

THE HISTORY OF BRACKENSTON IN PEMBURY

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OVERVIEW (insert 'Brackenston Pembury 1')

Brackenston was a grand mansion of 17 rooms located on large landscaped grounds at 8 Tonbridge Road in Pembury. The home was designed by the London architects C.E. Mallows and Grocock and constructed in 1905 by the Tunbridge Wells contractors Strange and Sons Ltd. As a point of clarification regarding the name of this residence it should be noted that depending on the record consulted, sometimes its name is given as Brackenston and other times as Brackenhurst. Throughout this article I generally refer to it as Brakenstone, but give the actual name in use in the record referred to. The researcher has taken the position, right or wrong, that the "official" name of this home began in 1905 at "Brackenston" for that is the name that appears on the architectural drawings by the architect who designed the home.

The first occupants of the home was the family of Rev. Rennell Francis Wynn Molesworth (1827-1906) who died at "Brackenston" January 6, 1906. His wife died there in the same year and by 1911 the only member of the family living there was a 43 year old spinster daughter Bertha Molesworth (1868-1949) with three servants. She was still there in 1913 but by 1916 she had moved to Langton Green.

When Bertha Molesworth moved out the home became the family residence of Joseph Gurney Fowler and family who were there from 1915-1919. When he left the Gordon family moved in.

Hugh Edwin Hamilton Gordon (1847-1921), who was a wealthy and prominent figure from Australia who lived there in a home named Strathbogie. Hugh moved to England sometime before his marriage in 1905 and by 1909 had taken up occupancy of a 17 room mansion called Oakleigh on Pembury Road about half way between Blackhurst Lane and the Hastings Road, which today is the site of Oakley School. He remained at Strathbogie until he moved into Brackenston and renamed it Strathbogie after his Australian ancestral home. Hugh died at Strathbogie in 1921. His widow continued to live there until at least 1922 but later moved to London and remarried.

The historical record for this home after 1922 is best described as a work in progress for specific details are lacking. 1925- 1934..... James Henry Newcomb and his family lived at Strathbogie from about 1925 to 1934 and then Major Henry Norcott Winter and his wife lived there from about 1936-1938.

Sometime after 1938 the name of the home was changed to The Dower House and during WW II it came into military use.

In the period of 1948 to 1958 The Dower House and its Lodge were occupied by Irene Edith Bird ,a widow who died there in 1958,when it was called St Edith's. A 1960 directory listed her son J.W. Bird as living at St Ediths, 6 Tonbridge Road.

A 1982 directory listed the Kent Association for the Disabled at 8 Tonbridge Road and also a R. Brown at the same address that year. The

duration over which they occupied the building has yet to be established.

A map of 1985 shows the home with the caption “The Dower House (T.A. Centre)” with “T.A. Centre” referring to a Territorial Army Centre and no doubt the caption relates to its use during WW II.

In an article by Jane Bateson, that appeared in the Pembury Village News Spring 2015. She recounts her recollections of what Pembury was like in the 1960’s and stated that The Dower House, which later became the Pembury Council offices and later still the Mercure Hotel (still in operation) was “unoccupied and falling into disrepair” but evidence of its grander days, such as a pond and flower gardens and a track for a miniature railway, could still be seen.

Issues of the Pembury Village News from at least 1977 onwards to at least 1984 make reference to The Dower House as a place where Pembury Council held their meetings and in 1984 reference is made to rubbish bins being used there by residents of the village.

(insert ‘Mercure Hotel 2016’)

The Mercure Hotel, also given on the internet as The Ramada Tunbridge Wells, took over The Dower House in 1991, according to the General Manager of Mercure, enlarged it and otherwise altered it and turned it into a modern 84 bedroom hotel. The restaurant and other parts of the hotel were created out of the historic Dower House and much of its original architectural features have been retained. An image from Google Maps dated 2009 shows a sign to the entrance as “Ramada Jarvis”. Shown opposite is a view of the former Dower House

as part of the Mercure Hotel from the Pembury History website taken March 2016.

This article reports on the history of this significant home and its occupants. Shown above is the architect's drawing showing this home.

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION (insert 'Strathbogie Pembury map 4')

Brackenston was a grand 17 room 2 sty residence with developed attic space, situated on several acres of nicely landscaped grounds with a pond at 8 Tonbridge Road, Pembury. The 1907 os map opposite provides details. As can be seen on the map the home was set well back off the road and near the road beside the drive to it was located a lodge, occupied by the estates gardener and a stable block which provided both accommodation for the horses and carriage, and later the motor car, but also a place for the coachman/chauffeur and groom to live.

(insert 'Brackenston Pembury 2')

Brackenston was designed by the architects C.E. Mallows and Grocock of 28 Conduit Street, London. The images of the home, given above in the 'overview' as well as the floor plans opposite were prepared by them and appeared in 'The Academy of Architecture and Architectural News of 1905 with the house name given as "Brackenston". On these plans the general contractor, who built the home in 1905, was identified as Strange and Sons Ltd of Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge. Also identified is that the Steel Casements were by Henry Hope and Sons Ltd of Lionel Street in Birmingham. Details about the architect and the builder are given later in this article in separate sections.

(insert 'Strathbogie pembury map 1946')

Shown opposite is a map from 1946 showing Strathbogie with its lodge and stable block. The main building at this time appears to have the same footprint as shown on earlier maps.

The Pembury Village News of spring 2015 included an article by Jane Bateson who reported on what Pembury was like in the 1960's. In part she said "The Dower House was later to become the Pembury Council Offices and then the Mercure Hotel. The clues to what life might have been like in and around the Dower House were difficult to uncover and interpret. The house itself seemed somewhat forbidding by the time I knew it when it was unoccupied and falling into disrepair. The grounds however hinted at an exciting past. There was a pond, a large stand of rhododendrons, a small woodland underplanted with daffodils and bluebells, and, most interestingly of all, the remains of what appeared to have been the track of a miniature railway".

A Planning Application dated July 31, 1975 was for "New HGV garages in separate annex building Dower House 8 Tonbridge Road, Pembury. The applicant was the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and the application was approved. The Council address given in this application was 8 Tonbridge Road.

The Pembury News from at least 1977 onwards makes reference to the Dower House being the place where Pembury Council held their meetings. The Pembury Village News of September 1984 referred to Council having a meeting at the Dower House in which was stated in part "The much appreciated facility to use rubbish skips at the Dower House was withdrawn on August 6th and now Pembury residents will have to cart their heavy refuse to the top at North Farm, Tunbridge Wells. The reason given by the Borough for withdrawing the Dower

House skips was that over the Easter weekend so much rubbish was dumped in and around the skips provided that it took three days for workmen to clear the site. Also there had been a theft of batteries from council vehicles parked at the site”.

(insert scan of 1985 map)

Shown opposite from the Planning Authority files is a map from a 1985 application regarding the land in black abutting that of Strathbogie ,which by this time, and since at least the early 1970's , is shown on the map as “The Dower House (T.A. Centre), which refers to the house when it was in use as a Territorial Army Centre. Note that the old stable block is labelled as ‘St Ediths’ a single family home and to the rear of the main house are two other buildings, suggesting that by this time the site had become that of the Mercure Hotel. The documents associated with this map state the application pertained to a certificate of appropriate alternative development for “accommodation land for use in association with Dower House.

(insert ‘Mercure photo `1 and 2)

The Mercure Hotel (photos opposite) was built on the site of the former Dower House. How much of the original building remains is not known but part of its façade and interior still exists. This hotel, also referred to as “The Ramada Tunbridge Wells” has 84 bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms. Suites, Studio rooms and rooms designed for the disabled and non-smoking rooms are also available. The hotel has a restaurant, bar, garden and many other facilities to ensure an enjoyable stay. There is also a 160 capacity reception room catering to weddings. The website of the hotel states in part “ The Park Avenue-also part of the original Dower House is the most popular of our eight rooms. It is used for

receptions for up to fifty guests. Shown below left is a photo of 'The Park Avenue'. If one looks at the entrance to this hotel, located at the corner of Tonbridge Road is a sign that reads " Ramada Jarvis".

