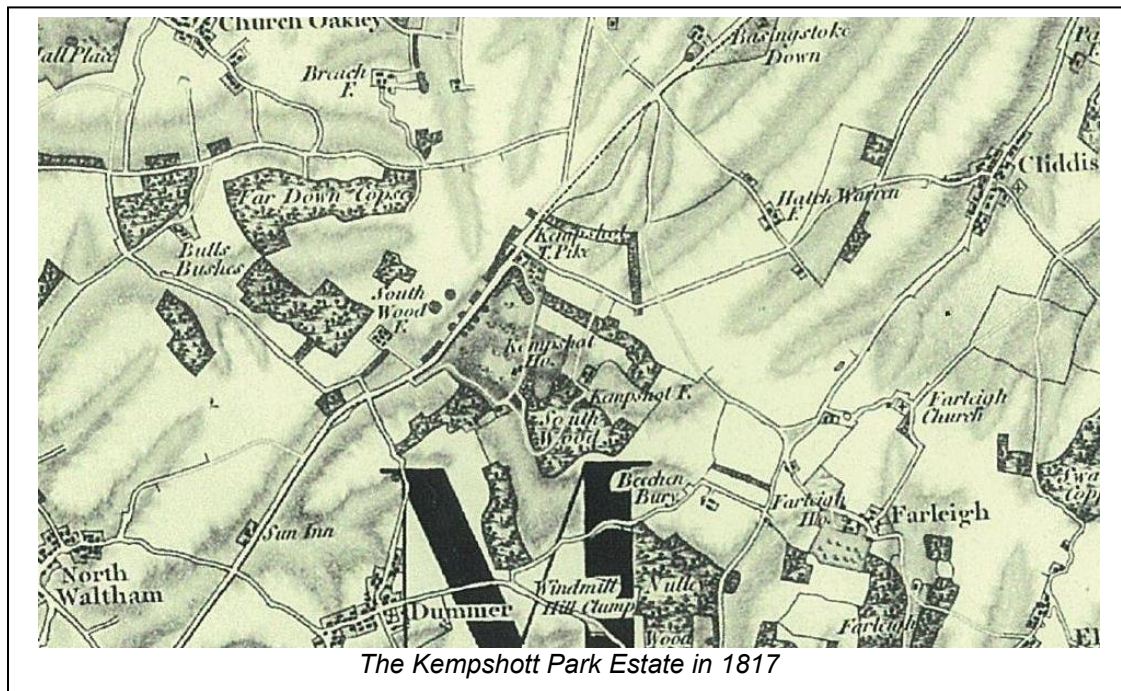


# BURNING PASSIONS – A BRIEF HISTORY OF KEMPSHOTT PARK

By Stafford Napier Dummer Resident  
June 2026



## INTRODUCTION

This brief monograph traces the history of Kempshott Park from humble beginnings as a simple farm, that formed part of the Manors awarded to Norman knights after the Conquest, through a time of royal and societal notoriety, onwards through times of national importance and, finally, to sad decline and devastation with the land overrun by swathes of suburbia.

The “burning passions” referred to in the title range from love and lust through a large amount of actual “burning” to a recreational passion for the game of golf. All will become clear!

In researching and writing this story I am indebted to many. Most notably, for the part of the account that covers the use of Kempshott Park by the Prince of Wales between 1788 and 1794, I have relied on the comprehensive and painstaking research carried out by Christopher Golding and published on the Web by him at [www.kempshottmanor.net](http://www.kempshottmanor.net). I have attempted, unsuccessfully, to make contact with Christopher several times and I hope that, if he ever reads this, he finds that I have reproduced the fraction of his work that I needed faithfully and with due acknowledgment. For the very early chapters of the story I have relied on the Victoria County History available as British History Online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=56775> which I can highly recommend to those who want to read more of this period of Kempshott’s existence.

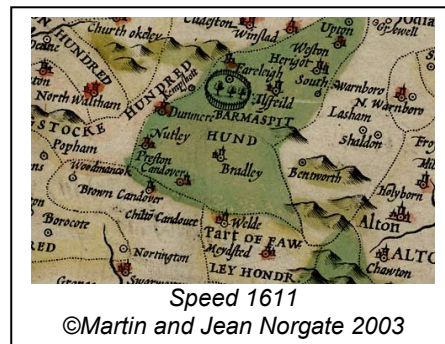
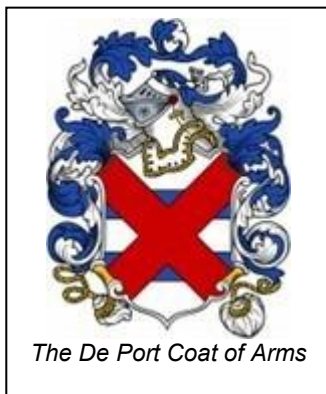
Finally, I ask the reader to take note of the Acknowledgments at the end of this account which list the names of those to whom I owe a great deal for their personal reminiscences and information. Any errors, omissions or even exaggerations are entirely my own.

## EARLY HISTORY - DOMESDAY TO THE PRINCE OF WALES

We can trace the identity of those who have either owned or leased the Kempshott Park Estate for almost 1,000 years. The Domesday Book of 1086 records Ealdred, brother of Bishop Odo as the holder of Kempshott with Hugh de Port as the Tenant in Chief. The De Ports were from Bessin near Bayeux. At Hastings the de Ports were credited with *“slaying many English”*. They held 55 manors in Hampshire including Basing, Herriard, Winslade, Micheldever and Kempshott (as part of Winslade). Hugh’s great grandson, Adam de Port, married Mabel de Aurevalle, heir of William de St John, William’s Grand Master of Artillery (more properly described as the equivalent of a quartermaster).

In the 1200s Kempshott was held by Hugh de Siffrewast and family as “Lord of the Manor” from the FitzPeters for *“half a knight’s fee”* with ultimate ownership still remaining with the de Ports

At the time of the Domesday Book Kempshott formed part of the parish of Winslade, located within the Basingstoke Hundred. The Speed map of 1611 clearly shows the boundary between the adjoining Bermanspit Hundred which contained the neighbouring parishes of Dummer, Ellisfield and Nutley and the Basingstoke Hundred.



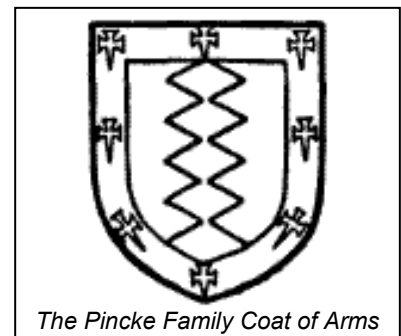
In the 1300s the ownership of Kempshott Manor changed through the marriage of Margaret de Siffrewast to John de Tichborne. The Tichbornes owned Kempshott Manor until 1578 when it was sold by Benjamin Tichborne to Henry Pincke “a Hampshire yeoman”. The Tichborne family obtained significant notoriety in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century through the case of the “Tichborne Claimant” when an Australian of unknown provenance claimed to be the true inheritor of the Tichborne fortune. A more contemporary notable in the Tichborne dynasty was Chidioc Tichborne, who was a noted poet and wrote a famous elegy. He was hung drawn and quartered in 1586 for his part in the Babington Plot which also entrapped Mary Queen of Scots. On the scaffold Chidioc pleaded his noble lineage as follows – *“I am descended from a house from two hundred years before the Conquest”*



Chidioc Tichborne – one of the Babington Plotters

An extract from his Elegy

*“My prime of youth is but a frost of cares,  
My feast of joy is but a dish of paine,  
My Crop of corne is but a field of tares,  
And al my good is but vaine hope of gaine.  
The day is past, and yet I saw no sunne,  
And now I live, and now my life is done”*



We can trace the genealogy of the Pincke family throughout the time that they owned and lived at Kempshott. Robert Pincke was much esteemed by James I for his debating skills and became Warden of New College, Oxford. Henry Pincke married a Wither, the family who became the Biggs-Withers of Manydown and Walter Pincke was another yeoman farmer who founded a charity in North Waltham through a bequest of £50 for the support of apprentices to learn trades. The charity exists to this day. Here is a fuller description of this charity by Richard Tanner of North Waltham.

