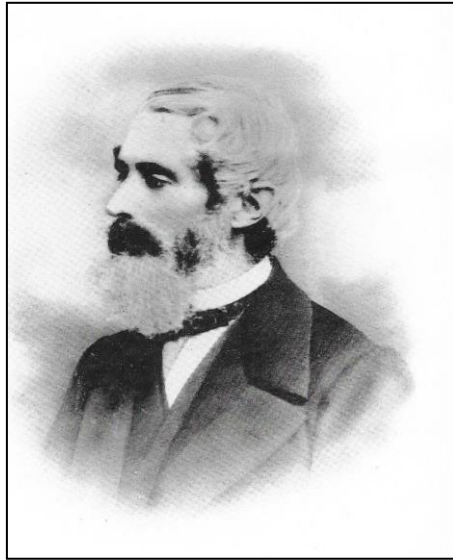


George Cocking (1808-1888)



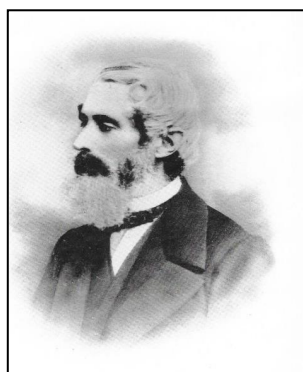
Baptised: Sandwich 21 November 1808

Died: Ludlow December 1888

George Cocking (1808-1888)

1. Introduction

George Cocking was baptised in St Peter's, Sandwich, Kent on the 21st November 1808, he married Elizabeth Harding at St Laurence's, Ludlow on the 12th September 1833. Little is known of the interim period or how he came to choose Ludlow as his home town. He was certainly in Ludlow during the passing of the Reform Bill in 1831 when it was noted that *"his figure could always be recognized at the political gatherings of 'the Reformers' whose headquarters were at the Golden Lion."* (Davies 1959). To have gained the hand of the daughter of such a prominent Ludlow citizen as William Harding would certainly suggest that a reasonable period of time had been spent in the town prior to the marriage.



George Cocking established himself as a chemist and druggist at 45 The Bull Ring in partnership with Henry Whittall (1789-1860). Whittall, a banker living at No. 7 Corve Street, was also married to a Harding - Elizabeth's aunt Mary Ann. Cocking soon immersed himself in the life of Ludlow. Elected to the Town Council in 1856 he became mayor in 1861. He served as a Justice of the Peace, a Trustee of the Town Charities and a Governor of the Grammar School etc., see his Obituary in Appendix 2). Cocking was also deeply involved in the Old Street Congregational Church acting as Secretary and Treasurer over a period of 22 years. He was a member of the church for 47 years.

2. Family

The Cocking family itself was well established in Sandwich. Grandfather Francis Cocking (1738-1815), a master grocer, was a Churchwarden at St Peter's - he married Hannah Reed at St Peter's in December 1800. Francis was joint proprietor with his son William of the business *'Cocking and Sons'*. Here lies a possible clue to George Cocking's choice of career as a pharmacist; Francis Cocking is variously described as a grocer, tallow chandler, stationer, bookseller, chapman and *druggist*. Francis was listed as bankrupt in the 1770s and the business was wound-up in 1812. William Cocking (1772-1842) continued in business as a stationer and bookseller. William's elder brother, John Maris Cocking (1767-1817) was a Hoyman. His youngest brother Joseph Cocking (1775-1835), George Cocking's father, was a 'Surveyor of His Majesty's Customs' based in Ramsgate at the time of his death. Joseph Cocking married Catherine Elizabeth Jordan in 1806 and they produced five children of which George Cocking was the second born. His sister Louisa Jane (1813-1892) was a witness to Cocking's wedding at St Laurence's, she later married George Chater, a wholesale stationer.

Back at Ludlow, George Cocking retired in 1877 handing over the business to his then partner Herbert Dawes. Herbert Dawes (1844-1882) was an apprentice to Edward Foster, Chemist and Druggist of Castle Street, Ludlow in 1861. He was proprietor of his own chemist and druggist business in Dursley, Gloucestershire in 1871 but by 1881 was a licensed victualler at Nos 41-42 The Bull Ring. Dawes died in 1882. The Chemists shop at 45 Bull Ring was in the possession of a George Woodhouse by 1881 and was followed by his son Wildish by 1911 - it retained the Woodhouse name until at least the early 1920s - George Woodhouse was apprentice to George Cocking in 1861. The business at 45 The Bull Ring was taken over by Boots the Chemist who later moved to the other side of the Bull Ring. The original shop is now occupied by an Oxfam bookshop (2017).

