



RUB-A-DUB-DUB

November 2025

Rub-a-dub-dub,
Three men in a tub,
And who do you think they be?
The butcher, the banker, the wet-dock maker—
All on the family tree!

This playful rhyme fits remarkably well when we look back at three extraordinary men on the family tree —each a key figure in his own field, and each leaving a legacy.

The Butcher: John Morley (1656–1732) – #15088

John Morley may have started out as a humble butcher in Halstead, East Anglia, but he quickly earned a reputation for much more. Known locally for ceremonially killing a pig in Halstead market each year—a tradition that earned him a groat—John’s ambitions didn’t end with meat. Through savvy land deals and mercantile work, he became known as Merchant Morley.

Most notably, he acted on behalf of the powerful Harley family, reportedly brokering the marriage between Edward Harley (later the 2nd Earl of Oxford) and Lady Henrietta Cavendish-Holles, heiress to the 4th Duke of Newcastle. His commission? A staggering £10,000—a small fortune in its day.

Not everyone was impressed. Jonathan Swift, the famed satirist, wrote disparagingly in 1738: “I remember a rascally butcher, one Morley, a great land jobber and knave...” Whatever Swift thought, Morley’s success speaks for itself.

His legacy continued through his daughter Anna, who married Reverend Thomas Fiske, ancestor to Harriet Temple Chevallier. And that takes us to the next key figure...

The Banker: John Wilkinson Cobbold (1774–1860) – #77

John Wilkinson Cobbold married into the Chevallier family, known for their Norman roots and cyder-making expertise. Following the death of his father, “Big John” Cobbold, he and his wife dove into expanding the family’s business empire.

In 1839, John Wilkinson helped found the Harwich Bank of Cox, Cobbold & Co, making him the first Cobbold banker. The bank flourished and stayed in family hands for 65 years, with successive generations continuing the tradition of enterprise and civic involvement.

The Wet-Dock Maker: John Chevallier Cobbold (1797–1882) – #114

Son of the banker, John Chevallier Cobbold was a true Victorian dynamo. With energy to spare and vision to match, he wore many hats: MP for Ipswich (1847–1868), Justice of the Peace, Mayor of Ipswich (1841), and Deputy Lieutenant of Suffolk.

He played a key role in bringing the railway to Ipswich as Chairman of the Eastern Union Railway and helped transform Felixstowe into a seaside retreat. But his most enduring achievement? Spearheading the development of the Ipswich Wet Dock. Today, the Waterfront remains one of the town’s most prized assets—a testament to his foresight and dedication.

So there you have it—three men, three remarkable stories:

- John Morley, the ambitious butcher-turned-land-agent
- John Wilkinson Cobbold, the enterprising banker
- John Chevallier Cobbold, the visionary wet-dock maker