

Emery Alexander Quait (1823-1901) : Draper, Pawnbroker and Local Councillor

Emery Alexander Quait was born on July 11th 1823 and baptised the following month at Holy Trinity Church, Dartford. His parents were Richard Quait (a draper) and his wife Amelia. Emery seems to be a family name. He had four sisters of which two died in infancy. Emery's father Richard died in 1830 aged 43 and was buried in Dartford's upper burial ground. His will left his estate (£4,376, equivalent to about £3.3M now⁴) to his wife Amelia for life. After her death it was to be divided equally between their surviving children, namely Emery, Mary Emery and Martha Ellen Quait. Amelia continued to run the family draper's shop after her husband's death. In the 1841 census she is shown as a linen draper aged 45 living in High Street, Dartford with her son Emery, aged 17.

An 1847 directory of Dartford¹ lists Amelia Quait, High St under the headings "linen and woollen drapers" and "pawnbrokers". The 1851 census shows Amelia Quait as a linen draper and pawnbroker employing 7 men, living in High Street, Dartford. Also at this address were her son Emery (aged 27, a draper and pawnbroker), nephew Richard Hackett (aged 14), three assistant drapers, one apprentice draper, two assistant pawnbrokers, a cook, a housemaid and a groom.

Emery married Martha Cooper in 1859 at St John the Baptist, Sutton at Hone. Emery was aged 35. Martha, a farmer's daughter born in Sutton at Hone, was 33. They went on to have three children; Amelia Emery (born 1861), Mary Alexander (born 1865) and Alexander Wortley (born 1868).

The 1861 census records Emery (36, a linen draper and pawnbroker) and Martha Quait living in High St, Dartford with four assistant pawnbrokers, a linen draper apprentice, a porter, a cook and a housemaid. Emery's mother Amelia died in 1862 aged 72.

Emery's obituary² says that he "*for the greater part of his life was the moving spirit of the great drapery, millinery and furnishing trade in the centre of the High Street, which flourished under his direction and made a reputation far and wide. Allied to a handsome figure and pleasant manners, Mr Quait possessed shrewd commercial capacity, and converted a once comparatively small business into one of the largest furnishing houses in the neighbourhood, with a trade and good name extending to distant parts of the county, and even beyond the limits of Kent.*" The address of the business in the 1871 census is given as 28-32 High Street. The building no longer exists, but its site is that now occupied by the Greggs and Dorothy Perkins shops, on the northern side of the High Street, next to the entrance to the Orchard shopping centre. Street numbers are not given in the 1851 and 1861 censuses, but from its position on the enumeration list (next to the Black Boy Inn), it seems that the site of the draper's shop then was the same as in 1871.

By 1874, the drapers shop was known as Quait and Standen, Emery having formed a business partnership with his manager, John Standen. The 1874 Kelly's directory for Dartford has the entry "*Quait and Standen, silk mercers, linen & woollen drapers, upholsterers & undertakers, 28, 30 & 32 High Street.*" I believe that *undertaker* here means a company

which undertakes work (not organises funerals). There is also another entry "*Quait Emery Alexander, pawnbroker, New Court, 32 High Street.*"

Emery was warden at Holy Trinity Church for a total of 23 years. He was a People's Warden from 1867 to 1878. The Dartford Library Local Studies Collection has an 1878 notice inviting townspeople to subscribe to a "*Testimonial as a public recognition of his long and valued services*" He was presented with a clock bearing the inscription "*Presented to Mr E. A. Quait by 130 subscribers in recognition of eleven years' services as Parish Warden of Dartford from 1867 to 1878.*" He then carried on as Vicar's Warden until 1890.

Emery became a director of the Dartford Gas Company in 1870. His father had been one of the founding shareholders and directors when it was formed in 1826 to provide gas lighting for the streets and private houses of Dartford. The company had expanded since then to meet increasing demand and it paid a good dividend to shareholders. Emery was chairman for 25 years, from 1874 until 1899.

By 1881, Emery and his family were living at Hulse Lodge, Wilmington. The household consisted of Emery, aged 57, a draper, his wife Martha (55), daughters Amelia (19) and Mary (16) plus a cook, housemaid and coachman. Hulse Lodge was a substantial house in its own grounds on the southern edge of Dartford Heath. It is now part of Wilmington Grammar School for Girls.

