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Richard Evamy: saddler, hop merchant and property speculator in Southampton, 1788-1855

There can be few people who have lived such eventful lives as Richard Evamy yet whose legacy is so underrated. He was baptised in the agricultural market town of Wimborne Minster, Dorset on 25 June 1765. He was the only son of Richard Evamy and his second wife Joanna Frances (*nee* Fabian), married in Wimborne Minster on 9 June 1757. His family on both sides were harness and collarmakers. The Fabians had been in the trade since the 1680s at least and Richard Evamy junior was apprenticed, as a tanner, to Richard Fabian (his future father-in-law) on 19 November 1750. Richard Evamy senior, saddler as well as harness and collarmaker, left his widow Joanna and his two children – Richard and Ann (wife of William Knott, stonemason of Wimborne Minster) – a “large and commodious brick sashed dwelling house” (his residence) near East Brook Bridge, two dwelling houses adjoining and an acre of arable land on the Poole turnpike road (will dated 2 December 1789, proved 9 June 1791). Joanna is listed as an ironmonger of Wimborne Minster in the *Universal British directory* of 1791. She died on 7 July 1802, her estate divided between her son and her son-in-law. This provided Richard with a freehold house and garden in Wimborne Minster on which he claimed a parliamentary vote.

Richard Evamy came to Southampton in early 1788, setting up as a “saddler, cap and coach-harness maker, from London” at a shop in Above Bar lately occupied by James Gradridge (*Salisbury Journal*, 11 February 1788). In September he shot a ‘whale’ (possibly a bottle-nosed dolphin?) in the River Itchen, opposite what was to become the landing place of the Itchen ferry. It produced 80 gallons of “very superior sperm”, manufactured by John Rice for use in All Saints Church (*The Hampshire repository*, volume 1, 8 September 1798; *Hampshire Advertiser*, 23 April 1843). Newspaper accounts refer to Evamy as a member of the New Forest Rifle Light Dragoons. He profited greatly during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, especially from government contracts to equip cavalry regiments encamped on Southampton Common. They were “furnished, on the shortest notice, with saddles, helmets, sabres, gilt and plated, epaulet chains and every other military appointment, equal in quality and price to any house in London” (*Salisbury Journal*, 20 May 1799). His services extended to the yeomanry, including the Loyal Southampton Volunteers commanded by Josias Jackson of Belle Vue, and to the infantry, supplied, at seven days’ notice, with “leather queues, as regulation, rusets, cartouch boxes, buff-belts, *etc.*” (*Salisbury Journal, ibid*). It was a labour-intensive, well-paid industry. Advertisements in August 1803 and July 1808 sought 50 hands – saddlers, harness-makers and shoe-makers – for immediate employment on piece work or at 30*s. per* week.

Profits from government procurement were invested in an extensive property portfolio – both leasehold and freehold – in prime development land to the west of Above Bar. A Corporation lease of 27 June 1792 gave Evamy control of land on either side of Orchard Street, incorporating the former Ropewalk, stretching from the town walls to Above Bar. This was the pivot for his subsequent acquisitions. He focused initially on land to the south. Catchcold gardens, Catchcold Tower and a significant portion of adjoining town wall fell to

Evamy by a Corporation lease effective from Lady Day 1807. This imposed an obligation to keep the tower and adjoining walls in good repair (*Corporation journal*, 19 September 1811: Southampton City Archives SC 2/1/13). In July 1809 Evamy leased two messuages in Albion Place, a prestigious development by the architect John Plaw which incorporated part of Catchcold Tower (Hampshire Archives and Local Studies 11M70/B1/2/73: indenture of 6/7 July 1809).