*“There are two North Waltham charities – the older of the two is the Pincke Charity, with the other being the Batchelor Charity. In the early 1700s, a gentleman farmer, Walter Pincke, left £50 in his will to help young people to learn trades. The Pincke charity paid for poor children to have proper apprenticeships with brush makers, blacksmiths or shoemakers – the traditional village craftsmen. The girls' indentures ran until they were 18 while boys went to 21. Among those to benefit from the charity was one, William Barfoote whose father had died. In 1707 at the tender age of 10, William was apprenticed to a shoemaker called John Wilson, of Elvetham, near Odiham.”*



*The Pincke Memorial in St Michael's Church North Waltham*

There is also a plaque to two other members of the Pincke family in North Waltham Church. Henry Pincke died childless in 1770 and in 1773, after nearly two centuries of ownership by the Pincke family, Kempshott was purchased by Philip Dehany from John Lee, the son-in-law of Dorothy Pincke. Dehany had been the tenant at Farleigh Wallop and one of two MPs for St Ives. He was a Hampshire magistrate who had made his fortune in the West Indies. His sponsor in the purchase was the Duke of Bolton who owned nearby Hackwood Park and who also owned manors in St Ives. Dehany was also a founding member of Hambledon Cricket Club. It was Dehany who in 1773-4 knocked down the original farmhouse and rebuilt a much grander house. Here is a contemporary quotation : *“... (he) built a handsome large mansion of brick... on a gentle knoll to the south of the turnpike and very conspicuous from it... with an extremely handsome interior”*



*The handsome House built by Philip Dehany – Hampshire Record Office*

However within 15 years Dehany sold the House and estate to a James Morley who had made his money with the East India Company. His tenure of the estate was short. His wife died within a year of his purchase and he promptly sold Kempshott Park to John Crosse Crooke

It is uncertain why Crooke bought Kempshott Park as he was leasing nearby Stratton Park from the Duke of Bedford. Perhaps he thought the price reasonable (£14,670) and perhaps he considered it would make a suitable house for his later years when he could no longer afford to lease the much larger and grander Stratton Park. Indeed, as we shall see, Crooke and his family did indeed occupy Kempshott later. However, the intervening years saw one of the most remarkable periods of Kempshott's varied history.

## PRINCE OF WALES – HIS SOJOURN AT KEMPSHOTT

The first question to ask about the selection of Kempshott by George Augustus Frederick, the Prince of Wales as a “hunting box” and country retreat is “why Kempshott?” There are at least three possible answers.

Firstly the decision coincided with the Regency Crisis of 1788-9. In October 1788 George III’s illness, his notorious “madness”, became serious. By December 1788 Parliament was debating a Regency bill. Charles James Fox and the Whigs, who were friends of the Prince of Wales wanted the Prince to assume full Crown powers as Regent but William Pitt and the Tories wanted limits placed on any Regency with the Queen having control over the King’s affairs. The Prince’s view of the King’s state of mind at the time was clear :*“Damn him, he is as mad as Bedlam”*. Parliament’s main concern was the position of Maria Fitzherbert whom the Prince was said to be planning to make a Duchess should he be given full Regency powers.

On 12 February 1789 the Regency Bill passed but by that time the King had recovered and the prospect of the Regency receded. However in respect of Kempshott, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of the same month a meeting was held at County Hall, Winchester at which the High Sheriff, Sir Thomas Miller of Froyle, Lord Portsmouth and the Duke of Bolton all pledged support for the Prince as Regent. This would indicate that an abode in North Hampshire would place the Prince amongst friends and supporters. John Crosse Crooke, who had purchased the Kempshott Estate in 1788 was also a friend of the Duke of Bolton who would certainly have known that Crooke did not intend to live at Kempshott and that the Estate would thus be available to lease.

The second influence on his decision was the Prince’s love of hunting. He had been introduced to stag hunting at Windsor by his father. The Prince rode regularly with the Hampshire Hunt whose participants included many of the Prince’s friends, the Duke of Bolton of Hackwood, the Chutes from the Vyne and Stephen Terry from Dummer. The Prince was a great sportsman, shooting at Bagshot and enjoying early boxing bouts. The Prince particularly admired Daniel Mendoza of Portsmouth, the famous prize-fighter, who had published the *Art of Boxing* in 1789 and whose debts the Prince paid. Mendoza was a direct ancestor of Peter Sellers, a fact of which Sellers was inordinately proud. Indeed Peter Sellers included an engraving of Daniel Mendoza on a wall in one scene in *The Fiendish Plot of Dr Fu Manchu!*

The final and, according to popular legend, the most influential consideration in the selection of the Kempshott Estate was the Prince’s relationship with his “wife”, Maria Fitzherbert.

The Prince had met Maria Fitzherbert, who was born in 1756 as Mary Ann Smythe, at the opera in 1784. The Prince was eight years her junior. She had already been widowed twice (Edward Weld and Thomas Fitzherbert) and was, most inappropriately for a potential Royal consort, a Roman Catholic. Her second husband left her a fashionable London house and enough wealth to indulge in London society. As was his custom the Prince, woo’d her assiduously. An example of his persistence is his 53 page letter sent to Maria in France which ended with an irresistible plea from the Prince : *“Come then, oh come, dearest of wives, best & most adored of women, come & for ever crown with bliss him who will thro’ life endeavour to convince you by his love & attention of his wishes to be the best of husbands & who will ever remain unto the latest*

*moments of his existence, unalterably thine.*” Eventually the Prince and Maria entered into an illegal marriage on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1785. From 1785 through the Regency crisis of 1788-9, the Prince and Maria behaved in society as man and wife at both private and public functions.

Kempshott was far enough away from prying eyes and the rumour mill to enjoy time with Maria (and many other ladies as we will see). It also had an adjacent house, Southwood Farm, suitable as a decorous lodging for Mrs Fitzherbert should the requirements of society require.

The Prince leased the House and Park (350 acres) for £600 p.a. plus 18% taxes from late 1789. He then proceeded to spend a further £4,300 (£240,000 today) making the House fit to be a Royal retreat. Furniture, paper and hangings, linen and drapery were purchased from John Ring, a local supplier, for £160 (£9,000 today). Amongst the furniture and fittings supplied by Ring were feather beds, three dressing tables, a walnut dining table, wallpaper and window blinds. The Prince also built stables for his hunters and kennels for his hounds, thus changing the name of the adjacent farm from Kempshott Farm to Kennel Farm, a name it retains to this day.

The Prince of Wales was much influenced by the architect Henry Holland who worked later on The Grange at Northington and on the Brighton Pavillion. Indeed Holland produced plans for two large wings to be built onto Kempshott House. These were never realised.

Once installed at Kempshott, the Prince and Maria entertained royally. Champagne at 10/6 a bottle would flow freely, the Prince employed the finest musicians and played the violoncello himself. Hot and cold fayre would be laid out on the lawns. To give a flavour of the entertainment and the balls at Kempshott here is the Reverend Charles Powlett, another of John Ring’s customers and nephew of the Duchess of Bolton.

*‘...What will your good Mother say to the following account of the Gaieties of Hampshire, in which no County can equal us , & at present indeed not even London. The Prince of Wales gave a most superb Ball last Friday to which I had the honor of an Invitation. Above an hundred people were present’*

Charles Powlett was an illegitimate child and, despite being ordained, was an inveterate gambler and socialite and was one of the founders of the Hambledon Cricket Club and instrumental in writing the rules of the game.

