

# Fancy finding this in the attic!

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Although Quorn Village On-line Museum ([www.quornmuseum.com](http://www.quornmuseum.com)) doesn't own many artefacts in its own right, we do come across some incredibly interesting items, which people allow us to photograph, and we can then try to investigate. Sometimes stories emerge that provide a fascinating glimpse into the lives of our forebears in Victorian Quorn.

Recently this intricate sampler came to light. It is minutely stitched in red thread and says 'R Goulding, Quorndon, Lough.' After the application of a few skills that Sherlock Holmes might be proud of, a story was revealed that involved the fortunes of four orphaned children and a scandal involving the headmaster of Quorn Primary School! It even brought to light a long forgotten murder.



## Investigations begin

An initial trawl of Quorn local history sources, (mainly on [www.quornmuseum.com](http://www.quornmuseum.com)), looking for R Goulding, didn't reveal anything useful - which was disappointing, but it is not unusual if someone only lived in Quorn for a short time, and especially if they weren't around at the time of the ten year census (1881, 1891 etc). This was obviously going to be a tough one! A lucky break came when someone mentioned that the sampler may have 'something to do with an orphanage near Bristol'. This rang bells as I had come across the Muller Orphan Homes at Ashley Down in Bristol, once before. A quick internet search for 'Muller homes sampler' brought back several images of samplers using the same designs and motifs, and embroidered in a single colour thread. This was great - a positive lead! 'Mullers' still exists today as a Christian organisation, helping those in need - and not only that, but they still hold the meticulous records and correspondence relating to their old orphanages. For a small fee, they were able to send copies of papers relating to two sisters; Matilda and Rosanna Goulding, who lived there in the early 1880s.

The documents showed that after their parents died in 1877, Matilda and Rosanna had initially been admitted to the Ardwick Protestant Orphan Houses in Manchester, but when these closed in February 1880, they were transferred to the Muller Homes. On 18<sup>th</sup> September 1884, the girls were discharged into the service of the headmaster of Quorn National School, Mr John Dryden and his wife, Emma. Both girls were to undertake school and household duties. From this information it was possible to widen the research and to begin to piece together the bigger picture.

## The research continues

A search of the 1871 census showed a young couple, Walter and Sabina Goulding, living in Hounslow in Middlesex, with their four children; Emma (aged 5), Edmund (aged 4), Matilda (aged 2) and baby Rosanna. It was Rosanna who later produced the sampler that still survives today.

Sadly life was not kind to the Goulding family. Sabina had been in service from a young age, and when she was 20 years old, in 1860, she gave birth in secret to a baby girl. Newspapers from the time report in lurid detail how she killed the child. She was charged with murder, but somewhat

surprisingly, given the evidence, was acquitted and received six months imprisonment for 'concealment of a birth'. She married Walter Goulding four years later in 1864, but after only eleven years of marriage, Walter died of pneumonia in 1875. Sabina herself was also ill at this time with heart problems, and died two years later in 1877 aged 37, after contracting TB. This left their four children, now aged 12, 10, 9 and 7, as orphans. Although the family had moved around due to Walter's job on the railways, they had kept in touch with their wider family, and one of Walter's brothers, Edgar Goulding and his wife Maria, took on responsibility for finding homes for the four youngsters.

As the eldest, Emma, aged 12, would have been the easiest to look after, and Edgar and Maria took her into their own family. She appears on the 1881 census living with them in Faringdon, Berkshire (now Oxfordshire), and her occupation is shown as a milliner (hat maker/seller).

Ten year old Edmund was found a place in the Bisley Refuge Farm School in Surrey. The School was erected in 1868, for 150 homeless and destitute boys; the

Edmund Goulding	Refuge School Bisley	August 4	12 years	Walter Eaton Esq. Rector.
No. 346.				

estate comprised of about 140 acres of land, which was mostly cultivated by the boys, who were also taught various useful trades. A second building (the Shaftesbury school) was built in 1873 for a similar number, together with a large Chapel which had seating for 400. Sadly Edmund died of TB just two years later when he was aged twelve. He was laid to rest in the Church yard of the small St John the Baptist Church in Bisley village, on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1879.