The centre of Evamy's property interests switched to the north of Orchard Street with his purchase, on 26 June 1810, of the freehold estate of the late Colonel James Morgan, originally of Purbrook Park, Waterlooville (Southampton City Archives D/Z 459/13). It was in a prime location, bordering Canshot Lane (later Windmill Lane, now Regent Street) on the north, Above Bar on the east and Southampton Water on the west. The grounds, extensive and secluded, included a hot-house for grapes, melon pits, mushroom beds, a pinery, three and a half acres of pleasure grounds and a well-stocked garden enclosed by a brick wall nearly 600 yards long. A 20-foot wide terrace provided a "sea-side" promenade 350 feet long. There was stabling for ten horses and a coach-house for three carriages. The capital mansion house itself, built in the mid-eighteenth century, was amongst the largest residences in the town (*Salisbury Journal*, 19 September 1810; *Bath Chronicle*, 9 January 1812). The purchase brought the Spa Gardens, the property of Southampton Corporation immediately to the south, under Evamy's control. On 19 September 1811 he lodged a plan of improvement for the Spa before the Corporation. This was approved following a site visit. A fresh lease was granted to Evamy, on completion of the improvements, from Lady Day 1815. It incorporated four separate elements: "the premises called the Cherry Garden or Spaw" granted to the Marquis of Lansdowne on 20 September 1808; a contiguous piece of land demised to James Morgan on 29 May 1806; 20 feet of mudland lately enclosed from the shore; and an approach road to the mudlands lately taken from Mr Simpkins (*Corporation journal*, 27 January 1815). The Spa gardens were run by William Bridgewater Page.

Richard Evamy quitted the saddlery business in the last year of the Napoleonic Wars. The lease of his workshop and stables on the south side of Orchard Street (the Ropewalk) and of his house and shop at 35 Above Bar were acquired by James Howell in December 1814 (Southampton City Archives D/PM Box 59/4/6). Howell continued the saddlery business – to January 1820 in partnership with William Spurrier – until his death in July 1837. Evamy moved into the highly speculative world of the hop merchant. The influence of his wife's family was perhaps critical here. He married Mary Barnes at St Thomas's Church, Winchester on 12 June 1788. Mary was the sister of William Barnes, brewer of Winchester, public house proprietor and mayor of the city in 1817, 1822, 1826 and 1831. Changes of residence suggest that Evamy was moving up the social scale. A newly-built compact freehold residence towards the top of Above Bar was acquired in 1814, comprising drawing room, dining room, breakfast room, six bedrooms and capital arched cellars, with much sought-after views of the New Forest and Southampton Water. He moved out of the town in 1818, leasing a recently-built house, complete with stables and coach house, on land enclosed from Nursling Common (Hampshire Archives and Local Studies 11M70/B1/1/8/101: 30 May 1818). The property lay on the north side of the Southampton to Romsey turnpike close to the

present-day Horns Inn and since October 1813 had been held under lease by his son-in-law Enoch Hodgkinson. The Above Bar property was offered for sale with immediate possession (*Salisbury Journal*, 20 July 1818) but was still on the market in April 1826. A certain social respectability was slowly being forged. Evamy was a subscriber in December 1814 to the newly-formed Southampton branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The following year he was on the managing committee of the Provident Institution for the town and neighbourhood, set up to provide “a secure investment to the industrious and lower classes of the people”. A “clever cricketer”, he was part of the Southampton team of gentlemen in 1817 that engaged the gentlemen of Winchester in a three-match series. The *Salisbury Journal*, 19 May 1817 characterized him as “the indefatigable Mr Evamy”. His batting position (not higher than number 9) and his relative lack of runs and wickets suggest that, at 52 years old, he was more a motivator and tactician than a performer.

Each of the daughters of Richard and Mary who survived infancy made an advantageous marriage. This network of family alliances was to play a significant part in the later development of their father’s property interests.

