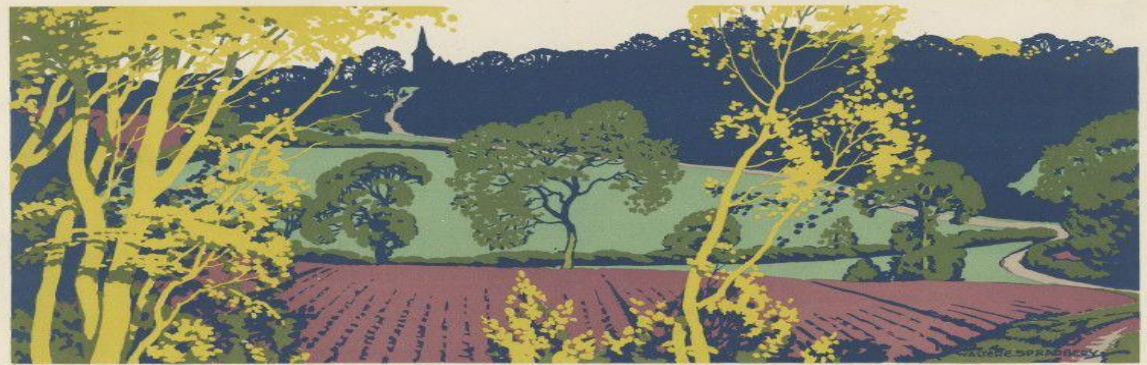


WALTON ON THE HILL & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

FOR HEADLEY, KINGSWOOD, TADWORTH & WALTON



WALTON-ON-THE-HILL
THROUGHOUT FARE 1/6
From CHARING CROSS

ROUTE 180
DAILY

PASSING CLAPHAM COMMON STATION, MITCHAM, SUTTON, BELMONT, BURGH HEATH, TADWORTH.

Charity Reg. No. 803796

Hon. Secretary Sandie Hunt huntsandie47@gmail.com

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR



A huge thank you to everyone who joined us for our final W&DHS meeting of the year on 8 October 2025 at Headley Village Hall. It was wonderful to see the hall completely full, with so many familiar faces and new friends gathering to share an evening of local history,

discovery, and remembrance.

We were delighted to welcome John Mitchell, creator of the remarkable Walton on the Hill Remembrance Installation at Howards Close. John spoke movingly about how the display first came about and shared his exciting plans for 11 November and beyond. His dedication to honouring local stories of service and sacrifice clearly resonated with the audience.

Our main talk of the evening was given by myself, focusing on the “Bonzo agents” – German troops who, having been captured, were turned by British Intelligence and sent back into Europe to work covertly on Allied missions. Their stories, often overshadowed in the wider narrative of the war, provided a thought-provoking look at loyalty, deception, and the extraordinary complexities of intelligence work. The interest and questions from the audience highlighted a growing enthusiasm for exploring Headley’s own wartime connections, particularly its links to the SOE interrogation and training school at Bellasis. There is clearly more to uncover here, and we look forward to developing this research with the support of the society and the local community.

Lorraine Spindler

Our next meeting ***A toast to Christmas Past: Stories from Our Local Pubs***



Wednesday 10 December 2025

Walton Primary School Hall

Doors open 7.45 pm

8.00 pm Start

Refreshments available

From roaring fires to roaring tales — uncover the stories behind our most iconic inns. Join us for a festive and fascinating evening exploring the colourful history of our local pubs, including *The Fox & Hounds*, *The Chequers*, *The Kingswood Arms*, and many more. Expect surprising stories, long-lost landlords, and plenty of yuletide cheer!

£4 non-members — members FREE

Festive food & drink available

Christmas Bottle Raffle.

CHURCHILL'S SAVIOUR SIR HENRY STRAKOSCH, G.B.E. By Pia Chamberlain

Henry (Heinrich) Strakosch was born on 9th May 1871 in Hohenau an der March, Lower Austria, the second son of Eduard Strakosch, a sugar manufacturer, and of his wife Mathilde (née Winterberg). The Strakoschs were of Jewish descent and came from Moravia, at that time a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Henry was educated at the prestigious Wasa Gymnasium in Vienna and later privately in England.

