

## 14. English Moltenos - Peckham, Guernsey and beyond

The first Molteno in Britain, Anthony, was an immigrant, of course, and only one of his children, Francis, left London and moved to some other country, and then only for a time. But this changed greatly with his grandchildren and great grandchildren, many of whom emigrated. The destinations they chose, as we have seen, included Jamaica, the United States, the Australian colonies, the Cape of Good Hope and Hawaii. This chapter however, and the two that follow, focuses on those branches of the family who remained in Britain in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although even some individuals also chose to go abroad eventually - both to other European countries and British overseas territories - in order to make a living.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was the age of European mass migration - the great majority of them going across the Atlantic to the Americas, but some to Europe's colonial territories in Australasia, Asia and Africa. It was probably the largest movement of people to other countries in history and transformed the demography and economic future of three continents. The reasons why some of the now English Moltenos continued to emigrate were less pressing, however, than the economic desperation that, for example, drove out the Irish after the Famine of 1845 or the fear of physical attack that European Jews fleeing pogroms in Tsarist Russia experienced a few decades later.

### The late 19th century - the world that was theirs

By the late 1800s - a century after Anthony had first arrived in London from Milan - his descendants were inevitably divided into branches, often with not much contact kept up between them. Geography played a role - the Hawaiian Moltenos were totally cut off from their English and South African cousins, and the Moltenos in the Channel Islands had little contact with other members of the family. Even among those who went on living in England, their history in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century became one of parallel stories rather than the dense web of inter-connectedness the first generation or two had maintained. Surprisingly, however, all the various branches retained a sense of their distinctiveness because of the rarity of their surname, the faint sounds of a rather distinctive ancestry passed down by word of mouth, as well as some awareness that all Moltenos were connected with one another.

Those who remained in England (living almost exclusively in London) led lives still constrained in various ways. There was no access to cheap land for them and many fewer opportunities for social mobility than in the 'New World' or the colonies. Almost none of these English Moltenos who remained became wealthy, the exception being a couple of Mary Molteno's Bristow descendants, even if the world around them was changing dramatically.

By 1900, London's population, which had been only a million when Anthony was running his printselling business, reached nearly seven million, not far short of what it is today. Britain had become the manufacturing 'workshop of the world', even if Imperial Germany and the United States were hot on her heels. Europe's colonial carve-up of other continents, the most recent chapter being the Scramble for Africa following the Berlin Conference of 1884, was now complete, and 'Great Britain', as its people liked to call

their country, now controlled the largest and most far-flung empire the world had ever seen. In technological terms, more and more people, already used to steam power and railways, were now on the threshold of a new technological age - of electricity, telephones and motor vehicle which, as they became mass produced early in the 20th century, made their world more and more recognisable to us today.

### **Branches of the family in England**

The main branches of the family in England at this time were Mary Molteno's Bristow descendants; Fred Molteno (brother of John Charles and Nancy) and his children, following their return from Australia in 1869; and the family of James Anthony Molteno's grandson, also called Frederick.<sup>1</sup> These were Anthony Molteno's only descendants in England until, as we have seen in previous chapters, several of John Charles Molteno's offspring at the Cape began to come over to England in the 1880s for their university education, becoming in the process the first generation in the entire family to go beyond secondary school. The first to arrive was Percy Molteno, soon followed by his brothers James and Victor. Their aunt, Nancy Bingle, was still alive and made them welcome in England. But after she died in 1892, there was only her adopted daughter Eliza Bingle left - single, not well off, and living in rented accommodation in South London. In Scotland, Great Uncle Charles Dominic Molteno's two ageing stepdaughters, Margaret and Catherine Glass, were still alive and interested in staying in touch.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Peckham Moltenos - Fred Molteno and Adversity**

A great frustration in writing this history is that the trail, always faint, sometimes runs cold. So it is with Fred Molteno immediately after the death of his wife Laura at the end of 1869.<sup>3</sup> There are no letters or reminiscences of his, or his children, to draw on - hence the sparseness of the story of their lives that follows.

Utterly unexpectedly, at the age of 47, Fred had become a single parent, responsible for four small children, and having no established way of earning his living. He moved to the only part of London he knew, Peckham, where he had grown up, and settled there at 29 St Albans Road with his eldest daughter Alice who was fourteen, Ada just ten, and Albert only six.<sup>4</sup> The census of 1871 makes no mention of little Agnes who was only three living with them; she had been placed elsewhere in London, perhaps in an institution which could look after her.<sup>5</sup> The area was a respectable, working class neighbourhood, the family's immediate neighbours were a boiler maker, dress maker, book folder, mantle maker, engine fitter and errand boy.

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<sup>1</sup> To avoid confusion, I will continue to refer to Nancy's brother as Fred, and in the following chapters call James Anthony Molteno's grandson, Frederick.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Scott Glass died in 1888 and her sister, Catherine, three years later in 1890, aged 90.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 6 that recounts his earlier life.

<sup>4</sup> 1871 census.

<sup>5</sup> The 1871 census records an Agnes Maud Molteno at Carlisle Place, Richmond.

## Peckham's changing face

The Peckham Fred had known as a boy was going through enormous changes. What had been a village on the outskirts of London when his mother Caroline had moved there as a young widow in the 1820s was being transformed into a suburb of the great city of London. Its last remaining market gardens and fields were built over and roads laid down, including those where Fred's children lived when they grew up - Friern, Melford, Lugard, Ivanhoe, and Arnot. The scattering of grand houses that had been built along Peckham Rye in the early part of the century were replaced by endless rows of terraced housing. A suburban railway was constructed, and Peckham Rye Station opened in 1865, in order to link the area with the city. Peckham was becoming populated by the 'aspiring working classes', mainly artisans and City clerks.<sup>6</sup> Facilities for these new inhabitants sprang up, including Manze's famous Eel & Pie Shop and the windows of Jones & Higgins on the corner of Rye Lane and Peckham High Street that opened in 1867 and grew into Peckham's famous department store.

Today this London suburb is experiencing yet another of its periodic social transformations.<sup>7</sup> Many West Africans have settled in the area. BIM's Africa Food Store offers 'Fresh Deliveries from Africa Daily', including 'goat meat', while the Strong Tower General Store sells gigantic 3-legged cooking pots, some two and a half feet across. There is Kumasi Market and the Mama Africa Hall. The Nubian Beauty Salon and Afro Hair and Beauty Superstore cater to the new community's fashion needs, while Divine Money Transfer makes it easy to send money to relatives back home. I cannot help imagining the total bemusement of Caroline, if only she could see the street now.

To support his family, Fred advertised his services as a 'classical tutor' - something of an exaggeration, given his lack of formal qualifications and only limited spells teaching in Australia.<sup>8</sup> He also tried to repeat the success he had had arranging public performances there by his musically precocious son, Frederick. In 1872, the *South London Chronicle* and *South London Press* reported a concert given by Alice Molteno on the harp and Ada on the violin.<sup>9</sup> In January the following year, Fred took the girls, now sixteen and twelve, on tour to the United States where they performed in New York, Baltimore and Washington D.C. The *New York Times* ran a report of the concert they gave in the Steinway Hall.<sup>10</sup> Another appearance by them - their names 'Alice and Ada Molteno' appearing in very large bold type on the advertisement - was in 'The Auditory' interlude during a Humpty Dumpty pantomime at the Histrionic [sic] Olympic Theatre which promised a 'Grand Corps of

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<sup>6</sup> John D. Beasley, *The Story of Peckham and Nunhead*, London Borough of Southwark Neighbourhood History No. 3; and Southwark Borough website: [www.southwark.gov.uk/DiscoverSouthwark/HistoricSouthwark/HistoricVillages..](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/DiscoverSouthwark/HistoricSouthwark/HistoricVillages..)

<sup>7</sup> I witnessed this when exploring the area to get some sense of where the Peckham Moltenos lived for nearly a century.

<sup>8</sup> 1871 census.

<sup>9</sup> 15 June 1872.

<sup>10</sup> *New York Times*, 12 Feb. 1873. The report understated Alice and Ada's ages as 12 and 11 respectively; this information could only have come from their father, trying perhaps to create a sense once again of two child prodigies.

American and European Artists, who will appear in their World-famed Specialities'! Money may have been tight for Fred, but he was able to afford this trip and the continuing musical education of his daughters. All three girls eventually became professional musicians and self-supporting.

### **Fred Molteno's *Suburban Illustrated Almanac for Southeast London***

For several years from 1876 Fred published an annual called the *Suburban Illustrated Almanac for the south and south-east districts of London: a family guide of useful, local and general information*.<sup>11</sup> This carried a 'pot-pourri of art and poetry, fact and fiction, articles serious and humorous, the usual data found in almanacs, and dozens of advertisements'.<sup>12</sup> And all for the price of two pence!