Mary Evamy (baptised 27 March 1789: All Saints Church) married Enoch Hodgkinson on 10 January 1811. He was - in partnership with John Pocock - a draper in the High Street, Southampton, set up in the trade by his late uncle, also Enoch Hodgkinson, linen draper -in partnership with George Warriner - of 124 Bond Street in London’s Mayfair. His uncle was also a director of the Hand-in-Hand Fire Office, a Surrey magistrate, leaseholder of respectable houses in Stamford Street, Bennet Street and Brunswick Street on the Surrey side of Blackfriar’s Bridge and owner of property in Child’s Hill in Middlesex. By his will of 3 May 1810 (proved 11 June), he left his nephew £3,000 in bank stock and the leasehold of 16 Stamford Street let at an annual rent of £46. Three years later the younger Enoch leased a house and grounds in Nursling from Sir Charles Mill of Mottisfont, later, as we have seen, let to Richard Evamy. Enoch later abandoned the drapery trade to become a landing waiter at the Custom House. He died in November 1820 leaving property in the City of London, Middlesex, Surrey and Hampshire to his widow. Mary remarried on 24 September 1822. Her new husband, nearly eleven years her junior, was the virtually penniless Jersey artist John William Millais. They were living at Townhill Cottage in South Stoneham at the birth of their first child in January 1824.

Ann Evamy (baptised 17 June 1796: All Saints Church) married Henry Coward on 27 June 1829 at St Boniface’s church, Nursling. He was a widower then living at Red Lodge in North Stoneham. His first marriage, on 18 October 1815, was to Mary Strong, daughter of the late Stephen Strong, ironmonger of Yeovil. A daughter, Mary Ann Coward, was born to this first marriage on 5 November 1817. She was baptized at Yeovil Independent [Congregational] Church on 28 December 1817. We shall meet Henry Coward later in this narrative.

Emily Evamy (baptised 12 September 1801: All Saints Church) married John Heather on 19 August 1829, also at Nursling church. He was the son of Robert and Elizabeth Heather, baptised at St Michael’s Church on 27 January 1795. Robert Heather was variously a gin distiller in French Street, a partner with Philip Le Feuvre in the wine and spirit importing firm

of Le Feuvre, Heather and Company, a brewer and owner of at least three inns: the Mitre, the Robin Hood and the Fish and Kettle. At his death in 1820 Robert owned land in St Michael's Square (no.17), French Street (no. 79), Simnel Street, Love Lane (St Mary's) and Bell Street, as well as freehold lands in Brockenhurst (*Salisbury Journal*, 29 May 1820). The brewer John Drew - a younger brother of Elizabeth Heather - was Emily's uncle. Originally of Portsea, he had come to Southampton in 1796 to join Robert Heather in running the French Street gin distillery. Between 1800 and 1804 he was a partner in Le Feuvre, Heather and Co, setting up as an independent trader in October 1804. He was trustee of Robert's will in 1820. At the time of his death in 1841 he was one of the largest brewers in the district, the proprietor of public houses in Southampton, Hythe, Winchester, Alresford, Romsey, Bishops Waltham, Newport (Isle of Wight) and Poole, and allegedly owner of property amounting to one fortieth of the whole Southampton rating assessment (A G K Leonard, *More stories of Southampton streets*, 1989, p 50).

Caroline Evamy (baptised 1 March 1806: All Saints Church) married Charles Pardey on 4 December 1825 at St Giles' in the Fields, London. He was born in Lymington, c.1801, the son of William Pardey. The family had by 1806 moved to Southampton where William, a builder and carpenter, invested heavily in property. At the time of his will (signed 29 March 1833) he owned land in Spa Road, Town Ditches, Trafalgar Place and South Front (both in Kingsland Place), Brunswick Place, College Street, Waterloo Place, Castle Hill, Bridge Street and Playhouse Yard (otherwise Pardey's Buildings) in French Street. Charles followed his father as a builder. His eldest sister, Sarah, married Richard Hopkins Perkins, chairmaker of Lymington, on 4 December 1821. He was a cabinet maker and upholsterer in Southampton during the early years of the marriage, but later became an auctioneer. The name R H Perkins was for half a century synonymous in Southampton with the auction trade.

