

William Cogger (1818-73) : Advocate of Temperance Reform

The following obituary is reprinted in *Dartford, Further Historical Notes*¹.

William Cogger, who died at Dartford, September 12th, 1873, was born at Maidstone on the 20th August, 1818. He received the elements of an English education at the Lancastrian School there, and was indoctrinated in the religious principles which induced him through life, at the Congregational Sunday School. His parents, very humble people, apprenticed him, at fourteen years of age, to a cousin of his, a boot and shoe maker. He applied himself with diligence in his few leisure hours to improving the very limited education his parents had been able to afford him. He took up teaching in the Sunday School, and became an earnest advocate of Temperance Reform. His speeches on the advantages of total abstinence were at all times practical, logical, and convincing, and attended with homely, well directed arguments. He laboured with assiduity in Maidstone and its district, afterwards in London, and later in Dartford, propounding the principles of teetotalism.



In Dartford and many of the adjacent villages he was one of the chief workers in the establishment of Good Templar lodges. Social and affable, he numbered friends among all who knew him familiarly, and he has left to them the best heritage a man can bequeath—a grateful remembrance of his goodness.—From *The Templar*, Thursday, May 28, 1874.

The 1841 census shows William, aged 22, a shoemaker living in the house of Robert Goodchild (43, a shoemaker), his wife and six children in Middle Row, High Street, Maidstone. William married Mary Ann Bristow on 31st July 1843 at All Saints, Maidstone. He was aged 25, a son of Henry Cogger, a labourer. She was 23, a daughter of Robert

Bristow, a carpenter. She came from Boughton Monchelsea, a village three miles south of Maidstone. They went on to have seven children, Mary Ann (b 1843 in Boughton Monchelsea), Henry (b 1845 in Maidstone), William (b 1851 in Badlesmere), Fanny (b 1853 in Badlesmere), George Palmer (b 1855 in Southwark), Caroline (b 1857 in Southwark) and Robert (b 1859 in Southwark). The birth of their first child was registered in Q3 1843, indicating either that the child was born before the marriage or that Mary Ann was pregnant when she wed (which was quite common then).

The 1851 census shows William (32, a shoemaker) living in Badlesmere (a village located between Faversham and Ashford) with his wife Mary Ann (30) and children Mary Ann (7) and Henry (6). The places of birth of his children indicate that William moved to Southwark in about 1854. By 1861 he was living at 7 Bridgnorth Cottages in Dartford. This house, which no longer exists, was in Waterside (now called Hythe Street). Its site was next to the Kent Curry House, where the Co-op shop building now stands. The family consisted of William (42, a shoemaker), Mary Ann (40, a shoe binder), Henry (16, a shoe maker), William (9), George (5), Caroline (3) and Robert (1).

In the United Kingdom, temperance as a mass movement originated in the 19th century². The earliest temperance societies, inspired by a Belfast professor of theology and Presbyterian Church of Ireland Minister Rev. John Edgar, who poured his stock of whiskey out of his window in 1829, concentrated their fire on spirits rather than wine and beer. A more hard line attitude dates from March 1832 when Joseph Livesey started his Temperance Movement in Preston, requiring followers to sign a pledge of total abstinence. The term Teetotal is derived from a speech by Richard Turner, a follower of Livesey, in 1833. Livesey opened the first temperance hotel in 1833 and the next year founded the first temperance magazine, *The Preston Temperance Advocate* (1834–37). The British Association for the Promotion of Temperance was established by 1835. In 1847 the Band of Hope was founded in Leeds, with the stated aim of saving working class children from the perils of drink. The members had to pledge to abstain "from all liquors of an intoxicating quality, whether ale, porter, wine or ardent spirits, except as medicine"

In 1853, the United Kingdom Alliance led by John Bartholomew Gough was formed, aimed at promoting a law prohibiting the sale of alcohol in the UK. This hard-line group of prohibitionists was opposed by other temperance organisations which preferred moral persuasion to a legal ban. This division in the ranks limited the effectiveness of the temperance movement as a whole. The impotence of legislation in this field was demonstrated when the Sale of Beer Act 1854, which restricted Sunday opening hours, had to be repealed, following widespread rioting. In 1859 a prototype prohibition bill was overwhelmingly defeated in the House of Commons. Despite this setback, various non-conformist groups, including the Methodists, Quakers and the Salvation Army (founded in 1864), still lobbied parliament to restrict alcohol sales.

The Independent Order of Good Templars was set up in America in 1851, as a fraternal organisation to promote temperance or total abstinence³. In 1868 Joseph Malins, a painter and decorator from Birmingham who had emigrated with his wife to the USA, returned to this

country with permission to set up the Order here. The first British lodge was instituted on 8th September 1868 in Birmingham. The Order spread throughout the country and the rest of the world.

The 1871 census shows William and his family living at 15 East Hill, Dartford. This building no longer exists but was near the bottom of East Hill on the south side. The site is now an area of grass between Amar Hall and the Fastrack bus road. The household consisted of William (52, a boot maker), Mary Ann (50, a factory hand), Henry (26, a factory hand), William (19, a baker), Fanny (17), George (15), Caroline (13) and Robert (11).

William died on September 12th 1873 aged 55 and was buried in a purchased grave in the SW quarter of East Hill Cemetery, Dartford. Cemetery records give his address as Spital Street, Dartford and his occupation as bookseller. The legible parts of the inscription on his gravestone read

In loving memory of / Mr WILLIAM COGGER / of Dartford / who died September [12th] 187[3] aged [55] years / Where soul / in / and not roll / across / Also GEORGE [PALMER] COGGER [son of the above] who died [20th November] 1892 [aged 37 years] / Also...

Also buried in the grave is Harold George Cogger, a son of George Palmer Cogger. Harold died 9th September 1895 aged 6.

William's burial service was conducted by Reverend John Hay Bowhay, who was the minister of the Independent Chapel in Lowfield Street (the building no longer exists, it was where the Priory shopping centre now stands). This church operated from 1819 to 1881, and was presumably where William worshipped. The building was superseded in 1882 by a new Congregational Church (which still stands but is now converted to flats) near the bottom of West Hill.

William's wife remarried in 1875. Her second husband was Henry Hartshorn, a newsagent. She died in 1894 aged 73 and is buried with her second husband in a grave near William's.

Philip Taylor © 2012

PhilT42LQS@Yahoo.co.uk

References

1. *Dartford Further Historical Notes*, S K Keyes (1938), p798
2. *Temperance movement*, Wikipedia, viewed 12 Feb 2012.
3. *International Organisation of Good Templars*, Wikipedia, viewed 12 Feb 2012.