

## THE HISTORY OF BRACKENSTON IN PEMBURY

FIRST DRAFT ONLY !!!!

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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.

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 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 renamed this home Strathbogie, and remained there until the house was sold in 1916 at which time 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. Directories of 1930 to 1938 give no listing for the home under any known names but a map dated circa 1930 identifies the residence at Strathbogie. What is known is that later it was called The Dower House and that during WW II it came into military use. 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.

The Mercure Hotel, also given on the internet as The Ramada Tunbridge Wells, took over The Dower House, 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.

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. 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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’

(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.

## THE ARCHITECT

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.

## 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 19<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> century the information will be updated.

1905-1916.....Rev. Rennell Francis Wynn Molesworth and family

1916-1924.....Hugh Edwin Hamilton Gordon and family

1925-1939.....Unknown

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

1950's.....Unknown

1960's.....Unoccupied

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

1980's-2016.....Mercure Hotel (Ramada Tunbridge Wells Hotel)

### [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 Brakenbston 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 Nasau 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 Rennell's 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.

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 Milesworth, esquires, the sons.

Upon Rennell's death his youngest children (mostly spinster daughters) continued to live at Brackenstone but eventually found accommodation elsewhere. The 1911 census, taken at Brackenstone, 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 Brackenstone 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 Brackenstone, Pembury in the 1913 Kelly directory but 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 Ashord, 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.

It is known that in 1916 Hugh Edwin Hamilton Gordon and his family took up residence at Brackenstone, details of which are given below.

[2] 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 Brackenstone/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 1916 when the house was sold and the name of the home was once again changed. From there the Gordon family moved to Brackenstone 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 Brackenstone/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 Neuchâtel, 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 Tentfield. 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, Strathborie, 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)"