(insert 'The Park Avenue')

The Mallows Restaurant (shown opposite right) is part of the old Dower House and the owners kept the original features such as the leaded windows. There is also an 'oast house' on the site next to the main building. The oast house does not appear on any maps and details about when it was constructed are lacking. Further information about the hotel can be found on their website, including more photographs of the way the building looks now inside and out.

(insert scan of the lodge)

The old lodge and stable block associated with the main house still exist today. They are shown on the map given earlier from a 1985 planning application. The name St Edith's is derived from Saint Edith (966-984) of Wilton, a Catholic nun and the daughter of King Edgar of England and Wulfrida. Shown opposite is a view of these buildings taken from the Tonbridge Road in 2008.

THE ARCHITECT (insert Brackenstone colour image)

Brackenston was designed by the architects C.E. Mallows and Grocock of 28 Conduit Street, Hanover Square. London. Their name appears on the bottom of the two drawings previously given in this article. These drawings appeared in Volume 28 of The Academy of Architecture and Architectural Review of 1905 and was identified as "Brackenston, Pembury".

Charles Edward Mallows FRIBA (5 May 1864 – 2 June 1915), often known as C. E. Mallows, was an English architect and landscape architect. He is considered to be part of the Arts and Craft movement in British art. He was a gifted draughtsman and produced many architectural perspectives.

Mallows was born in Chelsea, London and spent his childhood at Flatford Mill, East Bergholt, Suffolk where his uncle ran the mill. He studied in Bedford and London. He was the son of George William Mallows (1824-1892) and Lucy Barrell (1830-1904). He was one of four children in the family.

The Directory of British Architects recorded that he worked in eight different offices in London and Bedfordshire between 1880 and 1914. He was articled to Thomas F. Mercer of Bedford 1879-1881. He attended the Royal Academy schools and the Bedford School of Art. He was an assistant in the offices of Henry Hewitt Bridginton, Edward Salomoan, Ralph Selden Warnum, William Wallace & William Flockhart and Frederick William Lacey. He won the Pugin studentship in 1889. He toured in France. He was designated F.R.I.B.A in 1900. He commenced practice in 1886. He worked in conjunction with F.W. Lacey, Alfred William Stephen Cross, George H. Crocock, Arthur William Brewill and Basil Edgar Baily. He was the ecclesiastical surveyor for the Diocese of Ely. It was in 1886 that Charles took George H. Crocock into partnership. George was active in the period of 1892 to 1904 but some references to can be found up to at least 1908.

At the time of the 1871 census Charles was living with his parents and three siblings with his grandmother Lucy Burrell and her son Richard Burrell at East Bergholt, Suffolk. At the time of the 1881 census, taken

at 9 St Cuthbert. Bedfordshire, Charles was an “architect (articled pupil)” and was living with his parents and brother Ernest. At the time of the 1891 census he was living as a visitor in Beyton, Suffolk.

In 1895 he opened an office in Bedford with George Grocock and worked in the Arts and Crafts tradition designing cottages, schools, shops and restoring churches. He was made a fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1900 and by the following year was the diocesan surveyor for Ely. Mallows rented rooms adjoining those of the landscape architect Thomas Hayton Mawson, and occasionally worked with him.

In 1900 Charles married Sybil Lindsay N. Peacock (1874-1947). She had been born in Wilstead, Bedfordshire and died March 12, 1947 in Bedford, Bedfordshire. She was one of several children born to Henry John Peacock (born 1840) and Louise Caroline Peacock, born 1848. Charles and Sybil had two children, a daughter Sybil Dorothy Moleworth Mallows (1901-1970) and a son Edward Wilfrid Nassau Mallows (1905-2002). As you will read later the first occupant of Brakenston was Rennell Francis Wynn Molesworth. The Mallows family were related to the Moleworth family and no doubt it was the family connection that led to Charles Mallows becoming the architect for the Brakenston residence.

The 1901 census, taken at 37 Bushmerd Avenue in Bedford, Bedfordshire gave Charles E. Mallows as an architect. With him was his wife Sybil, their daughter Sybil and one servant.

The 1911 census, taken at Three Gables, 17 Biddenham Turn, Bedfordshire gave as the head of the household Henry John Peacock, a retired farmer, born 1840 in Southill, Bedfordshire. Also in the home was

his wife Louisa Caroline Peacock, age 63; Charles Edward Mallows, son in law, age 46, architect; Sybil Lindsay Mallows, daughter, age 37; two Mallows children and two servants. The family were living in a home of eleven rooms.

Mallows's major commission was Tirley Garth in Cheshire, where, from 1907, he designed the house and the major part of the gardens. He remodelled the house and gardens of Cannons in Stanmore, London between 1905-1908. The gardens were considered by some to be the greatest to be designed in the Edwardian era. He also designed Joyce Grove in Oxfordshire for Robert Fleming between 1903 and 1908.

He died June 2, 1915 at Biddenham, Bedfordshire leaving an estate of nearly £3,000 to his wife Sybil. His probate record noted that his business address was 28 Conduit Street, London. Many examples of the buildings he designed can be found on Google Images. George H. Cocock was a minor partner in the business and was still active on his own in 1908.

Shown above is a colour illustration or print of Brackenstone that appeared in The Studio Year Book of Decorative Art in 1907. The image differs somewhat than that of the architects model.

THE BUILDER

The builder of this home was the general contractors Strange and Sons Ltd of Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge as identified on the bottom of the two drawings previously given in this article. These drawings appeared in Volume 28 of The Academy of Architecture and Architectural Review of 1905 and was identified as "Brackenston,

Pembury". Also identified as the providers of the steel casements was Henry Hope and Sons Ltd of Lionel Street in Birmingham.

The firm of Strange & Sons were dominant builders in Tunbridge Wells since the 19th century and throughout the 20th century and a list of buildings they constructed is far too long to give here. Anyone familiar with the history of Tunbridge Wells will find the name 'Strange' familiar for members of this family have been residents of the town since the early 1800's. They are found as architects, builders, hotel proprietors, beer retailers, milliners, hatters, tailors, electrical engineers, decorators, painters, glaziers, accountants, auditors, ladies and childrens outfitters, drapers, plumbers, wool merchants, sanitary engineers, grocers, and many other occupations. They all played an important part in the history of the town and some left a lasting mark on it. Perhaps those with the greatest record of achievement are the ones who designed and constructed buildings in town for most of them survive today as a lasting reminder of their work.

The patriarch of the family for the purposes of this article was Edward Jeffrey Strange (1803-1868) who was a builder. His son Charles Mathew Strange (1839-1925) was also a builder and it was he who founded the the builder's company of Strange and Sons Ltd. Charles wife was (1) Lydia Herbert (1845-1874) and (2) Mary Ann Price (1841-1914). With his first wife he had four children including a son Edward Jeffrey Strange.

Edward Jeffery Strange (1869-1941) was born in Tunbridge Wells in 1869 and died in the town December 24, 1941. He married Maud Helen Coobon. She died January 19, 1940 at the Lonsdale Nursing Home and

left her estate valued at 5,640 pounds to her husband, who was a retired building contractor at that time.

Edward was a master builder and became a member of the Institute of Builders in 1901, a Vice President in 1911 and President in 1915. He was one of the founding members of the Tunbridge Wells Rotary Club and became its President in 1923. He was deacon of the Congregational Church for many years. Edward and his wife had four daughters.

With his second wife Edward Mathew Strange had four children including the sons John Price (1880-1961), Robert Mathew, born 1881 and Herbert Chapman, born 1882 who also became a builder.

