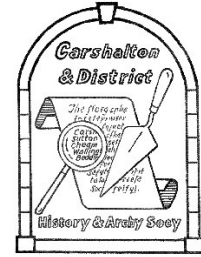


Carshalton & District History & Archaeology Society

Local History Note 19



In the heart of Sutton: Sutton Court

March 2025

Clive Orton

Sutton Court may have been one of the oldest houses in Sutton, although its origins are uncertain. The architect and local historian Charles Marshall suggested that it was built by John Martindale in 1756.¹ The local historian Robert Smith thought that the Martindale family lived there from 1756 to 1790, but that the Steel family lived here earlier, and hinted at the presence of a house here in 1632.² He stated that in 1840 that the house and its estate as far east as Langley Park Road (then known as Goodenough's Lane) was in the possession of Lady Maria King, widow of Vice-Admiral Sir Richard King, who had died in 1834.³ It is shown on the site of what is now the 'old' Police Station in Carshalton Road on the 1st Series O.S. 25in map (surveyed 1866-67). It stood there until about 1908, when it was demolished to make way for what was then the 'new' Police Station, built on roughly the same footprint.⁴ Its grounds were extensive, stretching as far south as the railway, but as *Sutton Court* was present before the coming of the railway in 1847, the estate probably originally extended even further south. I shall pick up the story from the time of Maria King.



Sir Richard King and Maria Susannah Cotton

Sir Richard King, 2nd Baronet, was born in Dorset in 1774. His father was Admiral Sir Richard King, MP, so it is not surprising that Richard junior joined the Royal Navy in 1788 on board *HMS Crown*, bound for the East Indies. Thanks to his father's influence he was promoted to Lieutenant in 1791, Commander in 1793 and Captain of the frigate *HMS Aurora* in 1794. While Captain of the frigate *HMS Sirius* in 1797-1802 he captured the privateers *Furie* and *Waakzaamheid* (Dutch), *La Favourie* (French), and a Spanish brig. In company with the *Oiseau* he captured the *Dédaigneuse* (French). He was rewarded with the command of the line-of-battle ship *HMS Achille* in 1804, in time to take part

in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. In the battle the *Achille* 'did excellent service'; Richard was awarded the gold medal, the thanks of Parliament and a sword of honour from the Patriotic Fund. He succeeded to the baronetcy in 1806. His upward career continued: Captain of the Fleet in the Mediterranean 1811-12 with his flag on HMS *San Josef* (which had been captured from the Spanish Navy in 1797), Rear-Admiral 1812, Knight Commander of the Bath (KCB) in 1815, Commander-in-Chief in the East Indies 1816-20, Vice-Admiral 1821, Commander-in-Chief at The Nore 1833. He died of cholera at Sheerness in August 1834. There was disagreement as to whether the naval surgeons treating him should have consulted the local civilian practitioners, on account of their greater experience of cases of cholera. Whatever the pros and cons, he died of the disease in only two days.⁵

What of his private life? He married Sarah Anne Duckworth (born in 1784, daughter of Admiral Sir John Duckworth) in 1803, with whom he had four sons and a daughter (Richard Duckworth, b. 1804, George St Vincent Duckworth, b. 1809, Henry Robert, John Thomas and Anne Maria). After Sarah died in 1819 in Mumbai (while Richard was posted to the East Indies) he married Maria Susannah Cotton (born in 1790 and daughter of Admiral Sir Charles Cotton) at Brighton in 1822. They had four sons and three daughters, making a total of 12 children in all.⁶ Of his second family, I can only trace Maria (b. 1823),⁷ Frances ('Fanny', b. 1825 at Madingley near Cambridge),⁸ William Affleck (b. 1830)⁹ and Elizabeth Ann (b. 1832); three sons are 'missing'. It is with Elizabeth that the family are first recorded in Sutton. She was born at *Sutton Court* on 10 October 1832¹⁰ and baptised at St Nicholas, Sutton, on 22 January 1833.¹¹ The relatively long delay between birth and baptism suggests that Richard may have been away on duty at the time of her birth, returning home for her baptism. Richard's death in the following year (see above) left Maria a widow at the age of 44, with twelve children, ranging from Richard (age 30) to Elizabeth (age nearly 2). It seems unlikely that many of the first family were living with her at this time, although Anne Maria married Sir James Samuel Lake in Sutton in 1833;¹² the others were probably away on military service. Nevertheless, quite a handful, even though I have no doubt that she had plenty of servants, and of course she must have had much experience of managing a household while Richard spent most of his life at sea. I hope that she also had a confidante (perhaps a relative or close friend), with whom she could share her inner life. By 1841 Maria had moved away to Park Crescent, Marylebone (facing Regent's Park) with Maria, Fanny and Elizabeth Ann.¹³ She died at *Madingley Hall*, Cambridge, in 1871, with an address in Wilton Crescent, Belgrave Square (just south of Knightsbridge).¹⁴ These addresses indicate that Richard must have left her well provided for.

William Affleck had an eventful career. In 1851 he broke with family tradition by joining the 4th Light Dragoon Regiment as a Cornet at the age of 20.¹⁵ In 1853 the Crimean War broke out, and the regiment was sent to Crimea, where it took part in the infamous Charge of the Light Brigade (25th October 1854), which William survived. He was soon promoted to Lieutenant,¹⁶ later (1857) to Captain¹⁷ and then (1867) to Major in the 17th Regiment.¹⁸ In 1873 he married Charlotte Webster in Quebec,¹⁹ but by 1881 he was living in Saffron Walden with Elizabeth.²⁰ He died there in 1886.²¹ Fanny married William Charles Smith (a rich landowner, 25 years her senior) at Madingley in 1860, and went to live at his ancestral home of *Shortgrove Hall* in Newport, Essex. William and Elizabeth were recorded there with them in 1871, but whether they were living there or just visiting is not clear.²² Fanny and William Charles were still living at *Shortgrove Hall* in 1881,²³ but William died in 1883,²⁴ and by 1891 Fanny had 'down-sized' to a house called *Plawhatch* in Hockerill (Hertfordshire),²⁵ where she died in 1898.²⁶ Elizabeth never married. In 1881 she was with William (see above) and in 1891 she was recorded at Fanny's residence. By 1901 she had her own household, at 11 Queensberry Place, South Kensington (now part of the *Gainsborough Hotel*),²⁷ where she lived until she died on her 93rd birthday (10th October 1925).²⁸

The next occupant was John Ruck, a wine merchant, who lived there from at least 1863 to 1871.²⁹ He was born in 1811 in the parish of St Dunstan in the East, City of London.³⁰ In 1834 he married Maria Sarah Sayer at St Dunstan in the East³¹ (she had been born in 1809)³². They had six children: Charles John (b. 1835),³³ Frederick William (b. 1836),³⁴ Helen Elizabeth (b. 1837),³⁵ Harriet Frances (b. 1845),³⁶ Egerton Winder (b. 1847)³⁷ and Gordon Ferdinand (b. 1850).³⁸ I cannot explain the gap between 1837 and 1845. The family lived in the City of London until at least 1847,³⁹ but were living in 'Sutton Village' in 1851. They were a prosperous family, with six or seven servants.⁴⁰ In 1871 John built and moved into *Manor Park House* (remembered by some as the old public library in Manor Park).⁴¹ John retired in 1875,⁴² and was in Madron (near Penzance) with Maria, Helen, Harriet and three servants in 1881.⁴³ John died in 1888 and was buried at St Nicholas Church, Sutton.⁴⁴ Maria moved back to Sutton with Helen and Harriet,⁴⁵ living in *Manor Park House* until she died at the end of 1894, aged 82.⁴⁶



