

# A Family Disintegrates

John Blyth Rogers 1801-1860  
Emma Millicent Cobden 1800-1836

## Mary Ann's twins

**John Blyth Rogers** and his twin Charles Fletcher Rogers<sup>1</sup> were born on March 10<sup>th</sup> 1801 at Gad's Hill, Gillingham in Kent to **Mary Ann (nee Blyth)** and **George Vining Rogers**, an army doctor of Portsea Hampshire, living at Shanklin on the Isle of Wight. There are two explanations of how Mary Ann came to be so far away from Hampshire, in Kent. The first is that she was on her way to visit her father John Blyth where he worked at nearby Chatham Dockyard. The other is that she was on her way to visit her uncle Samuel, a chief constructor at the Sheerness dockyard, also not far away from there.

Whatever the reason for making her journey whilst heavily pregnant, the infants were delivered safely and brought back home where they were baptised at St Mary's Portsea on October 25<sup>th</sup>. John, born half an hour before Charles, was the Rogers' second child, having an older brother George Vining who was born only a little over a year earlier. They were to have 13 more siblings between 1804 and 1827. The Rogers moved to Bishop's Waltham in 1802 where their father established his own medical practice, following in his father William's footsteps. Then in 1805, the family, now with four children, another brother being born in 1804, moved further north to West Meon in the Meon Valley where the parents would remain for the rest of their lives.



St Mary's Portsea (demolished 1843) where the twins John and Charles Rogers were baptised in 1801 Source: [www.portsmouth.co.uk](http://www.portsmouth.co.uk)



Below left: *The Cedars* West Meon in 1860s - the home of the Rogers' family and where John Blyth Rogers spent his childhood. Man in the centre is John's brother Francis S. Rogers with his first wife Emily and niece Laetitia. Source: *Family Papers of J.E.T. Rogers* Below: *The Cedars* today. Photo: Euan McGillivray 2018



## A licensed apothecary

Like his father and grandfather, and as several of his brothers were to be, John was educated for the medical profession, and he probably began his primary education at Bishop's Waltham where other family members went to school. John's uncle William Heron Rogers was a medical practitioner at Gravesend in Kent, and by about 1819 John, now about 18 years old, was working with him, probably as a medical apprentice or assistant. However, due to the failing health of his grandfather Dr William Rogers in Droxford, John returned to Hampshire to assist in firstly his father's practice at West Meon, and then his grandfather's practice at Droxford. The only other record we have of John's medical training was in 1823 when he became a Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries London.<sup>2</sup>

## From Heyshott to West Meon

**Emma Millicent Cobden**, the second child and eldest daughter of **William Cobden** and **Millicent Amber**, was born on December 11th 1800 at Heyshott near Midhurst in Sussex where her parents were yeoman farmers at *Dunford*. The Cobdens had been farmers in this area for generations and Emma's grandfather had held a position of chief magistrate. But Emma's father had not the same business skills as his forebears and consequently through harder economic times, was not able to sustain the family's fortunes and social position. On her grandfather's death in 1809, their farm was sold and Emma's family moved to farm at nearby *Gilder's Oak* (also called *Guillard's Oak*) in the vicinity of the town of Midhurst.



*Guillard's Oak / Gilder's Oak*  
farm house today. Photo: Euan  
McGillivray 2014

A family history of the Cobdens I have recently discovered<sup>3</sup> written by Emma's granddaughter Agnes Rogers (nee Cooper) says that Emma received an early education whilst living with her uncle Thomas Rhoades, a solicitor in Chichester and her aunt Sarah. They had a daughter, Fanny<sup>4</sup>, who was in need of a companion (having several brothers and two older sisters), so Emma was invited to live with them and the two girls became like sisters. The real reason for having Emma stay with the Rhoades may have been to help out her father when the Cobdens were under financial stress. Emma must have received a good education judging by her letter writing which shows her literacy to be of a high standard. It is also probable that Emma's mother Millicent, a very intelligent woman from all accounts, may have been her teacher at other times.





English 'Walking Dress' and bonnet of 1818 of the period when the Cobdens had a drapery and millinery shop in West Meon and Farnham. Source: [www.regrom.com](http://www.regrom.com)

## A drapery shop in West Meon

Further financial troubles led them to sell up in 1814 and move to West Meon in Hampshire, where they became tenants of the Rogers and now depended on running a small drapery and millinery business for a living. Her mother ran the shop and Emma with her sister Millicent, would have been employed in this family business.

