

Chubb family biography assembled by Tony Woolrich, and which formed the basis of the Wikipedia article, John Chubb (artist) begun 2 October 2016

07/10/20

1



John Chubb(1746-1818), amateur artist. John Chubb was born in 1746, the son of Jonathan Chubb (1715-1805), a Bridgwater timber and wine merchant, and his wife Mary Morley, (1715-1812). John wanted to become a professional artist, but his father did not approve of the idea. John took an active part in town politics in the Whig cause, and was Mayor of Bridgwater in 1788. He was active in the local campaign to abolish the Slave Trade. While his father ran the family business, John Chubb had plenty of spare time to spend on drawing and writing poetry, not to earn a living but for his own amusement.

### **Biography of the Chubb family**

The origins of Jonathan Chubb (1715-1805) are obscure, but he was related to the family of Thomas Chubb The Deist. <sup>i</sup>, and to the mother of the author Mary Robinson (poet) <sup>ii</sup> He married Mary Morley (1715-1812) of North Petherton, and she had links with a number of the local gentry, such as the Luttrells of Dunster. Jonathan Chubb was a merchant, importing wine, timber, coopers' supplies such as barrel staves and also builders' supplies such as glass and tiles. <sup>iii</sup>

John Chubb was born in Bridgwater 9 May 1746. A precocious child, <sup>iv</sup> John displayed a talent for art and wished to take it up professionally, but his father dissuaded him. As a teenager, John visited relations in London and more than 50 letters between him and his family at this time are in the Blake Museum collection. They have been deposited at the Somerset Heritage Centre Archive, Taunton: ref: A\CSC "Papers of John Chubb and family of Bridgwater".

John was much involved in local politics. By 1778 he was a burgess and so a councillor, and was elected Mayor of Bridgwater in 1788. He was a Radical and supported the Whig cause, <sup>v</sup> and was active in promoting Bridgwater's anti-slavery petition to Parliament in 1785. He was one of the promoters of Bridgwater Infirmary, and served as treasurer to the time of his death in 1818

He married Mary Wetherell (1765-1812), from Wells, and they had three children, Morley (1788-1855), Lucy (1794-1867) and Charles James (1797-1872). John Chubb died 2 February, 1818, after an illness lasting two years.

Chubb family biography assembled by Tony Woolrich, and which formed the basis of the Wikipedia article, John Chubb (artist) begun 2 October 2016

07/10/20

2

Morley Chubb succeeded to the family business. He married Frances Alford, (1788-1850) and they had thirteen children — eight boys and five girls. Morley Chubb, Charles James Chubb and John Bowen entered into a partnership to own a wine merchants business under the name of M. Chubb & Co in Bridgwater. This was dissolved in June 1830 in favour of John Bowen. By 1835 the family had moved to London. The 1841 census records him as a 'Professor of Music', and in 1851 the secretary of a commercial company – The Crosse Patent Co. Very little is known of his life in London, but after his death, in 1858 was published his translation into English of the words of [[Louis Spohr|Louis Spohr's]] " God, Thou art great ": opus 98, a sacred cantata for four voices, 1836. <sup>vi</sup>

Morley's eldest son, John Chubb, (1813-1859), attorney and solicitor, of Cirencester, married Caroline Tudway, in 1838 and died 1859. He was also a talented amateur artist. Thomas Alford Chubb, (1815-1883), the second son, was secretary, and afterwards treasurer, to the South Eastern Railway Company. He married Margaret Lyon, and died in 1883, leaving four sons, the youngest being John Burland Chubb, (1861-1951), F.R.I.B.A., of London. The latter was the father of Mary Chubb, (1903-1993), archaeologist, writer and historian of the family. <sup>vii</sup> The third son, Harry, (1816-1888) was prominent in the management of a number of coal-gas companies and railways in London, and was a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers. He died in 1888. The sixth son, Arthur, was a BA of Pembroke College Cambridge. He died at the house of his brother, John, in 1852 aged 29. Of the other sons, Hammond Chubb (1829-1904) was for thirty years secretary to the Bank of England, (which he had joined in 1847) and died in 1904 aged 75. <sup>viii</sup>

Lucy Chubb was unmarried and she ran a school, in Castle Street, Bridgwater in 1830, and later moved to London to join her brother, where she died in 1867.

Charles James Chubb was also unmarried, and by 1841 had moved to the midlands where he was appointed chief cashier and book keeper of the Boulton and Watt's Soho Manufactory at Smethwick. On his retirement 1863 he also moved to London, where he died in 1872.