We know that Jane Austen met the Revd Powlett and can there be any doubt that she used his flattering and excessive language as a template for Pride & Prejudice’s Revd Collins who is described as the worst example of snobbishness and obsequiousness?

## HUNTING – JUST ONE OF THE PRINCE’S PASSIONS

It would be impossible to do justice to a history of the Prince’s time at Kempshott without significant reference to hunting in Hampshire. The Hampshire Hunt, with which the Prince often rode was at the time more interested in fox hunting and this may be the reason that the Prince in 1791 formed his own “Kempshott Hunt”. He recruited a complete hunting retinue including grooms and managers. He employed one William Poyntz as Hunt Manager. Poyntz loved hunting and dancing and before joining the Kempshott Hunt had kept hounds at the Red Lion in Overton. The head groom was named Gascoyne whose sisters were also “employed” amongst the House’s servants. There were rumours of the Prince enjoying a “seraglio” with many of the local ladies including Gacoyne’s sisters. To lend some credence to this view it is recorded that, on his death, Gascoyne was buried with full royal honours and his sisters were subsequently employed as dressers at Court.



*George Sharpe who died in 1830 at 74 years old is buried in a large tomb in All Saints’ Dummer churchyard with his wife and daughter. Inscriptions on both sides of the tomb record George’s service as a Huntsman and a sacred dedication to his wife, Ann.*

By the beginning of 1791, there were 37 hunters in the stables and 80 hounds in Kennel Farm. The Prince would have hunted farmed red deer. On 7 January 1791 the first hunt pursued a stag released by the Duke of Bolton at Hackwood. Stephen Terry accompanied the hunt which travelled through Manydown, Malshanger and Ashe Park. Hunts could range as far as Winchester, Petersfield and Salsibury. Here is the description of the hunt from January 1790 from the Hampshire Chronicle.

*“A stag was turned out on Tuesday, before the Prince of Wales’s hounds at Hackwood. The deer ran directly to the river Loddon, which he crossed between Basingstoke and Basing; he then traversed Sherborn Fields to Shothanger, thence to Worting, over the late race course to Kempshott to Farleigh, Highwood, Preston Oak Hills, Herriard Common, Lasham, and Shaldon, where he ran into a cottage, and was secured in the kitchen. The Prince hired all his relay horses, and was left behind in Preston Oak Hills; but we are happy to say, that his R.H. arrived safe at Kempshott, about seven in the evening: only four persons remained with the hounds when the deer was taken. The Huntsman tired both his horses: The Hon. Mr Bligh and many others*

*had severe falls, but we do not hear that any bad consequences have ensued. The Prince returned to town on Wednesday, and before he got into his chaise, expressed the highest satisfaction at the sport and the fineness of the country. He wore the uniform of the H.H. and with his usual affability, conversed with every gentleman present”.*

After such strenuous activity, the huntsmen would retire to one of the local hostelrys. A favourite of the Hampshire Hunt and the Prince was The Wheatsheaf at North Waltham. On 6 May 1791 the Prince gave the first annual dinner at The Wheatsheaf for local farmers over whose land he would have ridden. The landlord, Mr Vernon, had a well stocked cellar of port which he kept for the Hampshire Hunt. The dinner was followed by a ball for 150 guests. The Prince's largesse was prodigious but he may well have left many unpaid bills since soon after the Prince gave up Kempshott House Mr Vernon went bankrupt!

## THE LATER YEARS OF THE PRINCE'S OCCUPATION



*Thomas Milne's Map of Hampshire 1791. Note the ownership shown as J C Crook (sic) and the identity of surrounding landowners.*

*'Old Hampshire Mapped' courtesy of Jean & Martin Norgate*

By mid-1791 the Prince had acquired the rest of the Kempshott Estate having also leased Southwood, a working farm of some 600 acres. Hampshire folklore has alluded to Mrs Maria Fitzherbert having (officially) resided at this nearby property during the Prince's Kempshott tenancy and there are even rumours of a tunnel between Kempshott House and Southwood Farm which Doug Bone, a Dummer resident, remembers exploring in his youth!. During preparation of the draft lease, it is feasible that Southwood's large farmhouse was re-evaluated as a potentially suitable residence for her. Its location was discreet yet sufficiently close to Kempshott House. The Prince refurbished Southwood Farm extensively for Maria with great attention to detail. For example, a payment of 4/6 is recorded for a man to maintain hedges along the turnpike, to cut

them level with the bank and to mend gaps. The Prince also added land leased from Stephen Terry adjacent to Dummer

The Prince encouraged French emigrées to take up residence at Kempshott. Indeed the servants were frequently overwhelmed by whole families of French noblemen staying in multiple occupancy in the rooms with consequent pressure on the catering facilities. In 1792 the Kempshott Hunt undertook a large hunt with many French nobles. Over 500 horses took part. The Hunt included George's younger brother, William, who was then a midshipman at Portsmouth. Stephen Terry is recorded as having saved the future William IV from a bad fall when jumping a hedge at Ganderdown into North Waltham.

Hunting in the French manner was much disliked by the locals. Some believe that this meant setting up a stage for the ladies before whom the hunt was driven however more likely it was the habit of the Frenchmen to ride with their traditional large horns which they blew at the sight of any wildlife causing the hounds to be diverted from their proper quarry to pursue any old hare or rabbit much to the disgust of the English huntsmen!

In 1793 the Prince's increasing corpulence meant that the Kempshott Hunt switched to hunting foxes more frequently and by the end of the year the horses were being sold and the Hunt was disbanded. The Prince remained a member of the Hampshire Hunt allowing them to use his royal feathers in their emblem and badge which they proudly display on their web page to this day. Gilray's "*A voluptuary under the horrors of digestion*" shows medicines for venereal disease, an overflowing chamber pot which rests on unpaid bills and we see the unfinished Carlton House through the window. By 1797 the Prince weighed 17 stone 8 pounds (the scales used are still located in Berry Bros & Rudd in St James). By 1794 the Prince had abandoned Kempshott in favour of the much grander, but cheaper, option of The Grange at Northington while, as we shall see, seeking a matrimonial solution to his financial problems to the albeit brief exclusion of Maria.

It is not only the Prince's huntsman who is recorded in nearby Dummer's Church records. In 1796 burials and baptisms at All Saints' Dummer are recorded as being of servants to "His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales" and one, John Reid, is recorded as being Butler to the Prince. The Hampshire Hunt Foxhounds are recorded as meeting at Kempshott Park as late as 1878.

## **THE PRINCE'S "EMBARRASMENTS" AND THEIR SOLUTION**

By 1791 the Prince was again on the sexual prowl. He had a succession of affairs with, for example, a daughter of Lady Archer, with an actress and with an opera singer and even with a close friend of Maria herself but by 1793 Maria had a new challenger.

Lady Jersey whose husband was Master of the Horse at Court was described as "*clever, unprincipled but beautiful and fascinating*". Maria, in retaliation, is said to have taken up with a 22 year old French aristocrat who was "*as handsome as the day*". However by 1795 a combination of debts, the rupture of the

relationship with Maria and his advancing years (the Prince was now 32) forced the Prince to consider a legal royal marriage.

To give an idea of the size of his debts, Pitt had been forced to introduce in Parliament "*the unpleasant topic of the Prince's embarrassments*". The unpleasantness came to a staggering £639,890 4s 4d or the modern equivalent of almost £18 million. No wonder he needed an acceptable solution!

The lady selected for the marriage solution was Caroline of Brunswick. She "*had a pretty face, not expressive of softness, her hair and eyebrows good, bust-short*". It was said that the choice of Caroline was influenced by Lady Jersey "*from the hope that disgust for the wife would secure constancy to the mistress*". In 1795 Princess Caroline arrived in London. The account of the first meeting with the Prince is notorious. He is said to have uttered not one word to her and immediately left the room saying to one of his companions "*I am not very well, pray get me a glass of brandy*".