Henry had been living in England for some years when he became a naturalized British citizen in 1907. Both his brothers, Frederick and Paul Ernest followed him to England and like him became naturalized British citizens. Their sister Adele remained in Vienna, where she, her husband and their children were baptized into the Catholic Church in 1896. Her husband Otto Fraenkel died in 1905 and the next time we hear from her is in 1939, when she too was living in London. She had retained her Austrian nationality but avoided being interned as an 'enemy alien' as war broke out.



Meanwhile, Henry Strakosch was establishing himself firmly as a financier and an economist.

In 1891, he joined the Anglo-Austrian Bank in Lombard Street, but by 1895 he abandoned banking and became interested in gold mining in South Africa. In 1896, he was invited to join A. Goerz & Co., a South African mining and finance house, renamed Union Corporation in October 1918. He served as its managing director (1902-1924), managing director and chairman (1924-1943) and chairman (1942-1943). During those years, the company developed some of the richest gold mines in the Rand, enabling Henry Strakosch to amass an immense fortune.

Late in 1919, he was invited to advise the Government of the Union of South Africa on the question of currency and banking. His recommendations were embodied in the South African Banking and Currency Act of 1920, which led to the creation of the very first central bank in any of the British Dominions.

In the process, Strakosch had acquired an unparalleled expertise in international finance and currency problems. He maintained a close association with the City of London and for years acted as an unofficial consultant to the Bank of England. He was closely involved in the reorganisation of the currency as well as the reconstruction loans of many of the Central European countries after WWI. He also was, for 17 years, a member of the financial committee of the League of Nations and its first chairman.

Strakosch had for a long time also been one of the leading authorities on Indian finance and in 1925 he was appointed as a member of the royal commission on Indian currency. In 1930, he became a member of the Council of India and on the dissolution of that body in 1937 he became adviser to the secretary of State for India, a post he occupied until 1942, when he had to resign for health reasons.

Henry Strakosch became a knight in 1921 in recognition of his services to the South African Government. In 1924, he was created K.B.E. and elevated to G.B.E. in 1927. Despite all his titles and numerous accomplishments, Henry Strakosch remained a very approachable, unpretentious and genial man. An intrepid motorist, he enjoyed nothing more than going on driving holidays to the Alps and the Tyrol.

Henry Strakosch had been for a long time a great admirer of Churchill, whom he considered to be the only European politician with the vision, determination and courage to stand up to and fight Hitler and his regime. This may help to explain the following extraordinary episode in his life.

Enter Brendan Rendall Bracken, an Irish-born businessman who made a fortune when, at the age of 24, he became a board member of Eyre & Spottiswode. This venerable publishing house was by then languishing in the doldrums and badly in need of an injection of new blood. Bracken set to work and launched himself into building up a portfolio of new publications. This is when *The Economist* came onto the market and Bracken put in a bid for it. *The Economist* was traditionally an independent newspaper with, if anything, Liberal leanings, and its old owners were not happy that it should fall into the hands of a Tory. Bracken was offered a half share, while the other half was sold to Sir Henry Strakosch with the proviso that an independent trustee would be responsible for maintaining the general character of the publication. Bracken later entered politics and remained a life-long supporter of Churchill.



Churchill with Brendan Bracken

Churchill spent most of his life living way beyond his means and teetering on the verge of bankruptcy. He ran up huge bills with his wine merchant, gambled away vast amounts of money at casinos while on holiday in the South of France and, gripped by investment fever, made huge losses on the Stock Exchange. His wife Clemmie's excesses were no better. She had accounts with all the major stores in London such as Harrods, Harvey Nichols, Peter Jones, John Lewis, and ran up accounts that went into several pages every month.

By 1938, as Churchill still had not recovered from the losses he had incurred following the American stock market crash, things came to a head. His overdraft had reached £35,000 (just over 2 million in today's money¹) and his debts with his stockbrokers, Vickers da Costa, amounted to £12,000 (the equivalent of just over £700,000). He had put both his London home and Chartwell on the market, but neither had sold.

In desperation, Churchill turned to his friend, Brendan Bracken, for help. Bracken suggested that he should approach Sir Henry Strakosch. Two months earlier, on Bracken's recommendation, Churchill had visited Strakosch at his house in Cannes, where the latter was recovering from illness. This shrewd move was to pay dividends.