Fred's offices were at 1 Paternoster Row, London E.C. and 5 Casterton Terrace, Ady's Road, Goose Green, Peckham Rye S.E. where the family lived. Paternoster Row was in the heart of the City, a few yards from St Paul's. It was bisected by numerous narrow passages barely wide enough to walk along - Ave Maria Lane, Paul's Alley, London House Yard, Queen's Head Passage. A couple of up and coming publishers had premises in the Row, including Hodder and Stoughton and Longmans Green. The Reader & Dyer Co. Ltd. and the People's Cafe Co. were located at Nos. 58 and 59 while the Systematic Bible Teachers Depository published its *Illustrated Missionary News* nearby and the Masonic Booksellers sold their rather different wares. Along with Fred in St. Thomas's Buildings at No. 21 were a black lead pencil manufacturer, the Anglo-Swiss Musical Box Co., a confectioner, tailor and wood engraver.<sup>13</sup>

The copy Fred carried in the *Almanac* gives a feel of those far off Victorian days. One report featured the 'new omnibus service by Mr Thomas Tilling [that] has started between Barry Road, Peckham Rye and the corner of Rye Lane, from 7.45 a.m. until 10.30 p.m. - Fare, 2d.' This was before the invention of the petrol engine, as the *South London Press* explained nearly a century later, 'the forerunner of the [famous] Tilling steam bus service which ran for many years as the No. 37 on the Peckham-Isleworth route, with steam belching from the large square bonnets of its vehicles, and its passengers enjoying the sunshine on the open top deck in good weather or getting quickly soaked on rainy days.'<sup>14</sup>

The advertisements in Fred's *Almanac* also give a glimpse of Victorian England. Mr Baldwin, medical herbalist, pushed the sales of his Baldwin's Balsam of Lungwort for coughs and colds, with a strap line from Shakespeare: 'No further service, Doctor, until I send for thee.' Another firm advertised 'Lowe's celebrate Nepaulese hair dye' guaranteed

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<sup>11</sup> Its name varied slightly from year to year, the 7<sup>th</sup> edition (1883) adding the word 'Metropolitan' to its title. The Local History Library in Peckham Hill Library has no copies of the *Almanac*, nor had the Librarian ever heard of it (6 Dec. 2008). One volume exists in Cambridge University Library. See [www.worldcat.org](http://www.worldcat.org) and Fred's great grandson, John Molteno-Mills, has two issues.

<sup>12</sup> *South London Press*, an article in 1965 drawing on information from Mrs Molly Taunton (nee Molteno) - known in the family as Great Aunt Molly - Fred's granddaughter.

<sup>13</sup> *Post Office London Directory - Streets and Commercial*, 1876 and subsequent years.

<sup>14</sup> The No. 37 bus runs on this route to this day, a century and a half after Mr Tilling's pioneering public transport enterprise.

to change ‘red or grey hair, eyebrows, whiskers and moustaches to any shade of brown or black in a few minutes’, while the same company urged women to buy Lowe’s Ornatus Perpetuum: ‘It frequently happens [the ad ran], either from natural or accidental causes, such, for instance, as the harsh bleak winds of winter or the scorching sunbeams of summer, that ladies find the appearance of the arms, face and neck far from what they would desire, being rough and red, unlike that exquisite tint of flesh which is, par excellence, the distinguishing characteristic of English female beauty.’

Fred also publicised the music lessons given by his daughters when they grew up. One full page advertisement in the 1881 edition of *The Almanac* offered ‘Pianoforte, Harp, Singing, and the Violin’ by Miss Molteno (‘of Albert Hall and Covent Garden Concerts’) - her services amounting to a veritable one stop shop for a comprehensive musical education! The lessons were ‘on the most approved modern principles, ensuring thorough advancement’. And if one needed any further assurance, ‘references to families of position and influence’ were available. Fred was never one to understate what was on offer!

Other lines of business he tried were as Agent for the Railway and General Accident Company in Cheapside, and commissions as an ‘Advertising Agent for Cape and Australian papers’, taking advantage perhaps of the fact that by this time his elder brother John Molteno had made a name for himself as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony.

All four of Fred’s offspring, as of 1881, were living with their father at 101 Ady’s Road in Peckham - the older girls already earning their own living, Albert (now 15) with a job as a junior clerk, and the youngest, Agnes, still at school.<sup>15</sup> Fred listed himself as a ‘Publisher and Advertising Agent’. The family seems to have been a little better off than before, judging by the fact that their neighbours now included a clerk, daily governess, wife of a commercial traveller, compositor, medical nurse, barrister’s clerk and one or two builders.

As the years passed, Fred persevered in trying to find ways of earning a living. In 1889, he called himself a journalist rather than a publisher. Two years later, by which time he was already in his late sixties, he was a ‘Commission Agent’. There was no possibility for him of a genteel retirement. He was lodging by this time with a family whose daughter was an apprentice hairdresser and son a merchant’s clerk. They lived at 37 Arnott Road, Camberwell, which was just a few hundred yards from where Albert and his young family were now living at 222 Ivanhoe Road, and Ada and her new husband (together with Ada’s sister Edith lodging with them) at 14 Hinkley Road.<sup>16</sup> Clearly Fred and his offspring stayed a close-knit family all his life. He never remarried.

#### Fred and Laura Molteno’s grandchildren<sup>17</sup>

Year of Birth	Names	Mother	Father	Comment
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<sup>15</sup> 1881 census.

<sup>16</sup> 1891 census.

<sup>17</sup> For a table of Fred and Laura Molteno’s children, see Chapter 6. An asterisk marks their names here.

1890	Constance Violet Molteno	Sarah Emma Louise Mills	Frank 'Albert' Molteno*	Did not marry; had a son, Jim Molteno-Mills (CHECK)
1894	Beatrice Lilian ('Molly') Molteno	Sarah Emma Louise Mills	Frank 'Albert' Molteno*	Married 3 times; no children
1895	Eileen Simpkins (nee Land; later used Molteno surname)	'Agnes' Maud Molteno*	Frank George Land	Married Frank Simpkins; they had a son Stanley F. Simpkins
1896	William Molteno Wallis	'Alice' Edith Molteno*	William Wallis	Married Elizabeth John Adams in 1927; children?
1898	Albert ('Bill') Arthur Molteno Durrant	Laura 'Ada' Molteno*	Arthur Isaac Durrant	Married; no children?

### Nancy and Fred make up the old family rupture

Fred and Nancy in their old age 'made up' at last after the mysterious, decades-long rupture between him and his brother and sister. In early October 1889 Nancy, who was now a widow but still living at 4 Friston Villas, a stone's throw from Richmond Station,<sup>18</sup> wrote to her niece, Betty Molteno, who had been staying with her during her recent trip to England with Miss Hall, a touching account of what happened. She told how, in a lull following various visitors staying with her, she had taken:

The opportunity of asking my brother to spend a few days, which he did last week.... We had a very pleasant few days together. We were able to take some walks by the River, to the Terrace and Kew Gardens, weather being tolerable although showery and one day we were obliged to remain indoors all day. We had so much to talk about of old times and people and things, also of events that had taken place during our separation, so that we were never at a loss - [and] as he wished it, we had some music in the evening. I playing accompaniments to his songs and he liking to hear songs and pieces he remembered my playing in days gone by.

I must tell you he has had two marriages in his family during the summer; first his only son who is only 21 and whose young lady was pointed out to me at the Concert. Then Ada, the second daughter and violinist; there were many notices in the papers about her, so I enclose them, as well as a copy of the speech made by Fred, as I know his style amuses

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<sup>18</sup> Nancy's husband, Mr Bingle, had died 13 June 1888, aged 73. He and Nancy had been married for 40 years. Source: 'Copy of Notes made by Betty Molteno ... concerning the Molteno family, the information supplied by Eliza Bingle who was adopted by her Uncle John Edward Hartwell Bingle'.

you. Ellen [the servant] thought him very clever as she sometimes heard his jokes and puns.<sup>19</sup>

Here we get a sudden glimpse of Fred's personality, the only we have - his sharpness, slight zaniness and noisy sense of humour, all things one finds echoes of in other Moltenos down the generations, including in particular his granddaughter, 'Great Aunt Molly' Molteno.

