

The COBBOLD Family History Trust

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THE VENERABLE ROBERT HENRY COBBOLD

Last month's 155th Boat Race reminds me of Robert Henry Cobbold (1820-1893) who is, I think, the only Cobbold to have rowed in the annual Oxford & Cambridge encounter on the Thames.

He was born at Eye, Suffolk, the eldest son of Robert Knipe Cobbold (1792-1859) and Emily Mary Smith (1791-1860). He learned to row at Shrewsbury and went up to Peterhouse, Cambridge in 1839. He rowed 5 in the Blue Boat of 1841 which won the race by 1 minute and 5 seconds in a time of 32½ minutes. The following year in which he became President of the Cambridge University Boat Club his crew lost to Oxford by 13 seconds in the faster time of 30 minutes and 10 seconds. Both these times are very slow by today's standards when a time of around 18 minutes is expected. That same year he was a member of the Peterhouse crew which was Head of the River and of the Cambridge crew which was defeated in the final of the Grand Challenge Cup at Henley.

By 1848 Robert had been ordained and was a missionary in Ningpo, where he stayed, latterly as Archdeacon, until 1857 except for a brief return home to marry Caroline Ann Brown (1828-1922). Whilst in China he prepared his book, 'Pictures of the Chinese, Drawn by Themselves' which was published by John Murray in 1860 and from which we reproduce a marriage procession.

After a brief spell in a Norfolk parish and with his first four children he moved to Herefordshire to be successively Rector of Broseley, Rector of Ross, Chaplain to the Ross Union, Ramsden Preacher to the University of Cambridge and Prebendary of Norton at Hereford Cathedral. Having added four more children to complete his family, he died there and was buried at Ross on Wye in 1893.



Footnote.

David Squires wrote to the Trust recently to explain that he had observed an error on the toposcope on the Wrekin (Shropshire) which incorrectly shows Snowdon to be visible from the top of the Wrekin. He claimed that this error had been repeated in many guide books but examination of the proceedings of the Cotteswold Naturalists Club had revealed the following lines from a poem entitled 'Lines on the Wrekin'

*And even Snowdon could be seen
Were there not other hills between.
And Ireland – oh, sad perplexity!
Is hidden by the earth's convexity.*

The author? Yes, you guessed! Robert Henry Cobbold.

