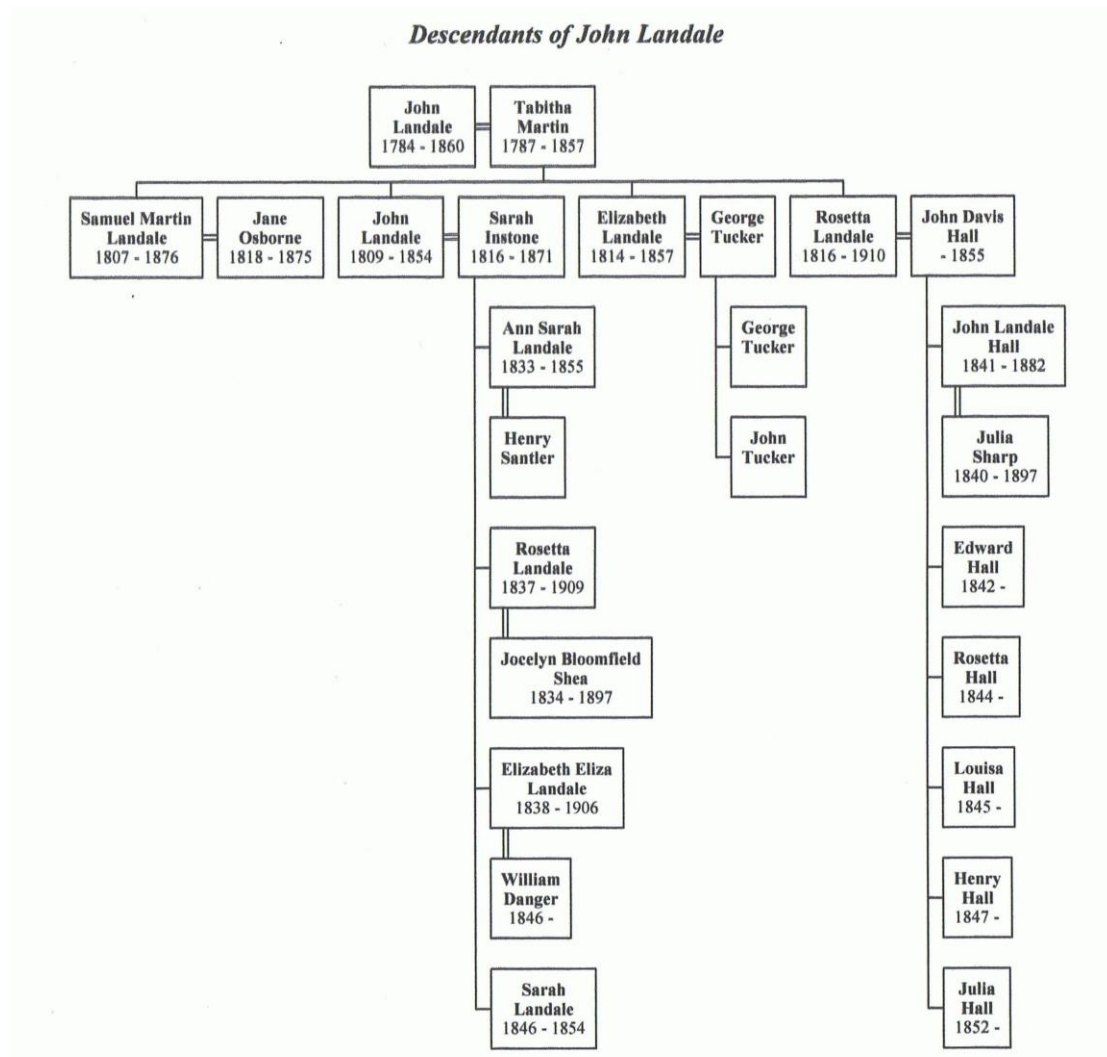


John Landale (1784-1860) : Lottery Winner, Property Owner and Antiquarian

John Landale was born in 1784 in Leeds, Yorkshire (I cannot find a record that gives the name of his parents). He came to London and in 1806 married Tabitha Martin at St Helen's Church, Bishopsgate. He was aged 22, she was 19, born in Dartford. They had four children, Samuel Martin (b1807), John (b1809), Elizabeth (b1814) and Rosetta (b1816). Samuel and John were baptised in London, Elizabeth and Rosetta were baptised in Dartford. It seems that the family moved to Dartford sometime between 1810 and 1814.