Nancy died a couple of years later in 1892, and Fred three years after that. He had gone swimming in the new Goose Green public baths on a hot summer's day (it was 12 August 1895), and was found drowned, presumably a heart attack. The notice of his death described him as 'late of 46 Ady's Road, East Dulwich' (just round the corner from Arnott Road where he had been before) and, rather optimistically, as a man of 'independent means'.<sup>20</sup>

### **Albert Molteno gets married, June 1889**

Albert, although younger than his sisters, was the first of Fred and Laura's children to marry, albeit by only a short head. He and Sarah Emma Louisa Mills got married in June 1889, a month before his sister Ada and Arthur Durrant's wedding. It was a Church of England ceremony,<sup>21</sup> the witnesses being Arthur who was about to be his brother-in-law, and Sarah's father, Mr Charles Mills, who was another Londoner born and bred.<sup>22</sup>

They started their married life in Ivanhoe Road, which backed on to the railway in Peckham, and their neighbours included a vegetable cook, other clerks like Albert, a coachman servant and draper's assistant. Both Albert and Sarah had jobs, at least until the birth of their first child, Constance Violet Molteno, the following year in September 1890.<sup>23</sup> Their second daughter, Beatrice Lilian (known as 'Molly') Molteno, was born in 1894.<sup>24</sup> Their rather extraordinary, and contrasting, stories are told in a later chapter.

A few years later, the four of them were still in Peckham, but Albert had risen from clerk to Advertising Manager and they could afford, like the Durrants, to employ a 'domestic help' called Ellen Brownfield.<sup>25</sup> They were now living in Friern Road, closer to Dulwich Park. In fact, whenever Albert's family moved house - which they did every few years - they edged a few streets closer to this lovely park, which indicates perhaps they were moving up in the world a little. By 1911, they were in Upland Road, just one street away

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<sup>19</sup> Nancy Bingle to Elizabeth 'Betty' Molteno, 10 Oct. 1889.

<sup>20</sup> The death certificate recorded his death as 'accidental drowning'.

<sup>21</sup> Like all his sisters, he had been born in Australia; he was christened in All Saints Church, St Kilda, in Victoria.

<sup>22</sup> Register of Marriages in Registration District of Camberwell, 6 June 1889. As so often with official records of Moltenos, Albert's surname was misspelt Moltino, and making for further confusion, Albert entered his father's middle name incorrectly as John (not James).

<sup>23</sup> Register of Births, Registration District of Camberwell, 12 Sept. 1890.

<sup>24</sup> Register of Births, Camberwell Registration District, 15 Oct. 1893.

<sup>25</sup> 1901 census.

from Friern Road; and Albert was now a journalist, with Violet and Molly still living at home.<sup>26</sup>

By the time the First World War broke out in 1914, Albert was 49 and too old to join up. But tragedy struck just after the War. In 1921 he had to have an operation because of a perforated gastric ulcer. Infection caught hold - antibiotics were only discovered a decade or more later - and he died with his younger daughter, Molly, at his bedside; he was only 56.<sup>27</sup> Sarah long outlived him and passed away only in 1959 at the age of 92.<sup>28</sup>

One last thing to say: it is clear how this branch of the family had virtually no contact with their South African relations. But Albert was in touch with at least one of his Bower cousins from his Grandmother Caroline's side of the family. At some point, he had come across Percy Molteno's biography of Sir John Molteno, and drew it to the attention of this Bower cousin of his, suggesting he read it.<sup>29</sup>

### **Ada Molteno and Arthur Durrant follow suit**

Ada was the first of the three sisters to get married. Her husband, Arthur Isaac Durrant, lived round the corner from the Moltenos, and was a local man, born in 'London City'.<sup>30</sup> He was of working class background, his father being a cabinet maker, but already had a secure job as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Clerk in the Civil Service. Ada, aged 28, was three years older than him and had long been earning her living as a freelance violinist and music teacher.

The wedding took place in the Anglican Church of St. John's, East Dulwich on 25 July 1889. Fred Molteno and Arthur's father were the witnesses. At the celebration afterwards, Fred made a rather florid speech which Nancy Bingle copied out and sent, along with newspaper clippings, to her niece, Betty Molteno, on 26 December 1889.

'Ladies and Gentlemen, or rather kind friends and relatives,

'On this happy and festive occasion the pleasing duty devolves on me of proposing a 'Toast' for your consideration, in harmony with the interesting and absorbing ceremony which has taken place. That is to say, I ask you all to join me in drinking the health, happiness, long life, and prosperity of the newly wedded couple just united in loving bonds of holy matrimony.' Fred went on to say how 'gratified I feel at witnessing the consummation of their well-trying wooing and mature courtship' - a clumsy reference, presumably, to the fact that Ada and Arthur's very modest financial circumstances may have prevented them from getting married earlier. He was desirous also 'that this supreme moment of their existence shall be surrounded and attended by all the mellifluous accents, euphorious assurances, genial aspirations, and propitious amenities

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<sup>26</sup> 1911 census.

<sup>27</sup> Register of Deaths in Registration District of Lambeth, 30 Jan. 1921.

<sup>28</sup> Register of Deaths in Registration District of Croydon, 6 May 1959. Her grandson, Jim Molteno Mills, reported her death.

<sup>29</sup> Letter of H. R. Bower (Caroline's nephew) to Percy Molteno, 26 July 1926. He remembered seeing John Molteno half a century before during his 1860-61 visit to England.

<sup>30</sup> Arthur Durrant and Ada Molteno's marriage certificate.

that may tend to constitute it a day of joy to them forever, as well as form a bright beacon or landmark for them to look back on with glowing satisfaction in the surging ocean of life's onward and upward voyage.'

More to the point perhaps, he then paid tribute to Arthur and his daughter: 'I believe the Bridegroom to be a young man of high honour and principle and feel sure he will make a good and kind husband. The Bride you have seen and heard often, both in private and public life (many of you from her youngest and most artless days) and can rightly estimate her genial disposition and social acquirements, as well as domestic experience and real merit.'

Ada and Arthur enjoyed a long marriage. They set up house in Hinkley Road, Dulwich a few yards from where they had grown up. Ada invited her older sister Alice to come and live with them; the two girls had long been musical partners. And from the start, the couple were able to employ one Annie Newton, 'a general servant', and continued to do so down the years, the wages of domestic workers being so low in those days that even the lower middle classes could afford to employ them.<sup>31</sup>

Arthur rose steadily in the civil service, and in 1903 achieved something very rare for the time, being promoted to the Higher Division despite his humble background. This facilitated, perhaps necessitated, his having a London club, and he joined the Royal Automobile Club which had been founded a few years earlier to promote the motor car. In 1909 he was made Principal Clerk in the Office of Works, then Controller of Supplies the following year (which post he held during the First World War), and eventually Director of Lands and Accommodation, H.M. Office of Works.<sup>32</sup> During the War, which put huge demands on the civil service, he actually attended one War Cabinet meeting, the minutes of which recorded his presence. After the War he received a Belgian royal honour, Officer of the Order of the Crown,<sup>33</sup> and in 1920 was knighted by the British government for his services, being awarded an O.B.E. (the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) and made a Knight Grand Cross of the Civil Division.<sup>34</sup> He was also made a Member of the Royal Victorian Order (M.V.O.).

This illustrious career gave Sir Arthur Durrant (as he had now become) and his wife, Ada, financial security and social standing. They moved to a somewhat more prosperous area, taking a house in Oakhurst Grove to the west of Peckham Rye Common and three-quarters of a mile north of Dulwich Park. They were also able to send their only child, 'Bill' Albert Arthur Molteno Durrant, who had been born in 1898, to Alleyns, the nearby public school which took day students drawn largely from the surrounding area. Such was the arcane hierarchy of English public schools, however, that Alleyns couldn't actually call itself a public school until its head was eventually elected to the Headmasters Conference in 1919, by which time Bill had already finished his schooling. We will hear a lot more about Bill, his lifelong love of heavy machinery and remarkable career in a future chapter.

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<sup>31</sup> 1891 and 1911 censuses.

<sup>32</sup> *The London Gazette*, various issues.

<sup>33</sup> *The Times*, passim. Much of Belgium was occupied by Germany throughout the War and its government was deeply grateful to its British ally for its steadfast support, including presumably the supplies that Arthur's department was responsible for.

<sup>34</sup> *London Gazette*, 26 March 1920.

Ada died in 1927 at the age of 66, while Arthur - now Sir Arthur Durrant, O.B.E., C.B.E., M.V.O. (Fourth Class) - lived on another 12 years. He was the first member of the family to be able to retire in the modern sense of entitlement to a state pension and able to look forward to a secure old age. He filled his time writing numerous short stories and magazine articles, and died on 23 August 1939, the week before the Second World War broke out.<sup>35</sup>

### Alice Molteno's musical marriage

Alice was the oldest of Fred and Laura's children. Born, like all of them, in Australia, she had become a harpist and continued to perform professionally all her working life.

She married at the relatively advanced age (for those days) of 34, a fellow musician, William Wallis, a Scotsman who played the bassoon.<sup>36</sup> This was in 1891, two years after Ada and Albert's weddings.