When approached, Strakosch agreed without hesitation to cover Churchill's share trading debts and guaranteed all his investments against future losses. On being given this assurance, Churchill immediately took Chartwell off the market.

Afterwards, Strakosch received the following thank you note from Churchill: *This is only to tell you that as Hitler said to Mussolini, on a recent and less worthy occasion, I shall never forget this inestimable service.*

Sir Henry's only reward was to be nominated for membership of *The Other Club*, a political dining society which had been founded in 1911 by Winston Churchill and F.E. Smith, one of Churchill's closest personal and political friends. Neither man had been invited to join the influential political dining club known just as *The Club*, as its members considered both Churchill and Smith to be too controversial. As

a result, the two of them decided to set up their own club, which they called *The Other Club*. It met to dine fortnightly at the Savoy Hotel when Parliament was in session. After Smith's death in 1930, Churchill practically became the sole arbiter of who should be asked to join. Indeed, it was the greatest honour he could confer on those he considered to be both worthy and *agreeable to dine with*.

Neither Churchill nor Strakosch ever spoke publicly about the transaction that had taken place between them and only a very few people were privy to it. However, Churchill's financial situation remained precarious and in June 1940, just two weeks after the Dunkirk evacuation, he was facing an ultimatum from Lloyds Bank for the payment of £5,000 (the equivalent today of £244,000), representing the interest on his overdraft. Once again, Sir Henry came to the rescue with a cheque for £5,000 made out not to Churchill, but to Brendan Bracken, who by then was Churchill's Private Parliamentary Secretary. One wonders what the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards would do nowadays if he got wind of such an arrangement!

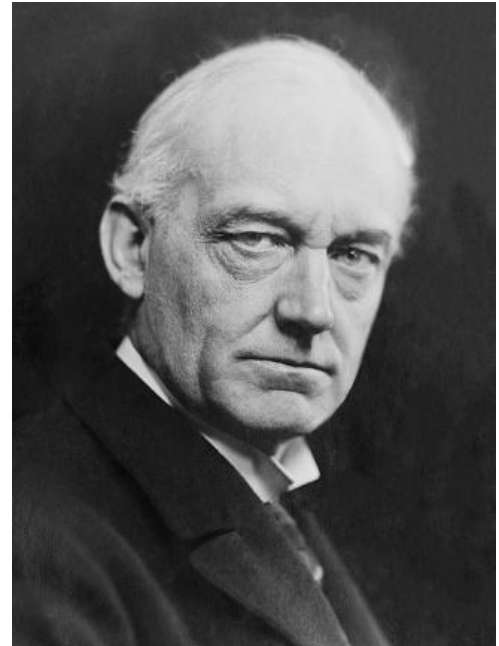
Henry Strakosch shared his time between his London town house in Chester Square and *Heatherside*, his house in Hurst Drive, Walton-on-the-Hill. *Heatherside* was built in 1917 for Sir Henry Greer, M.P. for Clapham and then Wells and later chairman of Baird Television. The Tudor-style house was developed around the remains of a medieval house dating back to the 1340s. It was fully restored in 1990, when it became a residential care home and was renamed Walton Heath Manor.



The house as it looks today

Henry Strakosch joined Walton Heath Golf Club in 1910, at a time when the owner of the *News of the World*, George Riddell, reigned supreme. When the latter died in December

1934, the chairmanship of the club passed to Sir Emsley Carr, the editor of the *News of the World*. Henry Strakosch, who had been a friend of George Riddell, was one of the new directors elected at the time. Much work needed to be done to both the club house and the courses, but times were difficult with Britain in the grip of the Great Depression. The new directors were nevertheless impatient to get on with the job, and that is no doubt when Sir Henry Strakosch's financial expertise and backing would have come into their own.



George Riddell,
1st Baron Riddell

On Friday 22nd August 1941, the following short announcement appeared in the *Surrey Mirror*:

The marriage took place on Thursday last week at St Andrew's, Kingswood, of Sir Henry Strakosch, G.B.E., and Mrs Mabel Elizabeth Temperley, of Juniper Hill, Lower Kingswood. Canon W.A. Dunn (Vicar of Kingswood) officiated.



