

The COBBOLD Family History Trust

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Patron: Lord Cobbold DL

JOHN COBBOLD (1745-1835)

THIRD GENERATION BREWER

The Trust has been sent a copy of an absolutely splendid silhouette of John Cobbold which we reproduce here. At the time this was painted he was 88 years old, had married and outlived two wives, had fathered 22 children, been a pillar of society and vigorously expanded his family business. An upright man in every sense!



The family brewery was founded in Harwich in 1723 by John's grandfather Thomas Cobbold (1680-1752). Thomas soon discovered that the water in Harwich was too brackish so in 1727 he started shipping clear spring water down the Orwell by barge from the 'Holy Wells'. The business prospered to the extent that in 1746 he decided to move his family and the brewery to a site on the Cliff above the Orwell at Holy Wells. There was a Cliff Brewery in Ipswich for a further 243 years. The founder died shortly afterwards and his son, another Thomas (1708-1767) took over. The business still flourished but 'young' Thomas died only 15 years after his father so that John, the 3rd generation found himself at the helm when only 22 years old. He had been educated at Greenwich and turned out to be a natural businessman. His granddaughter Emily Caroline (1819-1903) remembers him having fair hair and blue eyes. Other contemporary portraits suggest he was a well built man who having inherited property in Harwich and Dovercourt enjoyed an enviable lifestyle.

He married Elizabeth Wilkinson (1753-1790) in 1773 and she bore him 15 children in 17 years before unsurprisingly dying. Another Elizabeth, this time Clarke nee Knipe (1764-1824) was his second wife who gave him another 7 children in 8 years. As well as a brewer he was a merchant, a shipbuilder, a ship owner (at least 20), a banker and a Magistrate. With his philoprogenitive capacity satisfied, his business prosperous and his civic duties completed he died in 1835 at the age of 90. He was certainly entitled to feel that his life was a job well done.