**The Roffe engravers [Draft]**

There appear to be two separate families. The puzzling link between them is that in 1872/3 the SBA submission address of William John Roffe, painter, from one, was 4 Falkland Road, which at the 1871 census was the address of Felix Robert Roffe from the other. Similarly in 1879, William submitted at the RA from 18 Grisbach Road, Upper Holloway, which was Felix’s address in the 1881 census. If it was a distant cousinage then how is not clear.

1. **Robert Cabbell Roffe (RCR) descent**

**Thomas Roffey** or Roffée of Leeds, Kent, and formerly from Essex (b. before 1713 – bur. 2 or 11 September 1750, Leeds); m. 31 May 1710, at East Farleigh, Kent, to Lydia Mortimer of Maidstone (b.1687 – bur. 19 May 1749, Leeds).

Thomas was a second son – the elder, John, died as a young man – and had three sisters: Lydia (unmarried); Betty, who m. Robert Cabbell of Maidstone; and Jane, m. James Sherwood of Chatham [see *Leeds\*,* pp. 56–57].

*His son ….*

**Thomas Roffe** (b.1725, ‘yeoman’ of Leeds, Kent – bur. Leeds, either 15 June 1792 as ‘Roffee’ or May 1794 as ‘Roffe’; m. (1) unknown (2) as a widower on 25 June 1772 to Mrs Mary Field Merriman (née Alcock, 1735–95) at St Mary Magdalene, Bermondsey. Mary’s father, John, was a London silversmith. Her first husband was John Merriman (m. 23 Feb. 1756, St George the Martyr, Southwark) by whom she had three sons: Nathaniel, Benjamin Howard and Thomas. The last appears on p.6 in *Leeds* as the ‘City officer’ who, as RCR’s older half-brother helped secure his engraving apprenticeship to Benjamin Smith in 1794 about two years after his father Thomas reportedly died. Thomas Merriman was a ‘tinplate worker’ according to the eight-year apprenticeship indenture that RCR also entered with him on 1 May 1794, which calls RCR’s father ‘yeoman deceased’ and was presumably to cover risk to Smith. This suggests his 1792 burial date as ‘Thomas Roffee’ is correct. No ‘consideration’ for the Merriman apprenticeship was paid.

Mary’s sister ‘Mrs Elizabeth Alcock’ (d. July 1796) also appears in *Leeds,* p. 13, as Robert’s unmarried aunt, and in Mary’s will. The probate (27 March 1795) names her son Benjamin Howard ‘of Crutched Friars’ as one of her executors.

*Thomas and Mary’s son …*

**Robert Cabbell Roffe**, b. 6 April 1780, Bermondsey; m. 5 June 1802, St Pancras, to Elizabeth Hazley (1781– 1849, 1st qtr) – d. 48 Ossulston St, Somers Town, London, 25 March 1839.

Stated by his son Alfred Thomas Roffe (ATR) to be a late and only child after other (full?) siblings predeceased him [*Leeds,* p.3]. Apprenticed (15 April 1794 –15 April 1801), to Benjamin Smith, engraver working for Alderman John Boydell’s Shakespeare Gallery, through the agency of his half-brother Thomas Merriman.

RCR’s early friend and fellow apprentice, Albin Burt, painted an oil portrait of him aged 49 in 1830, still in family hands in 1862 [see *Leeds*, p. 62], and Thomas Uwins – another early and long friend – did a portrait drawing in 1802 engraved in 1862 by ATR as frontispiece to the *Leeds* pamphlet.

Pages 25ff there include RCR correspondence with Thomas Molineux of Macclesfield, a champion of Byrom’s system of shorthand writing, and explain RCR’s 20-year leisure interest and expertise in the subject. He wrote a small work of about 40 pp. on it titled *A Catechism of Shorthand* (pub. John Lindbird, 143 Strand, 1834). On p. 39, RCR’s address in 1821 is noted as 59 Ossulston St which appears to be that preceding a move to no. 48 from at least 1825 to his death. Alfred and Edwin Roffe were still there at the 1871 census by which time it was renumbered 135.

A facsimile of Elizabeth Hazely’s autograph signatures on *Leeds* p. 64 and the following page confirms the parentage of RCR.

*Children of RCR and Elizabeth (Hazely):*

**Alfred Thomas**, bap 25 April 1803–71, engraver (‘Portrait Engraver’ in 1861 census, ‘Historical Engraver’ in 1871)

**Emma**,1804–82

**Eliza Jane**, 1807–80: ‘housekeeper’ at 48 Ossulston St in 1861 and 1871 with ATR and Edwin, her brothers

**Octavia**, 1809–71 [or 1874?]: m. 5 Jan 1845, St Matthew, Brixton, to William Samuel Purches (1809–47); daughter Sophia (1846–47), infant death

**Harriet Freeman**, 1811–78

**Felix Robert,** 1814–87, artist/ draughtsman/ painter in watercolours; (‘portrait engraver’ in 1861 census). See separate profile.

**William Callis** (bap. 27 April 1817, St Pancras – d. 13 Jan. 1902, 132 St Paul’s Rd, Camden Square, London): m. Susan --?--, who predeceased him after 1891; ‘Steel Engraver’ (1891 census). Estate (effects) £1161-17- 8 to sole legatee Emily Amelia Roffe, spinster and apparently his only child, b.*c.*1862.

**Albert Henry**, b. 21 June 1819, [59] Ossulston St, Somers Town – d. 4 January 1891, 31 Charrington Street, Oakley Square, Camden: steel-plate engraver. Estate of £6647 4d: executors were his married daughters Elizabeth and Amelia Maria and his brother, William Callis Roffe, engraver.