The same announcement appeared in newspapers all over the country. Had our *lonely old bird*, as Brendan Bracken once described Henry Strakosch, finally found a companion to share his life? Who was his bride? Mabel Elizabeth Vincent Millet had been born in

Gloucestershire in 1867. In 1887, she had married Joseph Temperley, a wealthy shipowner 20 years her senior. According to the 1921 Census, the Temperleys lived at 47 Chester Square. Henry Strakosch's town house was just round the corner, at No 45. Did their paths perhaps cross at that stage?

By 1935, the Temperleys had bought Juniper Hill, in Lower Kingswood, and that was still their country house when Joseph Temperley died on 31st May 1941, aged 88, just 2 ½ months before his widow married Henry Strakosch. There had been an announcement in the local press that the funeral would be private, *no flowers, no mourning by his special request*, it stated. Had Joseph given Mabel his blessing for her to get on with her life?



No 47 Chester Square is in the foreground left, No 45 is the 3rd house from the left in the background

Sadly, the marriage was going to be short-lived. In 1942, Henry Strakosch was diagnosed with cancer. He travelled to America to receive treatment and stayed there for eight months. He underwent an operation, which turned out to be unsuccessful, and died at his home in Walton on 30th October 1943. A memorial service was held for him at St Michael's Church, Chester Square, attended not only by members of the Strakosch and Temperley families, but also by a large contingent of the 'great and the good' from the world of politics, finance and the press, including the Lord Chancellor and a representative of the Prime Minister and Lady Churchill.

Henry Strakosch had made his 'friend', Clive Errington Temperley, one of the executors of his will. Clive Temperley was Mabel's son. The fact that he is referred to as Henry's friend would indicate that there was no bad blood in the family over Mabel marrying Henry Strakosch so soon after the death of her first husband and might also indicate that Henry Strakosch had known the family from way back in the past.

One of the first provisions in Henry Strakosch's will, dated 29th August 1941, is quite revealing about yet another aspect of his character. He asks his executors to find a good home after his death, should his wife predecease him, 'among those of my family or friends who are lovers of animals', for any dog or dogs he may possess at the time of his death.

To his wife Mabel, he bequeaths all his personal chattels and the sum of forty thousand pounds.

To my friend the Right Honourable Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill I bequeath as a token of his friendship and gratitude for his and his wife's great kindness and hospitality the sum of Twenty thousand pounds or if he should predecease me to his wife Clementine Ogilvy Spencer Churchill.

Mabel Strakosch, it is said, contested that provision as she thought that Churchill had been a bad influence on her husband with his drinking habit. By all accounts, Churchill and Henry Strakosch spent many an hour together propping up the bar at Walton Heath Golf Club. As for Henry Strakosch's former house in Walton, it was put on the market in the Spring of 1944 and its contents sold off at auction. Mabel Strakosch returned to live at Juniper Hill, where she died in May 1951.



Juniper Hill in 1948

It did not take long for Winston Churchill to run into further money problems. In 1946, financial constraints forced him again to consider selling his beloved Chartwell. Churchill spoke about his plight to his friend, Lord Camrose, a wealthy newspaper proprietor. Camrose asked Churchill whether he would accept an offer of £50,000 (the equivalent of £1.8 million today). Churchill immediately agreed and Camrose suggested that a consortium of wealthy men buy Chartwell for that amount



and allow the Churchills to live in it for the rest of their lives for a nominal rent of £350 a year and that on their deaths it should be given to the National Trust as a permanent memorial. Churchill was delighted with the idea, and the money was quickly raised from seventeen benefactors, including Camrose himself.



The Churchill family at breakfast at Chartwell in 1927

Local D Day hero remembered By Tim Richardson

Whilst the developers continue in Tadworth to demolish large older houses in Shelveys Way and Epsom Lane South and build houses in what was once the back garden, the occupier of one of those now gone properties has been remembered with a new road name. That person is a D Day hero Lt Colonel Terance Otway DSO of Merville Battery fame.

