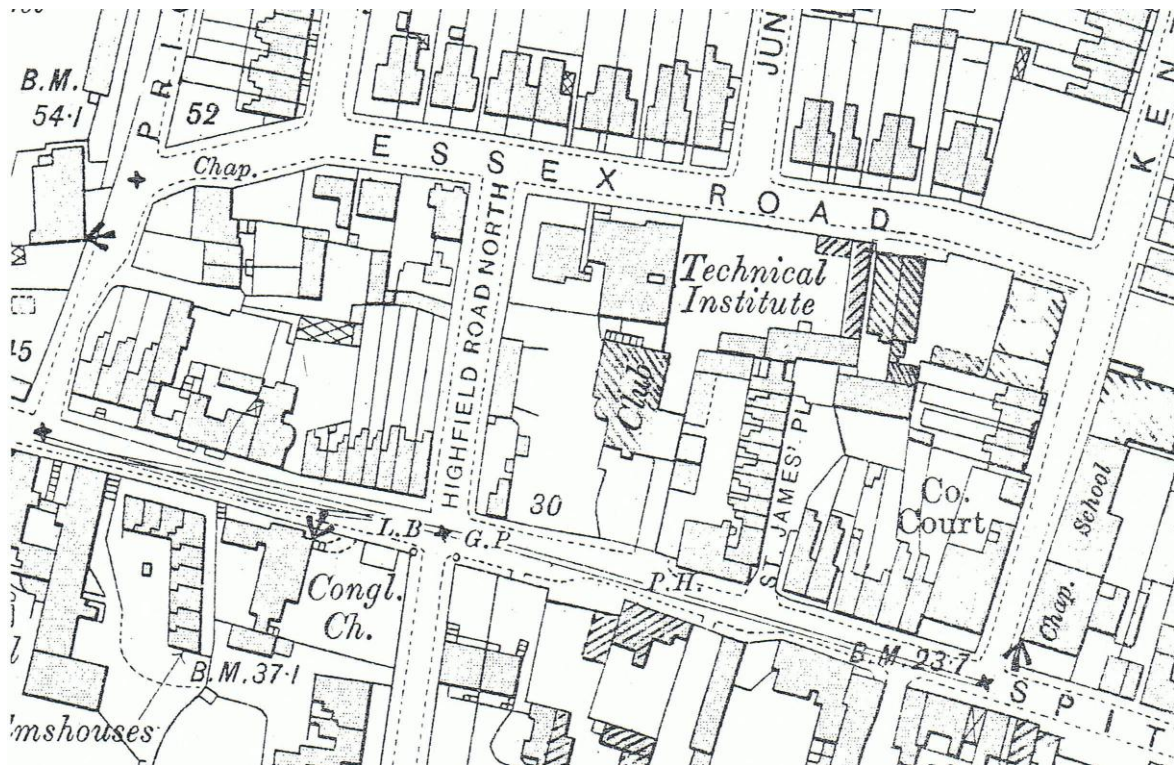


Richard Sanham (1815-95): Dartford Builder and Local Politician

Richard Sanham was born in Dartford in 1815. He was the fifth of eleven children (two boys and nine girls) born to James and Martha Sanham. James Sanham was a builder who died in December 1831, aged 49. He was buried¹ in what was then Dartford's burial ground and is now called St Edmund's Pleasance.

The 1838 Tithe List shows James Sanham (Richard's elder brother) as the owner of "2 Houses, 11 Cottages, Carpenters Shop, Yards, and Buildings formerly Bucks Malthouse". These were properties in St James Place, which contained a row of ten houses on the north side of Spital Street, at right angles to it and starting next to the Royal Oak Inn. Only the house adjacent to the Royal Oak survives – with a sign that says "St James Place" on its side. The rest of the houses no longer exist and their site is now a car park.



1911 map showing the location of St James Place

The 1841 census shows Martha Sanham, a widow aged 50, living in Spital Street, Dartford with her children James (30, a builder), Richard (25, a builder), Catherine (20), Rosetta (15) and Eliza (10). Ages in this census were rounded down to the nearest 5 years, so the figures quoted are not accurate.

A poster² shows Richard Sanham, Spital Street as one of five Constables for the Parish of Dartford, sworn in 13th April 1850. In addition there are four paid Constables listed, so presumably Richard was unpaid. This was before the establishment of the Kent County Constabulary in 1857.

In 1851, the family consisted of Martha (60), James (40), Richard (36) and Rosetta (22) at 10 St James Place, Spital Street. Martha's occupation is given as "proprietor of houses." James and Richard are described as builders employing 10 men. There are properties listed with the

address “Sanham’s Yard” immediately after 10 St James Place in the 1851 census. This is where the Sanham building business operated from.

Richard’s brother James died in 1855 aged 44, leaving Richard as the only surviving male in the family. His sister Jane, who had married William Macrorie, died in 1859 aged 40.

In 1861, Martha (76, a house proprietor) was living in Spital Street with Richard (46, a builder employing 9 men), Rosetta (30) and Eliza (28) Sanham. The house number is not given, but it was listed next to 10 St James Place. By 1871 Martha (88, income from rent), Richard (55, a builder employing 6 men), Rosetta (38) and Eliza (36) were living at 55 Spital Street. This is quite a large, three storied house on the corner of the entrance to St James Place. It was used as offices by Bailey & Goff, Solicitors between 1935 and 2005 but is now vacant.



The access road to St James Place with the Royal Oak Inn on the left and 55 Spital Street on the right (2011)

Martha died in 1878 aged 96 and was buried in East Hill Cemetery. In the 1881 census, Richard Sanham (65, a timber and slate merchant) was living at 55 Spital Street with his unmarried sisters Rosetta (51) and Eliza (49). I believe that Rosetta was actually 57 and Eliza was 55.