**Edwin**, Nov. 1821–23, infant death

**Charlotte Edwin**, bap. 30 May 1823, St Pancras; m. 31 May 1846 to William Searcy (1801­­–1901), d. 27 June 1892, Semaphore, South Australia (and buried in Adelaide), where two of her sons, Arthur and Alfred, were notable public servants.

**Edwin**, 1825–91, b. 48 Ossulston St, Somers Town; engraver and (amateur/leisure?) printer. The title page of *Leeds*, of which ATR appears to have been the prime author – states there were just 30 copies ‘Set up, and Imprinted, in Leisure-time, by / EDWIN ROFFE: / At his Birth-place, 48 Ossulston Street, SOMERS TOWN…1859’. The final page, as it states, was only printed on Good Friday, 18 April 1862, so it was presumably not completed until then.

Felix contributed recollected family notes to the 1858 *Memoir* of Thomas Uwins, whom RCR knew well [*Leeds* p. 15]. He also privately printed (50 copies) of RCR’s *My Diary of Sixty-Three Days, with Memorandums of occasional trips to Kent*, ill., (1858). *Leeds* p.19 confirms RCR’s father was buried at Leeds.

*\*Leeds: our grandfather’s native village, with divers remains gathered in memory of Robert Cabell Roffe, Engraver, by his sons Alfred, Felix and Edwin Roffe* (privately printed, Rochester Press, 1859 on t.p but 1862 on last page)

**2. John, Richard and William John Roffe**

**John Roffe**, 1769–1850. A London engraver who specialised in architectural subjects, his best-known works are the plates for Marbles in the British Museum (1812) and Murphy's The Arabian Antiquities of Spain. Another John Roffe, engraver, is also noted as active between 1820 and 1861. It has been suggested he might be a son but without any evidence.

The John Roffe who engraved Raeburn's 1808 portrait of Sir Walter Scott was also responsible for portraits of Byron and Thomas Campbell (acc Univ of Edinburgh Walter Scott website).

Basil Hunnisett’s dictionary of British steel-plate engravers (2021) says the father of the John born in 1769 was **Joseph Roffe,** a Soho schoolmaster. John was apprenticed to James Basire senior in 1785 and his younger brother Richard apparently to James Basire junior in 1795 according to Stationers’ Company apprentice records (which confirm Joseph’s identity). The only proximate London birth of a John Roffe to a father named Joseph and his wife Martha, was a boy who appears to have been baptised twice, on 30 August and 11 November 1770 at St Giles in the Fields.

It is not yet clear whether John (as his age may suggest) was married once or twice but he only had currently identified children when he was in his early fifties by a wife named Elizabeth. These were the painter William John Roffe (1822–1901) and his sister Elizabeth Anne (b. 1825) who married George Stephenson Knowles (1818–61) in 1846 but whose date of death is not known. In December 1850 William, then unmarried, was probably living with his father when the latter died on the 14th, aged 81, at 9, West Terrace, Park Road (now Parkhurst Road), Upper Holloway, and was buried at St Mary, Islington, on the 21st. William remained at Park Road until at least early 1853.

His own place of birth was given as ‘Lancaster Street’ – which is in Southwark –, at the time of his baptism in 1822 at St George the Martyr, Queen’s Square, Bloomsbury (not the one in Southwark). His sister was also baptised at Queen’s Square on 4 November 1825 with place of birth stated as Leigh Street, Burton Crescent, also in Bloomsbury/ St Pancras. (Leigh Street and Hastings Street are parallel roads linked at the west end by the houses now forming Cartwright Gardens, apparently the former Burton Crescent.)

Their mother, Elizabeth, was presumably younger than their father. A John Roffe who married Elizabeth Coates at St Mary-le-Bone on 26 August 1818 is the nearest London date and name match to the two births. This may not be the correct marriage but, if it is, it precludes an earlier one for John since the register says he was a bachelor, not a widower.

A John Roffe, engraver, Long Acre, who is recorded as a freemason in the Lodge of Regularity from April 1802 was also presumably the one born in 1769.

**Richard Roffe,** 1781/2–1846, also identified as an engraver in his will (and with an entry in Hunnisett), was younger brother of John and appears to have been apprenticed to James Basire junior from 1795. He and his wife Ann had two known daughters of whom Louisa was a perinatal death in 1807 and Emma (1820–81) became a Mrs Plowman in May 1843. She was his sole heir when he died, a widower, at 41 Hastings Street, Burton Crescent, (Bloomsbury/St Pancras), aged 64 and was buried at St Giles in the Fields on 5 March 1846. A former address was given in his will as Harton Street (though one only exists today,Q in Deptford, which seems unlikely).

**William John** **Roffe** (bap. 10 April 1822, St George the Martyr, Queen’s Square – d. 1901, 4th qtr, Hampstead). Painter son of the engraver John Roffe (1769–1850) and his wife Elizabeth. He exhibited (RA, BI and SBA) from 1845 to 1889 from numerous London addresses. The most notable (at the RA, 1851–53) for identification purposes was ‘9, West Terrace, Park Road’, now Parkhurst Road, in Upper Holloway, which was his father John’s last home. He is also listed there in the 1851 census and at least one directory in 1852. In 1866 he married Emma E. Faye (1830–1916) in Hampstead and had two daughters, Susan Emma (1869–1949) and Alice Elizabeth (1870–1962). In the 1881 census they were at 18 Langdon Road, Upper Holloway, where he is noted as ‘Artist Painting in Oils &c’ and in 1901 ‘Living on own means’ at 15 Lawn Rd, Hampstead with his wife and Alice. He died there late that year.

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