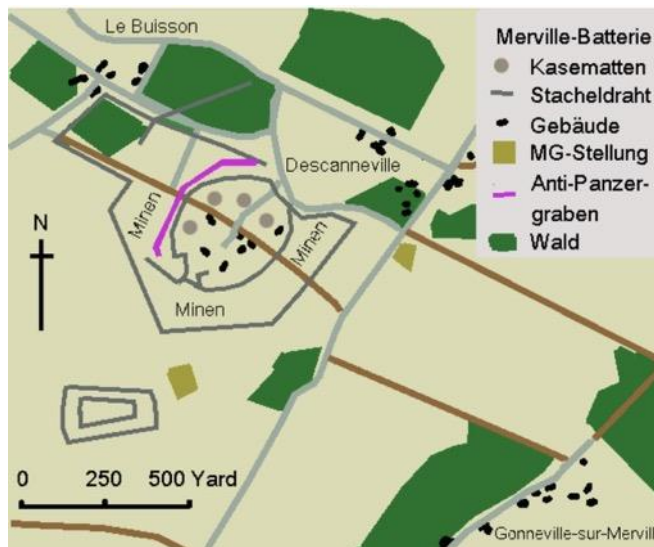


Terance Otway was born in Cairo just before the outbreak of WW1 returning to England when his father was serving in France. In 1933, he joined the British Army, after Sandhurst and commissioning, he was posted to the Royal Ulster Rifles. He would go onto serve at home and abroad including on the North - West Frontier in India. At the outbreak of WW2 his battalion returned to the UK. During the Battle of Britain, the RUR was stationed in Kent on anti - invasion duties and rounding up shot down German airman.

Promoted to Major after Staff College and staff duties he would return to his old regiment as a company commander. The Royal Ulster Rifles by now were part of the Airborne forces. Promotion again followed and he was given command of the 9th Battalion the Parachute Battalion in March 1944.

The 9th Battalion were given the specific task of capturing and neutralising a German gun battery at Merville which commanded the intended landing beaches where the British

assault troops would land on D Day. The heavy guns were protected by 4 concrete casements, mine fields, barbed wire and machine guns. A garrison of 130 manned the position.



Otway trained his men hard around Thruxton in Hampshire including building a life-size model of the battery. They would assault the fortified position on the night of the 5th and 6th of June. The plan was attack with 600 paratroopers arriving by glider and parachute. Their arrival would be preceded by a bombing raid by the RAF.

As is often the case a plan did not go as expected. The RAF missed the battery hitting only nearby fields and as with both hundreds of allied paratroopers during the night drop all along the rear of the landing beaches, the 9th missed their drop zones, many losing their lives in the flooded areas that formed part of the German defences.

Only 150 men made their assembly point with Colonel Otway. Most of the equipment they needed to successfully the battery was lost. Otway redrew his plan of attack and the assault went in. The fight continued most of the night with many acts of bravery taking place. The garrison surrendered but the cost was heavy only 75 men of the 9th were left. Having secured the gun position the paras under their colonel moved onto the next objection, once more involved in heavy fighting. On the 8th of June Otway was wounded.

by a near miss by a German shell. He was evacuated back to hospital in Wales. Upon recovery, he would go on to serve in the Far East finally leaving the army in 1948. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for the Merville battery action.



His post army career was very varied and interesting. He fought hard for army veterans making sure they received pensions or compensation for injuries received during service. I got to know him when I was chairman of Banstead and District Royal British Legion, he was a great supporter of the Poppy Appeal. I knew the story of Merville Battery from years back from a Christmas Victor annual – always a looked forward to Christmas present! A fit and dapper man there was never a thought but to call him sir. He passed away on the 23rd of July 2006 having made his home in Shelters Way for many

years. A memorial service was held at St Martins church in Epsom.

A visit to Merville battery in Normandy is well worth a visit it is now a very good museum. He is remembered there by a sculptured bust as he would have looked on D Day and a local road is also named after him. Now he is remembered in Tadworth.