The Prince is said to have brought Caroline to Kempshott, the scene of his rural assignations with Maria, immediately after their marriage as part of their honeymoon. Indeed Colonel Disbrowe, Vice Chamberlain to the Queen stated that the Prince brought his new wife to Kempshott before "*the bloom of her ugliness had worn off*". Caroline remembered it thus : "*He was so drunk the night he married that he remained away all night and did not return again till morning and then obliged me to remain in bed with him and that was the only time we were together as husband and wife*". For his part the Prince soon vowed "*never to touch her again. I had known her three times – twice the first and once the second night*". Whatever may have actually happened, there is much truth in the aphorism that there were three women in the Prince's life : Maria Fitzherbert whom he loved, the Countess of Jersey whom he lusted after and his wife, Caroline, whom he loathed.

Between 1795 and 1800 the Prince attempted a reconciliation with Maria, while, of course, continuing to indulge in numerous flirtations. By 1800 things were back to normal with Maria constantly at the Prince's side. The Prince of Wales, having severed all formal connections with Kempshott, returned briefly in 1799 as part of this lengthy reconciliation. With their 1785 marriage having been pronounced canonical by the Pope at or near this time, Maria had begun '*the eight happiest years*' of her life. A dinner was arranged, she travelling from the Andover home of her uncle. Kempshott's new lessee, Lord Dorchester, in collusion with Henry [later Sir] Rycroft, effected this reunion.

The Prince finally became Regent in 1811 at the age of 49 and continued his occasional relationship with Maria. In 1820 the King died and Caroline returned from what were known as her "*amorous wanderings*" around the continent, believing that she could take her rightful place as Queen. In July 1820 however a Bill was introduced into the House of Lords to deprive Caroline of her right to be Queen on the grounds of her adultery with an Italian. She even appeared in the House to witness this "trial". She was much supported by the general populace who saw her as a Protestant wife spurned by a debauched King in favour of a Catholic mistress. They mischievously considered that if Caroline was guilty of adultery, the only adulterous relationship she had had was with the Prince who had already been married for more than 25 years to someone else! The final ignominy for Caroline was at the coronation in July 1821 when she was refused entry to Westminster Abbey even though she tried to force her way in. She was barred with the tip of a sword to her throat. In August 1821 she saved the new King further embarrassment and unpopularity by dying.



*A close-up view of the Estate in 1832. It shows Kennel Farm beyond Kempshott Wood, the stables and, most interestingly, the House appears to have the two wings that Henry Holland designed but which were never built.*

*Hampshire Record Office*

## LORD DORCHESTER – THE FATHER OF CANADA

The next of John Crooke's tenants at Kempshott Park was Lord Dorchester. As Guy Carleton, he had been a major influence on the passing of the Quebec Act 1774, guaranteeing Quebec's freedom of religion and retention of French civil law. In 1782-3 he was commander-in-chief of the British forces in New York. He refused an evacuation until loyalist refugees had been guaranteed safety in Quebec and Nova Scotia. He became Governor-General of Canada in 1786 (until 1796). In 1794 he was instrumental in the negotiation of Jay's Treaty, the peace agreement between Great Britain and the United States. This made provision for the withdrawal of the British from the United States, but leaving behind all British acquisitions of war. This was deemed to include black loyalists who had already been granted their freedom by the British government. His influence on the early history of Canada led him to be known subsequently as the "Father of Canada". He was enobled in 1796 at the age of 72 and retired in July of that year, taking up the lease on Kempshott that the Prince had abandoned for The Grange.

The Dorchesters were obviously highly regarded, perhaps especially after the Prince; here is Elizabeth Terry's view

*"... we had to dinner the other day our new neighbours from Kempshott, Lord and Lady Dorchester. They seem the most rational beings I have met with [in] a great while, no airs, pride or affectation."* The Dorchesters had eleven children and this alone would have given them a degree of commonality with Stephen Terry in Dummer who had thirteen whom, Jane Austen noted, were "noisy". Lord Dorchester died in 1808 having occupied Kempshott House until 1803.

## JANE AUSTEN

Jane Austen was well acquainted with the Dorchesters and attended balls at Kempshott House.

*"Mrs Lefroy has just sent me word that Lady Dorchester means to invite me to her Ball on the 8th of January [1799] which tho' an humble Blessing compared with what the last page records, I do not consider as any Calamity".*

*"One of my gayest actions was sitting down two dances in preference to having Lord Bolton's eldest son for my partner, who danced too ill to be endured. "*

Whether Jane attended balls at Kempshott while the Prince was in residence we do not know. However there is no doubt of her opinion of him. In 1813 she wrote that she greatly supported Princess Caroline and that she "hated him" in view of his behaviour.

Notwithstanding this, in 1815 she felt obliged to dedicate "Emma" to the Prince.

## JOHN CROSSE COOKE'S TIME AT KEMPSHOTT

There can be no doubt that after 1803 John Crooke lived at Kempshott Park himself as Stratton Park, the house he had been renting while the Prince and the Dorchesters rented Kempshott, had been sold in 1801 to the Baring family. Incidentally, Stratton Park was demolished in 1963 by John Baring, known as "Basher Baring" since he also demolished the architecturally important Baring headquarters in London. There is a hatchment or heraldic device in the gallery of Dummer Church which is dedicated to John Crooke of Kempshott Park. This shows that he had a close connection with the Estate before he died. In 1830 his widow put the House on the market. John had died in 1829 in Tunbridge Wells and Elizabeth his widow who was the only child of Thomas Parry of Pennar, Cardiganshire, died in 1835. The advertisement for the sale is a master of the Estate Agent's art and shows just how extensive and luxuriant were the facilities developed by the Prince of Wales and Lord Dorchester. They included a Pinery (for pineapples), a Melon house and an Ice House. For the next 100 years Kempshott Park passed into the hands of descendants of two of England's most respected baronetcys.

## Particulars, &c.

### THE KEMPSHOTT ESTATE

Has been so long known and so invariably the subject of just commendation, that it may appear to partake of the work of supererogation to enter into a lengthened detail in this place. Strongly impressed with this feeling, the individual who has the good fortune to compose this hasty sketch, will adopt the maxim, that "brevity is the soul of wit." If the observation just made would apply successfully to most of the recognised and distinguished Properties throughout England, it will certainly be unhesitatingly admitted in the instance of Kempshott; for if any place has reason to be proud of its honors, surely the Seat which was especially selected from all others to be the abode of Royalty may safely put in its claim. It were impossible to pay a higher tribute than in the simple observation that the Prince of Wales gave it his commanding preference. Many and very pleasing recollections will be associated with the period alluded to—to enumerate them would be to diverge from the course prescribed, it shall therefore suffice to add, that the

#### HEIR TO THE THRONE OF ENGLAND,

Whose taste no one ever had the temerity to question, preferred Kempshott from amongst an infinity of admired contemporaries which hourly put in their claims to his attention. Amongst the leading qualifications, and which probably influenced the Royal Possessor in making this choice, was its renown for the enjoyment of Field Sports.

#### THE DOMAIN

And Property which encompasses it has uniformly been bountifully stocked with Game, and at an easy distance are Three Packs of Hounds. The short distance from London (only a Five Hour's drive) and the great respectability of the Neighbourhood, was probably not without its influential powers.

#### THE MANSION

Is happily placed in the most conspicuous part of this long admired Park, in which there is an infinite variety of Hill and Dale, and such a delightful irregularity in the Grounds, as to create an interest which unceasingly manifests itself in varied forms.