## Emma's sewing

Emma's eldest brothers Frederick and Richard worked for textile businesses in London in these early years. They tried to support their family's business by sending them orders and stock. But at one time Richard complained of Emma's shirt making ability:

'I have sent you the size of my Collars & also the size of my neck & wrist The last shirts I got were made by Emma & do not reflect much credit on her for unless I stick a pin in behind my neck to shorten the Collar it falls half way down over my shoulders & that is not comfortable in Cold weather.'<sup>5</sup>



Emma's brother Richard Cobden c1843. He wasn't impressed with her sewing! Source: National Portrait Gallery London.

## Cobden family letters

Richard went on to become a famous leader of the Anti-Corn Law League, a promoter of free trade and an MP (as well as close friend of John's younger brother Prof. J. E. Thorold Rogers) and it's through many of the preserved letters between all the siblings, particularly Fred and Richard who travelled widely, and their father William, that we find out so much about the Cobden family, the closeness between the brothers and sisters, and also their interactions with the Rogers. Agnes Rogers quotes one of these letters in her Cobden family history, to give an example of how Emma may have appeared. She gives an excerpt from a letter, undated, written by Richard Cobden sometime after Emma's death, when he observed a young woman on board a sailing ship who resembled his sister:

'She had the same glossy hair, the same intellectual forehead the identical form of temples so elevated and so clear then she possessed precisely those fascinating eyes which no age could resist, and all her vivacity of expression which few had spirit or wit to encounter..... I looked at her and remembered our favourite but lost sister Emma ..... in silence and sadness.'<sup>6</sup>

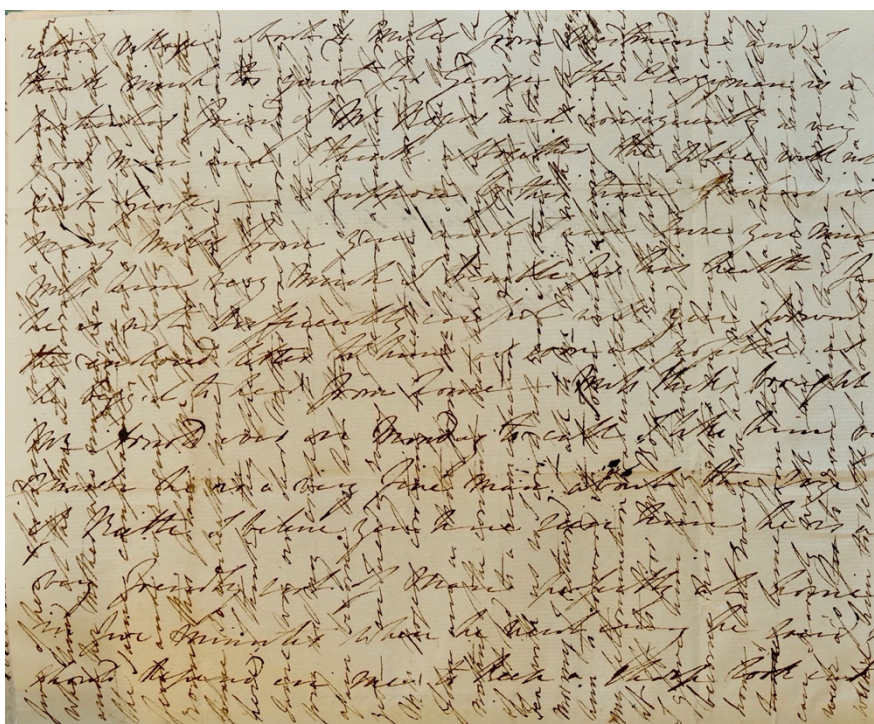
Despite Richard's criticism of Emma's sewing skills, he clearly was extremely fond of his eldest sister.

## Rocky relationship

The Cobden and Rogers families became good friends and John's father, George Vining Rogers snr, was their family doctor. From the Cobden's letters it seems that John was pursuing a serious relationship with Emma from at least 1825. One letter dated June 12<sup>th</sup> 1825 from Emma's father in West Meon to her brother Fred asks about John and Emma's relationship:

'I see William Rogers the other day he said his Brother & him spent the evening with you Richard & Charles was there anything in particular past respecting their brother John & Emma or not poor Girl'<sup>7</sup>

'poor Girl!' - was John not the best catch?



