

Discovering my Spondon ancestry

When I started searching for my ancestors I thought that a quarter of them, those of my maternal grandfather George Ratcliffe, originated from the Wirksworth, Cromford, and Matlock Bath area. However when I visited his sister, my great aunt Dorothy, to ask what she knew about them, she told me that this was not entirely the case. She revealed that her paternal grandfather (my 2x great-grandfather) William Longden Ratcliffe¹ had come from Spondon and she'd been told that he'd gone to America. She also said that as a child she'd visited relatives in Spondon. She showed me a Bible containing a Family Register, two entries recorded that William was born at Spondon in 1857, and that his parents George Ratcliffe² and Hannah nee Longden³ were married⁴ there in 1850.

At this time the Spondon parish registers were still held at the church but the vicar⁵ was very obliging and kindly allowed me to look through them. Cross referencing them with the census returns took me back to the baptism of my 6x great-grandfather Peter Coxon.

Peter Coxon: My 6x great-grandfather

Peter's baptism is recorded in the Spondon parish register, in the entries for the year 1745, as: Peter the son of Peter and Sarah Cockson baptized 28th December. He worked as a blacksmith; his forge was situated on Sitwell Street. He and his wife Mary had nine children: Elizabeth⁶, Peter⁷, Mary⁸, John⁹, Thomas; my 5x great-grandfather, Sarah¹⁰, Maria¹¹, James¹², and Ann¹³. He died on 30th March 1833 aged 87 and was buried in Spondon churchyard with his wife, who had died two years earlier¹⁴. His Will¹⁵ lists property comprising: Dwelling houses, gardens, an orchard, and closes of land, blacksmiths shops and tools. The tools were to be divided between his grandsons John Coxon (of Alvaston), and Peter Coxon¹⁶ who continued the line of Coxon blacksmiths in Spondon into the 20th century. The last was his grandson Peter Richards Coxon¹⁷ who died in 1931. I was fortunate in meeting his daughter Isabel¹⁸, my 4th cousin 3 times removed, who told me more about the family.



The Forge, Sitwell Street, Spondon

In 2008 I saw advertised, in the *Lets go wild in Derby* series of organised walks, a guided tour of Historical Spondon to be led by the Spondon Historical Society. I thought this would be a good opportunity to learn more about the village of my ancestors' times, it also led to me joining the society. After the formalities of the 2009 A.G.M. a committee member¹⁹ gave a talk on "Influential Spondonians"; one of these was my 5x great-grandfather Thomas Coxon. Afterwards he told me that the source of his information was a book: *Spondon House School*²⁰ by E.J. Kenedy. Two chapters from this augment other records to give a greater insight into his life and the part he played in Spondon civic life:

Thomas Coxon: My 5x great-grandfather

Thomas, the third son of Peter and Mary Coxon was baptized at Spondon on 29th January 1778. He received an elementary education at Spondon School, after which he went to Repton School, his name first appearing on its register in 1787. During his time there he stayed with relatives, who kept the "Mitre" inn which became one of the original School Houses. In 1802, at the age of twenty-four, he was appointed Parish Clerk, and Schoolmaster²¹ of Spondon. At this time education in Spondon was at low point, there were few pupils and the school house had also been used as his predecessor's residence. Thomas set out to remedy this situation. Firstly, together with help from his friends, he renovated the building which was then only to be used as a school. He then set about persuading the villagers to send their children to school, not an easy task as most people at this time thought education unnecessary for farm labourers and factory workers. He also ran a Sunday school where, in addition to the scriptures, reading and writing was also taught to those children unable to attend during the week. His passion for education earned him the nickname of "Schooly Coxon".

On 17th April 1805 Thomas married Ann Holland²² at Spondon church. They moved into the Church Cottage and had eleven children: James²³, Hannah; my 4x great-grandmother, Thomas²⁴, Mary²⁵, Ann²⁶, Miriam²⁷, Elizabeth²⁸, Peter²⁹, Sarah³⁰, Anne³¹, and Jemima³².