Keyes¹ refers to “a Mr Landale, a tailor in the town, who had won £30,000 in a lottery”. This sum would have been equivalent to about £25 million² now! There was an annual English State Lottery from 1694 to 1826. John used his newly acquired wealth to buy land in Dartford and build houses for rent.

East Dartford contains the site of a Roman Cemetery (now occupied by houses in Chaucer Park). John bought the field that contained the site and began some excavations in 1822. He found a stone coffin which he said³ “*contained a female with remarkably small bones. When the coffin was first opened, the hair appeared of a light brown colour, apparently clubbed on the crown of the head and fastened with a brooch or bandeau of pearls: but in a few moments the whole fell to dust: the pearls rubbed like soap to the touch and only a few pieces of the broken metal ornaments remained. ... A coating of gum strongly adhered to the larger bones,*

which retained an aromatic and pleasant smell, and in the coffin was found a copper coin of Constantinopolis in good preservation." The stone coffin is on display in Dartford Museum.

John was a founding shareholder and one of the nine directors of Dartford Gas Works, which was built 1826-27 in Gas Lane (now Victoria Road) to supply gas for street lighting in Dartford.

In 1829, John Landale published a book entitled "A collection and abstract of all the material, deeds, wills, leases and legal documents, relating to the several donations and benefactions to the church and poor of the parish of Dartford, in Kent and of the Spital alms houses." Dartford Library has copies in the local history collection.

John was a supporter of the 1832 Electoral Reform Act. The Times dated 6 October 1831 contained an item reprinted from the Maidstone Journal. It began "*A meeting was held in a field opposite the Duke of Wellington, Dartford of the tradesmen and artisans of Dartford, Crayford and its vicinity, to petition the House of Lords to pass the reform bill. The committee met in the town at 1 o'clock, with bands of music and banners, and marched to the field, where they met by their Crayford friends in excellent order. A hustings had been erected, where the committee, with Mumford Campbell, Esq., of Sutton Place, and a magistrate of the county, at their head, took their stand. Mr Landale, sen., a respectable tradesman of the town, was called to the chair. There were near 3,000 persons present, and the meeting was conducted with the greatest propriety.*"

The bill granted seats in the House of Commons to large cities that had sprung up during the industrial revolution and took away seats from the "rotten boroughs" - those with very small populations. It also slightly increased the number of individuals entitled to vote (by about 4%), to approximately one out of six adult males. The bill faced opposition in the House of Lords but was eventually passed in 1832 as a result of public pressure.

John's eldest son Samuel had a haberdasher's shop in High St, Dartford and was apparently declared bankrupt in 1832. The Maidstone Gazette contained notice of an Auction in May 1832 of the "*Valuable and Extensive Stock of Linen Drapery, Hosiery, Haberdashery, Household Furniture, Fixtures and Effects of Mr Samuel Landale.*" In June 1832 The Times contained a notice of a further auction in Dartford of "*All the best Household Furniture, China, Glass etc of Mr Samuel Landale By order of the trustees, for the benefit of the creditors.*"

The first of John and Tabitha's children to get married was their son John, who married Sarah Instone in 1832. Their eldest daughter Elizabeth married George Tucker in 1836 and Rosetta Landale married John Davis Hall in 1840.

The Dartford Board of Guardians was formed in 1836 to run workhouses in Dartford and the surrounding area. John was one of two people representing the parish of Dartford on the board, another 20 people represented nearby parishes. John Landale of West Hill, Dartford, Gentleman was one of four candidates for election to the board in 1840.⁴

The 1838 tithe list shows John living at West Hill House, which had 10 acres of grounds, including a fruit plantation. West Hill House is a large property at the top of West Hill, set back from the road on the north side and now used as a Masonic Hall. It has been extended since the Landales lived there. John was a major landlord – he owned 69 other houses and

cottages in Dartford. They included Hampden and Claremount Terraces, which flank the entrance to West Hill House. Also two rows of cottages called St Ronan's and The Crescent in Darenth Lane, near its junction with East Hill. Both no longer exist, St Ronan's was demolished in 1938.