The house and grounds at the centre of the estate purchased from Colonel Morgan in 1810 was originally on short lets, the house advertised as ready furnished. 'Lord Ormand' (presumably Walter Butler, 18th Earl of Ormonde) is recorded as having recently taken the house in July 1810. The majority of the estate was sold to Sarah Siddons on 29 September 1812 - three months after her retirement from the London stage - for £5,750 (Southampton City Archives D/Z 254/2). Evamy reserved the southern section for himself, possibly to protect his interests in Spa Gardens. Respective trustees for the vendor and purchaser were William Barnes of Winchester, Richard's brother-in-law, and William Fitzhugh of Banister Court, family friend and patron of Mrs Siddons. The sale soon unravelled. It is doubtful if the new owner ever lived in the house, the All Saints quarterly rate books marking the house 'void' between the middle of 1812 and 1815 (A G K Leonard, *More stories of Southampton streets*, 1989, p 122). The property was sold back to Evamy on 24 June 1814 for £3,550 (Southampton City Archives D/Z459/17b), although Mrs Siddons continued to hold a significant financial stake in the property through a £3,000 mortgage arranged three days later. She held the mortgage until 24 February 1824. The house was demolished in early 1826 after a further series of lets, latterly to Admiral Scott, and its building materials - 800,000 bricks, several thousand feet of excellent timber and fifteen tons of lead, "all deserving the attention of gentlemen architects and builders" - were sold by private contract

(*Salisbury Journal*, 27 February 1826). The site had already been prepared for development. Proposals for building lots were submitted to the Corporation on 10 August 1825 (*Corporation journal*: Southampton City Archives SC 2/1/13). The same meeting approved an exchange of property essential to the viability of the new development: freehold adjoining Spa Gardens owned by Richard Evamy exchanged with freehold south of Windmill Lane (Mounts Orchard) owned by the Corporation and leased to Evamy on 29 December 1820 (Southampton City Archives SC 4/3/1328). The sale of building plots “worthy the notice of respectable families” on “the only vacant ground so near this favourite town” was announced in the *Salisbury Journal*, 20 February 1826.

