

Southampton Local History Forum Journal

Terrence Pook

Nathaniel Ogle and a Missing Sculpture

Nathaniel was a young boy who had spent most of his childhood living in a detached house in Orchard Place in Southampton, which is the southern end of Orchard Lane, outside the town walls. The house had a pleasant view across the marsh, of the shipping in Southampton Water and to the distant Isle of Wight, whenever the weather was fine and clear enough. His father was a gentleman, and all that implied, with the same name and his mother was known as Mary although her real name was Anna Maria. His sister was also Mary which often caused confusion.

Born in 1795 but baptised in 1797 at St Mary's church, just outside Southampton, by his grandfather, Newton Ogle, the retiring Dean of Winchester, who also happened to be the vicar of the church but most of the parish duties he left for the curate to do. Nathaniel's parents were correctly named in the register of baptisms but the fact that they were not married was not mentioned, nor the fact that their son was illegitimate, as was usual in registers. The baptism was delayed until just before the wealthy Dean and his wife returned to their family seat in Northumberland after his retirement from the Church.

To cut a long story short, the two children grew up in a loving family environment and Nathaniel joined the navy as a young midshipman, as befitted the son of a gentleman, who then became involved with the naval transport of large numbers of troops embarking at Southampton for the military campaigns then ongoing, the current being known as the Walchuren Campaign, an area of coastal Belgium on the Island of that name. Sister Mary was sent away for her education and she later married, in 1818. The Children's father died in 1813 and had provided for the children but as Nathaniel was illegitimate he could not inherit the valuable estate in Northumberland he would otherwise have done, so that went to his father's younger brother, John Saville Ogle. Mary returned to Southampton to be with her mother for her first pregnancy but sadly she died having given birth to a son who also died a few days later. They were both buried in Pear Tree Chapel graveyard as was also Anna Maria in 1827, as recorded in the same burial register as her daughter, eight years earlier.

Nathaniel, now the only member of the family still alive, having left the navy as a captain, needed something to do and so became involved with designing and building steam engines for road travel. He was successful with the engineering but his vehicle design was not popular with the public due to it having only three wheels, in a similar fashion to the Bond Invalid car of recent years. Now having spent most of the legacy from his father, Nathaniel then abandoned the project at Millbrook Foundry and left Southampton for good, moving to London and became a writer.

After the death of his mother, Nathaniel wished to leave a memorial to her and so he commissioned one of the top sculptors of the day, Edward Hodges Baily RA FRS (1788-1867), who in 1832 designed a wall monument for Anna Maria which was placed in the St Nicholas, Millbrook Parish Church. An article in *The Literary World* of 1840 is the only reference to this work of his, which was then described as a marble wall tablet memorial to Mrs Nathaniel Ogle, entitled 'The Dying Wife' and was a female form rising and pointing upwards while looking down and had her infant creeping up to her bosom with the simple motto 'Farewell for a Little while'. The 1832 exhibition at the Royal Academy included a 'model of part of the monument about to be erected at Millbrook to the memory of a lady' but no image of this memorial has appeared.

The article in the review goes on to praise the quality of Baily's work, assessing it as better than more well known sculptors, it having a more correct feeling for arrangement and graceful outline. Other notable examples mentioned were, 'Eve at the Fountain' (see picture below), 'Eve Listening to the First Voice' and 'Maternal Affection' (see picture right), the latter described as a fond and lovely mother kissing her playful child who is clambering over her shoulder.

Other work by Baily includes 'The Sleeping Nymph' and an effigy of Lord Brome, which if they were seen together would show the difference between sleep and death, the former showing healthful repose and the latter depicting the sleep that knows no waking, but before, "Times effacing fingers Had swept the lines where beauty lingers".

If there is still any doubt about the quality of the work of E. H. Baily, I have only to



Figure 1: Maternal Affection



Figure 2: Eve at the Fountain

mention his most prestigious commission, the statue of Horatio Nelson, on his column overlooking Trafalgar Square in London with a statue of Isaac Watts also by Baily being within the Abney Park Cemetery in London.

St Nicholas' Church at Millbrook was finally demolished in 1939 after one of its walls had collapsed earlier. City Heritage and the successor church, Holy Trinity have no knowledge of the sculpture of which I can only assume to have been lost, either in the collapse of the wall, the demolition of 1939 or even earlier as the Victoria County History, which was written about 1900 does not mention it, which surely it would have

done if it had then been seen. This is surely a shameful loss of a beautiful memorial with historic City connections, the design of which can now only be imagined from the description written above.

The picture of Baily's white marble 'Eve at the Fountain' was one of the earliest photographs taken by William Henry Fox Talbot, the creator of photography, as we knew it, before the digital variety came along. The second picture, with the title, 'Maternal Affection' was another white

Southampton Local History Forum Journal

marble sculpture finished in 1837, which may give some idea of the style of the missing Ogle memorial and this was photographed in 2006 by Jacqueline Banerjee in 2006 as shown on the website, www.victorianweb.org (website shown as condition of use of this image).