A page of Emma's handwriting - a letter to her brother in 1827 written in economical cross-writing to save paper and postal charges. Source: West Sussex Record Office

But John was persistent in trying to establish a relationship with Emma. A letter Emma wrote from West Meon to her brother Richard on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1825 indicates how she felt about this at the time. In it she refers to an attempt by John to beg her forgiveness - for who knows what.... annoying her with offers of marriage?

'on Thursday evening I received a packet from Mr Rogers [John's father] enclosing a note from him saying "these papers came from Kingsclere I was desired to forward them to you and happy should I be if they were to lead to a reconciliation" the papers (five sheets full) contained a great many postulations and many regrets in fact all he could say for himself which amounts to nothing at all and entreating my forgiveness & this he has long had, and my thanks too for I am sure I ought to be thankful for the escape, the papers I packed up with the remainder of his letters and sent them to his Father accompanied by a letter in which I requested him to forward them to Kingsclere and at the same time giving Mr Rogers fully to understand that neither now or at any future time could I consent to become his Son's Wife, poor Man I really pity him and am not surprised he should wish John to be respectfully settled'<sup>8</sup>.

It is also clear from this that John's father thinks his son needs a settling influence in his life and that Emma would be most suitable. However, at least at this stage, Emma was not at all interested.

### Emma's mother dies

In 1825 on July 19<sup>th</sup> Emma's mother died in West Meon. She had been tending a sick child in the neighbourhood when she caught the same disease - typhoid. She had been the strength of the family and had kept the business running. With her gone, the whole family, particularly her husband who was heavily dependent upon her, was devastated. Now, Emma the eldest daughter of the 11 children, was shouldering the emotional responsibility of their father, seriously weakened by the loss of his wife.



Emma's mother Millicent Cobden.  
Miniature by R. Dudman c1798.  
Source: Manchester City Council

### Fragile Emma

Emma had not been a well person on and off for a few years. She had occasionally spent time away from the dampness of West Meon to take advantage of sunshine in places such as the Isle of Wight on a holiday with her brother Richard, or time recovering from illness with extended family in nearby Bishop's Waltham or at Amberley in Sussex. Her sister Jane wrote to Frederick on July 17<sup>th</sup> 1826 regarding Emma's health and that of the shop:

'I very much fear her health is in a precarious state, she eats nothing and is really a mere shadow she has such dreadful headaches which I am convinced proceed in a great measure from a harassed state of mind she has for some time past as well as myself been very anxious about our little business and fearful of us not going on so prosperously as we could wish, and I very much fear my dear Brother that unless some alteration takes place it will be impossible for us to remain here.'<sup>9</sup>

### Leaving West Meon

Although the Cobdens were very reluctant to leave their good friends in West Meon, with their small business struggling they were forced to make a move to nearby Farnham, a market town that had a larger and more affluent population than the little village of West Meon. They hoped it could be the answer to their economic woes. The move was made in the early months of 1827.





Castle Street Farnham c1913. With many medieval and Georgian buildings, little would have changed since Emma was there in 1827

Source: [www.alangodfrey.com/maps/co.uk](http://www.alangodfrey.com/maps/co.uk)

## Emma and John are reconciled

Finally, John's persistence paid off and he seems to have won Emma over. Emma's sister Millicent writes in her letter to brother Fred:

'..... you will therefore see it [a house the Cobdens were hoping to move to in Castle Street Farnham] my dear Fred when you come down to Emma's wedding which is fixed (if nothing unforeseen happens) for next Saturday 3 weeks as it will suit John best, ....'<sup>10</sup>

' if nothing unforeseen happens '? Sounds like there were still issues! I hope Emma's feelings towards John had changed and that she was not under pressure to marry so as not to be a burden on her family.

## Wedding preparations

The date was set for October 16<sup>th</sup> 1827 at St Andrew's Church in Farnham, probably a special occasion for the family as Emma was the first of William's children to marry.