Note. Chemist and druggist was a term first used to describe both chemical and drug merchants and practitioners of the emerging profession of pharmacy from the late 1700s. Under the 1868 Pharmacy Act, the term 'Chemist and Druggist' was used by the Pharmaceutical Society to denote those who had passed its minor examination, and so met the minimum requirement to register as a pharmacist. After 1868, the use of the title of chemist and druggist became legally restricted to registered pharmacists only.

Royal Pharmaceutical Society rpharms.com



The shop at No. 45 The Bull Ring is shown here in the 1920s when it was under the patronage of Woodhouse and Sons.

Source: Ludlow in the The Archive Photographs Series edited by David Lloyd, published by Chalford in 1995.

3. George Cocking and the Ludlow Natural History Society

The Ludlow Natural History Society was established on the 12th October 1833 at a meeting held in the market hall with the following attendance;

Dr Lloyd, Rev T. Wellings, Mr Clark, Mr G. Morris, Mr H. Salwey, Mr Marston.

It was there agreed *'That there be a Museum and Library illustrative of the various departments of science for the use of the members'*. The affairs of the Society were to be regulated by a Committee of six members meeting quarterly. William Jones was appointed Treasurer and Curator.

George Cocking is first noted in the quarterly minutes of the 4th February 1835 meeting where he is listed as a 'Subscriber'. He was elected to the Committee on the 17th March 1836 and then appears intermittently. The Society had fallen on straitened circumstance by the beginning of 1839 when only two committee members were present at the 20 January meeting – the Chairman and Secretary. It was in debt to the amount of £150, approximately £10,000 in today's money. In March 1840 Cocking was appointed to a sub-committee *'to wait upon the various parties to ascertain on what terms considering the state of the institution's finances, their claims may be liquidated.* He was not elected to the reformed main Committee in November 1840.

The Society was 'resuscitated' at the January 1844 meeting and the debts were cleared by donations from Powis and The Hon. Clive etc. Cocking rejoined the committee in 1851. Three members; George Cocking, Robert Lightbody (proposed for membership by Humphry Salwey in 1852) and John Colvin the Secretary/Treasurer, were largely responsible for the success of the Society and its Museum over the next two to three decades. Cocking arranged for lectures to be held, was responsible for the cataloguing of the fossil collection and was a regular attendee at committee meetings. As Secretary to the Ludlow Mechanics Institute Cocking organised free entry to the museum for its members. He was also responsible for the procurement of additional cases and equipment for the fossil collection.

Cocking was known to be interested in all branches of natural history but specialised in geology - his obituary notice in the Ludlow Advertiser said that *'His labours in aid of the Museum and Natural History Society of the town (especially the geological Section) would alone entitle him to be remembered with respect.....'*

Cocking contributed some 100 fossils to the Ludlow Museum as listed in the La Touche catalogue of 1928 – examples of those where a location given are shown below:

Ordovician

C/b/3 Monograptus species Built

Silurian

D/b/11 *Orthis (Rhipidomella) hybrida* Sow. Burrington
D/b/50 *Calymene tuberculosa* Salter Burrington
D/b/58 *Phacops (Odontochile) caudatus* Brunn. Burrington
D/b/61 *Phacops (Odontochile) longicaudatus* Murch. Burrington
D/d/40 *Palaeodiscus ferox* Salter Church Hill, Leintwardine
D/d/57 *Lingula lata* Sow. Church Hill, Leintwardine
D/d/63 *Spirifer plicatellus* Linn. var. *interlinneatus* Sow. Mocktree
D/d/105 *Cornularia bifasciata* Salter = *C. aspera* Lindstr. Bridge, Downton
D/d/125 *Gomphoceras obovatum* Blake Mocktree
fig. Blake Mon. Brit. Foss. Cephalopoda Pl. XXII fig. 3, p.193
La Touche Shropshire Pl. XIX, figs. 657,658, p.22.
D/d/167 (*Pterygotus*) *Eurypterus punctatus* Salter Church Hill, Leintwardine
fig. Huxley & Salter Monogr. I, Mem. Geol. Survey U.K. Pl.XI, fig.2, p.101
D/f/22 (*Ecculiomphalus*) *Cyrtolites laevis* Sow. Whitcliffe Coppice
D/g/59 *Conularia Sowerbyi* Defr. Shelderton
D/g/63 *Orthoceras paralegans* Wahl. = *C. tracheale* Sow. Ludlow
D/g/73 *Orthoceras imbricatum* Wahl. Whitcliffe
D/g/83 *Homolonotus (Koenigia) knightii* Koenig Ludlow Castle walks
D/g/94 *Pterygotus problematicus* Agassiz Whitcliffe
fig. Huxley & Salter Monogr. I, Mem. Geol. Survey U.K. Pl.XIII, fig. 5
D/h/3 *Patchythea sphaerica* Hooker Tin Mill, Downton

