

The COBBOLD Family History Trust

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PIOUS THOMAS

When you visit the family tree on this website it opens on John Cobbold (1745-1835). He is **Big John** because he was exactly that. Big in physique (some have called it portly!) big in procreation (hands up any reader who has fathered more than 22 children) and big in business because his brewery prospered for another 6 generations.

Thomas Cobbold (1742-1831) is **Pious Thomas** because, despite being the eldest son and therefore entitled to inherit the family brewery he chose to go into the Church. Whether he knew it at the time or not, he was heading for just as full and interesting a life. He went to Bury St Edmunds School under Mr Garnham in 1750 and on to Trinity College, Cambridge, as a Scholar under Mr Whisson in 1761. He took his BA in 1765 and his MA in 1773. He was ordained Deacon by the Bishop of Norwich in 1765, in which year he also became Curate of Bramford. Visited by his Bishop again he was ordained Priest on 20th September 1767 and inducted as Rector of Wilby the following day. If he had wanted a quiet life that would have been it.



Portrait of Uncle Thomas by his nephew,
Richard Cobbold

However, by 1778 he had become the Vicar of St Mary le Tower, the civic church of Ipswich, in addition to his living at Wilby and he was later joined there by his nephew Richard as his curate. As though that were not enough we find him inducted as Rector of Woolpit only three years later, again in addition to his two other livings. As some parishes were well endowed he may have been on the 18th century equivalent of 'a nice little earner' and it is not altogether surprising that the practice of ecclesiastical plurality was soon to be abandoned. Indeed it was exactly this ruling which forced his nephew, Richard to move from Ipswich to Wortham, initially against his wishes.

Pious Thomas remained as incumbent at all three churches until his death in 1831 whereupon he was buried at Woolpit in an elevated tomb behind the church, beside the road and opposite the gates to the Rectory. He was succeeded at Woolpit by his son the Rev John Spencer Cobbold (1768-1837) whose wife, though an elderly and blind widow, published 'Domestic Rhymes' in 1856 to help raise funds to rebuild the church tower which had been removed by lightning four years earlier. Keeping it in the family he was succeeded at St Mary le Tower by his son-in-law, the Rev Francis Cobbold (1803-1844).

It was perhaps his third son, the Rev William Rust Cobbold who caused him the most concern though the worst troubles to assail him occurred after his father's death. William was Vicar of Selborne at the time of the Workhouse Riots and it has to be admitted that he did not come out of the numerous altercations with much honour. To protect himself he enlisted the services of a huge dog which some said was the size of a lion, and the dog's equally huge collar is on display in the church to this day. It appears that one of the incidents was recorded in The London Gazette thus:

Whitehall, January 21st, 1823

Hereas it hath been humbly represented to the King that, about eleven o'clock in the night of Sunday the 12th instant; some evildisposed person or persons did wilfully and maliciously discharge a gun or pistol, loaded with shot into the parlour window of the house of the Reverend William Cobbold, Vicar of Selborne, in the county of Hants, with intent to do him some bodily harm;

His Majesty, for the better apprehending and bringing to justice the persons concerned in the outrage above mentioned, is 'hereby pleased' to promise His most gracious pardon to any One of them(except the person who actually fired the said gun or pistol), who shall discover his accomplice or accomplices therein, so that he, she, or they may be apprehended and convicted thereof.

ROBERT PEEL

And as a further encouragement, a reward of FIFTY GUINEAS is hereby offered by the said William Cobbold, to any person (except as aforesaid) who shall discover the said offender or offenders, so that he, she, or they may be apprehended and convicted of the said offence.

We do not know whether the offered pardon or reward was successful but we do know that William was run over by the Portsmouth Mail Coach in London and died at Belle Savage Inn on 19th August 1841, just 10 years after his father.

Anthony Cobbold