

## THE BOTTLE 1847

August 2018

**George Cruikshank (1792-1878)** who was one of the most famous artists of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, became well known for his work under the auspices of the Temperance Reformers of the United Kingdom. Nowadays the ‘Nanny State’ seeks to persuade us to drink less but in Cruikshank’s day the message was total abstinence. **The Bottle**, his eight-plate series of temperance themed illustrations caused a sensation when it was first published in London in 1847. His etchings, inspired by the 18<sup>th</sup> century painter William Hogarth’s **The Rake’s Progress**, charted the drinker’s decline from first glass to unemployment, poverty, violence and insanity. The plates were cheaply produced to ensure that they were affordable to the urban working classes where the highest levels of drinking were thought to persist. This despite Cruikshank’s personal experience of an alcoholic father and brother which encouraged him to take the pledge in the year of publication.



George Cruikshank

**The Rev. Richard Cobbold (1797-1877)** #106 on the family tree, riding high on the success of **The History of Margaret Catchpole: A Suffolk Girl**, wrote a poem to accompany Cruikshank’s plates rather grandly described as: “The Bottle: or, Cruikshank Illustrated by the Rev. Richard Cobbold, AM, RD, Rector of Wortham; author of “Margaret Catchpole;” “Mary Anne Wellington;” “Zenon the Martyr;” Dedicated to all thinking men, who regard God’s Laws of Temperance, Sobriety, and Domestic Peace, more than THE BOTTLE.” Interestingly, it was published in London, New York and New South Wales. The verse is little better than doggerel but perhaps that is what was required at the time.

An original copy of the Cruikshank / Cobbold work incorporating illustrations and verses has recently been acquired by the Trust and we show the eight plates below. We were also pleased to find that our copy (probably one of very few remaining) included **The Drunkard’s Children, a sequel to The Bottle** with another eight Cruikshank plates and verses by **Charles Mackay LLD** published in 1848.



*Plate I The Bottle is brought out for the first time: the husband induces his wife “just to take a drop”*



*Plate II He is discharged from his employment for drunkenness; they pawn their clothes to supply The Bottle*



*Plate III An execution sweeps off the greater part of their furniture: they comfort themselves with The Bottle*



*Plate IV Unable to obtain employment, they are driven by poverty into the streets to beg, and by this means they still supply The Bottle*



*Plate V Cold, misery, and want, destroy their youngest child: they console themselves with The Bottle*



*Plate VI Fearful quarrels and brutal violence are the natural consequences of the frequent use of The Bottle*



*Plate VII The husband, in a state of furious drunkenness, kills his wife with the instrument of all their misery*



*Plate VIII The Bottle has done its work – it has destroyed the infant and the mother, it has brought the son and the daughter to vice and to the streets and has left the father a hopeless maniac.*