The Cobdens, still struggling to make ends meet, were determined to make the wedding a happy celebration. Emma's father writes to Millicent and Fred on October 9<sup>th</sup>:

'I am given to understand Emma intends changing her name on the 16th I know you & Richard are made acquainted with it and I sincerely hope you will both be here before that day we received a letter from Richard he says we may expect to see him on Sunday I hope Fred if you can conveniently come with him you will on that day - if not I hope you will be here Tuesday next as it is Emma's particular wish and you have not seen John Rogers for a long time I hope nothing will prevent our being together on that day - what think you Fred of Richard asking Mr Cole [Emma's uncle and employer of Richard] for a bottle or two of wine or spirits as we have not a half a bottle of spirits in the House at this time - and I have no doubt myself that he would send some on this Occasion...'<sup>11</sup>

## The wedding dress

Emma also had to be thrifty with her wedding outfit. On October 10<sup>th</sup> Millicent writes to her brother Fred:

'Emma desires her kind love and says will not put you to the expense of a flock veil as she can make a gauze one do quite as well she is extremely obliged to you all for your kind presents ... we all think the Stockings and Gloves a very handsome present my Uncle Charles<sup>12</sup> has not yet sent the wedding dress if he sends it to you please to forward it to us immediately as we have to make it up do not keep it untill(sic) you come down....'<sup>13</sup>



Emma's wedding dress may have been similar to this (1827-9) in shape, but possibly less elaborate. Source: Gloucester Museum

Presumably the dress was ready in time and the wedding went ahead as planned at the church in Farnham.



Church at Farnham, where John and Emma married in 1827. Emma's father William, and brothers Richard and Fred were the marriage witnesses. Source: Paul Jackson flickr.com



View of Farnham Church today. Photo: Euan McGillivray 2014



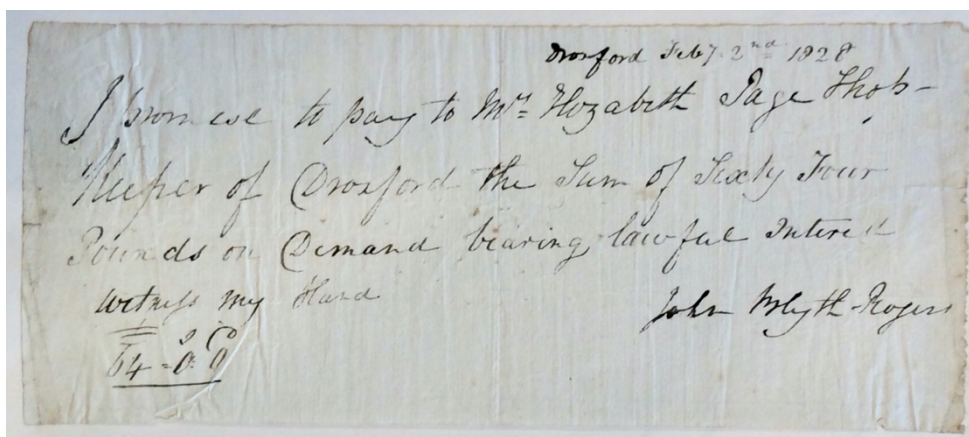
West House in Droxford, first home of Emma and John 1827. Source: Matthew Hill

## Bills 'all over the country'

The first home of John and Emma was *West House*. A very prestigious residence in Droxford that John had been leasing since December the previous year. A week after her wedding, Emma wrote to her brother Charles about settling in:

'...Millicent will tell you what sort of house I have I think you will approve of the situation in every respect and when we can afford to furnish the whole of it after my taste I think it will be quite the thing and I hope next summer you will all give your opinion of it. They all tell me I have worked wonders in John ..... I made my appearance at church last Sunday flanked by Mill [presumably her sister Millicent] and Louisa [presumably John's sister]. The weather has since been so very unfavourable that I have not had many to call. The clergyman and his wife called yesterday. It is an agreeable neighbourhood and the people seemed disposed to be pleasant..... I can promise you a hearty welcome from John and me and that is all we can promise at present you know we have some terrible long bills to pay but with a little management I hope we shall master these in the next year....'<sup>14</sup>

John's money problems were present from the beginning of, and before, his marriage to Emma. He owed money to many people and as Emma mentioned, some of their rooms at West House were unable to be furnished. Four months into their marriage John had to borrow the considerable sum of £64 (approx. A\$10,000 today) from Elizabeth Page, the local shopkeeper and relative of Sarah Rogers (nee Page) his step-grandmother. The guarantors were John and Emma's fathers, George Vining Rogers and William Cobden.



Left: The promissory note John wrote on February 2nd 1828 for the £64 he owed to Mrs Page. Below: Note by William Cobden and George Vining Rogers as guarantors. Source: *The Family Papers of J.E.T. Rogers*.



Whereas Mr John Rogers viz on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 1828 gave to Eliza<sup>th</sup> Page a Promissory Note for the sum of Sixty four Pounds, we whose names are hereunto subscribed do bind ourselves each & jointly in case of his failing to fulfill such contract to pay the same sum of 64 Pounds to the said Eliza<sup>th</sup> Page.