As we now know, the two youngest, Matilda and Rosanna, were sent to an orphanage in Manchester, but on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January 1880, Mrs Taylor, who ran Ardwick Protestant Orphan Houses with her husband, the Reverend Taylor, wrote to Edgar Goulding explaining that due to her husband's ill health, the orphanage would have to close:

*Dear Sir*

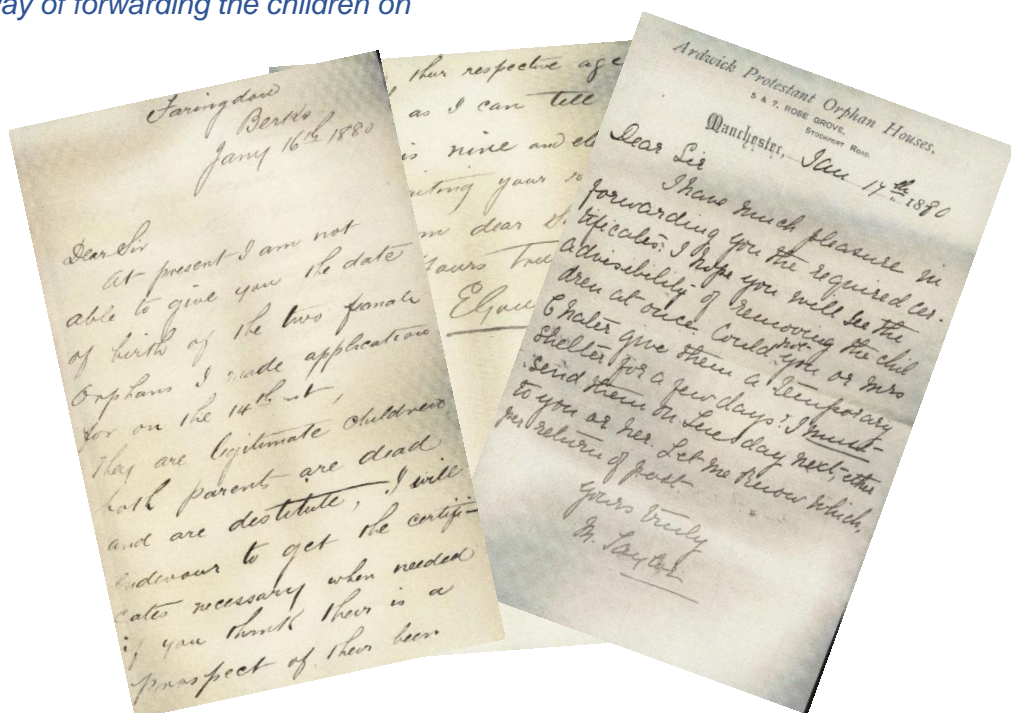
*Owing to Mr Taylor's failing health, we are obliged to close the orphanage and dismiss the children to their friends and relatives. Some have left already and we propose sending your two nieces on to you next week. You can of course dispose of them as you think best. We are very sorry to have to do it, but of course there is no help for it. We have made up some frocks for the children, from the remnants you sent, and the remainder will be disposed of to pay the travelling expenses of the children. Will you please let me know the best way of forwarding the children on to you. Please answer as soon as convenient.*

*Yours truly  
Mrs Taylor*

Two days later on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 1880, Edgar Goulding wrote to the Muller homes and explained that:

*"....this is a very urgent case as unless we can find some kind friends who will take them in, there is nothing before them but the Union [workhouse]"*.

There then followed an arduous process whereby Edgar had to answer detailed questions about Matilda and Rosanna, prove that they were legitimate, that they had been vaccinated and were of



good behaviour. In addition, he had to sign, what was in effect a disclaimer and guarantee, that he would remove the girls if there was need to dismiss them. Meanwhile Mrs Taylor wrote to Edgar again, insisting that the girls had to leave her home on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> January – just 8 days after her original letter. The children were finally admitted to Ashley Down, House no 3 (at the front of the picture) on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1880. There were over 2,000 children at Ashley Down – all orphaned and all born in wedlock.



After finding out what had happened to all four children immediately after their parents' death, I decided to try to discover what became of them later in their lives.

