

Chapter 2.18

**THOMAS AND CLARA GOFFEY**

**1834 – 1915**



ST. PETER'S CHURCH.

**St. Peter's Church, Church Street, Liverpool, in 1810.** St. Peter's was the old parish church of Liverpool until the Anglican Cathedral opened in 1926. Thomas's law firm operated from this area of central Liverpool for some years, their address being recorded as No. 5 Church Alley in 1864.

## Chapter 2.18. Thomas and Clara Goffey.

Thomas was arguably the most successful of James and Sarah Goffey's five sons, becoming a successful and wealthy solicitor in Liverpool. Not only was he followed into the legal profession by his son Thomas Jnr. but also by two of his nephews - William Jnr. and Arthur Jnr. The well-known Merseyside law firm of Goffey's, now based in Formby and Southport, was originally the practice of Thomas Jnr. and continues in business to this day although there have been no Goffeys in the firm since 1952. Thomas was born in Liverpool on 22nd June 1834 and was baptised at the Independent Congregational Chapel, Great George Street, Liverpool on 14th June that year. He can be seen in successive national censuses, in 1841 as a scholar aged seven living at 21 Newhall Street, in 1851 as an apprentice attorney's clerk aged 17 still in Newhall Street and in 1861 as an attorney's clerk aged 27 living at 4, Blackburn Street, Liverpool.

The following information on Thomas was obtained by the late Kevin Goffey of Bellmere, Queensland, in a letter from the Law Society dated 4 October 1996 :-

*Thomas was educated at Morsley Lane School and Queen's College Liverpool and was admitted as a solicitor in 1863. Between 1863 and 1864 he practised alone but between 1864 and 1872 he was a member of Duke and Goffey and between 1872 and 1878 he again practised alone. Between 1878 and 1879 he was a member of Goffey and North who afterwards became Goffey, North, Kirk and Cornett. There is a gap in the record between 1879 and 1889. Between 1889 and 1903 he again practised alone and ceased practicing in 1903. He practised in Liverpool throughout his years as a practicing solicitor.*

Two letters from Thomas to his father dated October and November 1855 are held in the archives of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, Albert Dock, Liverpool; these are described in more detail in Chapter 2.13. Thomas was an executor, with his Aunt Martha, of his grandmother Mary's will when she died in 1864. He gives his address at that time as 5, Church Alley, Liverpool. By 1871 he had moved from this address but his new address is not known so he cannot be found in the 1871 census. His whereabouts between 1879 and 1889 also remain a mystery; he cannot be found in the 1881 census, which suggests he was out of the country. This is rather odd since his name appears on his brother Alfred's will for whom he was named as executor and for which probate was extracted by Goffey, North and Co. after Alfred died in 1887, i.e. during the period for which the Law Society says that Thomas was not practicing. The fact that the deed of probate for Alfred's will was extracted by Goffey, North and Co. does not necessarily mean that Thomas did the work, or even that he was working for the company at the time.

On census day 1881 the youngest four of Thomas and Clara's children can be found at Larkfield Cottage, Toxteth Park, with Mr. and Mrs. Morecroft and Miss Campbell, a governess. Since there would be little point in Thomas and Clara living in Liverpool and putting their children into a boarding house or school in Toxteth Park only a couple of miles away, this suggests that Larkfield Cottage was the home of Thomas and Clara but that they were possibly abroad at the time and their children had been left in the care of a governess. Although Mr. Morecroft, a 50 year old domestic coachman, is shown in the census as head of the family there are in the house (in addition to Mrs. Morecroft) 25 year old George Horman a domestic groom, 40 year old Elizabeth Howard a cook / domestic servant and James Mullins, a 19 year old Irishman whose occupation is rather unfortunately listed as "housemaid". This all sounds very

much the lifestyle of an absentee wealthy lawyer such as Thomas, particularly since we know he owned his own carriage.

In 1883 Martha Goffey, Thomas's aunt, died and Thomas along with his older brother James is named as an executor of her will. Thomas's address is given as 15, Lord Street, Liverpool. In the 1881 census 15, Lord Street is a lodging house occupied by large numbers of seamstresses and domestic servants with no sign of Thomas and Clara. Possibly Thomas was their landlord, which might account for some of his not inconsiderable wealth. Another interesting possibility, bearing in mind that *J & W Goffey* ships were known to have been working on the Australia run in 1881 (see Ch.2.20), is that he might have been in Australia. Thus Thomas could have been the source of contacts for his nephew Harry's spell in Australia which is estimated to have taken place some time between 1889 and 1892.