Alice entered the sacred building [St John's, East Dulwich] supported by the arm of her father, who gave her away, looking bright and brilliant. She was attired in a charming wedding costume of ivory white Bengaline silk, the front of the skirt and bodice embroidered with pearls, and a spray of orange blossom bedecking the train, and a veil of tulle, adorned with orange blossoms, and carried a beautiful bouquet of chrysanthemums and lilies.... A numerous throng of guests assembled at the lunch, where all went merrily.... Singing, violin and piano performances during the festivities were given by Miss Agnes Molteno and her sister, Mrs Ada Durrant (the hostess), and other ladies and gentlemen, to the enjoyment of all.... The presents were numerous, tasteful, and of varying utility, filling a considerable portion of one room and exciting much admiration.... The happy pair left for Brighton amid showers of old shoes and rice.<sup>37</sup>

Alice and William both continued working after their marriage. Nearly 20 years later she was listed as harpist with the Royal Italian Opera - which is interesting given her Italian ancestry, but almost certainly a coincidence.<sup>38</sup> She and William were still playing professionally in 1920, by which time she was in her sixties.<sup>39</sup>

Alice, like Ada, had only child, William Molteno Wallis, who was born in June 1896. The family stayed in Peckham like all Fred's children and grandchildren - in Keston Road, just yards away from Oakhurst Grove where Ada and Arthur Durrant were living. Like them, Alice and her husband also sent their son to Alleyns and the two cousins were at the school at roughly the same time. Young William, or Bill as he became known, was extremely bright. He won a series of scholarships during his time there (1904-1915), giving him a total exemption from fees - his parents, who did not employ a domestic servant, could quite possibly not have afforded to keep him at the school otherwise. He also excelled at

<sup>35</sup> Obituary, *The Times*, 25 Aug. 1939. Also *Who's Who & Who Was Who*, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Marriage Certificate, 31 Oct. 1891, signed by the Vicar, Rev. W. Strickland, St John's, East Dulwich in the Parish of Camberwell. This was the same church where her sister, Ada, had got married two years before.

<sup>37</sup> *South London Press*, 1889.

<sup>38</sup> *The Musical Directory, Annual and Almanack*, 1909 (57<sup>th</sup> annual issue).

<sup>39</sup> *The Musical Directory*, 1920.

sport, representing Alleyns at Fives, Shooting and 1st XI Football, as well as chess, and was made Captain of his house. He matriculated with distinctions in four subjects, got a University of London Intermediate B.Sc., and then entered for the Intermediate Civil Service Examination, in which he was placed 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 278 candidates. He was also Captain of his House and excelled at sport.<sup>40</sup> Immediately on leaving school, he was appointed to a clerical post, Office of Woods, in Scotland<sup>41</sup> and five years later transferred to Inland Revenue as an Assistant Inspector of Taxes.<sup>42</sup> Alice continued living in Keston Road, Peckham. But in the early 1920s, she was calling herself Mrs Molteno-Wallis, her husband having died by this time.<sup>43</sup> She eventually moved to Glasgow in order to be nearer her son. William got married there in 1927 to Elizabeth John Adams. His mother died in the same city a few years later in 1935 at the age of 78.<sup>44</sup>

It's worth reflecting on what even a minor public school like Alleyn's gave William and his cousin Bill. The trajectories of their lives were completely different from their cousins, Violet and Molly (Albert Molteno's daughters) and Eileen (Agnes Molteno's - now Agnes Land - daughter. These girls were part of the first generation of children to benefit from the 1870 Elementary Education Act which for the first time in English history brought in compulsory, state-funded schooling for all children aged 5-13, in effect working class children. These schools did not charge fees and focused narrowly on the 3 R's (reading, writing and 'rithmetic). School premises built in accordance with the Act made no provision for playing fields or other facilities. The experience of children at these schools was a world away from what William and Bill got from their years at Alleyns - a much wider curriculum, full secondary schooling, access to higher education, the confidence and social connections that came from their middle class schoolmates, and the opportunities the various sports they took part in gave to learn application and self-discipline, leadership and team work. At the Cape in the previous generation, John Molteno had been sending his sons to the Diocesan College to get the colonial equivalent of these advantages although, somewhat like their female cousins in Peckham, his daughters did not go to a prestigious fee-paying school like their brothers. The chasm in educational experiences and life-time opportunities offered by these two kinds of school remains to this day, and not just in Britain or South Africa, but in so many countries around the world.

### **Agnes Molteno - the struggle to make ends meet as a professional singer**

Agnes, the youngest of Fred and Laura's children, had much the most difficult life. She lost her mother when she was only a year old. For a time at least as a baby, it seems that her father could see no practicable way of having her live with him and the older children after Laura's death. This changed, however, some time before the 1881 census which recorded Agnes, by then a 13 year old, living with her brother and sisters, and their father.

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<sup>40</sup> I am most grateful to Neil French who looks after the Archives at Alleyns and who tracked down all this information, 13 Aug. 2009.

<sup>41</sup> *Edinburgh Gazette*. 9 April 1915.

<sup>42</sup> *London Gazette*, 5 Oct. 1920.

<sup>43</sup> William Wallis was no longer listed in *The Musical Directory*, 1924 although Alice continued to be.

<sup>44</sup> Official Scottish records, [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk).

She was intensely musical like her sisters and the eldest brother who had died in Australia so many years before, but instead of playing an instrument, she chose to become a professional singer. There is a lovely story of her getting lost as a child in a zoo on some occasion, and her family finding her singing to a crowd that had gathered round to listen. Once she had grown up, she worked in the late 1880s and 90s mainly in light opera, including an appearance in *The Sultan of Mocha* at the Strand Theatre in the West End in 1888.<sup>45</sup> It was a tough, peripatetic life. In 1891, for example, she was on tour with an opera troupe, staying temporarily as a boarder in Durham with a family.<sup>46</sup> She told the census enumerator that she had been born in London, perhaps she had no idea she had actually been born in Australia!

For a number of years she worked as a member of a small touring ensemble, the Arthur Rouseby English Touring Opera, describing herself as a *prima donna*. The company was not very profitable, its orchestra comprised only six players who had to be augmented by local recruits at each stop on the tour, and playing in rather second-rate venues. But its first musical director, Henry Wood, went on to become very famous and founded the annual Proms (London Promenade concerts), now held in the Royal Albert Hall.<sup>47</sup>

When Agnes, as a young woman, was playing Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust* at the Elephant & Castle Theatre in South London, a reviewer with the local paper described how, 'despite the bitter East wind and the thermometer making freezing point,' he journeyed to the Theatre 'to see a well-known South London favourite in the person of Miss Agnes Molteno'. 'Her voice is pure soprano, of a light character, and very sweet and melodious.... Her rendering ... was of the highest order.... She has not mistaken her vocation in selecting the operatic stage.' The evening was rather spoilt, however, by the fact that 'the wind whistled through the house, and the audience shivered ... but Miss Molteno's delightful singing made us oblivious of the fact that we were probably catching colds in our heads.'<sup>48</sup>

It was when working for this company that she met her future husband, Frank George Land, a 'vocalist' who joined it in 1891. They married in 1893 a couple of years after Alice, and like her sisters, the ceremony took place in St John's Church, East Dulwich, a suburb which was really just an extension of Peckham southwards.<sup>49</sup> Her father was present, describing himself in the official record simply as a 'Gentleman'. Agnes's brother-in-law, Arthur Durrant, was one of the witnesses - the second time he had performed this role at a Molteno wedding. As for her husband, Frank Land was from a working class family. His father, Isaac, had been an ordinary soldier who had risen as far as non-coms were allowed - to the rank of Brigade Sergeant-Major in the Royal Artillery. Young Frank in fact had been born in Moulmein, Burma in 1865 when his father was serving there in the 45<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot during one of Britain's Burma wars.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *The Times*, 3 Jan. 1888.

<sup>46</sup> 1891 census.

<sup>47</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry\\_Wood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Wood)

<sup>48</sup> *South London Press*, 29 Nov. 1890, cited by R. F. M. Immelman in the section of his intended Molteno family history, 'Frederick Molteno's Family, a brother of Sir John'.

<sup>49</sup> Entry in a register of marriages in Registration District of Camberwell.

<sup>50</sup> I am grateful to David Land for sending me (27 May 2015) a timeline for Frank George Land's life.

Agnes and Frank had only one child. Her father, Fred, had died totally unexpectedly only weeks before the baby was due, and she had no mother of course. So she went down to Portsmouth (Portsea Island, to be precise) to stay with Frank's parents for the birth. The baby was born on 5 October 1895.<sup>51</sup> And just as her sisters had done - and many other Moltenos similarly down the generations - Agnes gave her baby daughter the middle name of Molteno; so she became Eileen Molteno Land.