A complete account of the members of the Strange family working in the builders trade in the town is not possible in this article. There is plenty of information about the family on the internet. Several generations of the family have been connected with the building trade and today still exists the firm Strange & Sons Electrical Engineering Company of St David's Road in Tunbridge Wells.

Given below is an account pertaining to the Strange family of builders that appeared in The Town Crier January 30,2013. Although it repeats some of what I have already given I have reprinted it as originally published.

"E. J. Strange was born in 1869 and his maternal grandfather, William Hilbert, was the engineer behind the Calverley Waterworks, on which Grosvenor and Hilbert Park is founded. His paternal grandfather, also called Edward Jeffrey Strange, was a plumber by trade, starting work in 1824 in Pembury. In 1856 he built the impressive building, No 8 London Road, as this work premises, the business expanding into all building

trades as Tunbridge Wells grew in size. His wife, Mary, ran a hosiery shop at 9 The Parade, The Pantiles, and the family lived first, above the shop, and then at Nevill Lodge, more or less where Union Square now is. They had ten children, and the fifth, Charles Matthew Strange carried on the family business. Charles married Lydia Hilbert, William's daughter and they lived at 4 Cumberland Gardens. Lydia died not long after giving birth to their fourth child. Within three years Charles had remarried, to his second cousin Mary Anne Price. The younger E.J. Strange was apprenticed as a joiner and carpenter and went on to become Managing Director of the family building firm, Strange and Sons. He was involved in several trade organisations, and Tunbridge Wells activities. He was one of the founders of the Tunbridge Wells Rotary Club, and a Freemason, where he was a donor to various charities. In 1929 he was elected Councillor for the South Ward, and he became Mayor in 1936. He was created a Justice of the Peace in 1925 and an Alderman in 1939. He was a member of the Mount Pleasant Congregationalist Church, now known to us as Cotswold and Ismail shops. As well as all the other activities he was involved in, he still had time to give to the Church, serving as a deacon, treasurer and a supporter of the Sunday School. In 1928 he donated the land known as Cadogan Playing Fields, in St John's Road, and in 1931 a large part of Charity Farm to the Local Authority to form the parkland to be known as Hilbert Recreation Ground, in memory of his mother, Lydia. In 1933 he was appointed a life member of the National Playing Fields Association. In 1894 he married Maude Helen Coulson, and they lived in Cadogan House in the centre of the town, where the Crescent Road car park now is. They had four daughters, the eldest two moving to Australia. Maude died in February 1940, and Edward on December 24th

1941. They are buried together in Tunbridge Wells Cemetery, next to the grave of Maude's mother Annie and her elder sister Alice. The graves are as photographed, there are no headstones, but lettering around the rectangular sides. This has meant that over the years some of the lettering has been obscured, most notably that of Edward Jeffrey Strange J.P. There are several other members of the Strange family at the cemetery, including Edward's brother, Charles Hilbert Strange, and their father Charles Matthew Strange, who lived to the grand age of 86."

THE OCCUPANTS

Given in this section is a summary of occupancy of the building along with information about the families who lived there. This information was compiled based on a review of maps, directories, census records, probate records and related documents. All dates given are approximate unless otherwise stated and as more research is conducted on the history of the building during the latter part of the 20th century the information will be updated.

1905-1915.....Rev. Rennell Francis Wynn Molesworth and family

1915-1919.....Joseph Gurney Fowler and family

1919-1923.....Hugh Edwin Hamilton Gordon and family

1925- 1934..... James Henry Newcomb and family

1936-1938.....Major Henry Norcott Winter

1939-1945.....Military use (Territorial Army Centre)

1948-1958..... Irene Edith Bird

1960.....J.W. Bird (at St Ediths only)

1960's.....Unoccupied

1970's-1980's..... Council Offices

1982.....Kent Association for the Disabled/R. Brown

1991-2016.....Mercure Hotel /Ramada Tunbridge Wells
Hotel/Ramada Jarvis

In addition there is a listing for Albert Henry Cavie at Strathbogie Lodge in 1929 and record in 1937 for a Frederick Beech. There are no directory listings for Strathbogie or the Dower House for the years 1940, or 1959.

[1] THE MOLESWORTH FAMILY (insert 'Rennell Molesworth')

This grand home was built in 1905 for Rennell Francis Wynn Molesworth (image opposite) and his family. The Molesworth clan were largely of Anglo Saxon in origin but a large concentration of them lived in Ireland and it is the Irish connection from which the home derived its name 'Brackenston'. Brackenston is the name of a neighbourhood in the town of Swords in Ireland. It developed in west Swords on the north side of the Ward River and developed along the Brackenston Road which runs from Swords to the townland of Knocksedan. Robert Molesworth (1656-1725) and his decendents and relations were of Brakenston and it is from this line of Molesworths that Rennell Francis Wynn Molesworth is related. Today can be found several members of the Molesworth clan in Dublin, Ireland and elsewhere in both Ireland and England with many of course who have emigrated around the world. It is not as uncommon a name as one might think.

(insert 'John Edward Nassau Molesworth')

Rennell was one of nine children born to Rev. John Edward Nassau Molesworth (1790-1877) and Harriett Molesworth, nee Mackinnon (1788-1850). He had been born January 17, 1827 at Millbrook, Hampshire and was the 5th son. His father was born February 5, 1790 at Rochdale, Lancashire. Like his father Rennell decided upon a career with the church as did other members of his family. Shown opposite is an image of Rev. John Edward Nassau Molesworth by Henry Richard Cook which is in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery.

The records of Oxford University, where Rennell was educated, record that he matriculated February 27, 1845 at age 18; was a scholar 1845-9 and obtained his BA in 1849 and his MA in 1851.

As noted in Crockfords Clerical directory of 1898 he was living at that time at "The Lodge, Pembury". Details from this directory are " Rennell Francis Wynn Molesworth B.N.C. Oxford BA 1849; MA 1851; Ordained 1850; priest 1851; curate of Preston –next-Wigham, Kent 1850-1852; Ramsgate 1852-1855; Betteshanger, Kent 1857-1863; Sutton 1864-1865; H. Cross Cant. 1866-1867; Ev. Lect. At St H. Bideford 1867-1868; vicar of Todmorden 1868-1875; Rector of Washington Co. Durham 1875-1897. He was not listed in Crockfords 1908 directory but his sons were. Details about their religious career can be found in that directory and later editions. The location of "The Lodge, Pembury" and details about it were not established and it was not established in what year he became a resident of Pembury.

(insert 'John Hilton Molesworth' and 'John Hilton Molesworth 1')

Rennell married Eleanor Jane Hilton (1826-1862) June 17,1851 at Thanet. Eleanor was born February 9,1826 at Sarre, Kent and died March 12,1862 at Bettershanger, Northbourne, Kent. She was one of five children born to John Hilton (1792-1861) and Mary Elizabeth Hilton, nee Denne (1790-1866). Rennell and his wife had the following children (1) Mary Agnes, born 1853 (2) Frances W, born 1854 (3) John Hilton, born 1855 (4) Ernest H, born 1859 (5) Arthur H. born 1860 (6) Eleanor Jane, born 1862. Eleanor died as a result of complications arising from the birth of her daughter Eleanor Jane at Bettershanger, Kent. Shown here are two photographs of Rennells son Rev John Hilton Molesworth.

(insert 'St Peters church leeds yorkshire')

Rennell's second marriage was to Frances Elizabeth Henderson (1834-1906) July 27,1864 at St Peter's Church in Leeds, Yorkshire (postcard view opposite). She was born 1834 at Bruton, Somerset and was baptised November 2,1835 at Bruton. She was one of several children born to George Henderson and Frances Henderson, nee Walcott. Frances died January 6,1906 at 'Brackenston' in Pembury, Kent. With his second wife he had the following children (1) Rodney H, born 1866 (2) Bertha, born 1868 (3) Dora, born 1872 (4) Theodore H, born 1873 (5) Walter H. born 1874.