Over the years pupil numbers gradually increased but Thomas was determined that the Spondon children should have a more modern school. With the aid of the vicar, he approached the National School Society and plans were prepared for a new school. But the cost would be a formidable £700, of which half had to be raised by private subscription. However, his years of determined persuasion had paid off and the village matched his enthusiasm. When the subscription closed £525 had been collected locally. The new school was built in Chapel Street and opened in 1839. Thomas, now over 60 years old, had succeeded in his aim and felt his work was done, he asked the society to send a new Schoolmaster so that he could retire. However he didn't stop work completely, he moved to the School Farm in Chapel Street where he could indulge in his passion for farming, and also continued as Parish Clerk.

Thomas died on 5th September 1860 and was buried in Spondon churchyard. His obituary in the Derby Mercury³³ stated that he was in the 83rd year of his age; was Clerk to the Church for 47 years; Schoolmaster for 39 years; also Clerk to the Old club at the Malt Shovel Inn, for 39 years. In his Will³⁴ he left his property for the use of his wife during her lifetime and then to be divided equally between his children. His wife Ann died on 15th March 1866 and was buried with him.



Thomas and Ann Coxon

Hannah Coxon: My 4x great-grandmother

Hannah, the eldest daughter of Thomas and Ann Coxon, was baptized at Spondon on 2nd November 1807. She married William Longden³⁵, a grocer and draper, at Spondon church on 2nd November 1828. They had eight children: Hannah; my 3x great-grandmother, William³⁶, Thomas³⁷, Henry³⁸, Lucy³⁹, James⁴⁰, Elizabeth⁴¹, and Jemima⁴². Her husband William died aged 39 on 4th January 1844 he was buried at the Spondon burial ground on Chapel Street. He'd made his Will⁴³ four days earlier leaving all his property to his wife. This would have been a difficult time for Hannah, now a widow with their eight children aged between fourteen years and nine months old. However she continued in business, also becoming a baker, for another forty one years. The census returns reveal that she employed members of her family as assistants: her daughter Lucy in 1851; her niece Elizabeth Coxon⁴⁴, and her granddaughter Lucy Longden in 1871; and her granddaughter Mary Jane Longden⁴⁵ in 1881. She died on 21st September 1885 and was buried in Spondon cemetery. In

her Will⁴⁶ she left her property to her surviving children, and the children of her deceased children.

Two sources: A book *Memories of Spondon*⁴⁷ and a transcription of a talk *Spondon—Years ago*⁴⁸, indicate that her shop was the building immediately to the right of the church entrance in the photograph of Church Street⁴⁹. Church Cottage is hidden from view between the shop and the church. The census returns also show that she had the same neighbour between 1841 and 1881; William Ashton a plumber and glazier to whom her eldest son was apprenticed. Thus it is quite likely that Hannah spent her entire life in this part of Spondon, initially at Church Cottage and then moving next door to the shop after her marriage.



Church Street, Spondon

Although William & Hannah Longden's shop on Church Street was replaced by houses in the early 1980's and Peter Coxon's Forge on Sitwell Street has been replaced by retail shops, much of the old Spondon village would still be recognisable to my ancestors. What might be termed Thomas Coxon's legacy, The Old School in Chapel Street is now a listed building. After serving its original purpose for over 150 years, it's now the home of the New Derby School of Bridge. I like to think that Thomas would approve, especially as they advertise that teaching is available to all standards of players. His first marital home, Church Cottage, also survives. On an occasion of visiting the church, I met the present owners who were just setting off to walk their dog. I told them that over two hundred years ago my ancestors had moved there and went on to have eleven children; they exclaimed that "it must have been standing room only!"

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¹ William Longden Ratcliffe: born at Spondon on 14th October 1857; baptized at Spondon on 8th November 1857.