Old Red Sandstone

E/a/6 'Fish defences' 'Onchus' Railway, Foldgate
E/a/7 'Fish defences' 'Onchus' Whitbatch
E/a/12 (*Pteraspis*) *Scaphaspis lloydii* Agassiz Whitbatch
E/a/16 *Cephalaspis (Eucaphalaspis) Lyalli* Agassiz Oakly Park

As with other contemporary members of the Society, Cocking's fossil donations to the museum were disposed of in 1947. A few examples remain at Ludlow:

G.00126 *Esopirifer plicatellus* Sow. Mocktree
G.00129-133 *Atrypa reticularis* (1 specimen, the others by Henry Pardoe)
G.00163/164 *Stophonella englypha* Hisinger (2 specimens)
G.15642 Fragment of a *Monograptus priodon* colony from the Coalbrook formation

(W. J. Norton Inventory Catalogue 1963)

Cocking would have had his own private 'cabinet' collection – this is referred to by John William Salter in Huxley and Salter (1859). There is also a reference to Cocking's own collection in Salter's unfinished 1864 monograph on the British trilobites regarding *Homolonotus Knightii*:

..... Others have been disinterred by the patient labour of the Shropshire geologists, and we are indebted to Mr. G. Cocking, of Ludlow, especially, for saving every specimen that could be preserved when the Ludlow railway was being made.

La Touche 1928 shows the location for *Homolonotus Knightii* as Ludlow Castle Walks and Whitcliffe, but there may be some confusion here with Lightbody's efforts at the railway. The whereabouts of Cocking's private collection is unknown.

Note that Cocking and Lightbody joined with Salter on the latter's second Longmynd excursion in 1856 - there is reference in Salter's 1857 paper to:

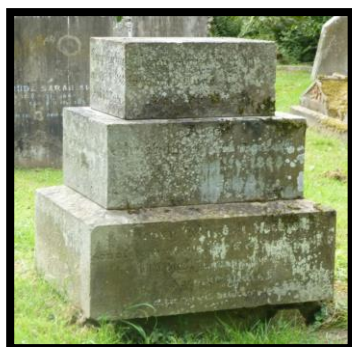
... a journey across the eastern portion of the Longmynd, in company with my friends, Messrs Lightbody and Cocking, of Ludlow, we found them (the annelids) at intervals all the way, until they ended with the sandstones of the Portway itself.

Salter visited the Ludlow Natural History Society in 1855 and helped to reorganise and name specimens in the Society's fossil collection, an act which led Cocking to propose a vote of thanks at the November 1855 Committee Meeting.

4. Death and Family

On his retirement in 1877, Cocking first moved to No. 1 Temeside but later on moved on to *The Hollies* in Gravel Hill where he died in December 1888.

George Cocking was buried in St Leonard's Cemetery, Corve Street on the 8th December 1888 – his wife Elizabeth had already been placed in the grave in August of that year - the couple were later to be joined by their son Henry Whittall (6 January 1916) and their daughter-in-law Anna Parmenter (6 February 1919). The grave had already received Elizabeth's spinster sister Mary Anne (10 June 1888). There was one further addition; George Cocking's niece Elizabeth Frances (Fanny) Harding born in India was buried 15 August 1896. The gravestone bears the message *Now lettest thou thy servant rest in peace!*



A memorial service was held at the Congregational Church with the Rev. W Burgess, pastor presiding. Cocking's obituary is attached at Appendix 2.