It is clear from the birth locations of all the children that the family moved frequently due to the repostings of Rennell in various churches in Kent and Lancashire.

(insert 'Betteshanger northbourne kent')

The 1861 census, taken at the Parsonage of Great Betteshanger, Northbourne, Kent gave Rennell as the curate of Bettershanger. With him was his wife Eleanor; five of his children; three members of the Hilton family including his widowed mother in law, and one domestic servant. A photo of Betteshanger Northbourne, Kent is shown opposite.

(insert 'Todmorden church yorkshire')

The 1871 census, taken at The Vicarage in the town of Todmorden, Yorkshire gave Rennell as the vicar of Todmorden. With him was his wife Frances; five of his children; two visitors and four domestic servants. An image of the church is shown opposite.

The 1881 census, taken at the Rectory at Washington, Durham, gave Rennell as the rector of Washington. With him was his wife Frances; six of his children, including his son Ernest who at the time was an undergraduate at Cambridge. Also there were four domestic servants. The family was still at this location at the time of the 1891 census where Rennell was the rector of Washington. Living with him was his wife Frances; three of his children including his daughter Bertha; his sister Harriett, age 71 , a niece and four servants.

The Crockfords 1898 directory gave Rennell living at "The Lodge, Pembury". Details of where this residence was located has not been established nor has the date that he first took up residence in Pembury. No 1901 census was found for the family unfortunately but it is likely the family was still at The Lodge until 1905.

In 1905 Rennell and his family moved into their new home 'Brackenstone' at 8 Tonbridge Road in Pembury, but it was a short stay

for both Rennell and his wife Frances. As noted above Frances died at this home in 1906. Probate records for Rev Rennell Francis Wynn Molesworth gave him of Brackenstone, Pembury, Kent, clerk, when he died January 6, 1906. The executors of his 19,928 pound estate were Rev John Hilton Molesworth, clerk, the son, and the Rev Ernest Hilton Molesworth, clerk, the son, and Rodney Henderson Molesworth and Theodore Henderson Mylesworth, esquires, the sons.

Upon Rennell's death his youngest children (mostly spinster daughters) continued to live at Brackenston but eventually found accommodation elsewhere. The 1911 census, taken at "Brackenston", Pembury recorded only the presence of Bertha Molesworth, spinster, who had been born 1868 at Bideford, Devon, who was living on private means. With her in this large home were just three domestic servants. The 1911 census, taken at "Brackenston Lodge", of four rooms, recorded the presence of Samuel Standen, age 82, widowed, the was the estates gardener. Living with him was Ann Harris a 31 year old housekeeper. There was not record in the 1911 census of anyone living at the stable block.

Bertha Molesworth was listed as a resident of "Brackenston", Pembury in the 1913 Kelly directory; but in 1915 was at Woodside and then appeared in the 1918 Kelly at 'Cromeen' in Langton Green. Probate records gave Bertha Molesworth of Hobdays Cottages Burghton Lees, Ashford, Kent, spinster, who died December 16, 1949 at The Hospital Ashford, Kent. The executor of her 8,865 pound estate was the Lloyds Bank Ltd, Walter Henderson Molesworth, retired civil engineer and Dora Molesworth, spinster sister.

[2] JOSEPH GURNEY FOWLER AND FAMILY (insert 'Woodford Essex')

Joseph is found at “BrackenhurstP in directories of 1915 to 1917 and Mrs Fowler was still there in 1919. It was not established who the Mrs Fowler was for it is known is that Joseph never married and he died at the home in 1916. His mother Ann Ford Fowler died in Woodford, Essex in 1913. After the Fowlers left the residence it became the residence of the Gordon family. The Gurney Fowler family were very wealthy and were related to the similarly wealthy Gurney family of bankers in Norwich. They lived for many years in a grand 22 room home on the High Road in South Woodford, called ‘Glebelands’. A postcard view showing the High Road is shown opposite, and along it can be seen many grand homes. It is not known is Glebelands is one of those shown in this view for as you will read later it was demolished in the 1930’s.

Joseph Gurney Fowler and his twin brother John Wilfred Fowler were born in Woodford Essex December 5,1855. Joseph’s father Henry Fowler (1823-1880) was the son of John Fowler (1792-1861) and Rebecca Hull. and had been born June 27,1823 at Woodford, Essex. Henry married Ann Ford Barclay(1822-1913) at Plaistow on October 19,1848. She was the daughter of Robert Barclay and Elizabeth Barclay (the daughter of Joseph Gurney of Norwich). Ann had been born at Leyton February 18,1822). Henry and Ann had four sons and six daughters between 1849 and 1862. It was interesting to note that many of their children including Joseph Gurney Fowler never married.

A number of websites make reference to Joseph Gurney Fowler as a chartered accountant. He had been a partner in the accounting firm of Price Waterhouse & Co. from 1887 to 1916 and a senior partner in the firm from 1913 to 1916. In 1889 he had travelled to the USA with George Smeath while with this company to undertake an audit of certain American companies in which British funds had been invested

and conducted similar audits for the company in connection to many other businesses. At the time of Joseph's death in 1916 at 'Brackenhurst' in Pembury he was acting for the government to determine the amount of compensation due to the railway companies under state control.

The Woodford Historical Society website includes an article by Georgina Green dated 1995 that gives the following reference to the Fowler family and their home 'Glebelands' in South Woodford. "As time went by the railway and the development of housing made Woodford a less desirable place for the wealthy, who could now travel further afield more easily and could sell their estates for building land at a good profit. But this was a gradual process and in the 1850s Woodford was still relatively rural. When Henry Fowler and his wife decided to move to Glebelands at the southern end of Woodford in 1852, relatives at Knotts Green, Leyton, were concerned for their safety, living so close to Epping Forest. He was a tea dealer from Wiltshire and had married Ann Ford Barclay (sister of Joseph Gurney Barclay, the banker) in 1848. They were both committed Quakers, and in 1856 Henry Fowler was deprived of four lambs valued at £4 as he refused to pay his church rates. They had ten children who all did them great credit. Their eldest son, Joseph Gurney Fowler, became a senior partner in the firm of Price, Waterhouse & Co., Chartered Accountants, as well as serving as a local councillor."

Joseph was living with his parents and siblings on Woodford Road in Woodford, Essex at the time the 1861 census. By 1871 he and his family had taken up residence at Church End in Woodford. Sometime before 1891 he and his family moved to the mansion 'Glebelands' referred to above in South Woodford.

The 1901 census, taken at 'Glebelands' gave Joseph as a 'chartered accountant employer'. He was living at that time with his widowed mother Ann, who was living on own means, and two of his spinster sister. Also in the home were 10 domestic servants.

The 1911 census, taken at 'Glebelands' gave Joseph as an account with an incorporated company (Price Waterhouse). He was living with his widowed mother Ann; two of his spinster sisters and six servants. Their home was a grand one, having 22 rooms.

Probate records for Joseph's mother Ann Ford Fowler gave her of "Glebe Lands" in Woodford, Essex, widow, and that she died March 10,1913. The executors of her 39,522 pound estate were her sons Joseph Gurney Fowler, accountant; Robert Henry Fowler, engineer; John Wilfred Fowler, bank manager and Alfred Fowler, engineer.

Joseph moved to 'Brackenston'/Brackenhurst' by 1915 for he is listed there in a directory of that year. He lived in the home on his own with a large complement of servants and commuted to London where his offices were. The only other people living with him at Brackenhurst was a large complement of domestic servants and the occasional visit from his mother and siblings.

Probate records gave Joseph Gurney Fowler of "Brackenhurst", Pembury and 3 Frederick Place Old Jewry, London, and that he died at "Brackenhurst" on April 24,1916. The executor of his 42,429 pound estate was James Hildebrand Ramsden, solicitor. A previous grant had been made in 1916.