#### The Entrance

Is through the extensive Plantations, of luxuriant growth, and thence through the Park to this Abode of Comfort; and it may be well to observe in the description of the Residence here given, that although its substantiability presents a most refreshing contrast to buildings of more recent creation, yet it would be out of character, and inconsistent with the candour which it is believed has marked the progress of this little history, not to say—it stands in need throughout of Ornamental Reparation. This will be considered no disadvantage to those who feel inclined to oppose their taste to that of "the Olden Times." An outlay of less than £1000, aided by the tact and judgment of a talented Man, will render it again an abode not unsuited even to Royalty.

#### THE INTERIOR OF THE MANSION

On ascending the Stone Steps, present a Vestibule, with solid Mahogany Doors to the Right and Left Wings, and also in Front, opening to the Hall of communication to the principal Apartments, consisting of Drawing Room, Dining Room, and Library; the dimensions of each are 30 feet by 22, and of proportionate height, ornamented by Statuary Marble Chimney-pieces, and solid Mahogany double Doors.

#### THE DRAWING ROOM,

Which opens to a Stone Circular Gallery, commanding the most favourite Views of the Park and Plantations, which are beautifully varied by the moving Scenery of the high Southampton Road, which is open to the view by judicious breaks in these Ornamental Plantations. (The Paper in this Room was selected by the Prince of Wales, and is in excellent condition). The principal Staircase from the Hall leads to the best Bed Chambers, six in number, with Dressing Rooms, Three Attic Chambers over, and numerous Bed Rooms for Domestic attendants in the body of the House; and on the Basement Floor with the Offices. The well proportioned and comfortable Breakfast Room is in the right hand Wing—about 22 feet square, full South aspect, and leading from the Vestibule to the Nurseries (three in number), or Billiard Room, which was the occupation of that apartment when the House was occupied by its Royal Tenant. There is a secondary and very excellent Back Staircase to approach the best Bed Rooms.

#### THE BASEMENT

Is very complete—a Servants' Hall, Butler's Pantry and Bed Room, a Housekeeper's and Store Room and Bed Rooms, Laundry, Wash and Brewhouses. The Cellaring is excellent; the Wine Cellars extensive, and of the best temperature. The Kitchen is lofty, and too far removed from the House to suffer inconvenience at dinner time. There are four Larders, Scullery, Bakehouse, and two Sleeping Rooms over; a paved Yard, with useful Offices; a Well 300 feet deep, and excellent Water.

#### THE COURT YARD

Embraces a Coach House for six Carriages, four Stables, with six and four Stalls to each, Granary, Hunting Boxes, and four Mens' Sleeping Rooms over.

#### THE GARDENS

Include nearly five Acres, inclosed, in a great measure, by lofty Brick Walls, and clothed with the best selected Fruit Trees, Hot House, Pinery, Melon Ground, &c. There is an Ice House well planned, and quite full.

## THE BLUNTS

In 1832 the Estate was bought by Edward Walter Blunt (1779 – 1860) second son of Walter Blunt and Anna Maria Gatehouse who had married in 1774 in Streatham. Walter Blunt was a younger son of Sir Henry Blunt, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baronet Blunt, a baronetcy that had been created in 1720 for Sir John Blunt, a Director of the infamous South Sea Company. Edward Walter Blunt is shown in the 1851 Census as being a Magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire, having been born in Croydon in Surrey. He remodelled Kempshott House extensively and added Italian features, notably stucco, thereby transforming it to the more elegant house that lasted into the late 20th century.



*The Blunt Memorial – All Saints' Church, Dummer*

Edward Walter and Janet Blunt's sons followed the well-worn traditional paths into the military and the clergy while their daughters married as well as possible. Their 6th son, Revd Alexander Colvin Blunt married Lady Susannah Bolton, the daughter of the 2nd Earl Nelson while another of their sons, Charles Harris Blunt became a Major-General and his son, another Edward Walter Blunt, became a Lieutenant Colonel and married the 3<sup>rd</sup> Countess of Cromartie. John Ruaridh Grant Mackenzie, the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Cromartie and Chief of the Clan Mackenzie, only stopped using the name Blunt as part of his title in 1962.

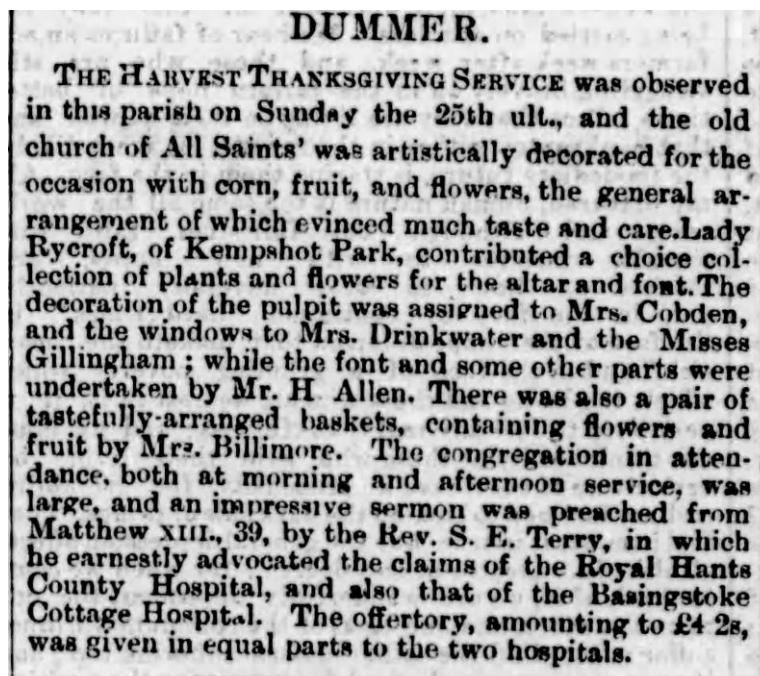
The Blunts are extensively recorded in the Church in Dummer, whose estate was still in the ownership of the Terry family. The memorial records Edward Walter and five other Blunts who all died between 1840 and 1884. The memorial was restored, without any help from the Blunt family whom no-one at that time could locate, after the great storm of 1987.

## THE RYCROFTS

As early as 1866 Sir Nelson Rycroft, 2nd Baronet Rycroft whose family came from Calton in Yorkshire, purchased both the Kempshott and Dummer Estates. Two Reverends (Williams and Torr) were housed in Dummer House while the Rycrofts lived at Kempshott House where according to the 1871, 1881 and 1891 censuses, they remained. In fact the negotiations for the purchase dragged on for almost 10 years and it was not until 1876 that the parishioners of Dummer recorded a welcome to their new lord of the manor in the Vestry Minutes of All Saints' Church. In February 1886 the Basingstoke Gazette recorded the marriage of

Sir Nelson's son, Richard, to Lady Dorothea Wallop, daughter of their near neighbour the Earl of Portsmouth with the "servants of Kempshott Park" presenting the groom with field glasses. Kempshott Park was a hive of social activity in 1886 with cricket being played in the park and a Primrose Fete being held in the grounds.

The following extract from the Basingstoke Gazette in 1887 gives a flavour of the closeness between Kempshott Park and the nearby village of Dummer.



Sir Nelson Rycroft died in 1894 and his family then moved to Dummer House (1901 Census). The 1901 Census shows only a Butler and other servants living in Kempshott House.

## THE GOURLAY FAMILY – SHIPBUILDERS AND WW1

The 1911 Census shows the Gourlay family in residence at Kempshott. Henry Gourlay was one of the brothers of Gourlay Shipbuilders from Dundee. That business had been wound up in 1908 after a disastrous decline in shipbuilding orders and, obviously, the Gourlays preferred a southern estate in which to invest their money. In 1911 Henry Gourlay was 81 years old and he had a daughter, Molly, who was born in 1899. More about Molly Gourlay who grew up in Kempshott House in a moment. The House by now was deteriorating.