The Cocking family suffered from four infant deaths and the death of their son George at the age of 24. The surviving children were son Henry Whittall Cocking and two of the daughters. Alice Marion Cocking married Nicholas Temperley, a provisions merchant of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and a cousin of the Reverend John Temperley, minister at the Congregational Church 1866-1871. Mary Ellen Cocking married Theophilus Harris Davies son of the Reverend Theophilus Davies also a minister at the Old Street Church. Henry Whittall Cocking (1835-1916) worked in a furriers business in London (as a seal fur dresser and dyer) but a Henry Whittall Cocking is also found as a joint proprietor of Adams and Cocking, Lead and Glass Merchants of Upper Thames Street in 1880. Henry Whittall married Anna Parmenter Moss in Chelmsford 1864. He died in 1916 when living in St Pancras, London but, as mentioned above, was buried in the Cocking grave at St Leonard Churchyard in Ludlow as was his wife Anna Parmenter.

Dr J. A. Gosling
July 2018

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Appendix 1 The Cocking Family

Francis Cocking 'Grocer, tallow chandler, stationer, bookseller, chapman and druggist'
1738-1815

|

Joseph Cocking	m.	Catherine Elizabeth Maxwell
1775-1835		1776-1827
b. 05.02.1775		-
c. <i>St Peter, Sandwich</i> 02.03.1775		-
bd <i>Ramsgate</i> 03.01.1835		bd <i>Ramsgate</i> 26.10.1827

|

George Cocking	m.	Elizabeth Harding <i>St Laurence, Ludlow</i>
1808-1888		12.09 1833 1808-1888
b. <i>Sandwich</i> 05.10.1808		-
c. 21.11.1808		c. <i>Ludlow</i> 30.06.1808
bd <i>Ludlow</i> 08.12.1888		bd <i>Ludlow</i> 23.08.1888

|

William Henry	George	William	Elizabeth	Ellen
-	Whitall	-	Harding	
1834-1837	1835-1916	1837-1861	1838-1842	1839-1840
c. <i>Ludlow</i>	c. <i>Ludlow</i>	c. <i>Ludlow</i>	c. <i>Ludlow</i>	c. <i>Ludlow</i>
03.07.1834	20.12.1835	21.02.1837	16.07.1842	12.06.1839
.	d. <i>St Pancras</i>	d. 20.10.1861	d. 13.07.1842	d. 14.02.1840
bd 20.07.1834	bd 08.12.1916	bd 21.02.1837	bd 16.07.1842	bd 18.02.1840

|

m. Anna Parmenter Moss *Chelmsford* 1864
1839-1919
bd *Ludlow* 06.02.1919

.....

Alice	Mary	Mary
Marion	Louisa	Ellen
1848-1884	1845-1846	1849-1907
b. <i>Ludlow</i>	b. <i>Ludlow</i>	b. <i>Ludlow</i>
bd <i>Newcastle</i>	bd 02.07.1846	-
m. <i>Ludlow</i> 15.10.1873		m. <i>Ludlow</i> 05.10 1870.
Nicholas Temperley		Theophilus Harris Davies

Appendix 2 Death of George Cocking Esq., J. P.

A once familiar face in the town 1888, and one, which will be long held in memory, has been removed by the death of George Cocking, Esq., J.P., who, after a lingering illness quietly passed away at his residence, The Hollies, Gravel Hill, on Tuesday evening last. The deceased gentlemen had for several years past been in a state of health causing grave anxiety. In the death of Mr Cocking an important link is severed which connected him with the stirring incidents and measures which must be recorded in the history of the town during the past half century. He was closely identified with the exciting times incident to the passing of the Reform Bill, and his figure could always be recognised at the political gatherings of the 'Reformers' whose headquarters in those days were at the Golden Lion Hotel. Born of an old Kentish Family Mr Cocking married in 1833 the eldest daughter of the late Mr William Harding, of this town, and for some years was associated with Mr Whittall, whose name will be well known to the elder inhabitants of the borough. Mr Cocking was Borough Assessor in 1850, and became a member of the Town Council in 1856, filling the office of Mayor in 1861. He was a magistrate of the borough, a Trustee of the Town Charities, and a Governor of the Grammar School, for many years a member of the Finance Estates, and Almshouses Committees; and filled the office of Auditor to the Savings Bank for 16 years. Mr Cocking took an active part in the establishment of the Mechanics' Institute, which for many years was a most successful Society. He was largely instrumental in carrying out relief works in the winter seasons, by means of which the Whitcliffe walks were greatly improved. His labours in aid of the Museum and Natural History Society of the town (especially the geological section) would alone entitle him to be remembered with respect, while many institutions of a religious character found in him an earnest supporter. In the social circle Mr Cocking was a welcome acquisition, his general knowledge enabling him to throw light upon almost any topic of conversation.

Ludlow Advertiser 8 December 1888