The Fowler family were Quakers. From the 'Quaker Published Memorials of 1818-1919 was the following " Joseph Gurney Fowler of

Pembury, near Tunbridge Wells died age 60 on April 14,1916. Joseph Gurney Fowler of Pembury, near Tunbridge Wells, Kent was senior partner in the firm of Price, Waterhouse & Co., Chartered Accountants, of which he had been a member since 1887. At the time of his death he was acting as advisory accountant to the Government in relation to the settlement of the compensation payable to railways under State control. He was also a member of the Board of Referees appointed in connexion with the assessment of excess profits duty. J.G. Fowler was treasurer of the Royal Horticultural Society and Chairman of its Orchid Committee, and he possessed one of the most notable orchid collections in the country”.

During my research I came upon several references to Joseph exhibiting flowers and fruit at various shows and that in ‘The Garden” publication of 1894 he won a second prize for flowers and a first prize for large fruit. The home ‘Glebelands’ sat on large lovely landscaped grounds in which Joseph took a great interest and had planted out by his gardener some lovely flower beds. He also had a large glass conservatory attached to the home in which he grew orchids and other plants.

The Woodford Historical Society website of Spring 2012 makes reference to the Joseph Gurney Fowler and the Fowler family at ‘Glebelands’ in South Woodford and that this home eventually became the Glebelands Rest Home , located at 29 Glebelands Avenue and that in September 2009 residents of the home were told that it was closing and that they needed to find other accommodation. In fact it was reported elsewhere ‘The Glebelands Rest Home on Glebelands Avenue is a remnant of Glebelands House, and old mansion that was demolished in the 1930’s. Unfortunately no photograph of the his house could be located.

[3] THE GORDON FAMILY (insert photo of 'Oakleigh') and selection of 'Strathbogie images on Pembury Road of the Gordon family from photogallery

I begin my account of the Gordon family as former residents of Brackenston/Strathbogie by referring readers to my article entitled 'The History of The Oakeigh Estate Pembury Road' dated April 30,2013 in which I gave an account of the history of this grand home and its occupants. The Gordon family had originally resided in Australia and lived in a residence called 'Strathbogie'. When they took up residence at Oakleigh on the Pembury Road they renamed it 'Strathbogie" and lived there until 1919. From there the Gordon family moved to Brackenston/Brackenhurst in late 1919 and as before, renamed it Strathbogie, a name it retained for several years after the Gordon family no longer lived there and was renamed again as The Dower House. The residence of Oakleigh/ Strathbogie was located on the Pembury Road between Blackhurst Lane and the Hastings Road and later became the site of Oakley School. Details about the Gordon Family are given below, as presented in the aforementioned article from 2013, for it includes the time the family resided at Brackenston/Strathbogie.

From the 'Overview' is given the following "In 1911 Oakleigh became the residence of Hugh Hamilton Gordon (1847-1921) and his family. The 1911 census records the home as Oakleigh but soon after it was renamed Strathbogie, after the families former place of residence at Strathbogie, NSW, which itself is derived from their ancestral home in Strathbogie,Scotland. Hugh Hamilton Gordon was a magistrate in Australia and derived his wealth from the families extensive land holdings(exceeding 100,000 acres) in Australia and the ranching activities carried out by them at Strathbogie. In 1916 Strathbogie was

put up for sale and the Gordon family moved to a 17 room home at 8 Tonbridge Road in Pembury called Brackenston, which they renamed Strathbogie. Hugh died at 'Strathbogie', Pembury, in 1921 and was survived by his wife Maria who died in 1927 but had moved to London after her husband's death. She is known to have still been a resident of Strathbogie on the Tonbridge Road in 1922. No exact date is known by the researcher as to when she left Strathbogie, but she would have been the one to sell it to new owners. Shown above is a photograph of Strathbogie on the Pembury Road taken during the time of its occupancy by the Gordon family." From the main body of the article is the information below.

The head of the family was Hugh Edwin Hamilton Gordon born October 10, 1847 at Strathbogie, Emmaville, NSW, Australia. He was one of seven children born to Hugh Gordon (1816-1895) of which a photograph is shown opposite. Hugh's mother was Emily Catherine Goron, nee Hollingworth (1816-1856), the daughter of Captain Hollingworth of the Royal Navy, of Surrey Hills. His father had been married twice and as a result Hugh had two half siblings. Shown opposite is a map giving the location of Strathbogie in NSW.

Hugh Gordon (1816-1895) had been born at Mains of Rhynie, Aberdeenshire, Scotland and died March 14, 1895 at Strathbogie, NSW. His first marriage was on June 14, 1845 to Emily Catherine Hollingworth (1816-1855) with which he had seven children. After his first wife died he married November 7, 1860 Caroline Eliza Hollingworth (1827-1900), his first wife's sister, at Neuchatel, Switzerland. A descendant of the family states that Hugh was a first cousin once removed of Hugh Gordon (1816-1857) of Manar Australia and a grand nephew of Hugh Gordon (1766-1834) of Manar Scotland. Walcha historian Jillian Oppenheimer

tells about her great grandfather Hugh Gordon who lived on a remote property at Strathbogie near Emmaville, and his two wives, who were sisters-one marriage followed the next. She said that Hugh's wife Emily was pregnant for the 6th time, but was unaware she was expecting twins. Jillian said one baby was born November 9,1855 and eight days later the second baby was born, or still born. The baby died and the mother died November 17,1855; and a few months later the first baby of the twins died. Jillian tells how Hugh called on his sister-in-law Caroline to care for the children, and eventually romance blossomed. She ends her brief account by stating they had a battle to get married and that was why the marriage was held in Switzerland. Shown opposite is a photograph of 'Strathbogie Station' referred to above, the birth place of Hugh Edwin Hamilton Gordon, and the source of the families wealth.

Shown opposite is a photograph of Hugh Gordon (1816-1895) and of his wife Emily Catherine Gordon(1816-1855).

Shown opposite is a general view of the landscape at Strathbogie, NSW.

Shown opposite is an interior of the families home in Strathbogie, NSW taken in 1897.

Shown opposite is an exterior view of the Strathbogie home in NSW taken in 1897.

Shown opposite is a modern photograph of the Strathbogie home in NSW. This twin gabled, pink granite homestead was built in 1868 for Mr Hugh Gordon who had taken up Strathbogie in 1839. This homestead is set among the best remaining gardens of what was one two acres of garden and orchard. By 1855 the station was 102,000 acres and was

growing in importance and production every year. Hugh Gordon and his family lived on Strathbogie for nearly 60 years. In 1900-1901 it was bought by Mr C. Body and family and owned it until the 1960's developing the property towards the modern enterprise it is today. It was owned after 1988 by the Dunne family and about 1997 Tim & Gina Fairfax purchase the property. The grand building has been well cared for and remains much the way it was when built. The area of Strathbogie NSW remains a largely unpopulated region without a single town of any significance other than perhaps the town of Strathbogie itself. In addition to ranching the area is well known for the production of olives and wine.

Local papers in Australia gave the following account of the life and death of Hugh Gordon (1816-1895). "Mr Hugh Gordon of Strathbogie, Gragin, and Gramin stations, New England, probably the oldest pioneer squatter of that district, died very suddenly last Thursday morning at Strathbogie. Mr Gordon represented New England for many years in the Legislative Assembly of NSW. To his many friends and several relatives in this colony it may be interesting to learn that his death took place at Strathbogie on Friday afternoon, in the presence of his sons, Mr Hollingworth Gordon of Gragin and Mr Hamilton Gordon of Strathbogie, and other relatives and friends. The deceased gentleman was interred beside his first wife in the family vault in the garden. Mr Gordon had been born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland and arrived in Sydney in 1839 and in the New England district took up two stations, Strathbogie and Rocky Creek. In 1860 he represented the electorate of Tenteffield. When parliament was dissolved in 1870 he did not again offer himself as a candidate. His obituary states that Owen left two sons and four daughters. Hugh (1816-1895) was a pastoralist and a

politician. He was the original owner of Strathbogie Station New England, a huge ranching operation.

