

The Start of the Story... ...and Some Unanswered Questions

The best place to begin is at the start of 1796, when French Revolutionary forces under the command of Napoleon went to war in Italy, with the aim of disrupting Austrian power in the area. Napoleon defeated Piedmont by the end of April, and subsequent campaigns led to French domination throughout the region. The previously independent Republic of Genoa was set up as a satellite state of France called the Ligurian Republic and it is here that the name of Cafferata makes its first appearance.

One family story says that Joseph Cafferata was an armour maker who didn't want to fight for Napoleon and the French and so fled to England at the beginning of the 19th century. Another story says that he was the youngest son of an Italian count. The stories indicate that Joseph was born in Genoa but they don't tell us when he was born. His burial record does suggest that he was born around the year 1783.

The earliest documented reference to Joseph comes in the parish records of St Paul's, Liverpool which shows that he married Mary Pendleton (a Lancashire native) on the 1st February 1804.⁽¹⁾ However, a newspaper advertisement placed in the Liverpool Mercury in 1830 stated that he had



Pulling Teeth by Louis-Léopold Boilly, 1825

been working in Liverpool for 28 years, that is, since 1802.⁽²⁾ Whatever the date Joseph arrived in Liverpool, it appears that he underwent a fairly radical change in career as he is alternatively described as a surgeon, dentist or doctor. In the marriage register his occupation is given as surgeon.

In Liverpool, Joseph and Mary lived for many years at 3 Cornwallis Street, working and raising their family. Their eldest child, Josephine was born on 3rd April 1806 and baptised on 20th July 1806 at St Peter's, Liverpool, although, interestingly, Joseph's abode is given as Manchester in the register.⁽³⁾ This may be an indication of the mobile nature of Joseph's occupation. There

followed three sons; Joseph (b.1807), John (b.1810) and William (b. 1812) and another daughter, Mary (b.1815). On old family trees, a sixth child is mentioned; "Dr" Cafferata, with no first name given, and this gives rise to some interesting speculation, which I'll deal with later. A final

daughter, Augusta Charlotte, was born on the 19th November 1817. She unfortunately died at the age of 12 and was buried in St Nicholas's Chapel on the 3rd October 1829.

As to Joseph's profession, he is listed as "surgeon & dentist, 3 Cornwallis Street" in Gore's Liverpool directory of 1827, but it appears that he travelled widely throughout the north and midlands, consulting in Leeds, Birmingham, Manchester, Hull and Newcastle as well as Cornwallis Street. He advertised extensively in the regional press of the time in adverts that hailed his prowess as a doctor and offered cures that verged on the miraculous, proclaiming:

"New Discoveries in Medicine for the Cure of Rheumatism, Gout, Cancers, Leprosy, Scurvy, Sores of every Denomination, Blindness, Deafness, Polypus of the Nose, Hoarseness, Falling Sickness, Convulsions, Dropsy, Palsy, Sciatica, Stones, Worms and Worm Fevers, Coughs, Consumptions, Head-Ache, Ear-Ache, Tooth-Ache, Fluxes of all kinds, Hysteric Fits, Giddiness, Asthma or Shortness of Breath, Nervous Complaints, Jaundice, Yellow Fever, Liver Complaints and other Diseases to numerous to be mentioned."⁽⁴⁾

Proof of the legitimacy of these claims came in the form of no less than "Twenty Thousand Certificates" (testimonials) received over the years and which could be examined by interested parties. Typical of these was the case of Mr Benjamin Briggs of Thorn, near Wakefield:

*He was afflicted with the **Chronic Rheumatism** for many Years past; especially in his Back; so that he could not stand upright; it was also very bad in his Legs and Hips. He was perfectly cured in **Eight Days** after taking **Dr. Cafferata's Rheumatic Pills** – Dec. 3, 1823.*⁽⁴⁾

Joseph's advertisements invariably concluded with a warning against imposters going about in his name.