Lord Rycroft's military connections began to play a part in the final decades of the House. One fascinating picture, reproduced below, shows a group of First World War German POWs outside Kempshott House. Kempshott Park was one of 87 outstations used as agricultural depots under the control of the Dorchester POW camp located at Poundbury. This camp had been opened in 1914 and eventually held over 4,500 German POWs. From 1916 some of these prisoners were sent to depots such as Kempshott. Their role was to replace local farm workers who had signed up and who were fighting in France and elsewhere. One wonders how many of these German temporary residents ever knew that their wartime billet had once been the home of a member of a distinguished royal family with Germanic roots in Hannover!



*German POWs pose outside the front door of Kempshott House (Photograph courtesy of the Smith family)*

### **FOR SALE – 1926 AND THE ROOM THAT NEVER WAS**



KEMPSHOTT HOUSE. LOTS 49 AND 50.

*By 1926 when this picture was taken, the property is looking very dilapidated. A sad deterioration of a once palatial building with 28 rooms over four floors plus an extensive servants' quarters. It is at this stage that*

*the fortunes and destinies of the House and the associated Parkland diverge. (Photograph courtesy of Alastair Stobart of Dummer)*

In 1925 Sir Richard Nelson Rycroft, the 5th Baronet died and it was decided to sell both the Dummer and Kempshott Estates. The sale particulars reveal that Kempshott House was now let as 8 flats so there were sitting tenants to contend with, one of whom was Owain Blisset's wife's grandmother, Mrs Angliss. The interesting aspect of the sale is that by means unknown an estate agent called Albert Edward Becheley Becheley-Crundall had become involved. We know little of this man, except that in 1908 he had been declared bankrupt and that he lived variously in Bournemouth, Monte Carlo and South Africa. Most sale deeds of properties that were part of the Rycroft estate have his name as the "beneficial owner". One suspects that a trust had been established with Becheley-Crundall as the beneficiary, perhaps dispensing proceeds of sales to the Rycroft family and to himself!

An article in the magazine *Country Life* in 1988 revealed an interesting sidelight on the original opulence of Kempshott House and also on the less than salubrious negotiations that surrounded its attempted disposal in the 1920s. In 1929 a sale for the then princely sum of \$6,000 was made to a museum in St Louis, Missouri to feature in an exhibition of English country house interiors. The sale was supposed to be of a complete room and was to be called "The Kemsphott House Saloon". In fact all that was delivered to the American museum were four panels and a marble mantle surround. The remainder ended up as painted reproductions. The *Country Life* article correctly describes it as "the room that never was".

## **SOUTHWOOD FARM IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

It is not clear whether the land associated with Southwood Farm on the opposite side of the Turnpike which had also been leased by the Prince of Wales in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was still in the ownership of the Rycroft estate at this time. We do know that by the 1950s Southwood Farm and its extensive lands to the north of the A30 was owned by the Beale family. On the death of David Beale it was passed to the Skinners' Company although the part of the farm now known as Hounsome Fields has now been developed as a large housing estate.



*A picture from 1953 of the Beech Walk at Southwood Farm taken from a Christmas card sent by David Beale. Few traces of the Beech Walk remain*

## BASINGSTOKE GOLF CLUB ACQUIRES THE PARKLAND

Basingstoke Golf Club had been formed in 1907 and had used land just north of Basingstoke station. In WWI this land had been requisitioned and so, by the 1920s the Club was looking for an alternative site. The park at Kempshott proved ideal and in June 1927 the Club purchased the land from Becheley-Crundall for £2,120 (approximately £63,000 today). They employed the great golf course designer and five times winner of the Open, James Braid to design the Course and in May 1926 appointed Edwin Bradbeer as the first Professional. He went on to make many improvements to the course and was also provided with a new house by the Club.



*The new house at the entrance to the Golf Club built for Edwin Bradbeer. Pictured is Edwin's son, Victor who died at 12 years old in 1931 (photo courtesy of Jeff Wearing)*

Sadly Edwin Bradbeer died of a heart attack at the age of just 51 while working on the course. His funeral was held in the Church in Dummer where he is also buried. He was succeeded as club professional by his brother Fred and later by another of his brothers, Charles. An indication of Edwin Bradbeer's importance in the development of Kempshott Park as a golf course is given in the following encomium recorded by one of its members: *"He brought to Kempshott a knowledge of the game, of green-keeping, of golf course construction and of club-house management, all given without stint for the advancement of the Club, without which it could not have attained its current flourishing condition."*

The untold story is that there was probably another reason for the selection of Kempshott Park as the new home for Basingstoke Golf Club. You will remember that Molly Gourlay, daughter of shipbuilder Henry Gourlay, had been born and brought up at Kempshott House in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1927 she was one of the most famous lady golfers in the land. She had won several titles on the Continent and was a semi finalist in the Women's Open in 1924. She went on to win the US Curtis Cup in 1932 and later, with her husband, became a golf course designer herself. The Basingstoke Gazette in 1926 reported that Molly's father, Henry, had laid out a small golf course in Kempshott Park for his daughter, employing James Braid, the famous golf course designer. Although Molly is not mentioned in Basingstoke Golf Club's history of the course, she was indeed there alongside Braid and Harry Vardon at the opening in 1928 and made the first drive on what was a very wild, wet and windy day. It is not too far fetched to conclude that Molly was influential in getting Basingstoke Golf Club to buy the land adjoining her childhood home, Kempshott House. In April 1928 after opening the course she wrote as follows: *"I was very much struck with the course and think that when the turf has had time to settle it should be an extremely interesting and pleasant test of golf"*. Molly went on to have an equally distinguished military career during WWII. She joined the Auxiliary

19

Territorial Service and was made a Temporary Chief Commander. In 1945 she was awarded the OBE for her work in North West Europe after D-Day.



*Molly Gourlay – famous enough to appear on the Cigarette Cards of the day!*

## UP FOR SALE – AGAIN!

Although the Park had been sold to the Golf Club in 1927, the House remained in Becheley-Crundall's beneficial ownership. We know that no bid had been made for the House in 1926 and that Southwood Farm, where Maria Fitzherbert had stayed, was not sold despite a bid of £4,900. In 1937 another attempt was made to sell all the parts of the estates that had not so far been sold. The 1937 sale particulars describe the House as "*eminently suitable for Institutional Purposes, Country Club, Hotel or Road House*". The House was still let as flats with tenants paying a total of £140 p.a. with some well known local names on the tenant list such as Head, Pound, Clements and Bulpitt as well as for a short period Edwin Bradbeer, the Professional of the adjoining Golf Club. A notable feature was the water supply which came from a holding tank at Dummer Clump which was fed from a pumped well behind Dummer House and which also fed the whole of Dummer village as well as the Golf Course and Kempshott House by gravity.

The sale was obviously not successful. No-one wanted a road house and by the outbreak of war in 1939 it seems that all the residents had moved out, some perhaps to the new Council houses in Coldharbour in North Waltham. For example, the Pounds still live in North Waltham. Whatever the case, there now began one of the most fascinating and untold parts of the story of the Kempshott Estate. The House and part of the Golf Course were requisitioned by the War Office.



*The west lawn in the 1930s showing the steps which are all that remain – see page 20 (Photograph courtesy of the Smith family)*

## WARTIME AND REAL “BURNING PASSIONS”

In the aftermath of the Dunkirk evacuation in 1940 Sir Donald Banks who had been part of the naval rescue force was given the job of setting up what became known as the Petroleum Warfare Department. The key instigators of this department were Geoffrey Lloyd, Secretary for Petroleum, who had been responsible for building up stocks of petroleum during the period of the phoney war and Lord Henley who had carried out experiments on flame warfare during WWI. They were said to have been inspired by a quotation in Gibbon’s Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire concerning so-called “Greek Fire”.



The early flame weapons they developed were defensive such as the Flame Fougasse. This was a half-buried large oil drum with an explosive charge at one end that could be “fired” with devastating effect if the enemy approached, an early IED. Fougasse is French for land mine but is also a type of bread! This and other initiatives such as setting the sea aflame near landing beaches were designed to counter the imminently expected invasion.

