

Thought for the week

By Olly Knight
Student worker at The City Church, Canterbury

SO OFTEN in my life I'm consumed and preoccupied with success.

Success in my photography business, success in music, success in my family and wanting bigger and better things to appear more successful – a bigger car or a grander house.

Job was a guy whose life was spoken about a fair bit in the Bible.

He said this incredible sentence: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord".

Job had a good life then things were taken away from him, he went through immense hardship and heartache yet he still was able to trust in a good and loving God.

I came into this world with nothing and after I breathe my last breath I won't be able to take my nice house, my car, my successes in business or my money with me. All I'll take with me is my soul.

This humbles me as I know that the things that I have in this life are grace gifts from God.

I don't want to see my life as a ladder of successes to climb but rather an adventure with a kind God who gives generously to me.

'Facts' about painter Sidney that just don't quite add up



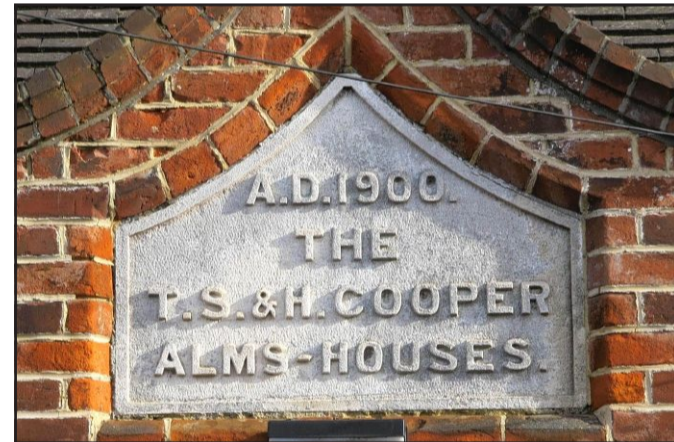
MEMORIAL: Cooper's grave in St Martin's church yard



WORK OF ART: Pushing off for Tilbury is exhibited at the Beaneys



David Lewis
Canterbury
Historical and
Archaeological
Society



MISTAKEN IDENTITY: The Cooper alms houses are not linked to Thomas Sidney Cooper

THE life and works of Canterbury's greatest artist, Thomas Sidney Cooper (1803-1902), have been well documented and analysed by artists and historians over the past 100 years. The most recent and most thorough is the two volume Thomas Sidney Cooper CVO, RA, His Life and Work by Kenneth Westwood which was published in 2011. It is a joy to read – once you've recovered from its £195 price tag. Here we concentrate on a few oddities and queries that have yet to be fully resolved.

One hundred and fifty years ago this year Sidney got married for the second time. The wedding was celebrated in the Holy Cross church – now the Guildhall. Nothing odd so far, apart perhaps from the fact that Sidney was 59 and his bride Mary Cannon just 27. The bride was the daughter of William Cannon, a local miller. What Mary saw in the balding artist with large nose, sunken penetrating eyes and enormous wealth we can only surmise, but they apparently went on to enjoy a happy married life together. A son was born in 1864, and all three are buried in St Martin's churchyard. Now we come to something which is rather odd – in his two volume autobiography with the imaginative title My Life, Sidney manages to get his wife's maiden name wrong – it appears in the text and in the index as Cameron not Cannon. The slip has been carried on in other works, including the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, who have refused to correct it on the grounds that Sidney must have known his own wife's name!

A second oddity concerns Sidney's own name. His autobiography suggests that the 'Sidney' was added late to the baptismal entry in the register of St Peter's Church, supposedly proposed by the naval officer Sidney Smith after the siege of Acre against Napoleon's army.

Unfortunately, none of this seems to stack up. The baptismal register shows no Sidney, added or otherwise; the siege of Acre took place in 1799, four years before Sidney's birth; and would Sir (later Admiral) Sidney Smith really have bothered himself with the son of an illiterate tradesman?

For a third oddity, we look at an example of Sidney's work. One of his largest pieces, titled Pushing off for Tilbury, on the Thames, is hung behind the reception desk in the Cooper Gallery of the Beaneys museum. The title suggests a military theme of soldiers or perhaps sailors leaving for duty at Tilbury Fort. The painting shows none of this – just another group of Sidney's trademark cows. It transpires that the boat pushing off for Tilbury has at some stage been

painted out, leaving the total mismatch between title and what the viewer sees. Time for a re-titling perhaps?

Finally, please avoid the mistake I made with the Cooper alms houses in Lower Chantry Lane, clearly marked with the name T S Cooper and a plausible date of 1900 – when Sidney was nearing the end of his life and certainly wealthy enough to endow alms houses if he wished. It turns out I was wrong – the donor on this occasion was Thomas Sankey Cooper (1818-1898) who practiced as a surgeon, was twice mayor (1866 and 1875), and quite unrelated to the city's greatest painter. Always check your assumptions!

For more information, visit www.canterbury-archaeology.org.uk

1861. Marriage solemnized at <i>Canterbury</i>				
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.
210	March 19 th	Thomas Sidney Cooper	7 1/2 yrs	Widower
		Mary Cannon	7 yrs	Spinster
Married in the <i>Parish Church</i> according to the Rites and Cer				

CLUE: Sidney Cooper and Mary Cannon married at Holy Cross

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