

Hodgson and Mountbatten

James Stewart Hodgson is remembered in Haslemere as the benevolent Lord of the Manor, who played an important part in the town's affairs. Over twenty-five years he assembled the 3,000 acre Lythe Hill Estate, on which he built the spectacular Lythe Hill House, with stunning interior decoration provided by his friend Lord Frederic Leighton and his circle of fellow artists.

The Stewart Hodgsons, James his wife **Gertrude Agatha**, and their three daughters, Mary Caroline, **Agatha** and Ruth, shared their time between Haslemere and London, where they were part of London's elite artistic society.

Agatha, born in 1866, married Captain **George Ulick Browne** in St. Bartholomews, Haslemere on 12th October 1887. Capt. Browne had an exotic upbringing in India, where he was born just before the 1857 Mutiny, and a career in the Bengal Cavalry. The couple acquired Highfield when the Lythe Hill Estate was put up for sale in 1894, which they set about improving and re-named Whitwell Hatch.

Capt. Browne was well known in Haslemere, serving on the Parish Council for many years, and there is an early photograph of him as Chief Officer of the fire brigade receiving the gift of a fire engine from Richard Garton.

He was also an art collector and connoisseur. A fan of the artist Samuel Pepys Cockerell he published a paper on Cockerell's work in Haslemere, which Browne would have been very familiar with as it featured strongly throughout his father-in-law's house. Browne was no doubt influential in Cockerell being commissioned by the family to make the memorial to James Stewart Hodgson which can be seen (ie. cannot be missed) in St. Bartholomews.



Agatha, Marchioness of Sligo - 1922

Settled in the tranquil Surrey Hills of Haslemere, Agatha and George Browne had four children. It wasn't until 1913 that George succeeded his father Henry to the title 6th Marquis of Sligo. Thereafter the Marquis and Marchioness repaired to their own 1,000 acre estate, Westport House in Co. Mayo in the North of Ireland.

The Browne's youngest daughter **Doreen Geraldine** married **Michael Knatchbull** in 1919. He had been in the Royal Artillery since the outbreak of the Great War, Mentioned in Despatches and awarded the Military Cross. After the war he joined the fledgling Royal Air Force and was later a Conservative Member of Parliament. In 1933, on the death of his father, he became the 5th Lord Brabourne. He was appointed Governor of Bombay and the Governor of Bengal, which position he held until his death in 1939 at the early age of 44. Doreen became the Dowager Lady Brabourne. They had two children, Norton and **John**.



Doreen, Lady Brabourne, Norton and John -1925

After Eton and Sandhurst Norton became a Lieutenant in the 6th Battalion Grenadier Guards during WWII. Wounded and captured in Italy, he and a fellow officer attempted an escape but were re-captured and executed in 1943. He is buried in Padua war cemetery.

John also served in the war, as a Captain in the Coldstream Guards. He served as an aide to Lord Mountbatten when he was Supreme Allied Commander, South-East Asia. On the death of his brother he became the 7th Baron Brabourne. In 1946 he married Mountbatten's eldest daughter, **Patricia Edwina Victoria**.

The marriage took place in the monumental Romsey Abbey, established in the 12th century, the parish church for the Mountbatten's Broadlands Estate in Hampshire, which had come down to Lady Mountbatten, as Edwina Ashley, from Lord Palmerston.



Back Row: Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent; Louis, Earl Mountbatten; John Knatchbull, Baron Brabourne; King George VI; Edwina, Countess Mountbatten; Charles Harris-St.John.

Middle Row: Doreen, Lady Brabourne; Princess Victoria, Marchioness of Milford-Haven; Patricia Mountbatten; Queen Elizabeth; Agatha, Marchioness of Sligo.

Bottom Row: Pamela, Lady Hicks; Princess Alexandra, Lady Ogilvy; Princess Margaret; Princess Elizabeth.

The bride's parents, Lord and Lady Mountbatten would shortly be leaving for India where he would be the last ViceRoy, overseeing independence. Her formidable looking grandmother rejoiced in the name of Princess Victoria Alberta Elisabeth, better known as a granddaughter of Queen Victoria (one of her sisters was Empress Alexandra, wife of Czar Nicholas II).

Other recognisable family members in attendance included King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (the Queen Mother), with their two young daughters the Princesses Margaret and Elizabeth as bridesmaids.

A year later the 21 year old Princess Elizabeth was herself to marry Lord Mountbatten's nephew, Prince Phillip, with the new Lord and Lady Brabourne among the wedding guests.

With fewer titles, but no less important were the groom's family - his mother Doreen, the Dowager Lady Brabourne and his grandmother Agatha, Marchioness of Sligo, known to us as the daughter of James Stewart Hodgson. Both ladies were widows, George Browne having died in 1935 aged 78.

The happy couple had eight children in all, from Norton born in 1947 (the current, 3rd Earl Mountbatten) to the identical twins **Nicholas Timothy** and **Timothy Nicholas** born in November 1964, just a few weeks before their great grandmother Agatha died at the age of 99. Agatha had moved to Ireland as the country headed towards the momentous events of the Easter Uprising of 1916, and the formation of the Irish Free State. It was as well she did not experience the tragic repercussions felt by her family 60 years later.

It is now 27th August 1979 and the war, because such it was, between the IRA and the UK was at its height.

Lady Mountbatten had inherited a holiday home, Classiebawn Castle near the coastal village of Mullagh More in County Sligo, very close to the border with Northern Ireland and some fifty miles from the Brabourne's home at Westpoint House. It was a long standing tradition that large family gatherings were held there every Summer holidays.

Mountbatten had a fishing boat moored in the village, on which he and the family set out to check some lobster pots. On the boat with him were three generations: daughter Patricia, husband John with his mother Doreen, and the twins - grandchildren Nicholas and Timothy, now 14. Helping as crew was a 15 year old local friend Paul Maxwell. Many other family members remained in the house that day.

The boat had moved offshore when the massive radio controlled IRA bomb, planted the day before, exploded. Mountbatten was killed, as was the young Maxwell. 83 year old Dorothy was so badly injured she died next day in hospital. Patricia and John survived, as did Timothy who was just feet from his grandfather. All

had life threatening injuries which required weeks of hospital treatment. Nicholas was killed, blown from the boat.

Anyone could have been on the boat that day - these seven occupants were a far cry from being legitimate war targets as claimed.

Norton, eldest son of Patricia and John cancelled his imminent wedding plans as Mountbatten was commemorated in a State Funeral at Westminster Abbey and buried in St. Nicholas chapel in Romsey Abbey.

Note: Line of Descent

James and Gertrude Agatha Stewart Hodgson

Agatha and George Ulick Browne (Marquis of Sligo)

Doreen Geraldine and Michael Knatchbull (Lord Brabourne)

John Knatchbull and Patricia Edwina Victoria Mountbatten

Nicholas Timothy and Timothy Nicholas Knatchbull