² George Ratcliffe: born at Beamhurst, Staffordshire on 28th April 1824.

³ Hannah Longden: born at Spondon on 27th September 1829; baptized at Spondon on 25th October 1829.

⁴ George Ratcliffe & Hannah Longden were married at Spondon on 1st October 1850.

⁵ Reverend Thomas E.M. Barber: Vicar of Spondon from 1939 to 1986.

⁶ Elizabeth Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 18th March 1770; she is named as wife of Thomas Elson in her father's Will.

⁷ Peter Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 2nd February 1772; married Sarah Theobald at Spondon on 24th July 1792; died 1st March 1846.

⁸ Mary Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 29th December 1773; married Joseph Ashby at Spondon on 11th April 1797; died 4th August 1854.

⁹ John Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 4th February 1776; married Martha Ashby (sister of his brother in law Joseph Ashby) at Spondon on 20th August 1798.

¹⁰ Sarah Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 9th April 1780; married William Spencer at Spondon on 25th March 1799; died 10th September 1856.

¹¹ Maria Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 1st January 1783; married John Potter at Spondon on 29th March 1804.

¹² James Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 1st February 1785

¹³ Ann Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 23 March 1788; married John Holbrook at Spondon on 3rd June 1817.

¹⁴ Mary Coxon: died on 5th February 1831 aged 84.

¹⁵ Peter Coxon's Will was proved at Derby on 16th April 1833. It is held at Litchfield Joint Record Office. A transcription is held in the DFHS library.

¹⁶ Peter Coxon: married Martha Elliott at Spondon on 18th July 1829; died 23rd December 1879.

¹⁷ Peter Richards Coxon: son of Charles Coxon and Hannah nee Richards: baptized at Spondon on 26th December 1880; married Beatrice Marion Coxon (his cousin) at Spondon on 14th October 1915; died 27th October 1931.

¹⁸ Hannah Isabel Coxon: baptized at Spondon on July 16th 1916.

¹⁹ Dennis Cameron.

²⁰ Held at Spondon Library: The author, Mr E.J. Kenedy included an appreciation to the encouragement and help given by the late Mr. A. Sinfoil of Spondon who made available his own papers and records and shared his knowledge of local history: Alfred Sinfoil was a great-grandson of Thomas Coxon.

²¹ His licence, giving him the authority to perform the Office of a School Master in the Free School of Spondon, was granted by the Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry on 15th June 1802.

²² Ann Holland: daughter of John & Hannah Holland: baptized at Spondon on 15th May 1788.

²³ James Coxon baptized at Spondon on 25th January 1806; died on 3rd December 1829.

²⁴ Thomas Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 25th March 1810; married (1) Emma; married (2) Elizabeth; died on 26th March 1870 aged 60; in the 1861 census he is recorded as the landlord of the White Swan, Spondon.

²⁵ Mary Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 9th September 1812; married William Bates at Spondon on 12th August 1841.

²⁶ Ann Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 23 February 1815; died on 30th December 1816.

²⁷ Miriam Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 6th April 1817; married (1) John Thomas Dale [GRO Marriages March 1844 Southwell 15 796 John Thomas Dale & Miriam Coxon (Free BMD)]; Married (2) John Evans [GRO Marriages September 1852 Sheffield 9c 334 John Evans & Miriam dale (Free BMD)]; she is named as the wife of John Evans in her father's Will.

²⁸ Elizabeth Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 26th September 1819; married Edward King [GRO Marriages March 1852 Basford 7b 91 Edward King & Elizabeth Coxon (Free BMD)]; died on 31st December 1896 aged 76, her gravestone in Spondon cemetery stated her to be the 5th daughter of Thomas Coxon of Spondon and widow of Edward King of Nottingham.

²⁹ Peter Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 11th December 1821.