The Ruck window in St Nicholas' Church, Sutton John Ruck's gravestone in St Nicholas' churchyard

Three of the sons – Charles, Egerton and Gordon – all became wine merchants, working together in the City of London.⁴⁷ The odd man out was Frederick, who after his education at Marlborough College joined the army in 1855 when he became an Ensign in the 50th Foot Regiment.⁴⁸ By 1859 he was a Lieutenant in the 13th Light Infantry in Calcutta, where in 1859 he married Marie Eliza Hollway (then 15 years old).⁴⁹ Marie died in 1863 at the age of 20.⁵⁰ Frederick next appears in New Zealand, where in 1864 he married Charlotte Ann Sarah Stewart Atkins in St Paul's Church, Auckland.⁵¹ In 1871 he was recorded as unemployed, living in Sutton or perhaps visiting family there,⁵² but by 1880 he was back in New Zealand, at Foxton in the Manawatu district.⁵³ He died in 1882 in Masterton, Wellington, while Captain of the Masterton Volunteer Rifle Corps.⁵⁴ He was later described as a controversial settler.

Two of the wine merchant brothers married and had children. Charles married Florence Sarah Turner (daughter of Rev. Sydney Turner, and ten years Charles' junior) at St Nicholas' Church, Sutton, in 1866,⁵⁵ and Egerton married Margaret Bradshaw Wanklyn at St Dunstan's Church, Cheam, in 1872.⁵⁶ Charles and Florence moved to a house in Reigate Road, Redhill, and seem to have had four children: Sydney, George, Cecil and Vincent,⁵⁷ while Egerton and Margaret moved to *Mayfield* (sometimes called *Mayfield House*) in Cheam, and had two children: John and Elsie.⁵⁸ Gordon appears never to

have married, and continued to live in Sutton.⁵⁹ The three brothers died within months of each other in 1905: Egerton in Cheam on 29th April (aged 57),⁶⁰ Gordon in Felixstowe on 3rd June (aged 54)⁶¹ and Charles on 1st November in Reigate (aged 70).⁶² I shall return to their business careers.

Helen (or Ellen) and Harriet seem to have lived quiet lives. Neither ever married. They were still living with John and Maria in 1881, when the family had moved to Madron.⁶³ Maria died in 1894,⁶⁴ and by 1897 Harriet had moved to a house called *Eversley* in Langley Park Road, where she stayed until 1920.⁶⁵ Helen appears to have lived with her: certainly, she was there in 1911. Harriet, despite being eight years younger than Helen, was recorded as head of household.⁶⁶ Further, she was on the Electoral Register throughout this period, while Helen was never listed.⁶⁷ Did Helen have a disability, and was she in the care of her younger sister? Finally, Helen died at *Eversley* in 1919 and was buried at St Nicholas Church.⁶⁸ Harriet moved to *Coleherne Court*, an upper-class apartment block in South Kensington, built between 1901 and 1904,⁶⁹ where she died in 1929, the last of her generation.⁷⁰ There is a curious historical link: Lady Diana Spencer lived there from 1979 to 1981.⁷¹

To follow the story of the Ruck family as wine merchants, we have to go back a generation to our John's father, John Ruck senior, who was born in 1780.⁷² By 1831 he was a tenant at St Dunstan's Hill, City of London,⁷³ and by 1840 we see the emergence of the partnership known as Ruck, Fenwick and Ruck (here abbreviated to RFR).⁷⁴ Fenwick was Joseph Fenwick, who had been born in Stanhope, Co. Durham, in 1799.⁷⁵ He was in London by 1833, when he married Elizabeth Bernard Hughes at St Botolph's, Bishopsgate.⁷⁶ Their first son, Joseph junior, was born at 8 Fowkes Buildings and baptised at St Dunstan's in the East in 1834. Joseph senior was described as a wine merchant in the Baptism Register.⁷⁷ The three partners held property in Harp Lane and St Dunstan's Hill in 1843-44.⁷⁸ By 1851 John senior had retired, Joseph had moved to Blandford Square, Marylebone and John junior's brother George Thomas seems to have joined the partnership. George was then living with John senior at *Croydon Lodge*, Croydon.⁷⁹

John senior died in 1859⁸⁰ and was memorialised by John junior with a window in St Nicholas' Church, Sutton (built in 1864-5), and Joseph Fenwick died in 1860.⁸¹ The name of RFR continued as the trading name of Robert Manuel and John Turner Hunter, at 19 St Dunstan's Hill,⁸² and supplied rum to the Royal Navy throughout the 1860s and possibly later.⁸³ In October 1879 RFR invested heavily in bottled brandy, to the extent of £25m (in today's money) over a period of one month;⁸⁴ they advertised its sale intensively through the rest of 1879 and into 1880.⁸⁵ They appear to have anticipated a lack of brandy following the shortage of wine caused by *Phylloxera* outbreaks in French vineyards. This may have made them over-ambitious, because the company collapsed in April 1882, attributed to "a large speculation in rum!"⁸⁶ Ruck Bros & Co were quick to dissociate themselves from RFR, despite having the same address (19 St Dunstan's Hill and 9 Harp Lane).⁸⁷ The brothers continued in business through the 1880s and 1890s;⁸⁸ Charles had retired by 1901,⁸⁹ but the others seem to have continued until their deaths in 1905.⁹⁰

It would be misleading to look only at their wine business. Egerton helped to launch the Tramways and General Works Company Ltd in 1877 (building tramways, mostly in the north of England),⁹¹ and was also described as a cheese factor and provision merchant in 1895.⁹² Outside their business interests, John junior was a keen horticulturalist (becoming a Fellow of the Horticultural Society of London).⁹³ In 1869 Thomas Hogg, a local nurseryman and florist, was employed as his gardener.⁹⁴ Egerton and Gordon joined the army as officers in the 8th Surrey (Carshalton) Rifles, Egerton rising to the rank of Major and Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel, and Gordon to Captain.⁹⁵ Gordon was the sportsman of the family, joining the Sutton Cricket Club,⁹⁶ Mincing Lane Bicycle and Athletics Club⁹⁷ and the Crystal Palace Curling Club,⁹⁸ but his main passion seems to have been for golf. He belonged

to at least five golf clubs: Cotswold, Epsom, Epping, Sandwich and Yarmouth,⁹⁹ and met his sudden death on the links at Felixstowe.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps that is how he would have wished to go.

The next occupier of *Sutton Court* was Charles Argels, who lived there from 1872 to 1877.¹⁰¹ He was born in 1824 and baptised at St Anne's, Soho. His father (also Charles) was a solicitor and his mother Elizabeth had been a Court Dressmaker.¹⁰² In 1845 he married Anna Sampson at St Margaret's, Westminster;¹⁰³ she had been born in 1828 in Belgravia.¹⁰⁴ Her parents were 'from foreign parts',¹⁰⁵ probably French; she later described herself as an 'importer of French fancy goods'.¹⁰⁶ Her father's first name was Blum,¹⁰⁷ perhaps indicating Jewish ancestry. They had a large family: Augustus Charles (b. 1846),¹⁰⁸ Napoleon Frederick (b. 1847),¹⁰⁹ Selina (b. 1848),¹¹⁰ Josephine (b. 1850),¹¹¹ Emile Theodore (b. 1851),¹¹² Jules Alexander (b. 1852),¹¹³ Arthur Felix (b. 1853),¹¹⁴ Alfred (b. 1854),¹¹⁵ Frank William (b. 1855),¹¹⁶ Augustus Charles (b. 1857)¹¹⁷ and Caroline Douglas (b. 1859).¹¹⁸ In 1851 Charles, Anna, and the four oldest children, as well as Elizabeth, and Charles' brother Henry (then age 12), all lived at 16A St George's Place, Knightsbridge (the eastern end of Knightsbridge Road).¹¹⁹ It is likely that most of their children were born there. Selina had become known as Céline. We shall follow each of them, but first we concentrate on Charles and Anna.

