

Patron: Lord Cobbold DL
Ivry, Lady Freyberg

'Oh, come and be my Valentine...'

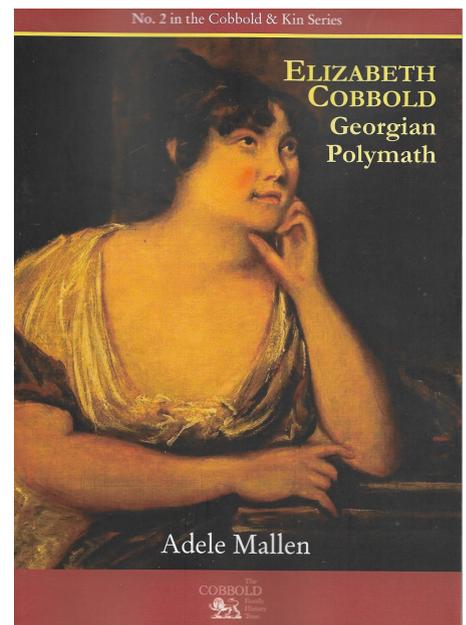
February 2021

St. Valentine's Day has become a global money spinner and it's a bit of fun we all enjoy, but what are its origins? Many agree that Valentine was a real person recognised by the Christian Church; a priest or even a bishop in the third century Roman Empire. Emperor Claudius believed that married men made reluctant soldiers due to their attachments. Valentine thought this was rather unfair and defied Claudius by secretly performing marriages for lovers. A livid Claudius had Valentine arrested and sentenced him to death. On 14th February 270 Valentine met his end. On the day of his execution Valentine wrote a touching note to his young lady signed simply "From your Valentine." A good many years later Valentine became the patron saint of lovers across Europe.

Traditionally, valentine's Day has been more significant for women than for men. This was certainly the case for Suffolk's own Elizabeth Cobbold (1765-1824) #58 on the web family tree described by Maggie Aggiss in Suffolk magazine February 2021 as a talented multi-tasking lady, wife of John Cobbold the Ipswich brewer. At a time when women were expected to quell their own interests in favour of raising children, Elizabeth was doing it all. (If you haven't read the Trust's book 'Elizabeth Cobbold Georgian Polymath' it is available from this website). In addition to being an accomplished writer and poet she was well read in Conchology, Mineralogy and Zoology. Her husband already had 14 children to which she added another 7. Their house, the Cliff and later Holywells were places bustling with activity but Elizabeth was also a party girl and every year threw an extravagant Valentine's Ball. It was the place to be and became the social event of the year. Using just scissors she would cut as many as 80 paper-cut Valentines for her guests each with a verse of her own writing. Unquestionably there was a little match-making going on – but if you can't do it on Valentine's Day when can you? – and we know of one couple who met at one of her balls and went on to be married. Mission accomplished!



A young Elizabeth



Book cover



'The Poppy and Ears of Corn' Paper-cut Valentine c 1816



'Cupid sleeping on a bed of Roses' Paper-cut Valentine c 1818