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- ³⁰ Sarah Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 3rd August 1824; died on 16th October 1910 aged 86; buried with her sister Elizabeth.
- ³¹ Anne Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 6th April 1828; became Infants mistress at Spondon School; married Alfred Cartwright at Spondon on 5th January 1864.
- ³² Jemima Coxon: baptized at Spondon on 9th April 1830; married (1) Charles Sinfoil [GRO Marriages June 1862 Malmsbury 5a 67 Charles Sinfoil & Jemima Coxon (Free BMD)]; married (2) Clay Hall [GRO Marriages June 1877 Shardlow 7b 697 Clay Hall & Jemima Sinfoil (Free BMD)]; died on 25th September 1912; buried in Spondon cemetery with her son Charles William Sinfoil; she was the grandmother of Alfred Sinfoil.
- ³³ Derby Mercury Wednesday 26th September 1860.
- ³⁴ Thomas Coxon's Will was proved at Derby on 31st December 1860. A copy transcribed from the H.M. Court of Probate 1860 Will register held at Derbyshire Record office is held in the DFHS library.
- ³⁵ William Longden wasn't baptized at Spondon and I haven't yet been able to find where he was born; he died before his place of birth could be recorded in the 1851 census.
- ³⁶ William Longden: baptized at Spondon on 2nd March 1831; married Jane Dale Jackson at Spondon on 10th August 1852.
- ³⁷ Thomas Longden: baptized at Spondon on 20th January 1833; served a blacksmith apprenticeship with Peter Coxon (his mother's 1st cousin); married Mary Jackson (sister of his sister in law Jane Dale Jackson) at Spondon on 17th April 1854; died 1867; buried at Spondon on 13th November 1867 aged 35.
- ³⁸ Henry Longden: baptized at Spondon on 13th July 1834; married Emma Frost [GRO Marriages March 1855 Derby 7b 493 Henry Longden & Emma Frost (Free BMD)].
- ³⁹ Lucy Longden: baptized at Spondon on 20th December 1835; married Robert Shelton [GRO Marriages March 1868 Chesterfield 7b 653 Robert Shelton & Lucy Longden (Free BMD)] she is named as the wife of Robert Shelton in her mother's Will.
- ⁴⁰ James Longden: baptized at Spondon on 1st October 1837.
- ⁴¹ Elizabeth Longden: baptized at Spondon on 22nd December 1839; married Francis Woodward [GRO Marriages December 1865 Grantham 7b 908 Francis Woodward & Elizabeth Longden (Free BMD)]; died on 26th August 1881 aged 41, buried in Spondon cemetery.
- ⁴² Jemima Longden: baptized at Spondon on 23rd April 1843.
- ⁴³ William Longden's Will was proved at Derby on 16th April 1844. It is held at Litchfield Joint Record Office. A transcription is held in the DFHS library.
- ⁴⁴ Elizabeth Coxon: daughter of Thomas Coxon and Emma: baptized at Spondon on 19th September 1852
- ⁴⁵ Mary Jane Longden: daughter of Thomas Longden; married William Rose at Spondon on 7th October 1885.
- ⁴⁶ Hannah Longden's Will was proved at Derby on 21st October 1885. A copy transcribed from the H.M. Court of Probate 1885 Will register held at Derbyshire Record office is held in the DFHS library.
- ⁴⁷ Guy Brighthouse, *Memories of Spondon – A Short Account of Spondon Past* (Published by the Derbyshire Library Service in July 1989). A copy is available in Spondon Library.
- ⁴⁸ *Spondon – Years Ago*, a transcription of a lecture given by George Wright in 1913.
- ⁴⁹ George Wright stated: on leaving the church the first house is occupied by Mr. E. Thompson, plumber and glazier, and that it was formerly occupied by Mr. Ashton to whom he was an apprentice. Guy Brighthouse states that the first building in Church Street was a large double-fronted baker's shop, occupied by a Mr. Rose around 1907/8. Just over two weeks after Hannah Longden's death, her granddaughter Mary Jane Longden married William Rose at Spondon on 7th October 1885; he gave his occupation as Grocer.