In 1851 Charles described himself as a 'managing clerk to a solicitor';¹²⁰ the earliest reference that I can find to him as a solicitor is from 1856.¹²¹ Between 1859 and 1866 the family moved to 18 Clifton Gardens, Maida Hill (just north of Paddington),¹²² presumably looking for larger accommodation, where they stayed until 1872, when they moved to *Sutton Court*.¹²³ Charles was still practising as a solicitor.¹²⁴ The Thirteenth Annual Show of the Sutton and Cheam Floricultural and Horticultural Society took place in the grounds of *Sutton Court* (with Charles' permission) in 1876.¹²⁵ In 1877, while living in Sutton, he was fined £10 (almost £1000 in 2024 money) for keeping a male servant without a proper licence.¹²⁶ Charles does not appear on the 1881 Census, and by 1891 he had retired to Herne Bay, where he described himself as a 'retired solicitor of the High Court'.¹²⁷ He died there in July 1899, leaving a surprisingly small estate of £10.18s (less than £1200 in 2024 money) to Anna.¹²⁸ Anna is harder to trace, but died in Kingston-upon-Thames in 1913.¹²⁹

Of the children, the first Augustus died within a year of his birth.¹³⁰

Napoleon had a long and complicated career as a solicitor in London and Paris. In 1871 he was still living with his parents,¹³¹ working with his father on setting up companies such as Alliance Bank (1866), reconstruction of the National Steam Navigation Company (1867),¹³² and The Company of Newfoundland Merchants Ltd (1873);¹³³ in 1873 he helped a Bill for a Glasgow Subway¹³⁴ (the Glasgow District Subway Act was passed in 1890).¹³⁵ By 1876 he was in Paris, where he married Julia Laura Sophia Caroline Hamerie Holmes (later known as Caroline),¹³⁶ and from then until 1919 we can see him working as a solicitor.¹³⁷ He seems to have spent part of his time in London (Fulham 1881,¹³⁸ Chiswick 1886,¹³⁹ Croydon 1890-1891,¹⁴⁰ with offices at 32 Great St Helens, London EC in 1881-1885¹⁴¹ and Lombard Court 1889)¹⁴² and part in Paris (1878,¹⁴³ 1880,¹⁴⁴ 1883,¹⁴⁵ 1887-1889,¹⁴⁶ 1911-1915,¹⁴⁷ 1919)¹⁴⁸, with branch offices in Marseilles, Madrid, Cologne and Stockholm (1878)¹⁴⁹ and Lyons (1885).¹⁵⁰ He was solicitor to the French Consulate in London 1880-1885.¹⁵¹ He and Caroline had four children: Claire/Claire (b. 1877 in Gunnersbury),¹⁵² Inès (b. 1880 in St Cloud, Paris),¹⁵³ Seymour (b. 1882 in Fulham)¹⁵⁴ and Irene (b. 1886 in Gunnersbury).¹⁵⁵ They were a musical family; Napoleon played the violin and Caroline organised a concert in 1893 in which she and Claire sang and Inès played a piano solo.¹⁵⁶ Claire was recorded as an organist and music teacher in 1901.¹⁵⁷ Napoleon's peripatetic life-style may explain why he was recorded as a 'boarder' at 27 Morland Road, Croydon, in 1891, where Caroline was the head of household.¹⁵⁸ He published five books: *Handy-book on the French Law of Bills of Exchange, Cheques, and Negotiable Instruments* (1878),¹⁵⁹ *French Law and Procedure* (1880),¹⁶⁰ *A Treatise upon French Mercantile and Maritime Law and the*

Practice of the Courts (1882),¹⁶¹ *The French Law of Marriage, Marriage Settlements and Divorce* (1884),¹⁶² and *How to Obtain a Divorce* (1894).¹⁶³ He seems to have still been active as a solicitor in 1919,¹⁶⁴ and is said to have died in Paris in 1925.¹⁶⁵

Céline married Thomas Charles Venable (b. 1843),¹⁶⁶ a wholesale stationer, at St Saviours', Paddington, in March 1868,¹⁶⁷ and then lived at 49 Carlton Hill, just east of Maida Vale.¹⁶⁸ She died at 18 Clifton Gardens in 1871 (age only 23)¹⁶⁹ and was buried that September at All Souls', Kensal Green.¹⁷⁰ Thomas married Helene Nazarkeiwich at St Mark's, St John's Wood, in December 1873, and leaves our story.¹⁷¹

Josephine is something of a mystery. She was recorded as the mother of Lilly Monteith (father not stated), who was born at *Sutton Court* in January 1873¹⁷² and baptised in June at St Paul's, Hammersmith.¹⁷³ I can find no further evidence for Lilly; Josephine was recorded with Napoleon's family in 1881,¹⁷⁴ and as a visitor at *Lyndhurst*, Cockshott Road, Reigate, the home of Ellen St Clair Hills, in 1911.¹⁷⁵ She lived there until she died in September 1923, leaving her Probate to Ellen.¹⁷⁶

Emile Theodore and Frank William went to Australia, and will feature below. I can find little trace of Jules Alexander, who died in the Hemel Hempstead district in 1920.¹⁷⁷

Arthur Felix married Rosa Eleanor White at St Andrew's, Well Street, Oxford Street in June 1875.¹⁷⁸ They had five children: Oscar Felix (b. 1876),¹⁷⁹ Isabel (b. 1877),¹⁸⁰ Claude (b. 1878/79),¹⁸¹ Gladys (b. 1880)¹⁸² and Guy (b. 1882/3).¹⁸³ In 1891 they were all living with Walter Knight (Rosa's father) at *Fullbrooks House*, Malden; Arthur worked as an auctioneer and valuer.¹⁸⁴ He continued this occupation at 36 Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, until 1895, when he became bankrupt.¹⁸⁵ By 1900 he was back in business as a valuer at 9 Southampton Street, Strand,¹⁸⁶ and in 1901 the family (except Gladys) lived at 45 Gondar Gardens, Hampstead.¹⁸⁷ Further addresses in Hampstead and Westminster followed,¹⁸⁸ but by 1911 Arthur and Rosa had moved out to *Cliff Cottage*, Pangbourne (Berkshire), where he worked as a land surveyor.¹⁸⁹ Isabel still lived with them and Oscar stayed there on leave from his job in Bengal. Arthur moved to Earls Court by 1922,¹⁹⁰ and died in Frimley (Hampshire) in 1931.¹⁹¹

Alfred is described as a half-brother to his siblings in one of the Ancestry family trees. I can find no trace of him in this country. There is a possible reference to him in Australia (see below).