George Vining Rogers

On 14<sup>th</sup> October 1828 Emma writes to her brothers Charles and Frederick:

'.....you know well that we began not only without money but when I came to Droxford there were bills all over the country owing to the extravagance and bad management of those who ought to have known better but I daresay Priscilla [her sister] has told you all about, however we shall do very well after a little time ..... I daresay you will recollect Thursday is our Wedding day [wedding anniversary] we depend on dining at Farnham on that day....'<sup>15</sup>

' those who ought to have known better!' we know who that is. There must have been a considerable amount of embarrassment that Emma felt within her family and within the town due to the state of their debts.

### The first baby arrives

Meanwhile Emma and John's first child was born. On July 20<sup>th</sup> 1829 her father writes to her brother Fred from Farnham:

'My dear Frederick

I have this day received a letter from Droxford informing us poor Emma is safe put to bed with a fine Boy just before 3 o'clock God grant she and the Child may be spared & do well, the child is to be baptized today his name to be Frederick William I understand poor Girl she suffered much from nine till three - we shall hear again in a day or two if she goes on well I shall not write to you again - but if not and anything should happen I will let you know...'<sup>16</sup>

Over the next few years both families experienced many life and death events that were so common in those days. John's mother gave birth to three more babies between 1823 and 1827, the last of her 16 children. In 1828 John's brother Frederick died at the age of 20 and his sister Mary Ann died at the age of 25 in 1834. In 1830 illness caused the loss of Emma's 24-year-old sister Jane, and her 18-year-old brother Miles. But that year she gave birth to her second child Willoughby John and in 1832 her third child **George Vining**.

## Nursing her father

In 1833 Emma's father became seriously ill and it was up to Emma to nurse him at the very end of his life. He had been staying in London but wished to be back in the fresh air of the country and so was sent to Emma in Droxford where she and John had been living since 1830 at *Miller's Cottage*, a much smaller, more modest and affordable home than *West House*. One of Emma's sisters wrote to their brother Fred on May 18<sup>th</sup> 1833:

'we heard from Emma yesterday she says my Father was very much fatigued from his journey but that he was rather recovered from the effects on Thursday when she wrote that he appears to enjoy the Country very much & is much pleased with his rooms, she says John can scarcely give his opinion yet but he does not think his lungs affected, but considers him seriously ill, and that he will require as much care and attention as an infant, but at present he thinks he will recover with very great care I fear poor Emma in her state will not be capable of giving him that attention which he requires indeed I think she ought not to be with an invalid very much .....'<sup>17</sup>



*Miller's Cottage* Droxford, home of Emma, John and family from 1830, and where Emma nursed her father until his death. Photo: Matthew Hill 2018



But Emma nursed her father for another month until his death on June 15<sup>th</sup>. Her parents are buried together in the West Meon churchyard.

During this time Emma was expecting her fourth child, and in October 1833 a daughter, Emma Millicent, was born.

The graves of Emma's parents William and Millicent Cobden in West Meon Churchyard. Photo c1901 Source: West Sussex Record Office

## Arson and gaol

According to reports in the local paper (*Hampshire Chronicle and Southampton Courier* Dec 23<sup>rd</sup> 1833 and Jan 6<sup>th</sup> 1834), in December 1833 John was arrested and imprisoned in the Droxford gaol for 3 days after being suspected of aiding and abetting his groom, John Gale, in a threat of arson. John was released for lack of evidence, but Gale had to stand trial the following January. The saga goes as follows:

On the evening of November 6<sup>th</sup> Robert Hatch Stares, farmer and landowner of Droxford, became aware of a straw rick burning on his property. A couple of days later he received a threatening 'ill spelt and badly written' letter, that the fire would be repeated if Stares didn't

heed the warning - about what was not precisely detailed except it had something to do with Stares being a bully. Stares believed that John, whom it was noted in court did not get along with Stares, had assisted Gale to write the letter. After acquiring handwriting samples from Gale and hearing the testimony of several people as to Gale's good character, including such testimony from John's brother George, Gale was acquitted. The question of who started the fire was to be dealt with separately and I don't know if John was implicated or not. Needless to say, whilst grieving for the loss of her father, and having four children under the age of 6 to raise, Emma didn't need any of this.