A noteworthy case, which was reported in the newspapers, gives some indication of the life that Joseph led. He advertised that he would be in Leeds for his dental practice in the spring of 1829,⁽⁵⁾ there lodging with Mr William Judson at 6 Woodhouse Lane, staying for at least a month. Amongst his patients was John Birch, who came to seek advice from Joseph on Friday 10th April. As a result of this consultation, Joseph asked John Stockdale, the local



A Regency Dentist, would Joseph have worked like this?

druggist's apprentice who had previously made medicines for him, to formulate an electuary (a medicine for oral administration) for Mr Birch. This was made from 2 ounces of honey, 2 ounces of spirit of turpentine and some powdered gum, with a little liquorice powder spread over the top. The apprentice also made an emetic (a medicine to induce vomiting) from sulphate of zinc. We can't be certain what Mr Birch asked Joseph about, but Mr Birch had complained to his wife that there were frogs in his stomach which he wanted to kill! Mr Birch took the emetic without any ill effects, but when he took the electuary, he quickly showed symptoms of poisoning and died on Sunday 12th April. At the subsequent inquest Joseph was referred to as Monsieur Cafferata, a French Doctor. The coroner had the electuary analysed independently and it was found to be harmless, and he was at pains to point out that there was no suspicion attached to Joseph, although the coroner also stated that "He was decidedly against the employment of quacks, believing they did much more injury than they effected good." This comment certainly seems a slur on Joseph's profession! A packet of arsenic which the ill-fated Mr Birch had somehow managed to acquire was found in the deceased man's pocket, and the coroner's conclusion was that he had probably taken it "with a view to destroying the reptiles which he imagined he had within him".⁽⁶⁾

NEW DISCOVERY OF
UNIVERSAL
SPECIFIC REMEDIES,
BY MONSIEUR DR. CAFFERATA,
Of No. 3, Cornwallis-street, Liverpool; No. 2,
top of Downing-street, Ardwick Green, Man-
chester; No. 30, Newhall-street, Birmingham;
Parliament Row, Nottingham; Pleasant
Dairy, Woodhouse-lane, Leeds; and
**NO. 24, GELL-STREET, GLOSSOP ROAD,
SHEFFIELD.**


For the cure of all desperate Chronic Diseases of long standing, hitherto deemed incurable, of every denomination incident to the human frame; and particularly Syphilitic Consumptions, of which so many striking instances or proofs have been published these 25 years past (and continue still to be published) of so many lives preserved from the very jaws of death! as the Inhabitants of Liverpool, Manchester, and other places know well.

N. B. Dr. Cafferata and Sons are consulted every day in the above six Towns, and by Agents in many other parts of the World.

One of Joseph's adverts – from the Sheffield Independent, 8th May 1824

A more direct insult to Joseph came earlier in his career where, in the journal "The Medical Adviser and Guide to Long Life" of Saturday 27th November 1824, a list of names was published under the headline "Manchester Quacks". This included Joseph's name with the comment that he was "a horrible rascal" and concluded with the comment "God help the Manchester people!"⁽⁷⁾

"Our's are the plans of fair delightful peace,—un-
warp'd by party rage to live like brothers."



SAFE AND EXPEDITIOUS TRAVELLING.

THE ROYAL UNION,

FROM SHEFFIELD TO YORK,
AND BACK, EVERY DAY.

A Coach of Joseph's Time

It should not be forgotten that travelling from town to town for Joseph would have been difficult: The railways hadn't even started their development at this time, which realistically left the alternatives of walking or coach travel, both of which were slow and potentially hazardous. Joseph must have either carried his equipment with him, or lived with similar medical men who had tools he could use. In the light of this, it is hardly surprising that, once established in an area, he stayed for several weeks.

There aren't any indications as to whether Joseph's wife Mary or any of their children accompanied him on these travels or whether they remained in Liverpool. Joseph's abode of Manchester in Josephine's baptism record may indicate they stayed in Cornwallis Street. It was there that Joseph's eldest daughter, Josephine, died on the 12th April 1828, following a long and painful illness.⁽⁸⁾