Augustus Charles was recorded as a lodger with no occupation at 73 St John's Wood Terrace in 1881.¹⁹² In 1890 he married Alice Mary Smith in the Kensington district,¹⁹³ and by 1899 they were living at *Overdale*, 89 Woodside Road, Wimbledon;¹⁹⁴ they were still there in 1901.¹⁹⁵ They had seven children: Frank (b. 1887 [sic])¹⁹⁶, Augustus (b. 1890),¹⁹⁷ John (b. 1892/93),¹⁹⁸ Violet Mary (b. 1895),¹⁹⁹ Winifred Pearl (b. 1899),²⁰⁰ Eric (b. 1901/2)²⁰¹ and Clifford (b. 1903/4).²⁰² By 1911 they had moved to 60 Auckland Road, Croydon, and Augustus was working as a publisher.²⁰³ He died in the Brighton district in 1941 at the age of 84,²⁰⁴ and was cremated in Merton.²⁰⁵

Caroline Douglas was born in 1859,²⁰⁶ just before the move to Clifton Gardens, but was not baptised until 1876.²⁰⁷ In 1879 she married Ernest Collard (a timber merchant) of Stodmarsh, Kent.²⁰⁸ In 1881 they lived at 3 Junction Road, Croydon, with Douglas Argles (age 1) and Gerald Ernest (age less than 1 month).²⁰⁹ By 1891 they had moved to 72 High Street, Beckenham; they had no further children.²¹⁰ 1901 saw them still in Beckenham, but at 78 Croydon Road. Ernest remained a timber merchant and Douglas was an articled clerk.²¹¹ Caroline died in 1905 at *Southbourne*, Horley,²¹² and Ernest in 1918 in the Steyning (Sussex) district.²¹³

This apparently respectable Victorian family had several 'secrets': two had been jailed (in Australia see below), and two fined (Charles in 1877 for keeping an unlicensed male servant²¹⁴ and Augustus in 1890 for unlawful manufacture of explosives in an unauthorised place).²¹⁵ There were also probably three illegitimate children: Alfred to Anne (1854),²¹⁶ Lilly to Josephine (1873),²¹⁷ and Frank to Alice (1887),²¹⁸ though Augustus and Alice were probably living together before they married in 1890.²¹⁹ They may have been casual in their observance of social conventions: Violet was baptised at the age of 4, and Frank at the age of 6.²²⁰

Two of the Argles family – Emile Theodore and Frank William – emigrated to Australia.²²¹ There are problems of reconciling information from sources in the UK (primarily Ancestry and the British Newspaper Archive) and *Trove* (the Australian equivalent to the BNA), which in my opinion is superior to the BNA (and is free to use).

The UK sources tell us that Emile and Frank were born to Charles and Anna Argles in 1851 and 1855 respectively,²²² probably at 16A St George's Place, Knightsbridge. Emile was often known as Theodore, and under this name he was a candidate for Law Examinations in 1868,²²³ but curiously was indentured as an apprentice in the merchant navy in 1869.²²⁴ I can find no reference to either of them in the UK after this date.²²⁵ In contrast, an 1886 obituary of Theodore by John Haynes (a contemporary Australian journalist), while agreeing that their father was a London solicitor, stated that his mother was a literary French woman, known by the name of Duchess, and that Theodore was an illegitimate son of Napoleon III. An alternative obituary (1905) said that Theodore was the son of a Jewish-French solicitor and his English wife.

There is further confusion about their arrival in Australia. According to the official records, Theodore arrived in Queensland as an 'assisted immigrant' on board the *Queen of the Bay* in the 1870s. This is odd, because the only *Queen of the Bay* that I can trace was a paddle-steamer serving the Scilly Isles. His obituary suggests that he made a tour of Europe and South America before emigrating, settling first in Victoria. By 1877 he had moved to Sydney and set out on a career as a journalist, where he wrote for *Freeman's Journal* under the pen-name *Pilgrim*. His writing took readers inside Darlinghurst Jail, Kent Street Refuge, a Sly Grog Shop, the Randwick Asylum for Destitute Children, the Gladesville Hospital for the Insane, the Redfern Benevolent Asylum, Bay View House Lunatic Asylum, the Protestant Refuge for Fallen Women, the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind, and the Hyde Park Asylum for Infirm and Destitute Women. His exposés of conditions in such local institutions made him unpopular in some circles. He was arrested in October 1877 for the theft of a gold watch, and in 1878 was sentenced to six months in Maitland Jail. While he was there, he met Harriette Pyne Brown, who was visiting her brother Richard Pyne Brown, jailed for embezzlement. They married in around 1880 and had one child, John, born in 1885. In 1878 he moved to Melbourne, where he offended more influential people, and moved on to Adelaide in 1879, where he got into more trouble with the law, but was acquitted.



Maitland Gaol

Frank was less fortunate. In 1879 he was charged with five forgery offences, and sentenced to four years' imprisonment with hard labour. He died in Yatala Labor Prison (known as *The Stockade*) in 1881. Meanwhile, Theodore returned to Sydney where he wrote for *Freeman's Journal* under the pen-name *Pasquin*.

In 1880, Theodore joined the staff of the newly-formed *The Bulletin*, which was edited by John Haynes, who later wrote Theodore's obituary. He adopted yet another pen-name: Harold Grey. He died in Woolloomooloo, a district of Sydney, on 9th October 1886. He had suffered for years from consumption and the effects of heavy drinking, and had the support of his long-suffering wife and 'a host of friends'. He was buried in Waverley Cemetery.

He was what we would now call a 'marmite' character: people either loved him or hated him. He modelled himself on Charles Dickens, hoping to become a sort of Australian Dickens. If he had lived longer, he might have done. Here are some quotes about him:

"Amazingly clever and desperately erratic."

"Harold Grey always threw upon the most commonplace topics an electric way of irresistible, satiric, if outrageous humour that invested all he wrote with peculiar interest ... He owed much of his great lampooning powers to his French extraction."

"Grey was a little, nervous man, and in good health weighed about eight stone. He was very natty, giving first consideration to his appearance."

"Noted for his playful humour and slashing criticism."

But on the other hand:

"He had a malign influence on his younger brother, and both had a terrible affinity for alcohol."

"By being the son of the Emperor ensures his being false to everybody – himself included."

"... a skilled journalist, but prostitutes his skill to get drunk."

"About seven years ago there came to Adelaide two smart gentlemanly young brothers, sons of a professional man in London – thoroughly well-educated, prepossessing young men. They had been a little erratic at home, it was understood, and it was hoped that they might grow quieter here. The elder brother was called Theodore, and he seemed to exercise a strange influence upon the younger. They did not grow quieter, alas! Both were soon drinking thirstily, and the fell and fell! – fell into the lowest of all social hells. They would sacrifice, as they had sacrificed, everything of material or moral promise to satisfy their lower desires. ... a skilled journalist, but prostitutes his skill to get drunk."

What are we to make of all this? Theodore's relationship to Napoleon III must remain rumour. The brothers' arrival in Australia is unresolved – was it assisted immigration, a stop-over from a trip that was never finished, or an attempt to remove two unruly sons to a place where they might in time settle down? The criminal cases seem undeniable, though perhaps the gold watch episode was more of a drunken jape than a planned theft. Much of their life story is filtered through fellow journalist John Haynes, colleague and friend, who wrote Theodore's obituary. One can imagine Theodore telling his story during drinking sessions with John Haynes and friends, which may raise doubts as to their veracity. The final question, which can never be answered, is "but for the drinking, would Theodore have achieved his ambition to become an Australian Charles Dickens?"