### **Siblings move to the north**

Meanwhile, Emma's brothers Richard and Fred were running their own calico printing business near Manchester and since the death of their father, and although Millicent still continued to run a millinery business, the older brothers had taken on the financial responsibilities of their unmarried sisters and their younger brothers. Eventually all the Cobdens went to Manchester, except of course, Emma.

### **Death of a baby**

In 1834 Emma was expecting her fifth child, Richard Charles. He was born in February 1835 and was baptised on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, but died at the age of 5 months and was buried on June 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Droxford churchyard.

Following the death of Richard Charles, or possibly even earlier, Emma was unwell. Her brother Richard was on his first trip to the USA and with John presumably being busy and no doubt unreliable, their brother Fred paid for her to join her sisters Priscilla and Millicent who were staying in Manchester. Priscilla writes to Fred on August 7<sup>th</sup> 1835:

'Emma is still with us & I am delighted to say much better for which she has to thank you for so kindly offering to pay her expenses as I really do not think she would ever have been better without a change it is astounding to see the change a fortnight has made in her,.....'<sup>18</sup>

### **Emma's fate**

But Emma became pregnant again in early 1836 and by April she was seriously ill, this time with consumption (pulmonary tuberculosis). Joseph McCarogher, the senior physician at the Chichester Infirmary was called in, and after examining Emma, made this report (possibly to her brother Richard):

'Droxford Apr 29th 1836

My dear Sir

Having visited Mrs Rodgers(sic) you will no doubt be anxious to know my opinion of her Case - I certainly have never seen her so emaciated as she is at present - breathing much distressed preventing her using the recumbent posture during the night and a very troublesome cough notwithstanding these unfavourable symptoms her spirits are good With regard to the ultimate result of the Case I cannot help expressing an unfavourable opinion She will I conceive go on until her confinement and may even improve by fine weather and an improved System of diet which I have recommended. With respect to one



of your Sisters coming here I should say there is no necessity till she is near her confinement when one of them may be of service.

Make my kind regards to my old patient and will every good wish for the good health and happiness of yourself and family believe me to remain

My dear Sir  
yours faithfully  
Joseph McCarogher'<sup>19</sup>

And on the same day, a letter probably from James Peter Rhoades, Emma's cousin, was written to her brother Richard:

'April 29th 1836

My dear Richard,  
I am unable of course to give you greater comfort in our dear Emma's case than the Dr. has done, but really she does appear in good spirits, and I truly hope much may yet be done for her comfort. Miss Edney [one of John's cousins] is here, and when I asked dear Emma if she would not be a great comfort to her provided she could remain until one of her Sisters could come, she said yes, yes indeed she would, and I should be quite happy to have her, I told her you would make her a compensation for her time etc. etc., and I think indeed I am sure Emma will be quite satisfied with the arrangement, but with four children at home I do not think it would be right for her to be without her, I am writing in the greatest haste, and will write from Chichester tomorrow but as John is out I fear if I did not send this off before I go you would not hear from any one to night, with my best regards and find love to all believe me ever truly yours  
JR'<sup>20</sup>

A month later on May 27<sup>th</sup>, Emma died and was buried with her son Richard Charles in a tomb in the Droxford churchyard, opposite the west door of the church alongside the graves of John's grandparents William and Elizabeth Rogers. The tomb inscription reads on one side:

'Sacred to the memory of RICHARD CHARLES ROGERS Son of J. B. and Emma Rogers'

and on the other side it reads:

'Sacred to the memory of EMMA wife of J. B. ROGERS surgeon of this parish who died May 27<sup>th</sup> 1836 aged 35 years'



Droxford churchyard - the grave of Emma Rogers and son Richard. John is buried in an unmarked grave beside Emma. Photo: Euan McGillivray 2018

### **'Leading a wicked life'**

I'm sure John was devastated at the tragic loss of his wife and overwhelmed by the fact that his children - Frederick aged 7, Willoughby aged 6, George aged 4, and Emma aged 2 were now without a mother. It is also clear that John had, from early on, created his own problems and could not manage money due to his own excesses - spending on things he could not afford and borrowing money he could not repay. It is not surprising therefore that his drinking became an addiction, if it wasn't already, and that this caused a deterioration in his relationship with his family. His father's letters written in 1840 give a vivid description of John's behaviour. George writes to one of his sons:

'John has made us, and continues to make us, most wretched. He came here last Saturday demanding money. I could not let him have it and a sad scene was the consequence.'<sup>21</sup>

Then in October that year:

'he is nothing more than a common vagrant without money, home or victuals. Oh the consequence of leading a wicked life, neglecting his duty to his God, with drunkenness (sic).'<sup>22</sup>

### **What about his children?**

Family members on both the Rogers and Cobden sides had to step in. His granddaughter Agnes (daughter of young Emma) said that 'when his wife died John broke up his home and left his children to the care of the grandparents at West Meon and Cobden family who looked after their bringing up and education'. The 1841 census shows Frederick and Willoughby at John Eggar's Grammar School in Alton, young Emma was at the school of her aunts Louisa and Elizabeth, also in Alton, and little George was with his grandparents in West Meon.