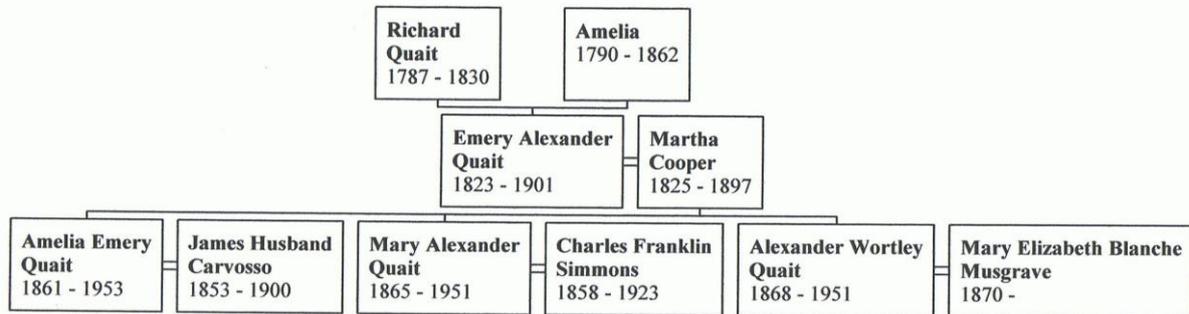


Hulse Lodge, now part of Wilmington Grammar School for Girls (2011)

Mary Alexander Quait, the younger daughter of Emery, married Charles Franklin Simmons (a land agent) in 1885. They set up house in Basingstoke, where they had six children (including two sons who became Captains in the Hampshire Regiment and died fighting in

the Middle East during the First World War). The following year Amelia Emery Quait, Emery's elder daughter, married James Husband Carvosso, a civil engineer who had become manager of Dartford Gas Works in 1882. They had five children before James died in 1900.

Hourglass Tree of Emery Alexander Quait



Lord Randolph Churchill was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1886, when he visited Oakfield Park near Dartford to make a speech. There was a crowd of about 20,000 people. Emery was one of those who, representing Conservative Associations, gave an address before Churchill spoke.

The 1891 census shows Emery (67, living on own means), his wife Martha (65) and son Alexander (23, a student of medicines) living at Hulse Lodge with a cook, housemaid and coachman.

Dartford became an Urban District under The Local Government Act of 1894. An Urban District Council of fifteen members was required to replace the nine members of the Dartford Local Board of Health (on which Emery had served), as the town's governing body. Thirty one candidates put themselves forward. Emery came fifth in the poll (with 515 votes) and so was elected.

Emery's son, Alexander Wortley Quait, was cited as co-respondent in a divorce case³. Frederick George Freeman (a consular assistant) married Mary Elizabeth Blanche Musgrave in 1890. He filed for divorce in 1894, stating that his wife had committed adultery with Alexander on several occasions between 1891 and 1894, claiming damages and costs from him. A jury trial was held in the divorce court in 1895. It ordered Alexander to pay £1500 damages and £316 costs. The total sum is equivalent to about £700,000 now⁴. The marriage was officially dissolved in 1896 and Alexander married Elizabeth later that year.

Martha, Emery's wife, died in 1897 aged 71, after a "long and severe illness"⁵. In 1901 Emery was living at Hulse Lodge with his son Alexander (33, a physician surgeon) and his wife Mary (31) plus a cook and housemaid. Emery died later in 1901 aged 78. A local newspaper¹ reporting his death said

For some years past Mr Quait had been in precarious health, but with the indomitable perseverance which had characterised him throughout his life, was frequently to be seen reclining in his carriage, with a lady attendant, driven about the town of Dartford, to take a

glance at the scene of his earlier activities, and to receive the sympathetic salutations of his many friends amongst the townsfolk.

An item in the Dartford Chronicle⁶ said

Mr Quait's association with Dartford was life-long and the prominent part he took for many years had made his name a household word, and few men were better known and respected.

He is buried in East Hill Cemetery in the same grave as his mother and wife. The monument is inscribed

Wi..... [AMELIA QUA]IT / who [died Dec 20th 18]62 / aged [72 years] / Also of EMERY ALEXANDER QUAIT / who died July 15th 1901 / aged 78 years / Also of / MARTHA / wife of the above / who died Feb 18th 1897 / aged 71 years.

Emery's estate was valued at £45, 146, which is equivalent to about £15.5 million now⁴. Probate was granted to his son Alexander Wortley Quait and son-in-law Charles Franklin Simmons. The death duty record shows that Emery made small bequests to various relations and servants, with his personal possessions and most of his wealth going to his three children.



Photo (supplied by St Michael's Church) of memorial window,

In 1907, a memorial window was installed in St Michael's Church, Wilmington. It depicts biblical scenes in stained glass with the words "*To the glory of God and loving memory of Emery Alexander Quait and Martha his wife of Hulse Lodge, Wilmington*" below.

References

1. *General History of Kent (Volume 1)*, Samuel Bagshaw (1847)
2. *Death of Mr Emery A. Quait*, newspaper (not Dartford Chronicle) article in Dartford Library Local Studies Collection, 20 July 1901.
3. Documents J77/537, held by the National Archives
4. Calculated with respect to average earnings using the website “Measuring Worth” www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/
5. *Death and Funeral of Mrs Quait*, newspaper article in Dartford Library Local Studies Collection
6. *The Late Mr E. A. Quait*, Dartford Chronicle, 23 July 1901