On May 4, 1903 Hugh Edwin Hamilton Gordon married Maria Angelica Carlotta Francisca "Mollie" de Meirelles at the Chapel of the Palace of Dafundo, Lisbon, Portugal. The following marriage announcement appeared in the newspaper. "Gordon-De Meirelles-May 4, at St Mathius Dajando, Portugal. Hamilton Gordon, second son of the late Hugh Gordon of Strathbogie, New England, to Maria de Dores, youngest daughter of Viscount de Meirelles, K,C,M.G. , and of Vicountess de Meirelles". Shown opposite is a photograph of Hugh Edwin Hamilton Gordon as a young man.

The Maitland Mercury of September 14, 1875 announced that Hugh Edwin Hamilton Gordon had been appointed a Magistrate and that he was of "Strathbogie near vegetable creek". Records also show that he was a diplomat in Lisbon, Portugal.

In about 1909 Hugh Edwin Hamilton Gordon and his family took up residence in England and purchased Oakleigh, a large home located on Pembury Road. The 1911 census, taken at Oakleigh, Pembury Road does not record the presence of Hugh Gordon but does list Mary Hamilton Gordon, age 28, born 1883 at Lisbon Portugal, with an occupation of 'employer'. Living with her is her son Francis, age 7, born 1904 at Sydney, Australia; her daughter Mary Catherine Gordon, age 5, born 1906 Sydney, Australia; her son Gordon Hamilton Gordon, age 3, born 1908 at Lisbon, Portugal. Also present in the household are six visitors including two governesses and a house maid. Two of these visitors were the Vicountess Meirelles, married, age 52, born Lisbon, Spain and Pedro Du Meirelles, age 14, born Lisbon, Spain. It would appear most

likely that the Vicountess was the mother of Mary Hamilton Gordon, nee Meirelles. Also present in the household were six domestic servants including a dook, butler, housemaid, footman, nurse domestic and a ladies maid. This census records that Oakleigh was a mansion of 21 rooms. Shown opposite is a photograph of Maria Angelica, Hugh's wife, with two of their children.

The 1911 census also shows that Oakleigh Lodge was occupied by a Mr Albert Hobbs, his wife Ellen and their two children, Kathleen, age 6, and James, age 3. Albert Hobbs was listed as a domestic gardener. Albert Hobbs had been born 1877 at Thorpe, Birkshire; his wife 1877 at Surrey and his two children in Tunbridge Wells. The couple had been married seven years and the Lodge was given as having four rooms. At Oakleigh Stables in the same census was Charles Vincent, a 55 year old coachman, born 1856 at Salisbury and his wife Rachel, age 46, born 1865 in London. The couple had been married 28 years and had one child. The stable building had four rooms.

Soon after the 1911 census was taken Oakleigh became known as Strathbogie, after the families ancestral home by that name in NSW.

In 1913 Mrs Gordon and her daughter Mary Catherine are found travelling from Argentina to Southampton. The Gordon's were frequent travellers with several trips to Portugal. Mrs Gordon and her maid, as an example, made a trip to Lisbon, Portugal in July 1914 and were still travelling back and forth to Portugal in the 1920's. Shown opposite is a photograph of Hugh in his later years.

In 1916 Strathbogie on Pembury Road was put up for sale and the Gordon family moved to a grand 17 room residence in Pembury named Brackenston, which they renamed Strathbogie.

Hugh Edwin Hamilton Gordon died June 5,1921 at 'Strathbogie', Pembury,Tunbridge Wells. His probate records confirm this and show he left an estate valued at about 51,000 pounds. The executor of his estate was Maria Gordon, widow, and the Royal Exchange Insurance Company. It is not known where he was buried for there is no burial record for him in the Tunbridge Wells Cemetery. He was survived by his wife who remarried.

The Sydney Morning Herald of Friday July 8,1921 gave the following announcement . " News has been received by Mr G.H. Gordon (by cable) of the death of his brother Mr Hamilton Gordon at Strathbogie, Pembury,England of heart failure, in his 74th year. Mr Hamilton Gordon was born at Strathbogie, Emmaville, New South Wales, and was educated at the Sydney Grammar School and Sydney University. With his elder brother, Mr G.H. Gordon, he took a keen interest in sport,especially cricket. On leaving the University he resided at and managed the property of his father Mr Hugh Gordon, one of the pioneers of the district, and for some years member for the New England district. On his father's death, Strathbogie was sold, and Mr Hamilton Gordon left for England. After several years of travel he married the youngest daughter of the Count de Mairelles, and had since resided in England. He has left a family of two sons and two daughters".

In the 4th quarter of 1921 at Maylebone, Maria Gordon married Joao A De Bianchi. The 1922 Kelly directory gave the listing " Mrs Hamilton Gordon, Strathbogie, Pembury". This listing suggests that the directory was out of date and that Maria Gordon had actually left the home in Pembury by the time of her marriage in 1921.

The Sydney Morning Herald of March 12,1924 gave the following announcement. “ Death-February 28,1924 Maria Angelica Carlotta Francisca de Bianchi, wife of Joao Antonio Bianchi, Concellor of Portugues Legation,London, formerly widow of Hugh Edwin Hamilton Gordon, of Strathbogie, Tunbridge Wells,Pembury,Kent,England (by cable)”

[4] JAMES HENRY NEWCOMB AND FAMILY (insert ‘Newcombe crest’)

Henry James Newcomb (sometimes mistakenly given as Newcombe) and other members of the family are listed in directories at Strathbogie in Pembury from 1925-1934.They were gone by 1936. I have written before about this family in connection to them being residents of ‘Heatherlands’ on Forest Road in Tunbridge Wells, in an article entitled ‘The History of Heatherlands on Forest Road’ dated March 23.2016, from which the following information is largely based.

(insert ‘Heatherlands’)

The earliest record for his presence at Heatherlands (photo opposite) is the 1911 census, followed by the 1913 Kelly Directory, He was gone from the home by 1917 eventually moved to Pembury where he and his family lived at ‘Strathbogie’, located at 8 Tonbridge Road.

James Henry Newcomb was born in 1868 at Welling,Kent. His birth was registered in the 1st qtr of 1869 at Dartford, Kent. He was one of 8 children born to Henry Thomas Newcomb (1829-1902). His father had been married twice and so two of James siblings were actually half siblings. James mother was Ann Elizabeth Newcomb, nee Tullett (1834-1907). The Newcomb family were wealthy. James father was in 1871 a Spanish merchant but by 1891 was an accountant with a foreign bank.

The 1871 census, taken at Rosweis Villa on the London and Dover Road in Bexley Heath, Kent gave Henry Thomas Newcomb as born in London and working as a Spanish merchant. With him was his wife Ann Elizabeth who had been born in London. Also in the home were six Newcomb children including JAMES HENRY, age 2. Also there was a sister in law, age 25.

The 1891 census, taken at Gravesend, Kent gave Henry Thomas Newcomb as a bank accountant in a foreign bank. With him was his wife Anne Elizabeth; one servant, and four children including a son Basis who was a stockbrokers clerk and JAMES HENRY, who was a clerk in a foreign bank.

In the 2nd qtr of 1895, at Lewisham, London, James married Alice Mabel Stuart Hargreaves, who was born 1874 at Stevenage, Hertfordshire. She was one of six siblings and 1 half siblings in the family. She was the daughter of Joseph Hargreaves (1845-1880) and Emily Mary Hargreaves, nee Moore (1847-1926).

James and his wife had the following children (1) Frederick (1896-1960) (2) Charles Stuart (1897-1918) (3) Mabel Alice (1899-1980) (4) Maurice James (1902-1976) (5) Sibyl (1905-1958) (6) Aubrey, born 1908 in Tunbridge Wells. All of the children except Aubrey were born in Gravesend, Kent.