I wonder how much contact John had with his children. They were not all that far away. In 1841 the census shows that John somehow had been able to lease a property, or part of a property in Droxford, the beautiful Georgian house *Fir Hill* (once the home of Admiral Lord Nelson and his mistress Emma Hamilton), and had two servants. This all, of course, fell apart. That year his possessions were seized and when he could not pay his rent, he was evicted. In 1841 his father writes:



*Fir Hill* Droxford, part of which John rented c1841 before he was evicted. Photo: Matthew Hill 2017

'Look at John. See what company and vice has brought him to.'<sup>23</sup>!!!

John's father died in 1846 and presumably John had never redeemed himself in his father's eyes. Over the next decade John's son Willoughby disappeared from London, his other two sons Frederick and George went to Australia and his daughter Emma married William Henry Cooper and moved away from Hampshire.

## 19th century medical profession

Apart from his other woes, I wonder if John's work as a medical practitioner and surgeon also contributed to his alcoholism. Being a doctor came with some social status, but the actual work was physical labour and technically primitive by today's standards. A surgeon had the crudest of instruments and methods with which to work. Bloodletting (including cutting and applying leeches) was a common form of treatment, there was no understanding of hygiene and therefore no knowledge of how infection spreads, and the use of anaesthetics was in its infancy. Overseeing the painful death of a patient was more common than watching a happy recovery. It was also a tiring and demanding job, particularly in rural communities where the doctor worked long days being required to travel through the country day or night and in all weather. Doctors also had easy access to alcohol (and other drugs such as mandrake, cannabis, heroin, opium etc) used in medicines and as painkillers.



A bottle of Laudanum tablets used as a pain killer or sleeping aid and highly addictive. Source: British Library



Blood-letting in 1860  
Source: The Burns Archive

## Still practising?

Notwithstanding his drunkenness and insolvency, John's name with his profession was still to be found in the Post Office Directory of 1849 as a surgeon of Droxford, and also in the medical directories of 1850, 1853 and 1855. The 1851 census shows he is living at Hill Pound, at Swanmore just outside Droxford, as a lodger with the family of Charles Boswell,



a farm labourer and another lodger, John Ings, a bricklayer. His occupation is given as a general practitioner and Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries, but his residence is a long way socially from his previous Droxford addresses. But surprisingly he was managing to keep practising, or at least giving the impression of practising, his profession. How much medical business he actually conducted is not known.



House at Hill Pound, Swanmore  
the likely place where John  
boarded in 1851. Photo: Euan  
McGillivray 2018

## Death at the beer house

At some stage after 1855, John moved to Fareham in Southampton about 14 kilometres (about 8.5 miles) southwest from Droxford. In 1860, at the age of 59, he died at the *New Inn Beer House*, Old Turnpike in Fareham. His death certificate states the cause of death was 'general decay' and his occupation was given as 'surgeon'. Present at his death was Cordelia Budd who lived next door to the beer house, no doubt called in to help when John was dying. (I wonder if the beer at the *New Inn* accelerated John's death - apparently Hannah Dunham the brewer at the inn, made her own beer on the premises, but at times she had problems with her water supply for it was generally obtained from a nearby pond.)



*The New Inn*, aka *The Turnpike*, Fareham,  
demolished in 2007, where John died in 1860.  
Source: [closedpubs.co.uk](http://closedpubs.co.uk)



Emma Millicent, Emma and  
John's daughter, married  
William Henry Cooper and was  
the only beneficiary of her  
father's will. Photo: c1901  
Source: *The Family Papers of  
J.E.T. Rogers*

## John's legacy

It is surprising that John had anything to leave in his will. His daughter Emma was the only legatee. She inherited some land at West Meon that was left to John by his father and was at the time in the possession of his mother, and under £450 in personal effects. It seems his parents ensured he could not take advantage of his land inheritance so there would be something to leave to his children or pay any creditors. The personal effects may have included any medical and surgical instruments, furniture or clothing still in his possession, but it was a considerable amount and probably sold to pay his creditors.