Hampshire was chosen as the area for development of these weapons for two reasons : firstly the enthusiasm of the Local Defence Volunteers and secondly because the PWD was donated Moody Down Farm as an unoccupied landing ground in July 1940. There were some other interesting anti-attack devices that were tested.

For example the anti aircraft flame thrower developed in 1940. These were to be used as a naval defence against masthead air attacks. Other unusual defensive experiments were revolving lawn sprinklers spraying lighted petrol and, amazingly, the floating of lighted petrol down rivers. The latter was tested on the nearby River Test, greatly upsetting the local fishermen!



*Early examples of flame weapon testing in WW2. On the left the anti-aircraft deterrent (abandoned after pilots reported that it did not deter their approaches) and on the right a test in winter in farmland that appears most likely to be Kempshott Park.*

*Photographs courtesy of the Tank Museum, Bovington, Dorset*

## Flame weapons in battle

Man pack flamethrowers had been used by the Germans in WWI and there had been a static semi-subterranean flame weapon developed by William Livens of the Royal Engineers and first used at the Somme. Early in WWII a personal flamethrower was developed by the Allies known as the Lifebuoy.

Early motorised flamethrowers were based on the Bren carrier. The mechanics of this were developed by the Lagonda car company in Staines. Reginald Percy Fraser (known universally as R.P Fraser) had been working at Imperial College specialising in gasses and propulsion. At the outbreak of war he was seconded to Lagonda and was instrumental in the testing and development of various types of flamethrower. He was also an early pioneer of rocket propulsion and later reconstructed a working V1 (Doodlebug) rocket to develop counter measures. Fraser was awarded the O.B.E. in 1947 for his work on flamethrowers during the war. A fascinating collection of R.P Fraser's papers and photographs is held at the Tank Museum in Dorset.

If there was some reluctance to embrace motorised flame technology amongst the British, the Canadians embraced it with enthusiasm. In 1941 they ordered 1300 Ronsons (so called because they lit every time!) and their enthusiasm was probably the reason why Kempshott was chosen as the headquarters of the Canadian Petroleum Warfare Experimental Unit. It was also used as a conference centre for the PWD and a subsidiary testing location after Moody Down.

The British Army did have its own, two man, motorised Bren carrier flamethrower called the Wasp.



A "RONSON" FLAME-THROWER. Manned by CANADIAN ROYAL ENGINEERS.

*Reproduced from "Flames over Britain" by Donald Banks*

However the groundbreaking development came in 1942 with the decision to develop flamethrowers that could be successfully operated by battle tanks. These would be crucial to the success of the landings that were to be made in mainland Europe. The PWD gained major support for the concept from Lord Louis Mountbatten. Here is how Donald Banks describes when and where the idea was first mooted.

*"The idea arose at a lunch-time discussion at Kempshott House, our country conference centre, when Major Oke of the Royal Armoured Corps suggested adopting the jettison fuel tank method as a means of carrying the fuel."*

From this lunch-time remark seated round a table at Kempshott there flowed the development of flamethrowers that were successfully fitted to the Churchill tank, as the Crocodile and the Valentine variant.



*THE "VALENTINE" Flame-Throwing Tank and Trailer. This gave continuous flame effect of immense heat for long periods.*

*In this picture it is possible to make out Kempshott House in the background.*

*Reproduced from "Flames over Britain" by Donald Banks*

Before we leave this period of the history of Kempshott House and Park, it is worth saying a word about the admixtures that were necessary to produce the most effective "flame". Ordinary petrol and even tar oil, while producing an immediate and impressive explosion of flame, did not have the necessary properties of adhesion and length of burn, leaving targets relatively unscathed. The scientists of the PWD at Kempshott tried many different additives, such as soap. Indeed a Dr Schulman had such a penchant for adding phosphorus that it led to the destruction of several pairs of trousers and frequent "holidays" in Park Prewett who came to view the Kempshott experimenters as regular customers. Rubber was also used for a short while until Malaya was lost to the Japanese.

Donald Banks recalls one visiting scientist, Mr Hugh Harvey of Shell who came from the sunny climes of California "to spend the grim and cheerless winter of 1944-5 encamped at Kempshott House wrestling with magnesium goop."

There was much discussion between the British and the Americans on the most appropriate additives. The minutes of a meeting at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington D.C. held in June 1943 record the pros and cons of American napalm (difficult to produce) and the British/Canadian aluminium stearate thickener, known as "K fuel" (more difficult to mix in the field and less stable).

Perhaps the most poignant use of the machines and liquids developed by the PWD at Kempshott and Moody Down was the employment of Crocodiles and Wasps to burn and destroy Belsen and Auschwitz. Also notably the PWD developed FIDO and PLUTO, both vital to the war effort.

## POST WAR – THE HOUNSOMES

And so we come to the final chapters in our story of 1,000 years of the Kempshott Estate. Basingstoke Golf Club re-acquired their land; part of the Course had been used to grow produce during the War. It is said that the Club was also offered Kempshott House as a club house and was told that, if the House were developed as such, the Course could become a championship course. The Club decided that it couldn't afford the cost and so the House was purchased by Harold Housome, son of Lord Portal's blacksmith at Laverstoke, apparently at yet another auction. He bought the house and outbuildings in 1949 for just £3,000 (£78K today).