In (date) Thomas married Clara Chapman, the eldest of eight children of Thomas and Elizabeth Chapman. Thomas Chapman was an amateur poet publishing – one suspects privately – a number of books of poems about Liverpool, his acquaintances in the city and his interests in the church etc.. His book *“Namby Pamby; or a Hotch Potch of Poetic Tit Bits by the author of Widder Bagshaw and her Nevvy Samul's Whitsentoide”* was published under the pseudonym Martha Bagshaw by William Gilling, Liverpool, in about 1875. Two of the poems therein relate to his son-in-law Thomas Goffey and his family; *“In memoriam of Mrs. G.”* concerns the death of Thomas's mother and *“Ethel and Hilda”* concerns Thomas Goffey's two oldest daughters. Two other poems, *“Hope Street Church Social Union”* (1870) and *“Epilogue”* (1872), commemorate events at the Hope Street Presbyterian Church, a church where at least two of Thomas Goffey's brothers were married - James in 1854 and Alfred in 1870.

Thomas and Clara had five children: Ethel was born in 1867, Hilda in 1869, Louise in 1874, Dora in 1875 and Thomas junior in 1877. Hilda is believed to have married a gentleman called Atkinson, some of whose descendants moved to the USA. In the 1881 census the 14-year old Ethel is found at 8, Parkfield Road, Toxteth Park, the home of Elizabeth Chapman her widowed maternal grandmother. Also in the house that day were her unmarried aunt Florence Chapman, aged 25, and her cousin Cecil Brunner, aged seven. The name Brunner is to occur frequently in the history of the Liverpool Goffeys; the connection arose from the marriage of Louise Chapman, one of Clara's younger sisters to Joseph Brunner a Liverpool chemical broker. Joseph Brunner was the brother of John Tomlinson Brunner who (with Ludwig Mond) founded Brunner Mond and Co. in 1873. Brunner Mond developed their soda ash process based on salt from the Cheshire underground salt deposits and built up a large soda ash and alkali plant at Winnington near Northwich. John Brunner became Sir John Brunner and a controversial Liberal MP for Northwich. In 1926 the alkali business of Brunner Mond became the Mond Division of ICI on the merger of Britain's four largest chemical companies. An alkali works still exists at Northwich today (2006). Cecil Brunner is remembered to this day as the name of a variety of pink climbing rose.

The Brunners were not the only influential acquaintances of Thomas Goffey. David Lloyd George's brother, William, in his book *My Brother and I* describes the George family's annual gift of a Christmas turkey to Thomas Goffey and of getting dressed in their best clothes in case Mr. Goffey made a visit in his carriage - which he never did. Apparently Thomas was reputed to earn £300 a year and be paid 3s 6d (17p) per letter; the George family thought the law would make a good career for David, then still a schoolboy. David Lloyd George was subsequently articled to a Solicitor's practice in Porthmadoc before entering politics.

On 27th August 1894 Thomas and Clara and their three youngest children Louisa, Dora and Thomas are recorded as having entered the United States at Ellis Island in New York harbour, after arriving on the *S.S. Umbria* from Liverpool. According to the Law Society records Thomas was practising in Liverpool between 1889 and 1903. However, the year 1894 coincides with Thomas having reached the age of 60, Louisa 21 and Thomas Jnr. 18. Possibly to mark three important milestones in their lives Thomas had taken them all on a holiday. Alternatively perhaps Thomas had some legal business to transact in America for *J & W Goffey* shipowners.

Clara died on 23 March 1912 at "Amalfi", Nicholas Road, Blundellsands, Liverpool, the family home. Her estate was valued at £7,986 10s 10d. Thomas died three years later aged 80 on 22 May 1915 at the family home. His estate was valued at £42,113 13s 1d and the beneficiaries were his son, Thomas, and Ethel Edgecombe, wife of Henry Herbert Edgecombe. It is reasonable to assume that Ethel Edgecombe was his eldest daughter, although this has not been verified.