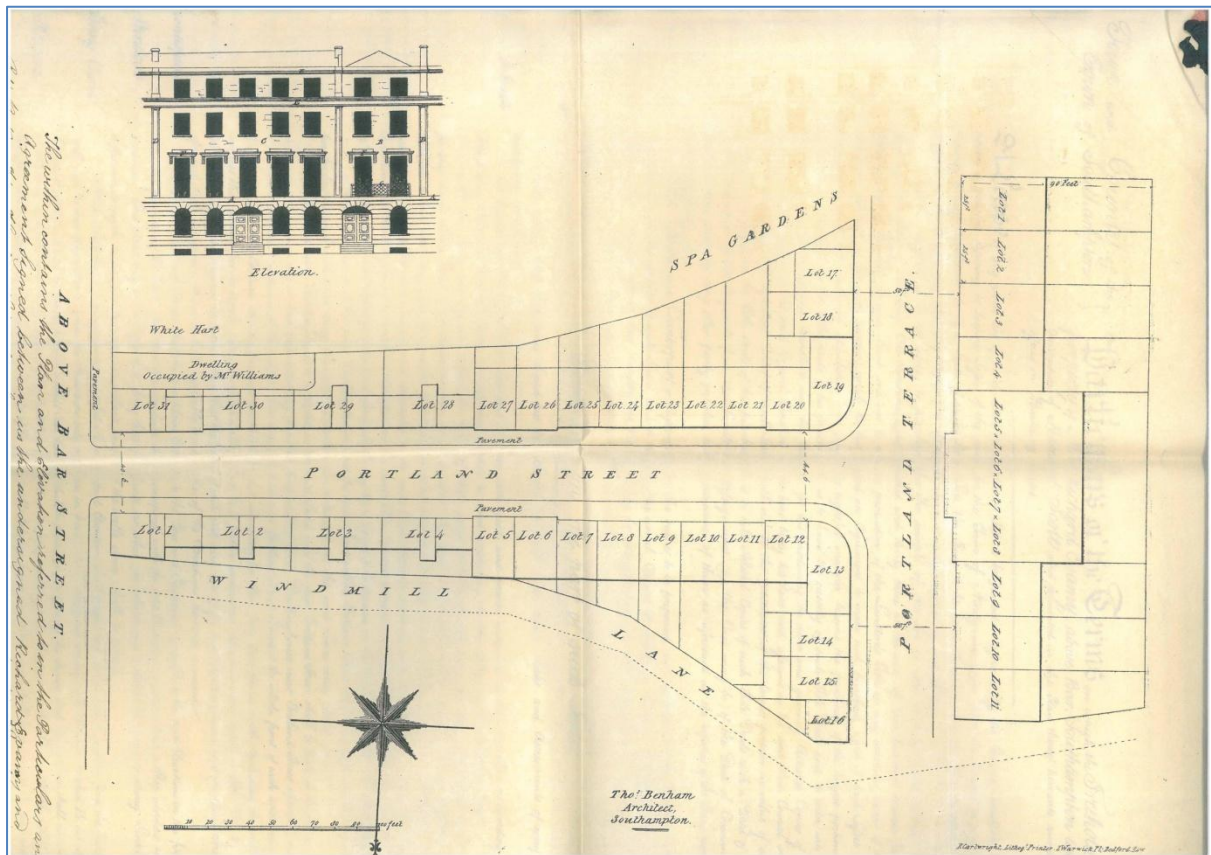


Figure 1 Outline and elevations of the Portland Street/Terrace development, [1826]
Southampton City Archives D/MW 62/112

The development of Portland Street and Portland Terrace was an exercise in creative speculation. Forty-two vacant lots were offered on 99-year building leases, with liberty to purchase the freehold before 1 January 1833 at a fixed rate of £100 for every £7.10s of annual ground rent. Lessees were to build a dwelling house on their lots within three years of the date of conveyance. Strict covenants controlled the build and prescribed elevations, drawn by Thomas Benham, created the illusion of single-build terraces (Southampton City Archives D/MW 62/112). The elevations are reproduced as figure 1. The majority of the first lessees were builders or in trades allied to building, and many were members of Richard Evamy’s close family. Eleven properties in Portland Street were leased to Charles Pardey, eight in

partnership with his brother-in-law R H Perkins. Single leases were held by Henry Coward and Mary Millais. Richard Evamy himself moved from Nursling to no.8 Portland Street.

A dramatic reconstitution of the area around the Spa Gardens complemented the new terraces. The river-side frontage was secured by a new lease, approved by the Corporation on 10 August 1825, of a 700-foot section of mudland in front of the gardens. Plans and elevations of what were to become the Royal Victoria Assembly Rooms were advertised jointly with the building lots in Portland Street in the *Salisbury Journal*, 10 April 1826. The New Rooms, as they were initially called, opened in the summer of 1830. The entrance from Portland Terrace is shown as figure 2. The main features of the two-storey building were a 90-foot long ballroom, a card room and river-front balconies. The addition of a promenade along the water's edge and extensive archery grounds transformed the remainder of the property, which included the eponymous spa and the original spa cottage. A new 40-year Corporation lease covering the Archery Rooms and associated buildings was granted to Evamy on 20 August 1830 (Southampton City Archives SC 4/3/1460). By the spring of 1832 the Assembly Rooms had come under the proprietorship of Henry Coward, Evamy's son-in-law.