Both parents had to go on earning their living - something entirely usual today, but very uncommon in middle class families in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In August 1899, the musical company which employed them went on tour overseas to the Cape Colony and Natal. This is how Agnes first became aware of the South African branch of her family and made contact with Betty Molteno in Port Elizabeth, who was running her school there, and her sister, Caroline Murray, in Cape Town. Betty and Caroline were actually Agnes's first cousins.

During this tour, little Eileen was probably left with her grandfather, Mr Land, and aunts, Gertrude and Beatrice. This is certainly what the situation was a couple of years later when in 1901 Agnes and Frank, both working, were living in rented rooms at 72 Doddington Grove, Newington, a mile or so from Peckham.

In South Africa the company performed in Cape Town, Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Port Elizabeth. Agnes sang in various operas, including *Faust*, *The Bohemian Girl*, *Tannhauser* and *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Her most popular piece, however, was something very different - a song called *The Daughter of the Regiment*. Agnes told the local paper in South London on her return how: 'The spirit of military enthusiasm was already abroad. *The Daughter of the Regiment* was a veritable triumph. I was recalled again and again. Bouquets were literally showered on me - and more substantial tributes too [and] with a smile she held out her shapely wrists and displayed some of the gold and diamonds for which South Africa is famous.'<sup>52</sup> Clearly a jingoistic spirit had already seized many English-speaking whites in the Cape Colony and Natal. But the tour had to be cut short when actual warfare broke out in October. The reporter who interviewed Agnes concluded his enthusiastic piece: 'Lovers of operatic music will be glad to hear that the popular prima donna is back from South Africa and has again taken up her abode in South London.... The popular cantatrice is as plucky as she is clever, and she is looking forward to many a brilliant night, revisiting the scenes of former successes.'<sup>53</sup>

A decade later however, Agnes, now in her early 40s, was very hard up. She and Eileen, now a teenager, were lodging in 1911 in Coldharbour Lane in Brixton with a working class family - the head of the household was a printer called Kramer, and a printer's labourer and warehouseman were also living in the house.<sup>54</sup> By an extraordinary coincidence Agnes almost certainly never realized, she was now living on a road off which ran the very street

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<sup>51</sup> Entry in the Register of Births of Portsea Island Registration District.

<sup>52</sup> *South London Press*, 9 Dec. 1899. By the time Agnes gave this interview, the Boer War had been being going a couple of months.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> 1911 census.

where her mother, Laura, had died 42 years earlier. The census does not record Frank Land living with them and it seems likely that they were separated by this time.<sup>55</sup>

In early 1913 Agnes was so desperately hard up that she wrote a begging letter to Percy Molteno whom she must have tracked down quite easily since he was now a Member of Parliament and his name appeared quite frequently in the papers.<sup>56</sup> She explained that her husband was not supporting her. Nor was she able any longer to keep Eileen in the boarding college in Barnes where she had to stay while her mother was on tour; instead over the past couple of years the girl had simply had to travel around with Agnes 'making our home every week wherever my engagements take us'. And now Agnes could not even afford the next £60 premium on a policy she had taken out for her old age. Could Percy pay it for her? 'Things have got so bad in our profession, and my engagements have fallen off.... It is through no fault of mine, for I am an honest, hardworking woman.'

Correspondence between Betty, Caroline and Frank in South Africa and Percy in London ensued.<sup>57</sup> Caroline recalled how she had met Agnes in the Cape: 'She impressed me with the feeling that she was a sincere woman who had bravely struggled under very hard conditions all her life. She made no attempt to enlist our sympathy or claim relationship, but Betty [had got] from her some picture of her life and struggles. She has of course moved in a social environment quite foreign to us, but I feel a great sympathy for her.... I feel strongly drawn to help her. I am sure she is a sincere good woman who has used her opportunities to the uttermost.' Unfortunately for Agnes, Percy, despite being always extraordinarily generous to members of the South African branch of the extended family, was not convinced and warned Caroline to have nothing to do with her! Whether either he or Agnes ever realized that they were actually first cousins we do not know.

A year after this rebuff, Eileen, now 19, herself went on the stage as her mother had done and her London cousin Molly Molteno, Albert's daughter, was also starting to do. She changed her surname and now called herself Eileen Molteno. She was an extremely pretty girl, according to Caroline Murray who had seen a photograph of her.<sup>58</sup> And Caroline lamented: 'It is a pity she [ie. Eileen's mother, Agnes] could not have given her an education to fit her for earning a living in some less hazardous way than the only one which will probably be open to her.'

A decade later, in 1923, Eileen married Frank Simpkins and they had a son, Stanley F. Simpkins, in 1925. At this time her mother was still singing professionally, including in one of the very earliest BBC Concerts broadcast from London in 1924.<sup>59</sup> Agnes eventually ended up living in Wandsworth where she died in 1947. Eileen died in 1983 at the age of 88.

## John and Fred Molteno's very different lives

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<sup>55</sup> No definitive record of Frank Land's death has been found by his relative, David Land.

<sup>56</sup> Agnes Land to Percy Molteno, 28 April 1913.

<sup>57</sup> Caroline Murray to Percy Molteno, 21 May 1913, and Percy to Caroline, 19 June 1913.

<sup>58</sup> Caroline Murray to Percy Molteno, 21 May 1913. She laments: 'It is a pity she [ie. Eileen's mother, Agnes] could not have given her an education to fit her for earning a living in some less hazardous way than the only one which will probably be open to her.'

<sup>59</sup> The very first BBC broadcast from London was on 14 November 1922.

When one thinks about the lives of Fred and his elder brother John, the differences are very obvious. John emigrated successfully, and became a widely respected and well off farmer and an important public figure. Fred, by contrast, failed to make a success of emigration and returned to live the rest of his life in relative obscurity in the same part of London where he had grown up. John eventually owned huge tracts of land in the Karoo, as well as Claremont House with its extensive grounds in Cape Town, and had several other business interests. But Fred constantly had to try out some new way of earning a living. And he lived in lodgings all his life and was unable to accumulate any wealth to provide for his retirement, let alone leave an inheritance to his children.

This huge divergence shaped, in turn, the lives of their children. John's offspring grew up with the advantages of their illustrious father's position in Cape society, they married into established business, professional and other families, and the ready supply of servants relieved them of the normal household and childcare burdens. Fred's offspring, by contrast - the three girls as well as their brother - all had to earn their own living all their lives. They stayed in what was a 'respectable' working class/lower middle class part of London and married people they met locally. Outright poverty was never very far away, and the constraints of their professional lives as musicians resulted in all three of Fred's daughters each only having one child, while even Albert and his wife had only two.

The two lots of cousins - English and South African - did have some things in common, even if they had no contact with one another. Each branch developed a considerable closeness as extended families, with much contact and mutual support among brothers and sisters. And Fred's offspring went on living in Peckham just a few streets away from one another - which was not so different from what many of John's offspring did in and around Cape Town at the turn of the century.

### **Another branch of the Moltenos in London**

Another branch of Moltenos also lived in London in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were the grandchildren of James Anthony Molteno, eldest son of the original printseller, Anthony Molteno, and so second cousins of Fred Molteno's children in Peckham and John Molteno's family at the Cape and Frank's in Hawaii. Though James Anthony had quite a large family, only one of his offspring, William, had children that led to a line of descendants coming down to the present day. William Molteno had emigrated to Jamaica with his wife, Letitia, and died there a few years later in 1846. I have already told the story of the difficulties that Letitia, pregnant and with two small children, faced on making her way back to London the following year.<sup>60</sup>

### **Mary Molteno**

Of Letitia and William Molteno's children - Frederick, Mary and the youngest, Catherine Clara (known as Kate) - we know almost nothing about Mary. She was born in Jamaica a year before her father died of yellow fever. Once in London, her Molteno aunts (James

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<sup>60</sup> See Ch. 4.