### **Rosanna**

Rosanna married James Shires in Leicester in 1894. He was from Yorkshire, and the couple made their home there. In 1901 they were living in James' home town of Leeds and the 1911 census finds them in Sheffield. The couple didn't have any children and died within a few months of each other in 1946, both in their seventies.

### **Matilda**

Matilda married John Ward Wright in Leicester in 1889 and had at least five children. She called her first child Rose after her sister, and her second son was called John Edmund Wright, after the older brother that she was parted from at the age of nine. There was only a year between Edmund and Matilda, so they were probably very close. On the 1891 census Matilda, John and their family were living in Belgrave in Leicester, on Elm Street (now Elmdale Street), and by 1901, they had moved to Green Lane Road. Contact has been made with one of Matilda's great great grandchildren, from a branch of the family that emigrated to Australia, and research is also indicating that there are still descendants of Matilda's living in Leicester today.

### **The Dryden family**

The Muller Homes papers had recorded that when Matilda and Rosanna were discharged, they were sent to work in service to John Dryden, the headmaster of Quorn St Bartholomew's Primary School. They lived in the school house on School Lane, which no longer exists. It was here that Rosanna continued working on the sampler that she had started in Ashley Down Orphan Homes. The 1880s were a turbulent time for Quorn Primary School - the school log books record eight headmasters in a period of ten years! The salary was low, there were insufficient books and materials, and constant

disagreements between the headmaster, the school managers and the vicar. It is not surprising that John Dryden moved on in 1886, after just three years in his post.

But what had brought John Dryden to Quorn in the first place? And how had it come about that he and his wife took on two girls from a Bristol orphanage? This is where the story took another interesting turn.

Although the Drydens are not on a census return in Quorn, they can be found on the 1891 census in London after John had retired. John was 58 and his wife Emma was recorded as 30, although it later transpired that she was only 26. They have six children at this point, two born in Quorn and one in Mountsorrel. A little more digging revealed that John had been married before – his wife, Catherine, had died in 1880 and left him with seven children.

John Dryden appeared to have led a normal 'steady' life for his first forty years. He was born in Dalkeith, Scotland in 1833 and went on to study to be a teacher in Edinburgh. He married Catherine McQuillan in April 1855 and they moved south to Norfolk, where John took up his first teaching post. He and Catherine had seven children between 1856 and 1873 and moved four times, settling finally in St Albans. It was not a remarkable life and there was nothing to predict the events that were to follow.



The old School House on School Lane in 1902, decorated for the coronation of Edward VIIth.

Catherine Dryden died late in 1880 and the 1881 census shows John residing in St Albans with four of his children - Catherine (25), William (17), George (12) and Louis (8). Only a short time after Catherine's death, John, aged nearly 50 years old, started a relationship with a 17 year old girl called Emma. It was only later in the research that I was surprised to discover that this was Emma Goulding – Matilda and Rosanna's elder sister. Emma was 32 years younger than John, and younger than four of his children – not quite what you expect from a respectable teacher! By early 1883, Emma was pregnant. It is not known exactly what happened after this, but the situation would have been a scandal in Victorian St Albans and not the sort of thing that the local school or community would tolerate. The couple moved to Northamptonshire, where baby Emma Goulding Dryden was born in October 1883. Quorn School log books show that John Dryden took up his appointment as headmaster of Quorn Primary School a few weeks later on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1883. Emma was always known as Mrs Dryden, but no trace can be found of a marriage ceremony ever taking place.

There is still a mystery surrounding how John and Emma first met, as St Albans and Faringdon are 75 miles apart, and with his eldest daughter living at home, he was unlikely to have employed domestic help. It was also very strange to have left his first family completely behind, especially as his youngest child would have been only 10 years old.

After the birth of baby Emma, John and Emma went on to have their next two children in Quorn, the fourth in Mountsorrel, and another eight after that when the family had moved to London and then Kent. John died in Gravesend on 20th January 1900 aged 67. Emma was still only 35 years old and had nine surviving children ranging from a young baby, up to Emma (junior), who was now 16. Eleven years after John's death Emma married Walter Williams and disappeared into obscurity.

### **To conclude**

So the story surrounding the sampler finally emerged and Rosanna will not be forgotten. The Gouldings and the Drydens may not have lived in Quorn for long, but they left their small mark on the history of the village, and now it is recorded for future generations.