The next occupants of *Sutton Court* after the Argles were the Robertson family, from 1879/80 to 1888.²²⁶ They were a much smaller family, never more than four in number. The head of the household was John Abel Robertson, who was born in Dulwich in 1842/3.²²⁷ In 1870 he married Barbara Price Keay in Brighton,²²⁸ she had been born in Mucklestone, Staffordshire, in 1842.²²⁹ In 1871 they were living at 60 Camden Road, St Pancras, with two servants.²³⁰ They had only two children: George Stewart, born in London in 1872²³¹ but baptised in Woodcote, Hampshire,²³² and John Abel junior, born in Sutton in 1876 and baptised at St Nicholas' Church.²³³ The family appears to have moved to Sutton by 1875, when they were living at *Oakley Lodge*, Grove Road, until at least 1878.²³⁴ They were at *Sutton Court* by 1880²³⁵ (the house was empty in 1878).²³⁶ In 1881 they were at *Sutton Court*; John was listed as a 'manager of companies' and George as a 'scholar'.²³⁷

However, they stayed for only a few years. In 1888 their departure was marked by a sale of furniture.²³⁸ In 1891 the family was at 34 Vincent Square, Westminster, with John listed as an 'accountant' and John junior as a 'public school boy'; George was a boarder at Winchester College.²³⁹ Later that year George matriculated (enrolled) at New College, Oxford, to read for a degree in Classics.²⁴⁰ Before looking at his career, I shall summarise the story of the family. John was still at Vincent Square, but died at The Vale, Chelsea, in 1898,²⁴¹ and was buried in Norwood Cemetery.²⁴² The rest of the family were at 86 Sheen Park, Kingston, in 1901 (George was by then a barrister and John junior a 'secretary to a public company').²⁴³ Barbara and John were still there in 1911 (John was a 'merchant's clerk') but George had moved to 28 Abingdon Street, Westminster.²⁴⁴ In 1912 George married Helen Lawson Peacock on 28th July at St Mary's Reigate²⁴⁵ (their banns were also read at St Margaret's Westminster).²⁴⁶ Barbara died in 1920 while still at Sheen Park.²⁴⁷ John junior is hard to trace, and died in 1947 at Worthing Hospital.²⁴⁸

Helen Lawson Peacock was born in Brixton in 1880.²⁴⁹ By 1901 she was living in Reigate with her mother Jennie and younger sister Winifred.²⁵⁰ She registered as a student at the London Medical School in 1902,²⁵¹ and was still a medical student in 1911, living at 8 Hunter Street, WC1.²⁵² She must have qualified.²⁵³ She and George appear to have had only one child: Anthony Stuart, born in 1915²⁵⁴ and baptised in Georgeham (a village on the north Devon coast near Barnstaple).²⁵⁵ In 1918 they were registered at Sussex Place, London NW1.²⁵⁶ They may have had a country residence at *Pitsborough Manor* in Georgeham; they were living there in 1939.²⁵⁷ Helen died in Kensington in 1954.²⁵⁸

We return to George's career as an athlete and as a lawyer. He studied Classics at New College, Oxford, winning a prize for Greek Comic Iambics in 1894²⁵⁹ and one for Greek prose in 1895.²⁶⁰ He was awarded a First Class degree in Classics in 1893, and became a Fellow of New College, where he was elected Derby Scholar in 1896.²⁶¹ He also won an Oxford Blue for hammer-throwing, so he wasn't just a scholar. He made a name for himself in 1896 by entering for the first modern Olympic Games in Athens. The story is taken from Wikipedia.²⁶² "He saw an advertisement in the window of a London travel agent, and later explained 'Greek classics were my proper academic field, so I could hardly resist a go at the Olympics, could I?' He paid £11 to travel to Athens for the inaugural modern games. On arrival there, he was dismayed to find that hammer-throwing, the discipline he was most proficient in, was not to be competed in at the games. However, in the spirit of amateurism he entered for the shot put and the discus instead.

In the discus throw, he came fourth, with a distance of 25.20 metres; the worst results ever recorded in the Olympic discus.

In the singles tennis tournament, he was defeated in the first round by Konstantinos Paspatis of Greece. This put him in a six-way tie for eighth (last) in the field of thirteen competitors. In the tennis

doubles, he partnered the Australian Edwin Flack. The pair received a bye in the first round, advancing them to the semi-finals and guaranteeing them a top three place before they had played a game. They lost their semifinal match to Dionysios Kasdaglis of Egypt and Demetrios Petrokokkinos of Greece, finishing third.”

He opened the ceremony which concluded the games by reading a Pindaric ode to athletic prowess that he had written in Ancient Greek, delivering it at the arrival of the royal party. He was rewarded by the King of Greece with an olive and laurel wreath.²⁶³

His involvement in the Olympic Games did not end there. In 1906 the King of the Hellenes conferred on him the Order of the Redeemer in connection with the (unofficial) Games of that year.²⁶⁴ The Order of the Redeemer is the oldest and highest decoration awarded by the modern Greek state. It was established in 1833 for ‘Exceptional Services to Greece’. The 1906 games are not recognised as part of the usual four-yearly pattern. In 1908 the Games came to London, and George, as a member of the Olympic Council, helped Queen Alexandra to present challenge cups to some winners.²⁶⁵

His legal career wasn’t neglected. He was called to the Bar by the Middle Temple in 1899,²⁶⁶ and published *The Law and Practice of Civil Proceedings by and against the Crown* in 1908²⁶⁷ and *The Law of Copyright* in 1912.²⁶⁸ He was appointed K.C. (Kings’ Counsel) in 1920.²⁶⁹ He served as Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies from 1912 to 1937,²⁷⁰ as Industrial Assurance Commissioner from 1923 to 1937, and was also a director of the Prudential Assurance Company. He was knighted in the 1928 Birthday Honours.²⁷¹ He died in 1967 at the age of 95.²⁷² I wonder if he was the last surviving competitor from the 1896 Olympic Games?

The next occupants of *Sutton Court* were the Foster family. They arrived in 1889²⁷³ and were there in 1891,²⁷⁴ but must have moved away by 1896 because the Routh family were recorded there in 1896 and 1897 (the directories from 1892-95 are missing).²⁷⁵ The head of the household was Harry Seymour Foster. He was born in Hornsey (London) in 1855,²⁷⁶ was educated at City of London School and confirmed by the Bishop of Winchester, Samuel Wilberforce, at St John’s Church, Angell Town, Brixton, around 1870.²⁷⁷ In 1871 he was living at *Edgerton Lodge*, Brixton, with his parents Samuel and Georgiana, older brother William, younger brothers Edmund and Alfred, and sister Constance.²⁷⁸ In 1878 he married Amy Sparks at St Clement’s Church, Barnsbury, Islington.²⁷⁹ They had six children: Madeline Violet (1879),²⁸⁰ Claude Seymour (1880),²⁸¹ Bertram Egerton (1881),²⁸² Florence Muriel (1883),²⁸³ Harry Gordon (1884)²⁸⁴ and Louise Helen Amy (1891).²⁸⁵ In 1881 Madeline and Claude were listed at 2 The Gardens, Camberwell (just off Peckham Rye), in the care of Mary E. Gates (nurse, age 28), Susanne Slade (general domestic, age 20) and Mary Gates (monthly nurse, age 54), and with Stanley Gates (age 2).²⁸⁶ I could not trace Harry and Amy, but they were living in Dulwich in the early 1880s.²⁸⁷ By 1891 the family were living at *Sutton Court*, with Claude attending boarding school in Eastbourne.²⁸⁸ They may have moved soon afterwards, because Louise was baptised at St Mary’s Church, Walton-on-Thames in July 1891.²⁸⁹ Politics then intervened (see below) and by 1895 Harry was at Geldeston Hall, Beccles, Suffolk.²⁹⁰