## **The paintings and drawings**

Some three hundred and sixty sketches and finished drawings and a number of documents were assembled by his daughter after his death in 1818, and, most unusually, were kept together by the Chubb family ever since. The collection was mostly made between 1761 and around 1800 although there are also some letters written by his Somerset ancestors going as far back as the 1650s. The Blake Museum had long possessed a number of John Chubb's topographical paintings of the town, and from 1977, sixty of the portraits of local worthies had been on loan from John Chubb's descendants to the

Chubb family biography assembled by Tony Woolrich, and which formed the basis of the Wikipedia article, John Chubb (artist) begun 2 October 2016

07/10/20

3

museum. At the end of 2002, the family decided to sell the entire collection and offered it in the first instance to the Museum. Thanks to local support and help from a number of national grant-giving bodies, in 2004 Blake Museum reached its appeal target of £123,000 to save nearly 400 unique historic original watercolour paintings and documents with an important link to Bridgwater's history. Heritage Lottery Fund contributed £88,000 in the light of local contributions from Sedgemoor District Council, the Friends of Blake Museum and other local organisations and individuals, which amounted to about £9,700. Other national organisations that contributed were the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund (£15,000), and the National Art Collections Fund (£10,000).

There are 52 portraits of John Chubb's immediate family, 150 portraits of Bridgwater worthies, 138 un-named portraits and 26 topographical paintings. A number of the latter are by John Chubb's descendants.

He painted not only local scenery, which makes an important record of what Bridgwater and its surroundings looked like in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but also many portraits of his family, local businessmen, doctors, clergy, local Members of Parliament and suchlike. A number of the paintings feature pretty girls in ornate hats. Many of his portraits relate to tradesmen and craftsmen working with their tools, rather like the *Books of Trades* of earlier centuries.

Some time in the early C19 lithographic prints were made of ten of his paintings of Bridgwater scenes, and these are fully represented in the Museum's collection.

The collection includes correspondence from a leading politician of the time, Charles James Fox,<sup>ix</sup> and a letter from the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, written at Nether Stowey in 1797 at the time when Coleridge was writing one of his most famous poems *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, as well as Chubb's own comments on local politicians in verse. There are account and memorandum books, showing the Chubb family's activities in a busy merchant town. There are also personal letters written by the Chubbs shedding light on their lives in the 18th and 19th centuries. Some of his writings contain witty pen portraits of local figures - and as he was not being paid for the work he did not have to flatter them!

## Sources

Dilks, T Bruce, '*Charles James Fox and the Borough of Bridgwater*', (Bridgwater: East Gate Press, 1937). Contains transcripts of 20 of Fox's letters to John Chubb, and reproductions of some of the drawings

Chubb family biography assembled by Tony Woolrich, and which formed the basis of the  
Wikipedia article, John Chubb (artist) begun 2 October 2016

07/10/20

4

AChubb, Mary, 'A Forebear and his Hobby' in *The Countryman*, Vol. 61 Winter 1963/64, p  
276. and Chubb, Mary, 'A Forebear and his Hobby -2' in *The Countryman*, Vol. 62 Spring  
1964, p 89.

Lawrence, Berta, 'John Chubb, a friend of Coleridge', in *Charles Lamb Bulletin* NS, Vol. 27,  
July 1979, pp 51-55.

Lawrence, Berta, 'John Chubb' in *Somerset & West*, Vol.7, No 3, March 1983, pp 24-27.

Girouard, Mark, 'Country-Town Portfolio' in *Country Life*, Dec. 7 1989, pp 154-159.

- i Somerset Record Office, A\CSC/2/2 : Letter in the Chubb papers notes him as 'Dear Cousin'
- ii Maria Elizabeth Robinson, *Memoirs of the late Mrs Robinson, written by herself*, 4 vols, London, 1801 I, p 6.
- iii Engraved trade card dated 1762. Photocopy in Blake Museum's Chubb reference collection.
- iv Letter from Jonathan Chubb, dated December 1750, noted he could read and write and knew a number of Latin and Greek words.
- v *Victoria County History of Somerset*, vol6, pp 228-230 and *History of Parliament*, volume for 1790-1820, Constituencies – Bridgwater
- vi Grove, *Dictionary of Music*, 1878 vol 1.
- vii Add Times obit. The Life and Times of Mary Chubb, Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution, 1993, Occasional Papers No 1 30pp. They comprise the texts of three radio broadcasts made for the BBC — two about her family and schooling and a third about John Chubb.
- viii Add Hammond's Times obit
- ix T. Bruce Dilks, *Charles James Fox and the Borough of Bridgwater* (Bridgwater: East Gate Press, 1937)