Anthony's unmarried daughters) made sure she was educated as a Catholic.<sup>61</sup> It seems that when she grew up she went to New York at some point, married there, but returned to London in 1874 without her husband, and no financial provision.<sup>62</sup> Her married name was probably Milford. The evidence for this is that, a few years later, the 1881 census recorded a Mary Milford - born in the West Indies, aged 38, a school teacher, and widowed - living in Moore Street, Chelsea. The following year, this woman reported the death of her 'aunt', Elizabeth Molteno (one of James Anthony's daughters), living round the corner in Halsey Street.<sup>63</sup> It seems likely therefore that this Mary was William and Letitia's daughter, had spent some time working in the United States, and had married there. We also know for certain that she lived for some of her life in France.<sup>64</sup>

### **Kate Molteno - An English governess in Portugal**

By contrast, we know a lot about Mary's younger sister, Kate Molteno. This is because of the correspondence Kate entered into, by chance, with her hitherto unknown South African cousin, Betty Molteno, from 1921. Kate, who was 75 by this time, told Betty a lot about her life. She, like her sister and brother, had had to spend many years abroad in order to earn a living. None of them, however, emigrated in the conventional sense of settling in some other country permanently, and they continued to regard England as home.<sup>65</sup>

Kate remained living in London with her mother, Letitia, who had remarried, until she was twelve years old when she took the initiative to make contact with her Molteno aunts - both James Anthony Molteno's unmarried daughters and his married daughter, Mary Parker, and her family in Great Russell Street - all of whom were still devout Catholics. This was in 1859 and proved to be a turning point in Kate's life. Despite being relatively hard up following their father's bankruptcy, the aunts were able to send her off to a school in Belgium where she was instructed in the faith and became a lifelong Catholic. She studied hard for three years, but then got ill (she always had a weak chest) and was sent back to England. Her youngest aunt, Catherine Molteno (also called Kate), had by this time become the Reverend Mother in charge of the very small Sisters of Mercy Convent in Bristol. She invited Kate to stay there while she recuperated. Kate became particularly close to her and years later wrote: 'She was a sweet creature and my true friend. Everybody loved her.' While living at the convent, her aunt taught her German and the other nuns painting, drawing and music - just the accomplishments a governess needed.

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<sup>61</sup> The 1851 Census records Mary Molteno at a Catholic boarding school.

<sup>62</sup> Information in a letter of Charles Dominic Molteno's, 19 Jun. 1874.

<sup>63</sup> I am indebted to Jenny Molteno for this piece of genealogical detective work.

<sup>64</sup> Catherine 'Kate' Molteno to her nephew, Herbert 'Bertie' Molteno during the First World War, in which she says her sister lived and worked for a time in France and America, her brother Frederick in India, and she herself in Italy, Belgium, Holland and Portugal, commenting that 'The Moltenos are a wandering family'. Extract sent me by Jenny Molteno in Australia, 14 Jun. 2009.

<sup>65</sup> Most of what follows is drawn from what Kate told Betty Molteno in her many letters about the previous generations of the Molteno family. She was a uniquely well informed, and in my view reliable, source because she actually knew her aunts, James Anthony Molteno's daughters.

After a year, the nuns heard of an opening for her in Turin as a ‘pupil and also mistress’ where, in exchange for giving lessons in English, she would be taught Italian. Kate was now about sixteen when she went off to Italy; she and her aunt in the Convent kept closely in touch through correspondence. Three years later, however, the Austro-Prussian War broke out in 1866. Northern Italy became a battleground as the Kingdom of Italy joined the Prussian alliance in order to wrest Austria’s remaining provinces in Italy from the Hapsburgs. Aunt Kate managed to get someone to accompany her young niece - Kate was now about 20 - safely back to England. She rejoined the Sisters of Mercy house in Bristol and considered becoming a nun herself. In April 1867, she became a choir sister and in September received her habit taking the name, Mary Paul. Two years later, however, in July 1869 she left the convent.<sup>66</sup> She got a job as governess to three children, but again her health broke down, and she then obtained a new post in the much warmer and drier climate of Lisbon. There she settled for a number of years until in early 1878 she heard that her beloved aunt was now mortally ill.<sup>67</sup> She threw up her job and hastened back to England in order to see her one last time. Kate was able to recognise her, but died a few months later, leaving young Kate inconsolable.<sup>68</sup>

By this time, she was competent in four languages in addition to her native English - French, Italian, Portuguese and German, and equipped to earn her own modest living. She returned to Lisbon which had already proved good for her health, and spent the rest of her working life there.

### **Getting caught up in the Portuguese Revolution of 1910**

Kate was tutor to the children of an aristocratic family in Lisbon at the time of growing political unrest in Portugal in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>69</sup> In 1908, King Carlos and his eldest son were assassinated. The next in line was duly proclaimed King Manuel II, but the republican unrest did not die down and on 5 October 1910 the new King was forced to abdicate. A mutiny broke out on some warships anchored in the Tagus River which the Army refused to put down. The following day two of the ships shelled the Royal Palace in Lisbon, and Manuel and his family fled the country for Britain. A republican regime took power and proved militantly anti-clerical. Convents were attacked and nuns and monks harassed in the streets. A decree shut down all Catholic monasteries and seminaries, suppressed religious orders like the Jesuits and expelled all religious from the country who were not parish priests. Kate, suddenly bereft of the family for whom she had long worked, had to flee precipitately, losing ‘everything - her home and what little money and

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<sup>66</sup> Communication, 4 April 2009, from Jean Olwen Maynard, author of *Sisters of Mercy - Bristol*, London, Mercy Union Generalate, 2008.

<sup>67</sup> See Ch. 4.

<sup>68</sup> All this information comes from what Kate Molteno told Betty Molteno.

<sup>69</sup> Her niece, Elsie Rose Lee, who kept in touch with Kate, thinks she was ‘English governess at the best convent in Lisbon’. Elsie Lee to Betty Molteno, Dec. 1921.

possessions she had (in fact everything except the clothes she was wearing)' in her flight.<sup>70</sup>

Almost penniless and already 63 years old, she arrived in England and was given refuge at St Margaret's Home for Incurables which was attached to a Dominican convent at Stoke on Trent in Staffordshire, and where she was listed by the 1911 census as one of the 20 female patients and inmates, albeit not actually ill herself.

### Penury in the age before the Welfare State

The nuns charged her for board and lodging, Kate having to pay £30 a year. Initially she had 'a nice large room with attendance'<sup>71</sup> in the main building, while the other inmates and pensioned off servants lived in a dormitory. She was given a grant of £26 a year towards her rent by the Catholic Society for Reduced Gentlewomen, the Catholic Church being as attuned to class distinctions as the Established Church of England. She also earned a little money during the First World War (1914-18) giving French lessons to volunteer nurses going to work on the Western Front in France. Initially, therefore, things were not too bad and her niece, Elsie Lee (see below), usually invited her to come and stay a week or two in Hereford with her family every summer. 'I thank God that I am able to get about and enjoy life on a small scale', Kate wrote in June 1919 to Elsie's brother, Bertie Molteno, in Australia.<sup>72</sup>

But things got much tougher after the War. She was not eligible for the new state pension that the radical Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd-George, had introduced in 1909 because she had lived and worked outside England most of her life. And what savings she had been able to salvage from Portugal only brought in a minuscule £13 a year, which sum was now eroded by inflation. By the time she and Betty Molteno entered into their quite intense correspondence in 1921,<sup>73</sup> she had been moved to a garret at the top of the building next door where the elderly servants stayed. She often could not afford tea or sugar, or even to switch on the gas light in her room (which in winter got dark from about 3pm), because what little income she had went on paying the rent. Betty, who herself was hard up in London, sent Kate a few pounds every now and then; at one point, Kate wrote that she had spent the £5 Betty had sent on a week's holiday - a welcome break because she had not been able to leave her lodging for the past seven years! More importantly, both her brother Frederick and sister Mary having died by this time, Betty's caring friendship meant a lot to her; she wrote on one occasion how touched she was at 'the

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<sup>70</sup> Her niece, Elsie Lee (nee Molteno), wrote about all this to Percy Molteno, her second cousin once removed, whose name she had seen in the papers but whom she did not actually know. She asked him for financial assistance for Kate. (Elsie Lee to Percy Molteno, 6 Dec. 1921) Percy passed on Elsie's request to his sister, Betty Molteno, who was living in London at the time and who entered into a warm correspondence with Kate which lasted until just before her death.

<sup>71</sup> I take this to mean that she was looked after by the Convent's servants in some degree.

<sup>72</sup> Kate Molteno to Bertie Molteno, 30 Jun. 1919. Kindly sent me by Jenny Molteno from Australia. Bertie's letters are in the hands of his descendants there.

<sup>73</sup> This lasted from 1921 to 1926, and comprises some 20 letters, preserved in the UCT Archives.

thought that I have somebody belonging to me who feels for me and to whom I in some manner belong.<sup>74</sup>

Kate felt that the Moltenos stood for certain personal values which, as she told Betty, were ‘the goodness of heart, and charity, and generosity of the Molteno race, and which my aunts tried to instil into us as being the virtues of our race’.

She was a well-educated and intelligent woman. All her life she had earned her own living. She was also courageous, not prone to self-pity, and unaccustomed to complaining. It is sad to see how lonely she was in her old age living in a country she had been away from most of her adult life, and how desperately poor her material circumstances.