By 1901 they were a dispersed family: Madeline (head of household) and Louise were in Bromley, Florence was a visitor in Hampstead, and I cannot trace the others.²⁹¹ Harry may have been abroad (see below), but was back, living in Bromley Park, by 1903.²⁹² In 1911 Harry and Amy were at *Thatched House*, Wargrave, where they were joined by Madeline, her husband Robert and their son (also Robert), Florence and Louise. Bertram and his wife were in Bromley.²⁹³ Harry retired in the 1920s (see below).²⁹⁴ Harry and Amy celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary in Westminster in June 1938,²⁹⁵ but he died only two weeks later.²⁹⁶ Amy died in Cranbrook (Kent) in September 1939.²⁹⁷

Madeline married Major Robert James Copeland (b. 1863)²⁹⁸ at St Mary's Church, Plaistow (Bromley), in 1903.²⁹⁹ As we have seen, they were living with (or perhaps visiting) Harry and Amy in Wargrave in 1911, together with their son Robert Henry. By 1915 Robert was a Colonel in the RAMC.³⁰⁰ He survived until 1925, when he died in a Hastings nursing home.³⁰¹ Madeline outlived him by almost 30 years, dying in Islington in 1958.³⁰²

Claude married Marjorie (probably Ethel Marjorie Stead) in east Suffolk in 1907.³⁰³ In 1912 he was commissioned Captain in the 37th Bombay Lancers (Indian Army),³⁰⁴ where he served throughout WW1;³⁰⁵ in 1915 he was Adjutant to the 9th Reserve cavalry at Shorncliffe, Kent.³⁰⁶ He retired as a Lieutenant-Colonel.³⁰⁷ He and Marjorie were living in Westminster in 1938³⁰⁸ and Kensington in 1939;³⁰⁹ she died in the Cheltenham district in 1946³¹⁰ and he in Wendover in 1961.³¹¹ According to one family tree, Harry Seymour and Carol Seymour were born to Claude and Marjorie, but I cannot verify this.

Bertram married Evelyn Maud Rivers in Manitoba (Canada) in January 1907,³¹² became a solicitor, and lived in Bromley.³¹³ They had two children: Audrey Amy (b. 1907)³¹⁴ and Doris Violet (b. 1910).³¹⁵ In 1920 he lived at *Thatched Holm*, Wargrave (probably the *Thatched House* of 1911) with Harry and Amy.³¹⁶ There must have been a divorce, because in 1921 he married again, to Constance Gibson, in St George's Hanover Square district.³¹⁷ They had four children: Pauline Riley (b. 1925),³¹⁸ Harry Bertram (b. 1927),³¹⁹ Peter Robert (b. 1930)³²⁰ and Jane Patricia (b. 1936).³²¹ He died in 1936³²² and Constance in 1959 (both in Streatham).³²³ Evelyn died in 1943 in the Canterbury district.³²⁴

Florence married Edward Kingston Stuart Aslet (or Aslat) at St John's Church, Hampstead, in 1917.³²⁵ They moved to Sutton Coldfield, where in 1938 and 1939 he was recorded as a publishers' traveller.³²⁶ Edward, described as a business man, escaped from a burning hotel in Manchester in 1942,³²⁷ and died in Sutton Coldfield in 1959.³²⁸ Florence died there three years later.³²⁹

Harry Gordon enlisted in 1914 as an Acting Sub-Lieutenant in the Royal Navy,³³⁰ but appears as a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Field Artillery in 1915.³³¹ He resumed his naval career after the war, becoming qualified as a 'master of a foreign-going steamship' in 1921.³³² He died on board his ship, the ss *Sharistan* in Basrah harbour in 1922, apparently of carbolic acid poisoning.³³³

I can't trace Louise from 1911 to her death in Banstead in 1975.³³⁴

Harry's career followed two distinct strands: in business and in politics. His political career started locally. From 1885 to 1891 he was the elected member for Lambeth West of the London School Board.³³⁵ When the London County Council was set up in 1889, he was elected member for Kennington (Lambeth).³³⁶ He came second in a field of five candidates; fortunately for him the top two candidates were elected. The LCC took over the role of the LSB in 1903.³³⁷ In the 1890s he widened his interests to the national scale. In 1892 he became the Conservative MP for Lowestoft (north Suffolk), defeating the Liberal candidate by about 1200 votes in a turnout of around 9000.³³⁸ He was controversial, blocking the Elementary Education Bill in 1894,³³⁹ and drawing an adverse comment from the *Pall Mall Guide to the House of Commons* in 1895: "He preached the service of God as a lay preacher in the Diocese of Rochester with the service of Mammon as a company-promoter and company-director in the City".³⁴⁰ Nevertheless, in 1894 he was appointed honorary (i.e. unpaid) Consul-General for Persia,³⁴¹ a post which he held until 1923 (see below). He retained his seat in 1895 with a slightly increased majority,³⁴² but did not stand for re-election in 1900.³⁴³ He regained the seat in January 1910,³⁴⁴ but lost it again that December.³⁴⁵ He was knighted in 1918 for 'public services for many years',³⁴⁶ which caused some cynical comments. A rumour that he would stand for Hull Central in 1919 was unfounded;³⁴⁷ he was elected as Conservative MP for Portsmouth

Central in 1924, standing down in 1929.³⁴⁸ He was described as “a friend of Prime Ministers from Disraeli to Baldwin”,³⁴⁹ and was awarded the *Order of the Lion and the Sun* from Persia, and apparently made *Knight Commander of Takova* in Serbia.³⁵⁰

His business career is harder to trace. He appears as a chartered accountant,³⁵¹ auctioneer and estate agent,³⁵² stock dealer,³⁵³ and financier,³⁵⁴ and travelled abroad on business.³⁵⁵ Accounts in the press of his dealings are so prolific and so detailed that I could not follow them. He seems to have had a reputation for setting up companies which soon failed, casting suspicion on his activities. Some papers, notably the *Westminster Gazette*, criticised him for this; in return he sued for libel. When *Westminster Gazette* contested the case, they won, but this does not seem to have damaged his reputation in the City.³⁵⁶ He was elected Sheriff of the City of London in 1891³⁵⁷ and Deputy-Lieutenant of Suffolk in 1895,³⁵⁸ and was associated with many City Livery Companies, especially the Glaziers Company, which elected him Master in 1919.³⁵⁹ His relationship to Persia is a curious sideline.

My curiosity was piqued by his link to Serbia, where he had no obvious connection. *Takovo* is a small village in Serbia where the Second Serbian Uprising started in 1815.³⁶⁰ There was an *Order of the Cross of Takovo*, set up by the Prince of Serbia in 1865 for distinguished military veterans, and last awarded in 1903.³⁶¹ It does not appear to include the rank of Knight Commander. I think that this may have been a spoof honour suggested by a well-informed journalist, who knew of the *Order*. Harry was already a Knight, could be described as a commander (of business), and was responsible for take-overs, which sound suspiciously like *Takova*.

As we approach the end of *Sutton Court*, we meet the two last occupants: William Pole Routh, here in 1984-98, and Francis Richard Round, here from 1898 to 1905. The house was empty in 1906 and by 1909 Sutton Police Station (the old one) stood on its former site.³⁶²

William Pole Routh was born in 1848³⁶³ and baptised that year in Tilehurst, near Reading.³⁶⁴ In the 1860s he was educated at Lancing College, Sussex, and from 1866 he took up a career in engineering.³⁶⁵ From 1866 to 1871 he worked for Beyer Peacock in Manchester,³⁶⁶ latterly as a mechanical engineer in their Locomotive Department.³⁶⁷ He married Edith Jane Miller in October 1878 in Barrow Gurney, Somerset.³⁶⁸ She had been born in 1855/56 at St Vincent in the Cape Verde Islands, off the coast of West Africa.³⁶⁹ She must have moved to England by 1871, and was living as a boarder/scholar at 3 Lansdowne Terrace, Bath.³⁷⁰ Her connection to Barrow Gurney is not clear to me.

