

ALDERMAN WILLIAM COGAN

BORN 1677 - DIED 1774

There are differing versions as to the life of William Cogan (Coggan) but it is known that he was the son of John Coggan who married Elizabeth Battie of Warmsworth. John Coggan came from Wroot in Lincolnshire and became a freeman and Merchant of the town of Kingston Upon Hull.

William Cogan was possibly educated at the Hull Grammar School.

It is often stated that he was a Baltic Trader but whilst there is one isolated reference to John Coggan as a merchant in the Bench Books of Hull Corporation there is no evidence that William became a merchant. On the other hand, according to the reference in the Bench Book of 18th January 1694 we can be certain that William was by then fatherless for his mother is described as a widow. The Bench were discussing the award of the towns two scholarships for local boys at Cambridge (possibly the Ferries & Bury Scholarships Exhibitions) and Mrs Coggan wanted one of them for her son. Apparently the idea did not appeal to William who wished to be put Apprentice to an apothecary in London.

William would have been about 16 at that time, the normal age of entry into a University.

The Register of Apprentice Bindings of the Society of London Apothecaries states that, on 4th September 1694, William Cogan was bound to John Garnier. The Court Minute Book under the same date has the entry "William Coggan, son of John Coggan late of Hull in ye Country of Yorke, deceased, bound to Isaac Garnier junior for eight years from this date." There is no record that William ever took up the freedom of the Society of Apothecaries.

William apparantly stayed in London until 1702 to complete his apprenticeship and as he was by then of age could have become a burgher of Hull but it was not until 1706 that he did so.

It is not certain when he married, but as there is no reference to his marriage in Hull church registers he possibly married in London before his return to Hull in 1706. It is certain that he did marry as his late wife is mentioned in his Will.

In 1712 he must have been regarded as a rising young tradesman in the town because on election day 30th September of that year he was sworn chamberlain and two years later as sheriff. This latter election proved him to be already a man of considerable substance. It appears unlikely that his wealth could have been acquired in his trade but could have come from his mother since his maternal grandparents were gentry.

In 1717 he became an Alderman and in September of that year became Mayor.

In 1736-37 he was again Mayor and by that time was a force in the town, fighting strongly for the poor, against congestion of shipping near the North Bridge and for improvements of streets. William Cogan was a Trustee of Listers Hospital. He founded the Charity School for girls in 1753. His own house was in Bowlalley Lane. He not only set aside certain property, including his house and £2,000 in 3 per cent consols to found the School but provided a building for the School in Salthouse Lane with two rooms downstairs and one up where the Mistress lived.

In 1808 this property was rebuilt as a three-storey building.

The first Mistress was Ann Stevens. She was well known to Cogan and may have been a relative since his maternal aunt Margaret Battie had married William Stevens Rector of Sutton in Bedfordshire and Anna could have been a grandchild. In William Cogans first indenture of 1753 he provided an annuity of five pounds a year to Ann Stevens of Nottingham, Spinster, for her life. Her salary was £14 a year and her annuity was paid quarterly.

Alderman William Cogan died in 1774 and was buried in the Quire Yard of Holy Trinity Church.

His Will makes it practically certain that he died without issue. After bequests amounting to more than £2,000 he left the remainder of his effects to his joint executors, Samuel Watson and William Wilberforce of Ferriby.

His Will also implies that he continued to practise as an apothecary all his life. He bequested £10 to the widow of John Woodward, his old apprentice and workman and all his remaining books of physic to a George Woodhouse.

Although he worshipped at Holy Trinity Church he bequeathed a select library of devotional books to the Church wardens of St. Mary, Lowgate. The books are standard commentaries on the Anglican creed and are still in the library.

Whilst this bequest has occasional surprise in some circles the Trustees of the Cogan's Charity who remember the Old Cogan's School in Park Street will recollect that the Whit Service held every year for the scholars was conducted on alternate years in Holy Trinity Church and St. Mary's, Lowgate.

Much of the foregoing information has been abstracted from the booklet published by Miss G.M. Attwood B.A. M.Ed and loaned from the Kingston Upon Hull Local History Library.

According to a letter sent to Geoffrey P. Coggan Esq., Edgbaston, Birmingham 16 from his father and dated 26th January, 1948, he was informed.