### Frederick Molteno and the Guernsey connection

We do not know all that much about Kate’s elder brother, Frederick.<sup>75</sup> When he reached adulthood he worked for some years as a clerk in the London offices of Morley’s, the great woollen manufacturers in Nottingham which Samuel Morley, a famous Victorian entrepreneur, political radical and philanthropist, had made the largest enterprise of its kind in the world.<sup>76</sup> This job kept Frederick in London for some years in the late 1850s and early ‘60s. At some point, he saw the opportunity to earn his living independently as a result of the new technology of photography that was spreading like wildfire, and for the rest of his life he earned an insecure living as a photographer in London, with long spells in India before his marriage, and after 1900 in Ceylon.

In London, he used to visit his father’s unmarried sisters, Elizabeth, Clara and Rose Molteno, occasionally. In 1879 when they were already elderly, he had dinner with these ‘respected aunts’ of his and, once again, ‘I was regaled with anecdotes of former greatness. I am afraid the poor old ladies derive their chief pleasure now from that source.’<sup>77</sup>

It was in London that Frederick met Georgiana (‘Georgie’ as he called her) White. She was from a large family of six sisters in the Channel Islands where their father, William Pitt White, was a draper in St Peter Port, Guernsey.<sup>78</sup> Their grandfather, also called William Pitt White (1765-1826), had been born in Weymouth and become a Captain in the Royal

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<sup>74</sup> Kate Molteno to Betty Molteno, 15 Feb. 1922.

<sup>75</sup> He and members of his family often spelt his name Frederic.

<sup>76</sup> Samuel Morley’s legacy endures to this day in the shape of Morley College, the radical adult educational institution in London that he endowed.

<sup>77</sup> Elizabeth and Rose Molteno, two of the unmarried daughters of James Anthony Molteno, had fallen on hard times following their father’s bankruptcy nearly 40 years earlier. Their story is told in Ch. 4. This letter dated 11 Sept. 1879 was kept by Frederick’s grandson, Denis Lee, and kindly shown to me by Alida Lee.

<sup>78</sup> The 1871 census shows Georgiana, a National School pupil teacher at the time, living at home with her five sisters - Susannah, Mary, Selina, Caroline and Rosalie - and their parents, William and Prudence White. Both parents were from Devon, William having been born in Plymouth when his father was in the Royal Navy there.

Navy. He had lost his capital in a rather extraordinary way, and when he retired, took his family from Plymouth to go and live more cheaply on Guernsey where he died.<sup>79</sup>

Georgiana's family, despite its now modest circumstances, always believed they were related to the famous British political duo, William Pitt the Elder, whose premiership had been rewarded by his being made Earl of Chatham, and his son, William Pitt the Younger, who also became Prime Minister and led Britain during the first decade of its wars with Napoleonic France.<sup>80</sup> The Chatham fortune had been amassed by their ancestor Thomas Pitt ('Diamond Pitt' as he came to be called) who, when employed by the East India Company in the heyday of its pillage of India,<sup>81</sup> had got hold of the so-called Pitt Diamond, the fourth largest ever found, and brought it back to England in the hollow of his shoe! Pitt the Younger had no direct heir and Captain Pitt White R.N., apparently spent some £30,000, a vast sum in those early days of the Victorian era, 'trying to establish his claim to the Pitt fortune and the title of Earl of Chatham'. The long drawn out legal proceedings were reminiscent of the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce in Dickens's novel, *Bleak House*, which was set at the time of the Captain's legal action. 'Needless to say, his lawyers went on and on saying that just another few hundred pounds would clinch matters. In the end, he realized he was getting nowhere and ... burned most of the papers in a fit of rage.'<sup>82</sup>

Frederick and Georgiana got married in Chelsea on 27 September 1879, by which time he was already 39 years old and she 29.<sup>83</sup> He was very much in love with her, judging by the fragments of two of his letters to her a couple of weeks before the wedding.<sup>84</sup> Writing to his 'darling Georgie' from his 'cheerless lodgings' in 24 Ovington Street, Chelsea, about a quarter of a mile from where the Victoria and Albert Museum was built at the end of the century, Frederick looked forward to seeing her the next evening: 'Oh! Georgie, when shall we meet, never to separate again?' And in another letter, 'I look forward to the time when your sweet face will greet me on my return to what will then indeed be Home!!'

After their marriage, Georgiana refused to go out to India despite Frederick having some prospect of being made a partner in the photographic business in which he had worked while there. Instead they settled into No. 12 Edith Villas in Fulham, along with Georgiana's

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<sup>79</sup> Bertie Molteno to Kenneth Lee, 26 May 1942. Bertie's older brother Fred, who remained on Guernsey all his life, inherited from his Aunt Carrie (Caroline Prudence) White a wooden box, about 24 inches long and 15 high, filled with old family letters and papers.

<sup>80</sup> Kenneth Lee, a grandson of Georgiana White, asserts that she was a descendant of William Pitt the Elder. Kenneth Lee to Timothy Ashfield, 4 Sept. 1981.

<sup>81</sup> William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy: the Relentless Rise of the East India Company*, London, Bloomsbury, 2019.

<sup>82</sup> This story is told by his great great grandson, Kenneth Lee, who must have heard it from his mother, Elsie Molteno, who was Captain White's great granddaughter. Kenneth Lee to Fiona Lorimer, 3 Dec. 1981.

<sup>83</sup> An important source of information on this branch of the family that I have not been able to draw on fully are letters between Frederick Molteno and his son Bertie (pre-1909), and between Bertie and his brothers Fred and Len, and their sister Elsie. These letters are now in the hands of his grandson, John Molteno, and his wife Jenny, in Australia. Jenny transcribed some details and sent them to me.

<sup>84</sup> Their grandson, Kenneth Lee, made these available to me in 1999.

younger sister, Rosalie, who was a qualified schoolmistress.<sup>85</sup> All their children were born in some part or other of West London (Acton, Shepherds Bush, West Kensington), except for Bertie who was born in Reigate.

#### Frederick John Molteno and Georgiana White's children<sup>86</sup>

Birth	Names	Marriage	Spouse	Occupation	Death
1880	Frederick ('Fred') William Molteno		Mabel Ozanne	Electrician	1967
1884	Herbert ('Bert' or 'Bertie') Molteno	?	'Ruby' Marguerite Allen	Cabinet maker (initially)	1970
1887	'Elsie' Rose Molteno	1909	Arthur Lee	Pupil teacher	1967
1888	Percy Charles Molteno				1890
1894	Leonard Clarke ('Len') Molteno			Pupil teacher	1916

Georgiana did not like living in London. It was, of course, utterly different from Guernsey with its tiny town on the coast and the rolling countryside just a few yards up the road. A particular blow she and Frederick suffered in London was the death in 1890 of their fourth child, two year old Percy, from cerebral meningitis.<sup>87</sup> The following year, 1891, they were still in West London, living at 7 Grove Road in Acton about a mile north of Kew Bridge.<sup>88</sup> But at some point quite soon afterward, Georgiana left the city, but without Frederick accompanying her, and moved with the children back to St Peter Port, a step precipitated possibly by Frederick finding it more and more difficult to support his family from photography in London. It seems that the two of them lived in different parts of the world most of the time from then on although they kept in touch by letter frequently and Frederick missed Georgiana greatly.<sup>89</sup> Their daughter, Elsie, told her sons she hardly ever

<sup>85</sup> 1881 Census. This also records Frederick's occupation as Photographer.

<sup>86</sup> Names in brackets indicate how they were known in the family. Sources include the 1881 Census.

<sup>87</sup> Entry in Register of Deaths, Registration District of Lewisham, dated 5 July 1890.

<sup>88</sup> The 1891 Census records Frederick (still stating he was a photographer), Georgiana, and their three children, Frederick, Herbert and Elsie aged ten, seven, and four. Leonard was born three years later.

<sup>89</sup> Some of these letters survive in Jenny Molteno's hands in Australia.

saw her father once she was in Guernsey, and she got used to going down to the dockside in St Peter Port and asking sailors coming ashore 'Are you my Daddy?'<sup>90</sup>

Georgiana had to support herself and the children. For some years she ran a tiny boarding house - in 1901, for example, she had three people staying with them, a clerk in a brewery, a watchmaker, and the assistant to a seed merchant.<sup>91</sup> This was the home in St Peter Port the children remembered and where they spent their formative years growing up. Their aunt, Caroline White, who was a stationer's assistant, lived with them for a time. Much later on Georgiana lived with another of her sisters, Susannah, who had married a Guernsey man called O'zanne; they lived in a small flat above the stationery shop in 16 Mill Street, which lay up a narrow winding lane from the docks.<sup>92</sup>

In the early 1900s Frederick, who was now in his 60s, went overseas once more in order to try and earn a living. This time he settled in Kandy in the highlands of Ceylon, which was the centre of the island's tea plantations. But things did not go well financially. He wrote to Georgiana lamenting how difficult the times were, so different from the years he had spent in India, but assuring her that, despite her refusal at the time of their marriage to go to India, he never regretted marrying her.