By 1880 they had moved to the city of Porto in Portugal,³⁷¹ where they stayed until 1890.³⁷² William was presumably employed in a large engineering project there. This may have been the construction of the *Dom Luís 1* bridge, built by Theophile Seyrig (a former partner of Eiffel) from 1881 to 1886.³⁷³ It is a double-deck metal arch bridge. The upper level was for trains and the lower one for road traffic. Their three children were all born and baptised in Porto: Edith Mary (b. 1880),³⁷⁴ Reginald Pole (b. 1883)³⁷⁵ and Gladys Helen (p. 1885).³⁷⁶ William was recommended for membership of the Institute of Civil Engineers while living in the Rue de S. Francis, Porto; by his election as an Associate Member later that year he had an address in Reading.³⁷⁷ It is not clear why he should have lived in Sutton from 1894 to 1898.

He seems to have taken an active part in civic life back in Reading, for example as a bell-ringer at St Laurence's Church for the Queen's birthday in 1899.³⁷⁸ In 1901 the family (except for Reginald) was at *Oaklands*, Redlands Way, Reading. William was listed as a Civil and Mechanical Engineer, retired, although he was only 52.³⁷⁹ In 1910 he published a Patent for 'Improvements in Machines for

Moulding Articles such as Flowerpots' – a far cry from the *Dom Luís 1* bridge.³⁸⁰ They were at the same address in 1911; William was listed as a Civil Engineer (not retired).³⁸¹ Edith died there in 1929³⁸² and William in 1931.³⁸³ His obituary gives a good picture of him; I quote from *Reading Standard* "He died with tragic suddenness of a sudden seizure in Castle Street, age 82. . . A wonderfully active man who the previous Wednesday visited Henley Royal Regatta, walking the whole length of the course during the afternoon". [a distance of about 2km]

"When he was eighteen years of age, he entered Gorton Foundry (Messrs Beyer, Peacock and Co.), where he worked through the various shops and drawing office, studying all branches of tool and locomotive construction. In 1876 he went to Oporto, Portugal, where, as a consulting engineer, he spent sixteen years carrying out a number of important engineering works. He was also instrumental in the perfecting of machine-made wine casks – hitherto the casks had to be made by hand. In 1891 he returned to England and became interested in some of Cooper-Coles' electrical processes and various other works." [This may refer to Sherard Osborn Cooper-Coles, who invented the sherardising process of galvanization].³⁸⁴

"He came to Reading in 1897 and soon associated himself with a number of undertakings in the borough – among them being the Electric Supply Company, of which he was a director up to the time of his death. For twenty-two years Mr Routh was honorary engineer to Royal Berks Hospital and was a member of the Board and House Committee. He was an ardent church bell-ringer and at one time was president of the Reading Branch of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers. He rendered long and worthy service to St Mary's church as a bell-ringer and helped to toll the Sunday evening peal for many years. He was formerly a churchwarden at Christ Church and was a trustee to Christ Church Institute and Schools. He was also a governor at Abbey School and a member of the finance committee. Among his many hobbies was gardening, and it was a source of pride and pleasure to him that for four successive years – from 1908 – he was awarded the Reading Horticultural Society challenge cup. In his younger days he was a keen oarsman and yachtsman and was a member of the London Rowing Club."³⁸⁵

He and Edith celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 1928.³⁸⁶ William Pole Routh was not as exciting as some of those associated with *Sutton Court*, but a worthy civic-minded man who earned a lot of respect in his life.

Edith Mary never married, and appears to have lived with William and Edith Jane until their deaths. She died in Reading in 1940,³⁸⁷ and was buried at St Michael's Church, Tilehurst.³⁸⁸ Reginald was listed as a brick, tile and pottery worker 1911,³⁸⁹ and married Phyllis Helen Mary de Medewe at St Jude's Church, Southsea, in June 1913.³⁹⁰ Phyllis had been born in Farnham on 13th January 1889³⁹¹ and was educated at Christ's Hospital, Hertford.³⁹² They had at least two children: Cicely (b. 1914) and [name obscured] (b. 1917), who were living with Phyllis in Poole in 1939.³⁹³ Reginald had died in Bournemouth in 1937.³⁹⁴ Gladys married Herbert Furmedge Hodges at Christchurch, Whitley, Reading, in 1909.³⁹⁵ In 1911 they were living in Watford, where he managed a motor car factory.³⁹⁶ He served in the RAF 1918-19,³⁹⁷ but Gladys petitioned for divorce in 1918;³⁹⁸ a final decree was granted in 1920. Gladys Hodges lived with Edith Mary in Reading in 1939,³⁹⁹ and died in the Upton-on-Severn district in 1945.⁴⁰⁰

The last occupants of *Sutton Court* were the family of Francis Richard Round, recorded here from 1899 to 1905. Francis was born in Colchester in 1845,⁴⁰¹ and seems to have remained devoted to Essex throughout his life, as far as his career permitted. He was educated at Marlborough College⁴⁰² and Balliol College Oxford, where he was awarded the degree of B.A. in 1868.⁴⁰³ In 1869 he applied to join the Civil Service by competitive examination and was appointed to the position of Clerk in the

Colonial Office,⁴⁰⁴ as far as I can tell a junior administrative role with good prospects of promotion. In 1871 he was living in lodgings in Marylebone,⁴⁰⁵ and in April 1881 he married Frances Emily Tufnell (12 years his junior),⁴⁰⁶ the daughters of a prosperous farming family living at a house called *Langleys* in Great Waltham, Essex, described as one of the finest country houses in the county. In the early 1880s the couple lived in Elm Park Gardens, Chelsea, where their first three children were born: Douglas Gray (1882), Constance Frances (1883) and George Richard Joliffe (1884).⁴⁰⁷ Francis' career then took him abroad; first to Bechuanaland (now the Republic of Botswana) in Africa in 1885⁴⁰⁸ and then to Mauritius (Indian Ocean) in 1886.⁴⁰⁹ Outlines of these trips are given below. For his services, Francis was rewarded with the title of C.M.G. (Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George) in 1887.⁴¹⁰ In 1891 the family were in Weybridge, Surrey,⁴¹¹ but the next three children were born in Chelsea: Arthur John Maurice and Auriol Frances Hay (twins, 1891) and James Murray (1894).⁴¹² Their last child, Harold Cecil, was born in Godstone, Surrey, in 1896.⁴¹³ In 1901 the whole family was at *Sutton Court*, except for George who was a boarder at Marlborough College.⁴¹⁴

Francis retired in 1905⁴¹⁵ (retirement at age 60 was compulsory for his grade in the Civil Service) and promptly moved back to his beloved Essex, to *Avenue House*, Witham, where he became (amongst other roles) a J.P.⁴¹⁶ and the Hon. Sec. of Witham Cricket Club.⁴¹⁷ I suspect that only the need to live within commuting distance of Whitehall prevented him from moving sooner. He threw himself into local administration as a J.P. until 1917, when, seriously affected by the death of three sons in the Great War (see below) he seems to have fallen ill,⁴¹⁸ dying at home in 1920,⁴¹⁹ shortly after celebrating his 75th birthday.⁴²⁰

