

From Spondon to Cromford, Matlock Bath, and America

A sequel to: *Discovering my Spondon ancestry* [DFHS magazine Issue 135, December 2010, page 21]. In which I related how I'd thought that my maternal grandfather, George Ratcliffe's ancestors originated from the Wirksworth, Cromford, and Matlock Bath area. Only for his sister, my great aunt Dorothy, to reveal that her paternal grandfather (my 2x great-grandfather) William Longden Ratcliffe had come from Spondon. She'd been told that he'd gone to America; a chance encounter on a historical tour of Cromford led to this being confirmed. However the story begins with his parents:

George & Hannah Ratcliffe: My 3x great-grandparents

George Ratcliffe¹ was born at Beamhurst, Staffordshire on 28th April 1824. At Spondon church on 1st October 1850 he married Hannah Longden, the eldest daughter of William and Hannah Longden, she was born at Spondon on 27th September 1829. The witnesses, and possibly also the Best Man and Bridesmaid, were Hannah's brother William Longden² and her aunt Jemima Coxon³. Jemima was actually just a few months younger than Hannah and since they'd grown up next door to each other they probably had a more sisterly relationship. George was the gardener to Frederic Arkwright⁴, a member of the Cromford cotton mills family, who was residing at "The Hall". However, the Spondon Historical Society was able to clarify that this wasn't Spondon Hall but a more grandiose name for Field House⁵, which stood at the end of Park Road.



Field House, Spondon, c1866 [Spondon Historical Society]

George and Hannah had six children: George⁶, Hannah⁷, Mary⁸, Jemima⁹, William Longden; my 2x great-grandfather, and Ellen¹⁰. The first three died in infancy and were buried at Spondon. When, in 1866, Frederic Arkwright moved to Rock House, Cromford, George and his family went with him. The 1871 census records them being resident at Lime Tree Cottage¹¹, Cromford. It also indicated its location as being on the other side of Derby Road from Rock House. Where, I was

informed on a tour of Cromford village that, its gardener's cottage and kitchen garden was situated.

George died on 14th February 1878 and was buried in Cromford cemetery. His Will shows that he was reasonably well off, his executors were: Isaac Moss, Farmer of Old Turnpike, Uttoxeter; and Thomas Coxon¹², Publican of Spondon. His estate was valued at £3,000 and included houses and land at Spondon, and also a boat hire business at Matlock Bath; revealing that he'd entered into the tourism business: Matlock Bath had long been an inland tourist resort and since arrival of the railway it'd become an accessible and popular destination for day trippers from the surrounding industrial towns.

In the 1891 census his widow Hannah was living on Derby Road, Matlock Bath giving her occupation as Boat Proprietress, her daughter Ellen is listed as her assistant, and also staying with her is Charles Wm Sinfoil; her cousin and son of her aunt, Jemima Coxon. Hannah also appears in *Kelly's Directory*¹³ for 1895, her address is listed in the residential section of Matlock Bath as: No. 4 Woodlands Terrace. She is also listed in the commercial section as having refreshment rooms and as a boat owner at Riverside, Derby Road.

I wasn't able to track Hannah down in the 1881 census until it was indexed and made available on the web. I found her in Derby as a visitor in the household of Thomas Watson Brooks, a tea dealer, at 25½ Friar Gate¹⁴, Derby; he may have supplied tea for her refreshment rooms.

Hannah died on 5th November 1896 and was buried with her husband. In her Will she left everything to her daughter Ellen, who was also her executrix and now named as Ellen Shaw; she'd married Joseph Shaw in 1892. Their first two children, twin daughters Kathleen and Eleanora were born at Matlock Bath and baptized there on 16th September 1893 their residence though was recorded as 12 Wilfred Street, Derby. Hannah's other executor was William Peat; butcher of Spondon

When I found George and Hannah's grave in Cromford cemetery; I also discovered that their daughter Jemima, who'd married William Lea at Cromford in 1876, was buried with them having died in 1879 aged 23 years.

William & Emily Ratcliffe: My 2x great-grandparents

On 14th October 1857, William Longden Ratcliffe became the last of the line of my ancestors to be born at Spondon. At Cromford church on 2nd May 1881, giving his occupation as Boat proprietor, he married Emily Statham¹⁵, her father; George Statham¹⁶, who'd died in 1872, had been a butcher and licensed victualler at the Cock Inn¹⁷, Cromford. In the 1881 census William and Emily were resident at Lime Tree Cottage, William's occupation was recorded as a butcher; possibly he'd also taken on the butchery side of George Statham's business; his widow Maria¹⁸ was continuing as the licensed victualler.

William and Emily had one child, my great-grandfather George, who was born at Cromford on 29th December 1881. After this time William seems to vanish; I couldn't find any record of him in the 1891 census or any record of his death. However, George and his mother Emily who was recorded as a butcher were living with her mother Maria who was still the innkeeper at the Cock Inn, and also now a farmer. Also living there was another of Maria's grandsons; Samuel Brown¹⁹ who was recorded as a butchers assistant. Emily also appears in *Kelly's Directory* for 1895, in the Matlock Bath commercial section as having refreshment rooms.

Emily died on 7th December 1899, aged 44, and was buried in Cromford cemetery.