Rosetta Sanham died in 1891. Richard died (unmarried) in 1895 aged 79 in Dartford. Both were buried in the family tomb in East Hill Cemetery. It is the largest tomb in the cemetery and is on the right as you head north along the main path from the cemetery gate. It is engraved as follows :

West side

Sacred / to the memory of / JANE / the beloved wife of / WILLIAM M[ACRORIE] Esq / of London and daughter of the / late Mr SANHAM of this parish / died September 12th 1859 /

aged 40 years / *four illegible lines* / ELIZABETH / daughter of the late / Mr JAMES SANHAM / who died May 28th 1877 / aged 54 years / Jesus said weep not / MARTHA MARY SANHAM / wife of Mr JAMES SANHAM / of this parish / who died March 2nd 1878, aged 96 years / “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken / away; blessed be the name of the Lord”

North side

In / affectionate remembrance / of / MARTHA ROSE SANHAM / wife of JAMES MANDY / of Woolwich / who died May 22nd 1880 / in the 31st year of her age / “Thy will be done” / Also / LEONARD / infant son of JAMES and MARTHA R.S. MANDY / died the 15th of July 1880, / aged 4 months / interred at Assington, Suffolk. / “Of such is the kingdom of God”

South side

In affectionate remembrance / of / ROSETTA SANHAM / daughter of the late / JAMES SANHAM / who died April 6th 1891 / in her 60th year / For his beloved /
..... / In affectionate remembrance / of / RICHARD SANHAM / younger son of the late / JAMES SANHAM / who died Dec 17th 1895 / aged 79 years / At rest with his creator / The memory of the just / is blessed.

East side

In / affectionate remembrance / of / ELIZA SANHAM, / youngest daughter of the late / JAMES SANHAM / who died Feb 20th 1902 / aged 76 years. / “Though lost to sight to memory dear.”



The Sanham family tomb in East Hill Cemetery (2011)

The Dartford Express, reporting Richard’s death said
“He was a good example of the vigorous and industrious tradesman. Originally a carpenter and undertaker, he paid strict and undivided attention to his business and rose steadily and of latter years was known as a successful builder.”

“It was but a year or so ago since he retired from his business, having amassed by then what, for men of his class of life, would be termed a considerable personalty (ie personal estate). He is said to have been of a generous nature, doing good by stealth to such an extent that numbers will miss him severely this Christmas.”

“Up to a year ago he had been a member of the old Local Board (the town council of Dartford) for between 30 and 40 years, and if not one of the most useful members, he was certainly one of the most conspicuous, and his name figured frequently with Mr J Cann in the discussions of that body.”

The West Kent Advertiser gave a somewhat less barbed description of his activities on the Local Board

“He was too, a most popular member, always securing an easy return and not infrequently heading the poll. He was certainly not an ardent progressivist and not altogether disciplined to be captious (fond of raising objections), but he was undoubtedly a valuable member of the Board, took an active interest in parish matters, and his opinions carried much weight, being based on practical experience. He was a thoroughly independent and outspoken representative, on which account he attained great popularity in the constituency, especially amongst the working classes, being considered the champion of their interests.”

“Brusque in his manner and secluded in his habits, Mr Sanham’s kindly nature was not generally understood.”

Probate on Richard’s estate of £12,486 (equivalent to about £6M now³) was granted to Eliza Sanham, spinster and John Northall, gentleman. His will, made in 1892, left £100 to John Northall for proving the will, £125 to his nephew James Lawday and £100 to niece Caroline Lawday, both children of his late sister Mary Ann (b1807). James Sanham Wilson, a son of his late sister Ann (b1814), got £500. Alfred Whatson, a son of his late sister Elizabeth (b1821), received £100. Richards’s friend Joseph Thomas Millbourn (paper mill manager at Hawley, Kent) was left £100. His personal possessions and the income from his residuary estate went to his only surviving sister Eliza. On her death or marriage (she died in 1902), James Lawday received £2,500 plus 1 to 10 St James Place, 53 & 55 Spital Street, 1 to 3 East Hill as well as a shop and 8 cottages in Union Terrace, Crayford. Caroline Lawday got £2,500 plus 48 to 51 Fulwich Rd, 63 & 65 Lowfield St, 120 Dartford Road and 70 to 72 East Hill. James Wilson was left 126 Hythe St and nine cottages in Gas Lane, Dartford. Joseph Millbourn got 161, 165 and 175 Lowfield St. Richard was the owner of a substantial amount of property!

Eliza Sanham left £500 in her will⁴ to Holy Trinity Church, Dartford for a memorial to her brothers. It is on the south wall of the nave and reads

“In / loving memory of / my dear brothers / James and Richard Sanham / of this parish. / James / who died 29th January 1855 / aged 44 years. / Richard / who died 19th December 1895 / aged 78 years. / “That they may rest from their labours.” / This tablet was erected by their beloved sister Eliza Sanham.”

Probate records state that Richard Sanham’s will was revoked in 1909, but give no explanation of the reason.

The family tree of Richard Sanham can be found in the “sanham42” database on RootsWeb’s WorldConnect Project website.

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References

1. Gravestone inscriptions for Dartford burial ground are recorded in *The History and Antiquities of Dartford* by Alfred Dunkin, 1844.
2. *Crime and Poverty in Dartford* by Peter W Boreham, Alison Arthur and Geoff H Porteus, 1995, page 13.
3. Calculated with respect to average earnings using the website “Measuring Worth” www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/
4. Death duty record at National Archives, Kew - folio 721 in IR 26/8400.