British Bechuanaland

In 1882 Boers from the Transvaal invaded Bechuanaland and established the Republic of Stellaland and Goshen. In 1884-85 a military expedition from the Cape Colony recaptured these areas, reputedly without bloodshed, and in September 1885 constituted them as the Crown Colony of British Bechuanaland. It was annexed to the Cape Colony in 1895. Francis' role in this area appears to have been to assist in the setting up of a civil administration, including the establishment of a new capital town at Mafeking.⁴²¹

Mauritius

Francis was sent to Mauritius in 1886 as Secretary to the Royal Commission, headed by Sir Hercules Robinson, to inquire into the historic quarrel between Sir John Pope-Hennessy (Governor, a Catholic and Irish Home Ruler) and Mr Clifford Lloyd (Lieutenant-Governor). The root of the quarrel appears to have been Sir John's attempt to mauritianise the local administration by reducing the power of the English officials, appointing Mauritians to positions of responsibility and proposing a new constitution based on the principle of "Mauritius for the Mauritians". Mr Lloyd headed the opposition to this policy. At the Inquiry, eighty witnesses were examined, thirty-six being in favour of Sir John, thirty-six hostile and eight neutral. Sir John was restored to the Governorship and Mr Lloyd became Consul for Kurdistan.⁴²²

This story has a very 20th-century feel to it; Sir John seems to have been ahead of his time.

Back to the family

The family seems to have been a very sporting one, which was unable to show its true colours until the move to Witham in 1905. Their favourite sports were cricket (summer) and hockey (winter). George played in trials for Oxford University for both sports,⁴²³ and later become known as 'the sporting vicar'. James played cricket for both Haileybury⁴²⁴ and Essex Amateurs,⁴²⁵ Auriol played for the M.C.C.,⁴²⁶ and most of the family (Frances, George, Arthur, Auriol and James) played in the family

cricket team, including a match against the Tufnell family team in 1907.⁴²⁷ George and Auriol also played hockey for Essex (1912-13),⁴²⁸ and Auriol went on the play for the army⁴²⁹ and for the Hockey Association in Munich in 1914.⁴³⁰ Other sports were also represented: Auriol ran in the half-mile event⁴³¹ and Harold was a competitive steeplechaser⁴³² and swimmer.⁴³³ Only Douglas seems not to have excelled in some sport. His interests were more artistic; his sketches were 'commended' while at Marlborough College⁴³⁴ and he exhibited a watercolour at the Royal Academy in 1910.⁴³⁵

The lives of most of the family were dominated by World War 1, except for Douglas and George. Douglas became an architect, and lived with the family until 1911,⁴³⁶ when he married Irene Courtney Gale, the vicar's daughter at Christchurch, Sutton,⁴³⁷ and moved to Chelsea.⁴³⁸ From 1927 to 1936 they lived in Chertsey,⁴³⁹ where Douglas died in 1936.⁴⁴⁰ Irene survived him until 1960, when she died in Southampton.⁴⁴¹

George gained a BA degree at Trinity College, Oxford, in 1908 and went on to study for the priesthood at Cuddeston College (about five miles from Oxford).⁴⁴² He was ordained deacon in 1909 and priest in 1910,⁴⁴³ becoming curate of St Margaret's Church, Leytonstone, in 1909.⁴⁴⁴ He belonged to the Anglo-Catholic (high church) wing of the Church of England.⁴⁴⁵ He moved to Leeds in 1920 where he was curate of St Margaret's Church, Burley, until 1925,⁴⁴⁶ when he became Perpetual Curate of All Saints' Church, Kettering.⁴⁴⁷ In April 1937 he married Veronica Phyllis Rooke (née Hawkins), the widow of the Rev. Bertram Rooke, Rector of Little Braxted, Essex, at St Nicholas' Church, Little Braxted.⁴⁴⁸ He was promptly sued for breach of promise by Winifred May Divine, a member of his congregation who had known him for sixteen years and had followed him from Leeds to Kettering.⁴⁴⁹ The case was settled out of court.⁴⁵⁰ George and Veronica still lived in Kettering in 1939,⁴⁵¹ he died in Wilby, Northamptonshire, in 1966⁴⁵² and Veronica died there in 1981.⁴⁵³

Constance seems to have lived in the family home until Frances died in 1929, when she sold *Avenue House*⁴⁵⁴ and made a trip to Canada in 1930,⁴⁵⁵ presumably to visit Arthur (see below). She died in a bus crash near Kettering in 1943.⁴⁵⁶

Arthur was living at *Sutton Court* in 1901,⁴⁵⁷ but by 1911 he had emigrated to Canada.⁴⁵⁸ He fought for the Canadian Army in France, survived the War, and in August 1920 married Marjery d'Easum in Holy Trinity Cathedral, New Westminster, British Columbia.⁴⁵⁹ He died in British Columbia in 1985, the last of his generation, at the age of 93.⁴⁶⁰

The other three brothers all fought in WW1, Auriol and James in the 2nd Battalion of the Essex Regiment. Auriol was recorded as a 2nd Lieutenant in 1911,⁴⁶¹ promoted to Lieutenant in 1912,⁴⁶² and in May 1914 was selected to play hockey against German teams in Munich.⁴⁶³ Ironically, he was wounded at the Battle of Le Cateau on 26th August 1914⁴⁶⁴ and died of tetanus on 5th September in King Edward VII Hospital in London.⁴⁶⁵

James studied at Haileybury, where he joined the O.T.C. (Officer Training Corps).⁴⁶⁶ In 1913 he was appointed 2nd Lieutenant in the Special Reserve, Essex Regiment, joining the 2nd Battalion as a 2nd Lieutenant in 1914.⁴⁶⁷ He was wounded in action in 1915,⁴⁶⁸ returned to the Front and was promoted from Lieutenant to Captain in May 1916.⁴⁶⁹ He was killed in action on 13th November 1916 at Beaumont-Hamel in the last stages of the Battle of the Somme, and buried in the Serre Road Cemeteries.⁴⁷⁰

The youngest brother, Harold, was promoted to Lieutenant in the O.T.C. of Marlborough College in 1915.⁴⁷¹ He gained an open mathematical exhibition at Worcester College, Oxford,⁴⁷² but before he could take it up, he was given his commission in December 1915.⁴⁷³ He joined his battalion of the Rifle Brigade at the Front in August 1916, and was awarded the M.C. within a month.⁴⁷⁴ A D.S.O. and

promotion to Captain came in 1917.⁴⁷⁵ He was killed in action at Passchendaele on 24th August 1917,⁴⁷⁶ and buried at the Tyne Cot Memorial Cemetery.⁴⁷⁷ He was only 21.

The story of this family reflects that of many across the country: three of six sons killed in action, a daughter who never married, and a father whose death may have been hastened by his grief.

The story of *Sutton Court* can be seen as a microcosm of upper-middle-class Victorian England. We see merchants, politicians, lawyers, sportsmen and an engineer, book-ended by two military families, one associated with the Navy and one with the Army.

¹ *History of Cheam and Sutton*, C.J. Marshall, 1936, p.95.

² *A History of Sutton AD 675-1860*, Robert P. Smith, 1960, p.19.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Pile's Directory* 1907; 1909.

⁵ Taken from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_Richard_King,_2nd_Baronet [15 February 2025].

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ inferred from 1841 Census.

⁸ England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975.

⁹ England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975; 1881 Census.

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