George & Millicent Ratcliffe: My great-grandparents

The 1901 census shows that George was still with his grandmother at the same place, but it was no longer named as the Cock Inn. Her grandson Samuel, now married with a young family, had become the head of household; his occupation was stated as Butcher shopkeeper, George was recorded as a Butchers assistant. He most likely remained there until he married Millicent Marple²⁰, the daughter of Henry and Hannah Marple, at Cromford church on 25th May 1903. Their daughter, my great aunt Dorothy, who revealed my Spondon ancestry, also told me that her family had lived on North Parade, Matlock Bath, where her father had a butchers shop and her mother had run a restaurant next door. The photograph of North Parade taken around 1910 shows a name board “Ratcliffe’s Dining Rooms” on the building to the right of the car. The photograph of their first three children: Frances Maria²¹, George²²; my grandfather born in 1906, and Dorothy²³ would’ve been taken just before the outbreak of the Great War; a conflict which was to have a tragic outcome for the family.



North Parade, Matlock Bath [Wirksworth website on www.wirksworth.co.uk]



From left, Dorothy, George, and Frances Ratcliffe

Later revelations

During the 2009 *Discovery Days Festival* celebrating Derbyshire's World Heritage Site – the Derwent Valley Mills, I attended some events at Cromford to get a greater insight into the places which would have been familiar to my ancestors. These included *The Walk to Rock House* and the *Tour of St Mary's Church, Willersley and Grounds*. After telling the guide of the latter, about my ancestors' connections to Cromford and Matlock Bath he asked me to send him any information I had as they were interested in all aspects of the villages' history. Since I'm always willing to share anything I know or have found, I sent him a short account; I later received an e-mail from a member of the Arkwright Society giving me some information from her research. This revealed that George Ratcliffe had been the licensee of the boating rights on the lower Derwent, and also of the "Lovers Walks"; A series of footpaths on the east bank of the Derwent. They were subsequently held by Hannah until she died: Widows continuing their husband's business seem to prevail amongst my ancestors. There was also information from Newspaper reports that explained Williams's absence: He'd had a run in with the law over an assault and had absconded to America. A few years later he returned and with the help of his wife had got the Home Secretary to waive his penalty. Two years later there was a serious disturbance between him and his wife, who was seen hanging over the balcony of their home and was rescued. He again absconded to America and died there in 1898.

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¹ Spelt Ratcliff in: Spondon marriage register, & Marriage certificate; 1851 & 1861 census

² William Longden: baptized at Spondon on 2nd March 1831; married Jane Dale Jackson at Spondon on 10th August 1852.

³ Jemima Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 9th April 1830; married (1) Charles William Sinfoil; married (2) Clay Hall; died on 25th September 1912 and was buried in Spondon cemetery.

⁴ Frederic Arkwright: born 16th August 1806; died 6th December 1874; in his Will (Proved at the Principal Registry of H.M. Court of Probate on 10th February 1875) [page 1, lines 11 & 12] he bequeathed George Ratcliff; his gardener £100

⁵ Field House now demolished; Its site is occupied by West Park Community School, and part of its parkland is now the West Park Meadow nature reserve

⁶ George Ratcliffe: baptized at Spondon on 6th April 1851

⁷ Hannah Ratcliffe: baptized at Spondon on 13th March 1853

⁸ Mary Ratcliffe: baptized at Spondon on 26th October 1854

⁹ Jemima Ratcliffe: baptized at Spondon on 14th October 1855; married William Lea at Cromford on 24th April 1877; died 13th May 1879; buried at Cromford

¹⁰ Ellen Ratcliffe: baptized at Spondon on 1st May 1864; married Joseph Shaw

¹¹ Lime Tree Cottage: the 1871 census indicates it to be adjacent to *The Ashes* and *Oakhill*; now named *Alison House*

¹² Thomas Coxon: Publican of the White Swan, Spondon: George Ratcliffe's wife Hannah's cousin; son of her mother's brother Thomas Coxon

¹³ Kelly's Directory of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire 1895

¹⁴ Maxwell Craven, *The Derby Townhouse* (The Breedon Book Publishing Company Ltd, 45 Friar Gate, Derby, 1987: ISBN 0 907969 31 3) Names No.25, Friargate as Chesshyre's House, known as the 'Queen Anne House', and states that in 1874 it was the residence and office of Francis Bassano, attorney, and that a part of it had been let separately. Presumably this would've been No.25½ where Hannah was staying. The house was demolished in 1938: Until recently its site was a car-park on the south-east corner of the junction of Friar Gate and Ford Street: Now absorbed by the widening of Ford Street as part of the 'Connecting Derby' road works

¹⁵ Emily Statham: born 11th July 1855 at Bonsall

¹⁶ George Statham: born 8th October 1821 at Bonsall; married Maria Oliver at Duffield on 25th December 1843; died 24th September 1872 at Cromford; buried at Bonsall

¹⁷ Situated on the lower corner (opposite to the Bell Inn) of the junction of North Street and Cromford Hill

¹⁸ Maria Oliver: born 9th February 1823 at Bonsall; married George Statham at Duffield on 25th December 1843; died 1910 [GRO Deaths March 1910 Bakewell 7b 491 Maria Statham age 87 (Free BMD)]

¹⁹ Samuel Brown: son of Aaron Brown and Louisa nee Statham; Emily Statham's sister

²⁰ Millicent Marple: born at Bolehill, Wirksworth on 2nd May 1883; died 3rd December 1965

²¹ Frances Maria Ratcliffe: born 25th November 1904; married Lawrence Brewer [GRO Marriages September 1925 Belper 7b 1671 Lawrence Brewer & Frances Maria Ratcliffe (Free BMD)]; died 2nd November 1940; buried at Wirksworth

²² George Ratcliffe: born at Matlock Bath on 24th February 1906; married Charlotte Agnes Riley at Idridgehay on 27th July 1931; died 1st July 1969

²³ Dorothy Ratcliffe: born 21st December 1908; married Thomas Parker at Matlock Bath on 3rd February 1928; died 1995