



# **THE COATHUPES - A MARITIME CONNECTION**

**PENNANT REPRINTS N<sup>o</sup> 16**

**WRAXALL**

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*Edited by Peter Wright*

*I am indebted to Mr William Ferguson Knight who has provided the information on which this article is based and who has given the result of his researches to N&DLHS. The original text was too long to publish in Pennant. This shortened version will, I hope please not only my readers but also Mr Knight and Mrs P Horman and Mrs A.J. Codrington whose assistance he acknowledges.*

**T**his article is about three members of the Coathupe family who were involved with the sea either in life or in death.

Henry Thornton Coathupe    b 1834    d June 8th 1856  
Frederick Augustin Coathupe b 1839    d Dec 23rd 1881  
Gilbert Gutch Coathupe      b 1840    d July 15th 1877

"Birdcombe Court" also known as "The Tower House" stands to the north of what is now the main road from Nailsea to Wraxall and can be seen if one looks to the left just after passing the last cottage on that side of the road. It was bought by William Coathupe in 1793 when he was a partner in the Nailsea Glassworks and later passed to his son

Charles Thornton Coathupe who had been born there in 1801. Charles and his wife Ann (nee Bains born in Jamaica) produced fourteen children there.

When the research was done the family memorial which stands in Wraxall churchyard was said to be "rather scruffy, and overgrown with ivy and brambles". The inscriptions relating to Henry Frederick and Gilbert read

"IN MEMORY OF HENRY THORNTON COATHUPE MEDICAL OFFICER ON BOARD THE MORNING STAR WHO DIED AT SEA JUNE 8TH 1856, AGED 22"

while below this is

"ALSO OF GILBERT GUTCH COATHUPE AGED 37 CAPTAIN, R.M.S.S. "ETEN" WHO WAS DROWNED IN THE WRECK OF HIS SHIP, OFF THE COAST OF VALPARAISO, JULY 15TH 1877, AND OVER ONE HUNDRED OF THE CREW AND PASSENGERS ON BOARD WERE LOST."

SONS OF THE LATE C.T. COATHUPE, OF THIS PARISH

On another side there are inscriptions relating to William Thornton who died in 1834 aged 3, Charles Thomas M.B., M.R.C.S. who died in 1862 at Clevedon aged 30, Alfred King who died in 1865 at Clifton aged 18 and

FREDERICK AUGUSTIN COATHUPE LIEUT. R.N.R. CAPTAIN R.M.S.S.AFRICAN WHO DIED AT CLIFTON DECEMBER 23 1881 AGED 42

SONS OF THE LATE C.T. COATHUPE, OF THIS PARISH

HENRY THORNTON COATHUPE  
the fourth child of Charles and Ann was born at Birdcombe in 1834.

Henry the "medical officer" does not appear in the "Licentiate registers of the Society of Apothecaries 1815 -1856" (1) so the question arises as to what standard he had been trained. The answer is not available so maybe he was what might be termed a medical orderly.

The MORNING STAR could have been one of several that carried the name about 1856. It seems likely that Henry's vessel was one built at St John New Brunswick in 1854, Official No 3995 and registered in Liverpool on 27th March 1854 (2)

She was bought from the builders Francis and Joseph Ruddock by James Alexander in March 1854 and in the October fifty six /sixty fourths were sold to William and James Ferrie, Merchants and Captains. Both Alexander and Co and William and James Ferrie were involved in the emigrant trade.

GILBERT GUTCH COATHUPE

born at Birdcombe Court in 1840 was employed by the Pacific Steam Navigation Company of Liverpool.

He passed his examination for a certificate as Master mariner in 1869 in Bristol and was appointed mate of the steamship AREQUIPA in 1870. He then became master of the QUITO prior to commanding the ill fated ETEN.

The circumstances of his death were documented in the Western Daily Press where attention was drawn to the fact that his brother Edwin was Chief Constable. A considerable achievement in those days for one who had joined the Metropolitan Police force as a constable and did not have the benefit of a service commission.

Hockings "Dictionary of Disasters at Sea" states that the ETEN plied regularly between Valparaiso and Panama. Capt

Coathupe was an officer well acquainted with the coast. The ship set her normal course and according to evidence kept to it throughout the night. There was however an extremely strong current running with a continual disturbance of the sea due to the effects of an earthquake and tidal wave on May 10th

In Haydn's Dictionary of Dates "23rd Edition containing the history of the world to the end of 1903" there is an entry under "Wrecks"

"Eten, steam ship (English Pacific Steam Navigation Company);wrecked about 70 miles N of Valparaiso; about 100 (of 160) lost; many rescued by H.M.S. Amethyst 15th July 1877

#### FREDERICK AUGUSTIN COATHUPE

born at Birdcombe Court in 1839 Frederick passed his master's ticket at Bristol during 1871 and was appointed mate of the liner CELT. He went on to serve as a mate in the EUROPEAN and SAXON prior to being appointed master of the BRITON in 1873 in which year he became master of the AFRICAN.

The AFRICAN was built in 1873 by Key of Kinghorn and was employed as a mail steamer between England and the Cape until 1881.

Frederick left the employ of the Union Line and joined their keen rival the Castle Line. He reappears in 1877 as Mate of the COURLAND, then, in the same year, the TAYMOUTH CASTLE and his final vessel appears to be the BALMORAL CASTLE in which he served as mate until 1879.

William Ferguson Knight finishes his researches with a number of questions

Why did he leave the Union Line? Why did he join the Castle Line? What killed Frederick at the age of 42? Why did three sons of a country business man end up in the Merchant Fleet?

Sources

- (1) Guildhall Library - Miss Nicola Smith
- (2) Mr Gordon Reade MA of Merseyside Museums and Galleries, and R.L. Dawson Esq. of H.M.C & E.

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