, James Carnish (boarder) Ironmonger

#### Part Four: Anything Else

Please use this space to record anything else you have found out about your pensioner

There is a funeral report for John Durant in the North Devon Gazette 4th July 1905.

#### Part Five: Your Sources

Please use this space to record the sources you have used

**Census Transcript John Durrant Household Devon 1901**

RG13/2160/F? (Genealogist)

**Census Transcript Household John Durrant Devon 1881**

RG11/2259/F? (Genealogist)

**Census Transcript Household John Durrant Devon 1871**

RG10/2199/F? (Genealogist)

**Census Transcript Household John Durrant Devon 1861**

RG9/1504/F? [Pages 59-60] (Genealogist)

**Census Transcript Household John Durrant Devon 1851**

HO107/1894/F? (Genealogist)

**Census Transcript Household William Bridgman Devon 1851**

HO107/1896/F? (Genealogist)

**Census Transcript Household Samuel Vanstone Devon 1841**

HO107/0258/F? (Genealogist)

**Birth Record for John Durant in the District of Torrington 1843**

page 273 Vol 10 (Genealogist)

**Marriage Record for John Durant in the District of Bideford 1869**

page 0943 Vol 5B (Genealogist)

**Death Record for Matilda G Durant in the District of Bideford**

page 0600 Vol 5B (Genealogist)

**North Devon Gazette - Tuesday 16 November 1869** – Report of the wedding of John Durant and Miss M G Vanstone

**North Devon Gazette 4<sup>th</sup> July 1905** Funeral report of John Durant.