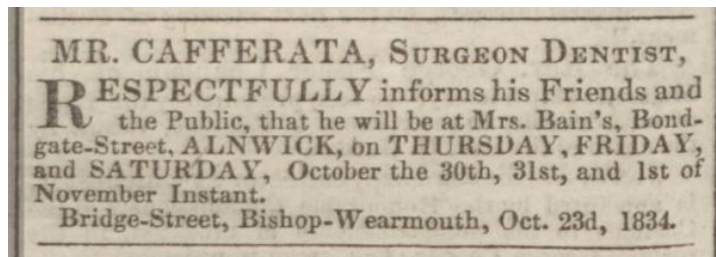
Joseph himself died in 1833 at the age of 50, and was buried at the Catholic Chapel of St Nicholas, Copperas Hill on July 14th of that year. Mary lived many years longer than Joseph, finally passing away on the 6th May 1858, in the house of her son Joseph. Of the four children who survived them, Mary died of bronchitis at the age of 44 in 1860. All of Mary and Joseph's sons married: John was the longest lived, dying at the age of 77 in 1887, Joseph had the most children with 11 and William became a very successful businessman.

44

REGISTER OF BURIALS <small>AT THE</small> CATHOLIC CHAPEL OF ST. NICHOLAS, LIVERPOOL.					
No.	When Buried.	Name.	Abode.	Age.	Officiating Minister.
37	1833 July 14	Jane Adkinson		77 Years	
38	1833 July 14	Joseph Cafferata		50 Years	

Joseph's burial record of 1833

After Joseph's death in the 1830s, a series of adverts appeared in the Newcastle Journal, placed by Mr Cafferata, Surgeon Dentist. The Mr Cafferata in question was Mr James Lewis Cafferata, who was born in Genoa in 1797. The obvious question is, was he related to Joseph Cafferata? I don't have the answer, but considering the name and profession, I think it is more than likely. If



An advert from The Newcastle Journal, 25th October 1834

we make that assumption, then the next question is: what was the relationship? Was he Joseph's Son? Brother? Nephew? There is conflicting evidence for these, particularly the hypothesis that James was Joseph's son. The old family tree mentions a Dr Cafferata – was this James? Added to that on one family tree, Dr Cafferata is shown as marrying Maria Horton. (I haven't been able to find supporting evidence for this though.) James Lewis Cafferata married Maria Horton in Birmingham on 28th April 1824. Birmingham was also one of the towns that Joseph visited regularly on his travels. Some of Joseph's adverts also state that his practice was operated by Dr Cafferata and SONS.⁽⁴⁾ All of the sons Joseph had with Mary would have been too young to be practising with Joseph in 1824, but James would have been old enough, and was the right profession. If James WAS Joseph's son, then Joseph would have been an improbably young father at 14 (based on Joseph's age in his burial record – not necessarily accurate), and who was James' mother? Mary seems too young – she was born around 1786, so would only have been 11 when James was born, even if she'd been able to leave Lancashire and

travel to Genoa to meet Joseph. James was naturalised as a British citizen in 1844, but a search of the naturalisation papers doesn't shed any light on the matter.

Another tantalising clue lies in the Liverpool Catholic Baptism records of 1843, which tell us that Joseph's Granddaughter, Frances Elizabeth, was baptised at St Nicholas's Chapel on 22nd October, and that her Godfather was James Lewis Cafferata! Equally intriguingly, James Lewis Cafferata had a daughter called Frances Elizabeth Cafferata who was also born in 1843. I would love to find out if there is a definite link between the families but I suspect the problems may never be solved.

Notes

1. Lancashire Online Parish Clerks Project: Register: Marriages 1773 - 1810, Page 249, Entry 7
Source: LDS Film 1656374
2. Liverpool Mercury No. 1005, Friday 6th August 1830, Page 1
3. Lancashire Online Parish Clerks Project: Register: Baptisms 1799 - 1810, Page 210, Entry 12
Source: LDS Film 1656377
4. Leeds Mercury No. 3073, Saturday 22nd May 1824 – gives the addresses of both Cornwallis Street, Liverpool and Woodhouse Lane, Leeds
5. Leeds Mercury No. 3141, Saturday March 21st 1829
6. The Standard No. 605, Friday 24th April 1829 & The Times, Saturday 25th April 1829, Page 3
7. https://books.google.ca/books?id=ruYEAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA383&dq=dr+walwork&hl=en&sa=X&ei=suQlVbuID_T7sATTiYDgAQ&ved=0CB4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=caffarata&f=false
8. Liverpool Mercury No. 882, Friday 18th April 1828