

Death of Thomas Longley

From the Dover Express Friday 26th February 1904

Submitted by Derek Leach

The death occurred on Monday at Dover at the age of 56 years of Mr T. Longley a member of a very old and much respected Dover family. His father was a butcher in Dover and he was born in Snargate Street.

For many years Mr Longley has been landlord of the Star Inn, Church Street, a quiet hostelry at the rear of St. Mary's Church. From his youth he developed great size of body, more especially in his chest measurement. As he grew older his size increased and in the course of time he came to be regarded as the heaviest man in the kingdom. His great bulk doubtless caused him discomfort and inconvenience nevertheless he until recent years enjoyed good health. Visitors to the inn mentioned the fact of his remarkable size to their friends and he became somewhat of a curiosity which could not have been pleasant to one who was naturally of a refined disposition. Of late years his portrait has appeared in several London papers and without much regard to his feelings, his weight, girth, and height were published and comparisons made between him and other heavy men known in recent history.

It is said that his notoriety caused him to receive offers to go on "show", but he shrank from anything of the kind. Now that death has claimed our townsman it becomes a matter of history to record that he was beyond question, previous to his illness, the heaviest man in the United Kingdom, his weight being 46 stone and his chest measurements 86 inches. Owing to his bulk



Thomas Longley

he did not look tall but he was 6 foot.

For thirteen years Mr Longley had been confined to his house. The last time he visited London he had to travel in the guard's van since it was found impossible to pass his bulk through the doorway of an ordinary carriage.

Heavy as he was Mr Longley was 62 stone below the weight of the bulkiest man to whom history has any record, Daniel Lambert. Some idea of the girth of the great celebrity, who was born in Leicester in 1770 and died in Stainford in 1809, may be gathered from the fact that his waistcoat, which is still preserved at the inn where he died, is sufficient to enclose seven ordinary persons. Twenty years earlier than Lambert there lived in Essex a grocer who at the age of 25 weighed over 43 stone but unlike Lambert he refused to become a showman's attraction and so little is known of him. There is a well known case of a girl of four years who weighed over 18 stone. In the popular mind Arthur Orten is no less noted for his impudent claim to the estates than for his corpulence. Contemporaries described him on his arrival in England from Australia as gross, ponderous and unwieldy compared with Lambert, however he shrinks into insignificance. His weight at the time of the first trial was given as slightly over 20 stone though he is said to have "put on flesh" subsequently at an alarming rate.

Apart from being so well known Mr Longley will be very much missed by the poor in the neighbourhood of his house. Whenever he

heard anyone in distress he was always conscious to assist.

The funeral took place yesterday at St. Mary's cemetery Copt Hill where the grave was dug close by the church. It was seven feet deep and was eight feet long by three feet three inches wide.

The service was impressively conducted by the Rev. Prebendary A. I. Palmes who came over from Saltwood to add his last tribute of respect in the memory of an esteemed former parishioner. The immense size of the deceased gave rise to rumour that it would be necessary to interfere with the structure of the Star Inn to get the coffin out but Messrs. Flashman & Co., who undertook the funeral, found no need to do this and the coffin was slid through a window of the bar on to the hearse, which was drawn up close to the window for that purpose. At the graveside the bearers numbered ten and additional help had to be given in carrying the remains up

the slope. The funeral was timed to leave the house at 2 p.m.

There was a dense crowd around the Star Inn when the procession started taking the route, Castle Street, Maison Dieu Road, Park Avenue, Salisbury Road, and Frith Road. The procession was followed by hundreds of people whilst thousands witnessed it en-route. At the graveside there was probably between two and three thousand people present and in all probability there was as much public attention given to the funeral as there was on the occasion of the late Sir Richard Dickeson; and in addition to the general public there were many who mourned the deceased as a very good friend.

There were many beautiful wreaths upon the coffin from his immediate relatives and friends whilst behind the procession was a carriage filled with wreaths and floral devices from his wider circle of friends, including Sir William Crundall.

COWGATE CEMETERY Deborah Gasking

Venture up into our wonderful, tranquil nature reserve.

Yes, that is what our oasis is: not just a place for our old bones. Rest awhile here and cast your vision 180°. What could you see? The Kent Downs - our place in the North Downs, an Area of Outstanding Beauty. Yes, you read correctly - it's official, we are privileged to be living in a beautiful area.

And nestled in and below this landscape of distinctive character and natural beauty of National interest are our familiars:

The Castle - our ancient weapon of threat.

Dover Harbour - a mixed bag of expansion and contraction and expansion over millennia.

Connaught Park - our gift from Victorian times.

That constant rolling expanse of water named after our town - the Strait of Dover (historically known as the Dover Narrows), our very own bit of the English Channel.

France - our enemy with whom we warred up to 31 times (number depends on how you count them...).

St Mary's church - Cowgate cemetery was created as St Mary's was full.

So, are you tempted? Come and see our paradise and take in all of the above, but also look around within the cemetery's walls - see how we care for nature here, take note of the names engraved on the stones and absorb our local (and international) history.