The lives of John Blyth Rogers and Emma Cobden were sad ones. Emma's life was too short and her final years were spent suffering ill health and disease. At least Emma always had the support and comfort from her own brothers, sisters and other relatives. For John, his problems were largely caused by his own unrealistic expectations, lack of personal responsibility and alcohol addiction which alienated him from his family. The saddest outcome was the loss of respect and eventual loss of contact with his four children.

Ann Hurley

2020

See my stories **A Family Reunites** and **Master Mariner on the Murray** for more about their children.

[hurleyskidmorehistory.com.au](http://hurleyskidmorehistory.com.au)

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Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Charles Fletcher Rogers, John's twin, was a draper and had a business c1841 in Alton. He moved to Devon, married Sarah Toulmin and was a commercial traveller. He died suddenly at the *Globe Hotel* in Plymouth whilst on business. He had no children.

<sup>2</sup> Between 1st August 1815 and 31st December 1858 the Society examined and licensed medical students to practise as apothecaries (in effect a G.P.) anywhere in England and Wales and hence anyone wishing to practise as such had to hold the Licence of the Society of Apothecaries (the LSA).

<sup>3</sup> *The Cobden Family 1313-1903* From the West Sussex Record Office, Chichester UK written in 1903 by Agnes Rogers daughter of Emma Cooper, granddaughter of Emma Cobden.

<sup>4</sup> Possibly Frances Rhoades b1796 who married Rev. William Watkins in 1820.

<sup>5</sup> November 20th 1821 Richard Cobden to his parents (letter in the WSRO)

<sup>6</sup> Undated letter recorded in *The Cobden Family 1313-1903* From the West Sussex Record Office, Chichester UK written in 1903 by Agnes Rogers daughter of Emma Cooper, granddaughter of Emma Cobden.

<sup>7</sup> June 12th 1825 William to Frederick (letter in the WSRO)

<sup>8</sup> August 25th 1825 Emma to Richard (letter in the WSRO)

<sup>9</sup> July 17th 1826 Jane to Frederick (letter in the WSRO)

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- <sup>10</sup> September 17th 1827 Millicent to Frederick (letter in the WSRO)
- <sup>11</sup> October 9th 1827 William to Frederick (letter in the WSRO)
- <sup>12</sup> Charles Andrews Amber youngest brother of their mother, partner (and brother-in-law) with Robert Hogard furriers and haberdashers of 4 Regent St London
- <sup>13</sup> October 10th 1827 Millicent to Frederick (letter in the WSRO)
- <sup>14</sup> October 24th 1827 Emma to Charles (letter in the WSRO)
- <sup>15</sup> October 14th 1828 Emma to Charles and Frederick (letter in the WSRO)
- <sup>16</sup> July 20th 1829 William to Frederick (letter in the WSRO)
- <sup>17</sup> May 18th 1833 Sister to Frederick (letter in the WSRO)
- <sup>18</sup> August 7th 1835 Priscilla to Frederick (letter in the WSRO)
- <sup>19</sup> April 29th 1836 from Dr Carogher (letter in the WSRO)
- <sup>20</sup> April 29th 1836 JR to Richard (letter in the WSRO)
- <sup>21</sup> Notes in *The Family Papers of J. E. T. Rogers* - The Bodleian Library, Oxford
- <sup>22</sup> Notes in *The Family Papers of J. E. T. Rogers* - The Bodleian Library, Oxford
- <sup>23</sup> Notes in *The Family Papers of J. E. T. Rogers* - The Bodleian Library, Oxford

Other resources:

19th century medical profession <https://janeaustensworld.wordpress.com/2008/05/17/the-physician-in-the-19th-century/>

Apothecaries <https://www.apothecaries.org/family-history/>

Currency converters <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result>  
<https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/australiacompare/relativevalue.php>

Death and Marriage certificates -General Register Office England

*England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858* (Ancestry.com)

*England and Wales census records* (Ancestry.com)

Hill, Matthew - Droxford UK, local historian

Howe, Anthony and Bannerman, Gordon - *The Letters of Richard Cobden* (2007)

New Inn Beer House <http://www.sopse.org.uk>

Rogers, Julian C. - *A History of Our Family (Rogers of Westmeon) 1451-1902* (1902)

St. Mary's UK Droxford churchyard burial records