West Hill House, Dartford (2010)

John Landale, West Hill, is listed as a market gardener in the Dartford section of Pigot and Co's Commercial Directory for 1840.⁵

The 1841 census shows Tabitha (50), Samuel (30) and Ann (7) Landale living at West Hill House, Dartford. John Landale is not listed at this address – it seems that he was elsewhere when the census was taken. Ann was John and Tabitha's granddaughter Ann Sarah Landale, who was the eldest child of their son John Landale.

The Dartford Library local history collection has a letter dated 25 June 1841 from John Landale to Messrs Dunkin & Son, Printing Office, Dartford. It reads
Sir. I am too ill to see to any business and with regard to your publication, as far as I am concerned there is not a vestige of truth in any of it. Your informants must have meant to hoax you, or they are ignorant liars. If I was in health I might set of it on its true bottom and give you honest information but as regards myself – personals I beg you not to interfere with. I thought you were a man of too much sense on hearing to think of the risque of a false statement of any one's affairs, and what is my affairs to Dartford's history, or its valuable inhabitants.

I have sent the sheet to my solicitors in New Inn and expect it back tomorrow.

John Landale

John seems to be objecting to something that Alfred Dunkin had printed about him, but I have no information on what it was. Dunkin wrote a book on the history of Dartford that was published in 1844.

The 1851 census shows John Landale (born in Leeds and aged 66) as a farmer employing 6 labourers, so it seems that he was still running his market gardening business. Also at West

Hill House with him were Tabitha (62) his wife, Samuel (43) his son, Ann Landale (16) his granddaughter and a servant.

John and Tabitha's son, John junior, is listed in the 1851 census as an accountant, aged 41. He was living in a house on West Hill, Dartford. His wife Sarah (34, a tobacconist) and two of their children Elizabeth (12) and Sarah (5) were living in Spital Street. Presumably John and Sarah had separated. John junior died in July 1854 aged 45 and his daughter Sarah died two months later aged 8.

Ann Sarah Landale, John and Tabitha's granddaughter who is shown living with them in the 1841 and 1851 censuses, married Henry Santler, a corn merchant, in 1855. Sadly she died, aged 22, later that year.



John Landale's tomb (2011)

Tabitha Landale died in 1857 and John in 1860, aged 76, at West Hill House. They were both buried in a tomb in East Hill Cemetery. The inscription is difficult to read but says
In memory of / Mr JOHN LANDALE / of West Hill House in this parish / who died [October 31st] 1860 aged [76] years / Also M[rs] LANDALE wife of the above / who died [February 17th 1857] aged 69 years

The probate record for John Landale, late of West Hill House, Gentleman, says that his will was proved by Edward Hall the younger of Dartford, millwright, Thomas Miles of White Hill, Dartford, farmer and James Sharp of Dartford, builder. The value of his estate was quoted as "under £3,000." I have a copy of the will (made in 1857) but it is difficult to decipher, being lengthy, handwritten, phrased in legal language and without punctuation. I have also looked at the death duty record⁷, which provides some clarification and additional information. John left an annuity of £26 a year, to be paid in weekly instalments to his eldest son, Samuel. Presumably John did not trust him with a lump sum, given his previous record of bankruptcy!

John's daughter Elizabeth had died by the time that he made his will but he made a bequest of £200 to each of her children George and John Tucker, to be held in trust until they reached the age of 21. He left all his household goods, his shares in the Dartford Gas Light and Coke Company and the residue of his estate (total value £2,541) to his daughter Rosetta for the benefit of herself and her children namely her sons John, Edward and Henry Hall and her daughters Rosetta, Louisa and Julia Hall. There were no bequests to the two surviving daughters of his son John Landale (1809-54).

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1. Dartford Historical Notes by S K Keyes (1933), p255.
2. Calculated with respect to average earnings using the website "Measuring Worth"
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3. The History and Antiquities of Dartford by A J Dunkin (1844), p90.
4. Dartford Historical Notes by S K Keyes (1933), p236.
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6. Yesterday's Town: Dartford by Geoff Porteus (1981), p21.
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