The joint development was a financial disaster. The Portland Street element became mired in a labyrinth of mortgages, complex tenancies, delays and bankruptcies: a pecuniary failure according to Evamy's terse obituary (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 13 October 1855, reprinted in *Gentleman's Magazine*, November 1855). The western side of Portland Terrace was incomplete by the time that Evamy lost control of the project. The Royal Victoria Assembly Rooms were put up for sale by

Figure 2 Royal Victoria Assembly Rooms: north entrance, 1941
Local Studies Library, Southampton Central Library. Portcities 2267

private contract in August 1834. The essential precondition that Evamy should own the freehold was affected in December 1833 by the exchange of the Assembly Rooms leasehold with the freehold on nos 7 and 8 Portland Terrace. The new freehold, sold in 90 shares of £100 each (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 30 August 1834), was acquired by a consortium led by John Fleming of North Stoneham. This preserved the rooms as a Tory stronghold. Evamy, a lifelong pro-Corn Law Tory, was a signatory to the requisition to Fleming to stand as a Tory candidate for the South Division of Hampshire in the general election of 1832 and had placed the Assembly Rooms at the disposal of his election committee (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 22

September 1832). James Barlow Hoy, Tory candidate for Southampton at the same election, also held rallies in the Assembly Rooms, at one of which Evamy had spoken. Somewhat churlishly, the Tory press merely noted the speech but did not report it, citing lack of space (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 22 December 1832). The shares were conveyed in such a way that “Gentlemen Subscribers” – by temperament and outlook largely Tory - were guaranteed a vote for the South Division.

The world of commodity trading was as volatile as that of the property developer. As we have seen, Evamy became a hop merchant in 1814. An early partnership with the Winchester hop merchant W Nicholas was dissolved on 19 February 1818. Evamy then traded independently until October 1828 when he entered into partnership with Thomas Morris, esq of Whitchurch. A Chancery law case in July 1841, between two sets of rival assignees over the true state of the accounts, reveals the blatantly capitalistic nature of the partnership. It was based, according to one of the attorneys, on “the foundation that Morris had capital and Evamy had knowledge of hop dealings”. Morris was to advance all the capital, and bearing all loss, was to take one half of the profits. Evamy was to manage the business. “Morris made very large advances for the hops, and as long as their sale was delayed his capital remained dead, but Evamy who advanced nothing, was unwilling to sell whilst there was a hope of prices rising” (*The Times*, 17 July 1841: submission of Mr Tinney). The partnership ended in July 1833, by which time Evamy was in debt to Morris for the sum of £11,000. This was secured on two mortgages of £8,000 and £3,000. Morris was also lessee of 7 and 8 Portland Terrace, suggesting that Evamy was trying to cover his trading losses through his property portfolio. Similarly damaging sums were owed to the firm of Joshua Lockwood, Joseph Thackrah and Henry Thackrah, hop merchants of Pooley Street, Southwark. Mortgages taken on Evamy’s property in Albion Place and Nursling as early as November 1832 failed to appease the creditors and by April 1834 virtually all of Evamy’s remaining property – freehold and leasehold – was assigned to the two surviving members of the firm, Joshua Lockwood and Joseph Thackrah, subject to an annuity of £220 and a mortgage for £1,000 at 5%. This still left Evamy in their debt for £3,500 (Hampshire Archives and Local Studies 11 M70/B1/2/73).

A fiat of bankruptcy was issued against Richard Evamy on 18 July 1835. It was the annihilation of all he had worked for. He lost his property, his home, his furniture, his money and his hopes. His house in Portland Street was already forfeit. William Pardey’s will, made in March 1833, records Evamy as occupier of one of Pardey’s houses in Spa Road. Charles Pardey claimed absolute ownership of his father-in-law’s household furniture and effects (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 14 November 1835). By c.1838 Evamy had retreated to the outskirts of the working class suburb of Northam, renting no.4 New Road, a modest 6-roomed house, from Samuel Morton Peto, partner in the firm of Peto and Betts, contractors (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 16 October 1847). He paid one guinea a year to the matron of the County Female Penitentiary for permission to turn his pony out on the penitentiary’s drying ground in Kingsland Place (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 24 October 1846). Evamy’s obituary refers to a manful struggle against misfortune (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 13 October 1855). He continued in the hop trade, as a hop factor working on commission for other houses, almost until his