The 1901 census, taken at Lily Villa at Gravesend, Kent gave James as a bank clerk. With him was his wife Alice and his children Frederick, Charles and Mabel.

The 1911 census, taken at 'Heatherlands' Forest Road, Tunbridge Wells, gave James as a managing director of a finance company. With him

was his wife Alice and his sister in law Ethel Maud Hargreaves. Also there were five of his children and six servants. The census noted that the home had 19 rooms; that they had been married 16 years and that all six of their children were still living. At 'Heatherlands Stable block was a coachman and stable hand. At 'Heatherlands Lodge was John Dutch, age 58, domestic gardener, and his wife Jane, age 48 and two sons George, age 16 and Alfred age 12. My article 'The Dutch Family of Tunbridge Wells' dated March 21,2016 provides information about this family. Of particular note about them is that they were Quakers who were opposed to the war effort. Although Alfred Dutch served and was wounded twice in the war but survived and lived a full life, his older brother George refused to fight and was court martialled, the result being that he served three years in jail before joining an organization in 1919 to provide relief in France and Poland. He later returned to England, got married and lived a full life.His father John however lost his job as the gardener at Heatherlands because of his son George and had to leave the estate and make a life for himself as a jobbing gardener.

Insert 'Tunbridge Wells War Memorial')

James Henry Newcomb had two sons who served in WW 1. One of them, Lieut. Charles Stuart Newcomb, who had been born 1898 at Gravesent Kent, and who had lived at Heatherlands in 1911 with his parents and siblings was killed in the war. Charles is remembered on a number of monuments and plaques. He is recorded on one of the plaques of the Tunbridge Wells War Memorial, a transcription of which reads "C.S.NEWCOMB[Charles Stuart].....Charles was a Lieut (no service number) with The Buffs (East Kent Regiment) ,6th Bm. who died of wounds sustained in action at the age of 20 in France on April

5,1918.He is recorded at the Doullens Communal Cemetery (VI.A.23). He was the son of James Henry and Alice Newcomb of Heathlands, Tunbridge Wells.” A photograph of the Tunbridge Wells War Memorial on Mount Pleasant Road is shown opposite.

(insert photo of plaque at St Marks Church) and (‘St Marks Church’)

The Newcomb family were members of the congregation of St Mark’s Church in Broadwater Down. For information about the history of this church see my article ‘The History of St Mark’s Church Broadwater Down’ dated November 20,2013. Inside this church are three plaques listing the names of 34 men who fell in WW 1 and there are also plaques for WW II listing a further seven names. The name of Lieut Charles Stuart Newcomb is on one of the plaques. A photograph of the church and of the plaques is shown here. The transcription related to his listing on this plaque is given as “ NEWCOMB, CHARLES STUART. Lieutenant.6th (Service) Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment).Died Friday 5 April 1918. Aged 20.Born Gravesend, Kent. Resided Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent.Son of James Henry Newcomb and Alice Mabel Stuart Newcomb (néeHargreaves) of Heatherlands, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent.Buried Doullens Communal Cemetery Extension No.1, Somme, France.Grave Ref: VI. A. 23.At the time of the 1911 census, Charles’ parents and five of his siblings resided at “Heatherlands,” Forest Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Head of the house was 42 year old Welling, Kent native James Henry Newcomb, who was the Managing Director of a Financial Company. Charles was commissioned from the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst as a Second Lieutenant in The Buffs (East Kent Regiment) on Wednesday 16 August 1916, as was published in The London Gazette the previous day. He served on the

Western Front as a Lieutenant in The Buffs (East Kent Regiment) from New Years Eve 1917.”

(insert Tonbridge School plaque) also (Tonbridge School photo) and ('Charles Stuart Newcomb')

The Newcomb sons had attended Tonbridge School. At this school is a plaque erected in memory of those who had attended the school and staff who had served in the war and fell in action. From the school website is the following transcription for Charles Stuart Newcomb and a photograph of the plaque and an image of the school. Also given here is a photograph of Charles in his military uniform. “LIEUT. CHARLES STUART NEWCOMB, THE BUFFS (EAST KENT REGT.), ATTD. 6TH BATTN. DIED APRIL 5TH, 1918, OF WOUNDS RECEIVED THE SAME DAY, NEAR ALBERT. AGED 20. At the School 1912—15 (School House). Lieut. C. S. Newcomb was the second son of Mr. and Mrs. James Henry Newcomb, formerly of Heatherlands, Tunbridge Wells, and now of Strathbogie, Pembury. His elder brother, 2nd Lieut, F. Newcomb, M.C., Hampshire Regiment (So. 1910—14), who was a House Praepostor and in the XL in his last year, enlisted in the Kent Cyclists Battalion in August, 1914, but entered Sandhurst at the end of 1916, and was gazetted to the Hampshire Regiment, August 16th, 1916, and was promoted Temporary Lieutenant, June 5th, and Temporary Captain, July 20th, 1917, in a Service Battalion of his Regiment. He was awarded the M.C. January 1st, 1918. His younger brother, M. J. Newcomb (D.B. 1917—18), left whilst still quite young, and his youngest brother, A. Newcomb, entered the School in May, 1923. Entering the School in January, 1912, from Mr. Harrison's School at Caterham, C. S. Newcomb, who had been a Lance-Corporal in the O.T.C. for his last two Terms, left in the Michaelmas Term of 1915 to go to Sandhurst. He and his brother were

gazetted from the R.M.C. on the same day, August 16th, 1916, but not to the same Regiment. He received a commission in The Buffs and, going out to France in the following month, became attached to the 8th (S.) Battn. of his Regiment. After commanding a Platoon till the end of January, 1917, he was appointed Battalion Intelligence and Sniping Officer. He was all through the severe fighting in front of Lens after the capture of the Vimy Ridge, in the spring of 1917, and did most valuable reconnaissance work. In May, 1917, he returned to his Company, and as second in command of it took part in much stern fighting at Ypres, the Messines Ridge, Shrewsbury Forest, and elsewhere, until June 28th, 1917, when he was wounded at Hill 60 in the Ypres Sahent and invalided home suffering from shell-shock and internal injuries. His Company Commander brought his name before the CO. for gallantry and devotion to duty in a very successful operation carried out by the Battalion on the Ypres Canal, June 14th, 1917. " I was with him at the time," he says, " and was tremendously impressed by his coolness and cheerfulness under very trying circumstances." Returning to France in December, 1917, he was posted to the 6th (Service) Battn., was promoted Lieutenant, February 16th, 1918, and commanded a Platoon till the date of his death, April 5th, 1918. " On that day," as an officer wrote, " the Battalion made a glorious stand against the Germans and saved a critical situation," but Lieut. Newcomb and a brother officer were mortally wounded by the same shell. They were removed to the CCS. by the ambulance of an Australian unit fighting alongside of the Battalion, and, though he died there the same day, news of his death did not reach his Battalion till the beginning of May. His CO. wrote that they were both " brave and gallant boys, two of the best officers of the Battalion."

Insert ('Brackenston Pembury')

As can be seen from the Tonbridge School transcription at the time of the death of Charles Stuart Newcomb, his parents were residing at Strathbogie in Pembury. A photograph of Strathbogie is shown opposite. He is listed as "Henry James Newcombe" at Strathbogie in a 1927 directory and as "James Henry Newcombe" in directories of 1933 and 1934. His son Frederick is found in Pembury directories of 1933 and 1934 living at "Brackenston, Lower Green, Pembury. The name Brackenston was the former name of Strathbogie in Pembury. A passenger list for July 29, 1933 recorded James as still living at Strathbogie in Pembury. In the 1940's James had taken up residence in Preston, Sussex.

A review of passenger lists covering the period of 1930 to 1935 record four trips made by James Henry Newcomb between Southampton and Quebec Canada. Some of these trips he made on his own and others were made with his wife and one trip was made with two of his children. In the passenger records James is given as a Banker travelling c/o The Trust & Loan Company of Canada.