*The Housome Family at Kempshott –  
Photograph courtesy of Nigel Rea*

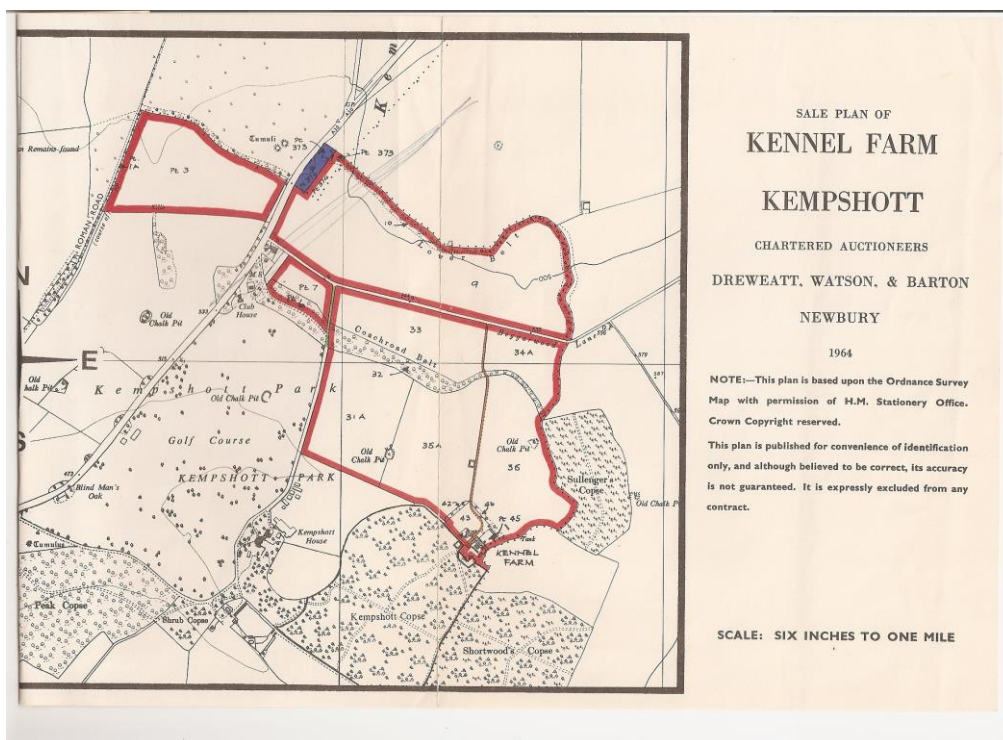


Harold Housome had had the foresight to purchase a property at the top of Kempshott Hill (where Motts Motorcycles are now located) in 1926 for £190. Harold was well known in the Basingstoke area. He owned a charabanc and had already rented a garage on the Reading Road from J May, the Brewers. He also took over a garage at the bottom of Sarum Hill from Grover, Smith & Willis. Both he and Percy Grover had been apprentices at Wallis and Stevens in Basingstoke. In September 1926 he offered to pass on the lease for his charabanc to Venture Buses who ran most of the local buses in Basingstoke in the 1920s. His experience in running the garages encouraged him to turn the property at Kempshott Hill he had bought in 1926 into a petrol station which went on to be one of the most successful filling stations in the whole of Hampshire, selling over 200,000 gallons of fuel per year. Harold was approached many times by the major oil companies to sell the station, but he held on to it until 1954 when he sold it to Esso for £14,000! The petrol station was adjacent to the famous "Blue Hut" roadside transport café (it was located adjacent to where the current traffic lights at the entrance to Beggarwood Lane are now) which was owned until 1964 by Wilfred Appleton who also owned Kennel Farm. Both the Blue Hut and Kennel Farm were sold in 1964 at auction, the farm being bought by Ted Saunders from Ramsdell for £55,250 and the Café being sold to a Mr Lewis for £9,000. It is interesting to note that the field to the north of the A30 which developers and Basingstoke Council mistakenly called "Kennel Farm" was more correctly known until 2005 as "Saunders's Field" and that the Saunders family were a party in the development of what is now the Longacre estate. We, of course, know that Kennel Farm is actually located over a mile away!

Harold Hounsome was also an agricultural haulier and used Kempshott House and the surrounding wartime huts for drying grain which he did on behalf of, among others, Smith Bros, the agricultural merchants, who, at that time were located near the station in Bunnian Place in Basingstoke but who later moved to North Waltham.

His son Harry had been killed in 1944 in RAF Bomber Command, sadly recorded as a victim of "friendly fire". Harold never really got over the loss of his only son although his daughter, Molly Hounsome, helped run the business very successfully. Harold's great nephew, Nigel Rea, remembers living in the single storey annex of the House in 1952-54 when his family returned from Canada whence they had temporarily emigrated at the end of the War. Nigel remembers, at 9 years old, walking to school in Dummer every day along the track that passed the Stables and the walled garden of Kempshott House. He knew this track as Primrose Lane, so named because of the carpets of primroses that appeared each spring. Those primroses have survived and the banks of the M3, at this point, are still adorned each and every year. Nigel also recalls being warned not to wander into the area between Kempshott House and Kennel Farm because of the dangerous residues that might have been left by the Petroleum Warfare experimenters. A sensible precaution since, as we know, the scientists had used all sorts of strange chemicals in the formulation of their "goop".

Harold built The Cedars, a bungalow next to Kempshott House in 1954. The Housomes lived there until 1970 when they moved finally to Bournemouth. Of course, Harold and his family gave their name to "Hounsome Fields", the large field adjacent to Southwood Farm to the north of the A30. It is sad that this last link to an owner of Kempshott House is also now a major housing development.



*The Plan of Kennel Farm and the Blue Hut Café for July 1964 Auction – courtesy Nigel Rea*



*One final picture of Kempshott House from the 1960s – courtesy of Vera Newman*

## **THE END OF A ONCE GREAT HOUSE**

By the 1960s the House was said to be unsafe and was leaking badly. Nigel Rea remembers that many of the floors were sagging from the weight of grain sacks that were stored throughout the House. Owain Blissett recalls seeing a large metal safe in one room. Maybe that was installed for the Prince of Wales' valuables! Who knows?

The derelict House was still there in 1971 after the M3 opened but was part demolished. The M3 was built between 1968 and 1971 and passed just to the south of the House. The House and all of the contents and the grain drying equipment had been sold by Harold Hounsome at an auction on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1968. The contents included dinner services and crockery. Perhaps some had been left over from those purchased from John Ring by the Prince of Wales. Again we can only speculate. It is believed that the House itself and the surrounding land was purchased by a development company called Louisville Investments. They finally completed its demolition and built 5 industrial units. These were supposed to comprise the same square footage as the three floors of the House but, as is the way with developers, an extra unit was built. Vera Newman remembers that access for contractors was through the track at the bottom of Peake Cope that had been the original exit driveway from the House in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Industrial Estate was sold to the Tameside Pension Fund in the 1970s. Many will remember that Basingstoke Gym Club using one of the industrial units for a period of years in the 1980s and 1990s but finally the buildings were sold in 2007 to Finnab, a property development company set up to develop the site which now comprises almost 70 dwellings.

## THE SITE TODAY

There is little to see of the once great House today. The final part, just three steps that once led up to the back entrance, lies hidden amongst undergrowth. To the south of the M3 can still be found The Prince of Wales' stables where he once kept almost 40 hunters, now called The Coach House and used as offices. Behind these offices surrounded by a tall sheltering "Crinckle Crankle" wall lie the gardens where pineapples and melons were once grown.

In a bizarre twist, an advertisement appeared in a local newspaper in 1987, purporting to offer the Lordship of the Manor of Kempshott with an asking price of £10,000, although it would have been a Lordship with no grand estate!



*The Prince's stables today*



*Just 3 steps left*



*Buy the Lordship!*

## THE FUTURE

The site on which Kempshott House once stood is now a housing estate with over 60 residential dwellings. As part of this development the foundations were mapped and recorded by Cotswold Archaeology. Below are photographs which show the foundations of the eastern wall of the House and, a subterranean brick-built arched structure which was outside the House itself and whose inner walls were rendered with metal pipework leading through a top opening. It is possible that this was a rainwater tank or part of the cellars. A more imaginative interpretation would be that this was part of the "tunnel" of local legend that gave the Prince of Wales access to Southwood Farm! The brickwork is obviously of the same age as that of the foundations of the House.



The future of the Park that became Basingstoke Golf Course is even more chilling. It is now an enormous housing estate of over 1,000 houses and extensive “community facilities”. Even the land that once belonged to the Terry family and the Beach family (the source of the name of the Beach Arms in Deane) either side of the A30 beyond Southwood is threatened with massive development of warehouse complexes, a General Hospital and several thousand more houses.

An incredibly sad end to land that was the rolling green Hampshire Down backdrop to the life of a Royal Prince, his lovers and his wife, to the retirement of the “Father of Canada”, to the formative social inspiration of England’s greatest female novelist, to the family lives of Baronets, to the exploits of wartime experimenters when Britain was in peril, to the ambitions of England’s first champion lady golfer and to the hard work and success of a local Hampshire family.

*Omnia transeunt.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The more that I talked about this project, the more people came forward with memories and information. I am indebted to them all. Specific mention should be made of the following.

Christopher Golding for the information in his Kempshott Manor website

Doug Bone – long term resident of Dummer, sadly now deceased, whose memory was invaluable and who was able to supply a copy of the long out-of-print “Flames over Britain” and several photographs he acquired from the Tank Museum at Bovington.

Owain Blissett – another long term resident, this time of Kempshott, who had a remarkable collection of memorabilia of old Kempshott. Owain (or “Don” as he was known) is also sadly deceased.

Vera Newman – a well known resident of Dummer

Nigel Rea - Harold Hounsome’s great nephew and keeper of much family memorabilia. He has been an invaluable source of material for the post-war years

Jeff Wearing the great grandson of Edwin Bradbeer for information pertaining to the early history of Basingstoke Golf Club’s development of the Kempshott Park course.

Alastair Stobart for the Sales Particulars from 1926

Phil Howe of Hidden Britain Tours

Colin Smith for family photographs relating to WW1

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The staff at the Tank Museum Archives Bovington in locating relevant information in The Fraser Collection. <https://tankmuseum.org/article/fraser-flamethrower-donation>

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