From the Archives Originally published Autumn 2003 Felicia's Memories

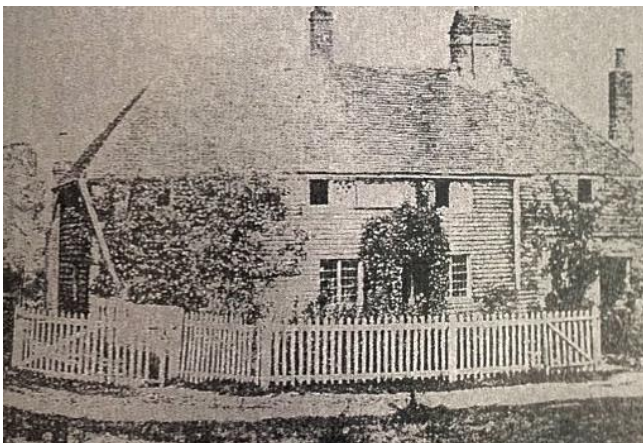
My family arrived in Tadworth in 1913 when I was very small. They came to the area because my father had spent a year in a sanatorium with TB, and it was recommended that he live in a place with pure air. Tadworth was in the Highlands of London and renowned for the purity of its air. It also happened to be near some excellent golf courses! Anyway, it seemed to work, because his health was always good hereafter, and he lived to a ripe old age.



Felicia and her parents

My parents first took a little flat over a shop in High Street, while they looked around for a suitable house. It must have been very cramped with two small girls and a canary in a cage. My poor dead Mother must have had her hands full, because Father was still in the sanatorium, and she had to organise the move alone. There was a short interlude in a boarding house, and then we finally moved into 'Amberley' in Tadworth Street. This was, and still remains, one of two pairs of semi-detached Edwardian houses on the left as you go down the road from the railway. Tadworth was still very much a village in those days. It was of course, a great deal smaller, and there was very little traffic. We walked everywhere wanted to go in the area: shopping, visiting, school, and church. Our bread came from Miss Tulloch's little bakery in Chapel Road (now Hunters Hall), I can remember how

delicious it smelt when we went there with our mother; all warm and cosy. In addition to selling bread Miss Tulloch ran a little library, and my mother would often borrow a book at a penny a time. Her other source of reading matter was the book Father brought home every week from Mundie's Library in London. However, he carefully vetted this one. He would go and borrow it, probably in his lunch hour, from a branch in the City, and then skim through it on the train. If he did not approve of what he read the book did not get beyond the cloakroom in the front hall, and was returned unseen by his wife. He was very strict about what he considered suitable for his wife and daughters, and he definitely ruled the house with a rod of iron.



Hunters Hall

Every Sunday we walked across the common to Kingswood Church where father was an Organist. I remember I was cross because my muff was on a string, while my sister who was four years older, was allowed hers without. However, I was somewhat mollified by my summer hat which was wreathed in poppies and cornflowers, and looked very nice. As we grew older we went for other walks with our mother. A particular treat was to walk to Headley, via Walton, down the path by the pig farm, now the goldfish farm, and have a picnic. Occasionally, as a special treat, we had tea in one of the cottages in Headley.

For a short time, while we lived in Tadworth Street, we had a Nanny, but she felt she ought to go and do her bit towards the war effort, so she left us. After that the maid looked after us. She had to go down Tadworth Street, over the stile and down the footpath where Tadorne Road now runs. There were several more stiles as we crossed the fields, and then the

path went passed Preston Hawe, and so out onto Burgh Heath itself.

Further down the road from our house there was a pond in the field on the corner of Epsom Lane, and once a terrible thing happened. A haystack in that field caught fire, and as the firemen could not reach a hydrant, they had to get water from the pond. As they pumped all the frogs and fishes got caught and were squired on the flames to their doom. Father was horrified. A happier memory was the Muffin man walking down the middle of Tadworth Street ringing his bell, and you rushed out and stopped him if you required muffins for tea. The house was lit by gas downstairs, but I am not sure about upstairs, because I can remember my Sister and I being given a candle to go to bed. The great thing was to toast our supper bread and butter by it, a most extraordinary taste, I can assure you.

Look out for the next issue of our newsletter for the continuation of Felicia's life in Tadworth and Walton.

Upcoming Events

**Our next meetings will be on
Wednesday 18th Feb & Wednesday
28th October 2026 at the Church of
the Good Shepherd's Hall, Tadworth
– speakers to be confirmed.**

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huntsandie47@gmail.com**