"I know from your great-grandfather that his grandfather was the Alderman Cogan of Hull who founded the Charity School in the street named after him, Cogan Street. His gift was, if I remember rightly, 1756 (actually 1753). He was a Baltic Trader, and I believe owned a number of ships bringing timber and grain from the Baltic ports to Hull.

"Several of his possessions were passed down in the family as heirlooms. One of these, a pair of guinea scales, I am sending to you now. The others, including a Navigator's compass and an ivory rule, have long since disappeared, but I remember plainly seeing them in my grandfather's house."

It is possible that, as John Coggan (William's father) could have been a merchant, these possessions belonged to him and not his son. It could also be that, as there were two sons, Williams elder brother might have carried on the business. There are no records to substantiate this surmise.

From information supplied by Mr. Geoffrey P. Coggan the family has direct association with John Coggan who married Elizabeth daughter of John Battie. The Cogan (Coggan) family is of Norman-Welsh stock, the result of the marriage of Gwgan of Wales to a daughter of Gerald of Windsor, in the 12th century. One of their sons, Sir Miles de Cogan of Cogan (a hamlet just outside Cardiff,) took a leading part in the Geraldine campaigns in Ireland. He founded the knightly family which flourished for over 200 years until 1385.

The knightly seat after 1265 was at Huntspill in Somerset. The family spread throughout the whole West country and during the 17th century into Hull, London and Northants, the main stream being all the while identified with the original knightly coat of arms. This consists of a red shield charged with silver oak or laurel leaves and bears the motto "Constans Fidei". A copy of this coat of arms presented by Mr. Geoffrey P. Coggan, is in the offices of the Hull United Charities, Cogan Chambers, Bowlalley Lane, Hull. These offices are possibly built on the site of Alderman William Cogan's residence.

Mr. Coggan's family had a large hosiery manufacturing business in Nottingham where, it will be noted, Miss Anna Stevens, the first Mistress of the School resided when Alderman William Cogan provided her with an annuity.

The School

The School commenced with 20 poor female children but after the improvements and enlargement in 1808 the number of scholars was increased and when the Board of Education gave the School a grant in 1889 the numbers were increased to 100 and later to 130. Under the Education Act of 1902 however the Board decided that, if the grant was to be continued the School must be maintained and controlled by the Local Education Authority. The Trustees declined the grant, the numbers were reduced. When the School closed down in 1950 the number of girls being educated was 60.

Before that date however the School had been removed from Salthouse Lane to Park Street, Hull.

Sir John Listers Almspeople vacated the Almshouse property No 94 and 95 Park Street when new Almshouses were erected in Northumberland Avenue in 1886 and the Trustees of the Alderman Cogan School purchased the property and adapted it for a school.

The School was opened in 1839, (when the Board of Education gave a grant) and continued until 1950 when it was decided that the premises did not comply with the Ministry of Education's requirements.

It was felt by the Trustees that it would be unreasonable to relinquish all funds and property and allow these to be swept into a School's pool and after considerable discussion with the Ministry it was agreed that a Church of England Special Agreement Modern Secondary School should be built in the City to be known as Alderman Cogan's School. A 75 per cent grant was received from the Ministry, and the balance was equally met by the Church of England and the Trustees of the Cogan's Charity. The land on which the School is sited was purchased by the Charity. The new School was opened in November 1957, at a cost of approximately £110,000.

The famous old stone, first sited over the door of the School building in Salthouse Lane and later built into the wall of the Park Street property was once again removed and is now built into the wall of the Main Hall of the new school.

By virtue of the association with the knightly family a grant of arms was obtained from the College of Arms and part of this is used as the school badge. The grant of arms incorporates references to the original family with the vizor, oak leaves and family motto "Constans Fidei".

The Cogan's Charity has been retained and all the property in Bowlalley Lane, the property in Park Street and income derived therefrom is managed by the Trustees. The money accruing from income over expenditure is used to maintain the new school, with proportionate grants from the Department of Education and Science.

The Park Street property, used for so many years as the Alderman Cogan School is now let to the Hull Central Hebrew Congregation as a Synagogue. Their original Synagogue was destroyed during the Second World war. This building was in Cogan Street. An interesting coincidence.

I hope that the foregoing notes will be found of interest to the Trustees, some of whom will remember the Prize Days followed by tea to scholars, staff and Trustees and friends, The May Festival, the Whit-Monday services and above all the nickname which was famous for so many years in Hull, the "Coggy Dollys".

Alfred Shaw,
Secretary,

1974.