

Patron: Lord Cobbold DL
Ivry, Lady Freyberg
Nicholas Cobbold OBE

GETTING A RESEARCH PROJECT INTO PRINT

April 2015

We show here a 3 page article by Catherine Lerner which appeared in the April 2015 edition of Family Tree magazine.

SHARING RESEARCH

*Round Pond and Christchurch Mansion,
Ipswich*



Christchurch Park was given to Ipswich
by Felix Thornley Cobbold in 1894.

Journalist
Catherine Lerner talks to Anthony Cobbold, who has recently collaborated with a historian to publish a detailed account of his East Anglian family.

Getting a research project into print

Any one of the members of the Cobbold family would make a fascinating biography in their own right. Their bold, enterprising and adventurous spirit led some to set up home in Australia, Canada, India and the Far East, as well as the far reaches of the British Isles, and among their number was a railway pioneer, an explorer, a geologist, composer, novelist, numerous war heroes, bankers and priests, and a few famous names – Lillie Langtry and Lord Kitchener are related to the family. This is the story of how Anthony Cobbold, the founder of the Cobbold Family History Trust (www.cobboldfht.com), worked with researchers and publishers to share his family's fascinating history.

Anthony's story
'It was at a family birthday that I first remember becoming intrigued with my name and heritage. My father held a dinner party and on the back of the menu had presented a family tree showing all the relatives who had been invited. There were 15 or 20 of us there I suppose, but I was so impressed by that little drawing that I wondered why we couldn't go a bit further.

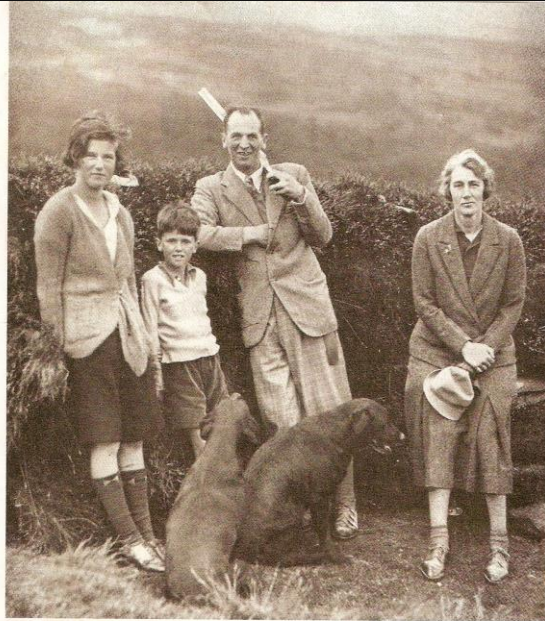
Sharing information
'As I explored, I discovered more and more astonishing personalities coming out of the shadows, and the extent of the achievements of the Cobbold family gradually became apparent. It is an extraordinary privilege to belong to such an astonishing line, and I feel

a certain responsibility in keeping their names and memories alive.
There was no time to do much about it while paying the mortgage, holding down a job and educating the children, but when that was largely over I thought it would make a good hobby, preferable to growing roses. I had by then accumulated some memorabilia – pictures, artefacts and documents – and I didn't fancy the idea of the collection being broken up so I put it all into a charitable trust, which I hope will eventually find a home in a permanent exhibition. Now, 10 years later, I have a website making 8,000 names available to anyone interested in looking them up. It is free and gets a large number of hits, but I have always wanted these stories to be more widely known.

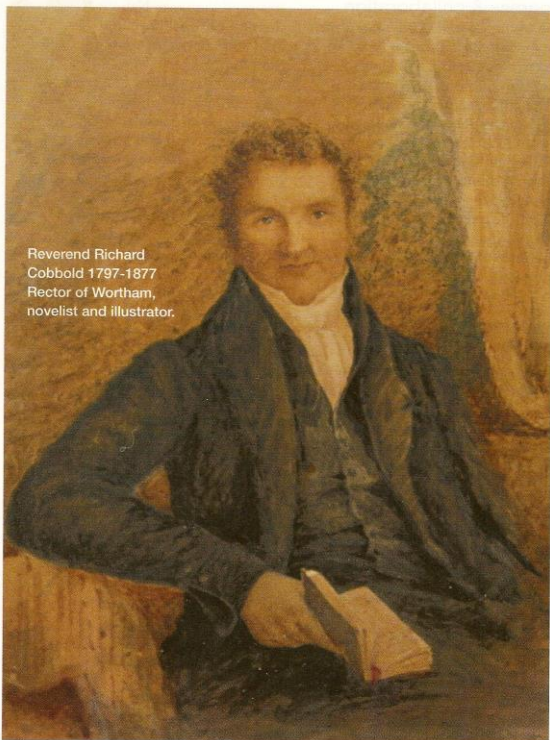
22 Family Tree April 2015

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John Murray Cobbold and his family.



Reverend Richard
 Cobbold 1797-1877
 Rector of Worthing,
 novelist and illustrator.

Images All images courtesy of the Cobbold Trust.

On to the printed page

Over the years I have sponsored a small number of works written by or about individual Cobbold members, and when I was approached by someone researching the 18th-century polymath Elizabeth Cobbold, one of the family's great matriarchs, I set about looking for a publisher for what I considered an important biography.

East Anglian origins

The Cobbold name is particularly well-known in East Anglia – you can't step into a village pub, watch a football match at Portman Road, walk on the seafront at Felixstowe, visit the Ipswich museum or town parks without encountering some mention of this high-achieving family – so I had high hopes that my proposal would appeal to a well-known Suffolk publisher.