death (*Bath Chronicle*, 2 December 1852: advertisement). Fishing continued to fill his leisure time. The landing of a 32-pound pike, the alleged destroyer of at least 2,000 brace of trout in the River Itchen, was reported in the *Hampshire Advertiser*, 28 March 1840. His wife died, aged 67 years, on 7 January 1835, a few months before his bankruptcy. By the time of the 1841 census Richard had remarried. We know little about his second wife apart from her first name (Sarah), her approximate age (recorded as 62 years in the 1861 census, suggesting she was about 23 years younger than her husband), her place of birth (Portsea) and the oblique aside that she was “a woman who had lived servant in his family” and that he “left her with several children” (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 10 June 1865: letter signed ‘The Ghost of John Lisle’). Richard Evamy died at his house in New Road on 8 October 1855, aged 90 years. The ethereal letter-writer described him as “a beggar” at his death.

The legacy of Richard Evamy continued through his extended family.

His two surviving sons entered the brewery business. William (baptized 23 April 1806: All Saints Church) moved to Holloway (London), recorded in the 1861 census as a brewery agent for Reid and Co. He married Maria Parbery at St Mary’s, Finchley in May 1833. His elder brother John (baptized 10 November 1809: All Saints Church) was, at the time of the 1851 census, clerk of a brewery in New Windsor.

Ann Coward lived the life of a gentlewoman in Southampton. Her husband Henry, proprietor of the Royal Victoria Assembly Rooms between 1832 and 1834, was a proprietor of houses, a guardian of the poor for All Saints parish and regularly sat on the grand jury at Southampton quarter sessions. She died on 13 September 1843 in Winchester after falling downstairs. Her step-daughter Mary Ann Coward married (1 February 1845 at All Saints Church) Henry Hodgkinson, youngest son of Enoch and Mary Hodgkinson.

Emily Heather joined her husband in Demerara, a centre of the trade in sugar and rum in present-day Guyana. She died there, probably a victim of the climate, on 18 January 1831. Her husband died on 8 August 1834.

Caroline Pardey was sole proprietor of the Regent Baths off Above Bar between December 1837 and April 1850, financially supported by a £400 mortgage taken out by R H Perkins in June 1843. She became proprietor on the death of her husband, through consumption, aged only 36. Their eldest son, Charles Pardey (1827-63), was a charismatically brilliant and devoted general practitioner in Southampton whose early death – at the same age of his father – was deeply mourned. He married Kate Perkins, second daughter of R H Perkins, in December 1852. A grandson, Charles Pardey Lukis (1857-1917), was also in the medical profession. The son of Caroline and Charles’s eldest daughter Caroline (wife of William Henry Lukis) he was to become Director General of the Indian Medical Service, honorary surgeon to King George V and knighted.

Mary Evamy is chiefly remembered through her children. Clement Hodgkinson (1818-93) - eldest son of her marriage to Enoch Hodgkinson - studied civil engineering in France, worked as an engineer on railways in France, Belgium and Holland, lectured at the College of Geodetic Engineers in Putney, was a contract surveyor in 1840-2 for the government of New

South Wales on the northern rivers and wrote *Australia, from Port Macquarie to Moreton Bay*, published in 1845. He returned to Australia in December 1851, where for 40 years he worked as an engineer and surveyor (*Australian dictionary of biography online*). Emily Mary Millais (born January 1824) - eldest child of Mary's marriage to John William Millais - married the actor John Johnstone (Lester) Wallack in 1848. Although British born, he was a member of perhaps the leading American acting family of the day and became one of America's leading light comedians. Two sons of Mary's second marriage became artists. William Henry Millais (1828-99) was a watercolourist of note. John Everett Millais (born 8 June 1829, baptized 8 June 1829 in All Saints Church) became the youngest ever Royal Academician, founder of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and perhaps commercially the most successful English artist of the century. His earliest surviving pencil sketch, dated 1837, is probably of his paternal grandfather fishing. It is a comfort to know that Richard Evamy, who died a few months after his grandson's marriage to Effie Ruskin, lived to see the early years of his acclaimed career.

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