James Henry Newcomb was of St Mary Thatch, East Preston, Sussex when he died March 10, 1948. The executor of his 19,275 pound estate was his widow Alice Mabel Stuart Newcomb.

Records of the Peerage gave James Henry Newcomb living at Strathbogie in Pembury and that he had a son Maurice James Newcomb, born September 16, 1902 at Gravesend, Kent, who married Joan Cecile Drummond (1909-2000), the daughter of Lieut. David Robert Drummond (born 1884) and Hilda Margaret Harris (born 1882) on June 17, 1933. Maurice and his wife had one child and couple

divorced in 1939. Joan went on to marry two more times and had one more child.

[5] MAJOR HENRY NOEL NORCOTT WINTER

Henry and his wife Pearl are found in directories and passenger lists from 1936 to 1938 inclusive but were gone by 1939.

Henry was born June 1, 1883 at Dover, Kent and was baptised at St Mary-the-Virgin, Dover, Kent. Henry was one of several children born to Noel Norcott Winter (1852-1908) and Constance Mary Winter, nee Broadbent (1854-1914). Henry's father died in London and his mother in Thanet, Kent.

The 1891 census, taken at 33 Park Crescent in North Neols, Lancashire gave Henry as a student in a boys school whose headmistress at the time was Ann Hope, age 64, who ran the school with two teachers and staff of three servants. At the time of this census there were 15 boys attending the school all age 11 or under.

Henry decided to pursue a military career and military records show that he was in the Second Boer War in South Africa from 1899 to 1902, having served with the 6th Btn Royal Fusiliers. His medal card shows that he was entitled to receive the South African Medal; and clasps for service in Cape Colony, Orange Free State, and Transvaal. The 1901 and 1902 clasps were awarded to him on the basis that he was in the county from May 25, 1901 to July 31, 1902.

It is not known when or where Henry was married but his wife was Pearl Norcott Winter, who was born at Malabar Hill, Bombay, India on December 7, 1875. She was one of four children born to Charles Albert Winter (1846-1920) and Ann Jemima Winter, nee Watson (1851-1920).

Her mother died in London and it is believed that her father died in India. Pearl had been baptised January 11,1876 at Christ Church in Byculla, Bombay, India. Henry and Peal never had any children. Pearl had been living 1881 at Marylebone,London and in 1891 at Holdenhurst, Hampshire as a spinster. In January 1897 she married Francis Stanhope Hanson(1869-1920) in London and with him had two children namely Violet Gwendoline Pearl Hanson,born 1899, and Charles Reginald Frances Hanson(1904-1933). By 1927she married Henry Noel Norcott Winter.

A review of travel records show that Henry and his wife travelled together repeatedly and during the period they made a total of 12 trips out of the country between 1927 and 1950. These records provided the addresses of where they were living in England during that time , a list of which is given below.

1927.....St James Street, London

1929-1931.....Marwell House near Winchester

1932-1935.....Downs House, Eastbourne,Sussex

1936-1938.....Strathbogie, Pembury

1950-1952..... 93 Burlington Court, Eastbourne,Sussex.

All of the travel records record him as “Major Army retired” and wife as a housewife, except for one record from 1948 that gave Peal as a landowner. The couple always travelled 1st Class.

Probate records gave Henry Noel Norcott Winter of 893 Burlington Court,Eastbourne, Sussex when he died on October 4,1952 at

Northumberland House, Green Lanes, London. The executor of his 39,280 pound estate was his widow Pearl Norcott Winter.

Probate records for Pearl Norcott Winter gave her of 19 Demton Road. Eastbourne, Sussex when she died November 27, 1960. The executors of her 182,630 pound estate were James Hildebrand Ramsien, solicitor, and John Roland Adams, Queens Council.

With regards to the military career of Henry one can find many references to him on the internet from various announcements of his military postings and promotions that appeared in the London Gazette. The earliest reference to him appeared in the London Gazette of April 21, 1900 when he was given as a gentleman "to be second Lieut". The Gazettes of 1901 refer to him being with the 6th Btn Royal Fusiliers and the Gazette of March 27, 1901 announces that he was assigned for service in South Africa. Later Gazettes of 1903 announce him having a rank of Lieutenant. Henry had served in the Boer war with the Royal Fusiliers reaching the rank of Major and was with the KRRC.

A metal index card for him shows he served in France during WW1 and was with the 5th Royal Fusiliers and the 7th Fusiliers, beginning as a captain and ending as a major. It appears that he served in France in 1915 but returned to England by 1916 as the London Gazette of June 27, 1916 announced that he was in the 'Training Reserve' as a Temporary Major. In 1917 he was a Major in the Headquarters staff. The London Gazette of September 29, 1917 announced that he relinquished his rank of temporary major and that on April 1, 1920 he relinquished his command and was "granted the rank of Major".

[6] MILITARY USE WW II

The home was take over during WW II for military purposes and became a Territorial Army Centre.

[7] THE BIRD FAMILY

Directories of 1948 to 1953 listed “ Mrs I.E. Bird, The Dower House, Pembury. Those of 1952 to 1954 gave two listings namely (1) Mrs I.E. Bird, The Dower House, Pembury (2) Mrs T.E. Bird, The Lodge, The Dower House, Pembury. A 1957 directory gave “ Mrs I.E. Bird, St Edith’s, Pembury.

In actual fact there was only one Mrs Bird living there. She was the widow Irene Edith Bird (1886-1958). Irene had been born as Irene Edith Roach. She was the daughter of Henry Richard Roach. From the India Army Quarterly list of January 1,1901 Henry Richard Roach had the rank of “Surgeon-Capt”, a rank he achieved February 4,1907. He retired from the army February 5,1911 but appears to have remained in India where he died.

(insert ‘Poona India’)

Irene was one of several children born in Poona, Bengal, India to Henry Richard Roach and Helen Josephine Roach. Irene married William Richard Dacomb Bird at Poona,Bombay, India on November 20,1907. A postcard view of Main Street in Poona is shown opposite.

Birth records indicate that Irene and her husband had only one child namely Joseph William Henry Bird (1909-1993).William Richard Dacomb Bird was born November 20,1884 and was one of eight children born to Ernest William Bird and Sara Eliza Bird, nee Rose, and was baptised January 31,1885 at Madras, India.

Probate records gave Irene Edith Bird of St Ediths, Pembury, Kent, widow, died April 3,1958. The executors of her 5,966 pound estate were the Midland Bank Executors and Trustees Ltd; Joseph William Henry Bird, civil servant, the son, and Maria Irene Helena Carroll, single woman.

With respect to the Joseph William Henry Bird referred to in the probate record of Irene Edith Birth he was born September 3,1909 in India and was baptised at Poona, Bengal, India on October 1,1909 and given as the son of William Richard Bird and Tresa Edith Bird. This record is in error in that his mother was actually Irene Edith Bird. Joseph died in the 4th qtr of 1993 at Bracknell, Berkshire. He was be the J.W. Bird listed in a 1960 directory at St Ediths (the former lodge/stable) of the Dower House. The map I presented earlier in this article labels the location of St Edith's.

The name St Ediths's is derived from Saint Edith(966-984) of Wilton, an English nun and daughter of King Edgar of England and Wolfrida.

[8] COUNCIL OFFICES

Pembury Parish Council (PPC) has only two full time office staff, currently in a small office building. All the parish councillors are volunteers and do most of their work from home. When they have a meeting they hire a local hall to accommodate the multitudes. The Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is something far bigger, with the Pembury Parish Council being a local branch of the TWBC. It is most likely that it was the TWBC that owned the Dower House in the 1970's - 1980's with the PPC using some of it on an irregular basis.

This article originally appeared on Edward Gilbert's web site for a short while, including its illustrations. The copy shown here only carries the text, and we no longer have record of the illustrations.