To cut a long story short, it did not. The publisher said a biography of Elizabeth Cobbold would be too singular and wouldn't have wide enough appeal.

Breakthrough

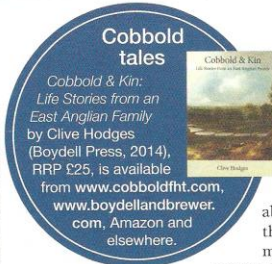
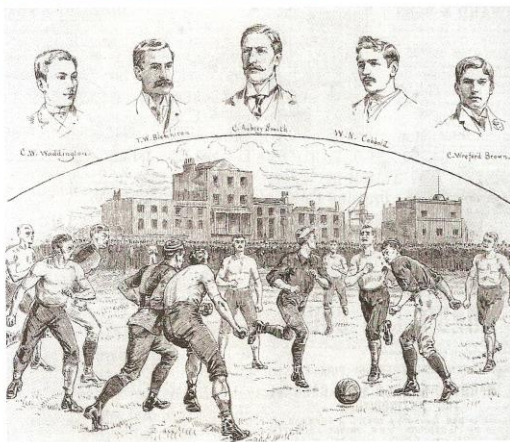
But what happened next was quite extraordinary. I was having lunch with a historian called Clive Hodges. He was completing a PhD about the Great Game (the rivalry and conflict between the British and Russian empires over supremacy in Central Asia, c1813-1907) and had encountered Captain Ralph Patteson Cobbold, who spied against the Russians in Central Asia in the late-19th century. Clive visited me to consult the trust's collection of Ralph's records. As we were discussing his research, an email arrived from the same publisher saying that a book of wider interest about the Cobbold family would be of considerable interest. It seemed very fortuitous. Here was the publisher suggesting the topic for a book just as I was meeting a historian who was equipped to write that book.

Together we devised a framework that would feature 32 members of the Cobbold family in one book. Eight themes would reveal the enormous scope of the expertise and enthusiasms of this vast family – from industry and agriculture to the arts, military service to faith, the empire to public service, sport to science and academia.

We felt that putting together a collection of personalities would have something to interest everyone. It was very much like being a football team manager – we wanted a blend of different disciplines and, inevitably, had to leave some talent

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William Cobbold played for the Old Carthusians against Preston North End in the 1887 FA Cup.

out of the final squad. Our eventual selections for each theme or field of endeavour comprised a mixture of Cobbold and not-Cobbold, male and female, familiar names and some surprises. All were hugely interesting in their own way.

The only absolute among our selection criteria was that each subject should no longer be with us. Beyond that we sought to achieve a balance between Cobbolds and those from other families linked by marriage. This would make the book more interesting to a broader spectrum of people and by presenting the personalities within themes, we avoided the who-begat-who issue.

The publisher helped by suggesting the key requirements for the title. The Cobbold name had to be there, but we also had to reflect the book's

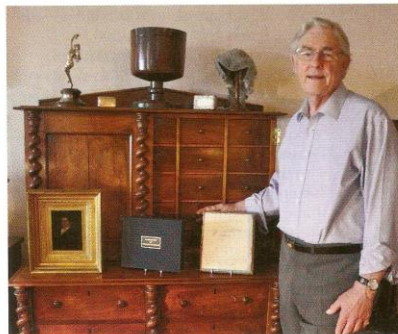
broader appeal, so it became *Cobbold & Kin*. The subtitle highlighted the family's East Anglian roots and told the reader that the book was made up of individual life stories.

Progress & collaboration

'The result, *Cobbold & Kin: Life Stories from an East Anglian Family* took two years to compile and a further six months to publish. Clive worked on the book chapter by chapter. I gathered together the material and he would visit me in Devon, from his home in Bristol, to consult it. We would discuss each subject and he would take away any material he thought he needed. Each individual biography had to be quite short and sometimes this proved a challenge. Trying to fit Lord Kitchener's life into 3,000 words, for example, was

difficult and there were a number of entries like that. In addition to the trust's archive material, Clive consulted a wide range of primary and secondary sources to enable him to boil down to the essentials of each subject's life and work. He acknowledged these sources within the

Anthony Cobbold with some of the Cobbold collection treasures.



book. Occasionally his research led to new discoveries about the people or their relatives. Other members of the family reviewed the work and gave helpful suggestions, and the publisher guided us in the presentation of the material. We decided not to use colour images inside the book as almost all the photographs we wanted to use were black and white. The 283-page book carried 67 photographs. Colour on the cover came by way of an excellent reproduction of Gainsborough's painting of Holywells, the former family home of the Cobbolds in Ipswich.

Future plans

'Clive and I have ideas for further books about the family. A self-published history of Holywells will be ready this summer. Its launch will coincide with the reopening of the old orangery and stable block, recently restored thanks to National Lottery money. Clive will format the pages and add images before sending PDF files to print.

Publishing *Cobbold & Kin* wasn't straightforward. The publishing industry to an outsider is difficult to get to grips with and it is sometimes necessary to trust *your* instincts and not compromise *your* vision for *your* book. On one thing the publisher was absolutely right. Some people will buy this book because they have an association with the brewery, some will buy it because they have an association with the football club, or are interested in military history, or have links to one of the many families connected to the Cobbolds through marriage. So the reasons for people to buy the book are legion.'

About the author

Catherine Larner is a freelance journalist contributing lifestyle articles to national and regional newspapers and magazines, and reviews books on local radio and in the press. She also works for a variety of publishers editing history and other non-fiction titles, and organises author events for her local independent bookshop.