He desperately wanted one of his sons to join him in Kandy and help run his photographic business. He regarded his eldest son, Frederick, as temperamentally unsuited to the role, so kept urging the next boy, Bertie, to come instead. At last on 3 November 1905 Bertie, who was an easy-going and good-natured young man, gave in and took ship on the SS Orotava bound for Colombo en route to Australia, in order to join his father.<sup>93</sup> But it is not clear when he actually arrived, or indeed how long he stayed in Kandy working with him.

### **Elsie Molteno's wedding overshadowed by tragedy**

In 1909 the news reached Frederick that his daughter Elsie was going to get married - the first of his and Georgiana's offspring to do so. Now almost 70, he decided to return to England for the wedding in St Peter Port. The business in Kandy, in any case, was not going well; indeed he was so hard up that even when his furniture was sold up, it only went some way towards paying off his modest debts.<sup>94</sup>

Fit as he always was and in excellent health, he spent his last evening in Ceylon with his close friends, the Crowther family, sitting in his customary chair at table and afterwards on the verandah. He took ship the next morning. The voyage went well and the boat eventually passed through the Suez Canal and reached the Mediterranean. It was high summer, mid August, when tragedy struck. One day someone discovered Frederick totally inert, unable to speak, and at a cursory glance no longer breathing. The ship had no doctor on board and the crew concluded he was dead. The Captain ordered that they sew

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<sup>90</sup> Alida Lee, Elsie Lee's daughter-in-law, told me this, c. 1997.

<sup>91</sup> The 1901 Census lists her as the head of household and a boarding house keeper.

<sup>92</sup> Information from her grandson, Denis Lee. Georgiana died in 1926.

<sup>93</sup> Passenger transcript details.

<sup>94</sup> Georgiana, as a result, inherited little or nothing in the wake of her husband's death.

him up in a length of canvas, and with a perfunctory burial service put him over the side, as the custom was with deaths at sea. It is highly likely however, as his grandson Kenneth Lee believed, that Frederick was 'undoubtedly still alive'.<sup>95</sup> He had long had a condition that made him subject to periodic 'cataleptic trances' that left him temporarily inert and slowed down his breathing, almost as though he was in a coma, and he had been declared dead at least once before in his lifetime.<sup>96</sup> It is hard to imagine his daughter Elsie's horror when, waiting to welcome her father on shore and be present at her wedding, she was told on the boat's arrival that he had died and been buried at sea.

A tall memorial stone was subsequently erected in the cemetery at St Peter Port by the White family in loving memory of William White and Prudence Wood, but on it they also recorded Frederick's death on 20 August 1909 as well as Georgiana's nearly 20 years later, and several other members of the family.

Lovely glimpses of Frederick survive in a letter that Mr Crowther wrote Georgiana following the tragedy.<sup>97</sup> He told her how Frederick's affection for her continued right to the end of his life; 'he was always talking of you and the children'.<sup>98</sup> He was accustomed to walking in order to fulfil his photographic assignments and 'he would do his 15 miles when he was out on his rounds in the better days of photography,' and even at 69, 'he could beat me going up the hills. And it is all hills here. I would have to stop and pant; not so he, he was fresh and like a young man of forty.' And as for the kind of man he was - 'very quiet, but in the highest degree entertaining.... I do not remember seeing him in a violent temper. He could maintain himself in a conversation without being self- [illegible]. He had a good address and would not do a thing de[meaning?] to himself or others.' What's more, although by 1909, 'there is not any business done, none of the photographers can earn a living in this way', 'your husband ... always met troubles with a smiling face.'

### **Bert's decision and founding the Australian Moltenos**

Following these sad events, young Bert returned to Ceylon to wind up his father's affairs. There was clearly no future in the photographic business in Kandy. He had been working recently as an overseer on a friend's rubber plantation in Malaya. While the job required no particular training or qualifications (apart from being a white man, and preferably British) Bert did learn some Tamil from the indentured Indian labourers, and his son, Ron, remembers how years later he tried to teach his children in Australia something of the language!

Bert was now stuck in Colombo and had to decide what to do. He did not want to spend his life as an employee on some remote plantation in the Tropics, nor did he see any future in returning to Guernsey. He decided to go to the United States, but just missed a

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<sup>95</sup> Kenneth Lee to Tim Ashfield, 4 Sept. 1981.

<sup>96</sup> A cataleptic state can last only a few minutes, or more rarely several days or even longer. The patient cannot move or speak during it.

<sup>97</sup> R. F. Crowther to Georgiana Molteno, 20 Nov. 1909. Alida Lee kindly showed me this letter.

<sup>98</sup> UCT Archives, BC330, Box 45.

steamer bound for the West Coast. The next one was only due in five months' time, so he took passage instead for Australia and landed up in Portsea, Victoria.<sup>99</sup>

On arrival, he boarded with the Allen family, and eventually married one of their daughters. He and Ruby (b. 1888) had five children and this is how the Australian branch of the Molteno family began. It remains modest in size to this day because of Bert's five children, only one, Fred Molteno, had children.

#### Bert Molteno and Ruby Allen's children<sup>100</sup>

Birth	Names	Marriage	Spouse	Children	Death
1913	Leonard ('Len') Allen Molteno	?	Hope (she later married Mr Black)	None	1943
1916	'Kathleen' White Molteno	?	[unmarried]	None	1980
1917	Frederick George White Molteno	?	Una Clare Minton	1. 'Paul' Frederick 2. 'John' Richard 3. 'Anne' Marie 4. 'Rosemary' Una	1994
1920	Ronald ('Ron') John Molteno	?	Kathleen Greenop	None	2003
1925	'Margaret' Marion Molteno	?	Sydney John Wedderburn	None	After 2004

As a young man in Guernsey, Bert had been an apprentice to a cabinet maker and these skills stood him in good stead in Australia.<sup>101</sup> He had also worked on some of the extraordinarily fine and elaborate woodwork in Hauteville House in St Peter Port where the great 19<sup>th</sup> century author, Victor Hugo, had lived for 15 years during his enforced exile from France. Victor Hugo had bought it from William Ozanne, an ancient Guernsey family; Bert's aunt, Susannah White, married an Ozanne. When settled in Australia, he continued to be a fine craftsman. One example was a dining room suite he completed in 1925. It was

<sup>99</sup> I am grateful to Jenny Molteno for this account.

<sup>100</sup> Information from Jenny Molteno, 19 May 2009.

<sup>101</sup> The 1901 Census records him as a cabinet maker.

exhibited first in Sydney and then transported to England where it was put on display at Wembley.<sup>102</sup> He eventually got a job doing wood veneers and marquetry inlays for Beale & Co., the piano manufacturers.

Bert was very conscious of his family who had remained on the other side of the world. He stayed in touch with his mother, his brother Fred and sister Elsie, and his Aunt Kate Molteno in the Convent in Stoke on Trent. He always wanted to see Guernsey again, but it was never possible. He could not afford the trip when still in good enough health to make it, and then at the age of 68 he had a stroke and died 18 years later in 1970 at the age of 86.

### **Bert's brothers, Fred and Len Molteno, and the Great War**

Fred, the eldest boy in Frederick and Georgiana's family, was almost 30 by the time of his father's death in 1909. He was firmly settled on Guernsey and became an electrician there - electricity was just beginning to be important for both lighting and machinery.<sup>103</sup> In 1906 he was earning 22 shillings a week, working very long hours, and hoping for a new job with better pay in 'the tram shed' at St Peter Port.<sup>104</sup>

The First World War broke out five years after his father's death. Fred volunteered, like countless young Britons, and joined the Royal Navy as a stoker.<sup>105</sup> The ship he was on took part in 1916 in the biggest naval clash of the First World War - the Battle of Jutland - that resulted in Britain bottling up the Imperial German Navy's capital ships, though not its submarines, for the rest of the War.<sup>106</sup> Fred came through the battle without a scratch, only at the end of the War to injure his head quite badly during a storm while being shipped home to Guernsey.<sup>107</sup> Sometime after his return, he married a cousin, Mabel Ozanne, who was a cook at Government House, and for many years the two of them ran a little bicycle and radio repair shop in St Peter Port. They had no children. Fred's family apparently felt that Mabel wasn't a suitable wife for him, being not quite of their class. However, her letters show her to have been a hard worker and very good natured.<sup>108</sup> Many years later Fred became very enthusiastic about the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and travelled to London in 1953 to watch it. He lived well into his 80s and died only in 1967.

His brother, Len, was the youngest in the family. He wanted to be a teacher, like his elder sister, Elsie. By this date, 1913, it had become a requirement to undergo some training

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<sup>102</sup> Kate Molteno's letters to Betty Molteno.

<sup>103</sup> The 1901 Census.

<sup>104</sup> Frederick Molteno to his son, Bertie Molteno, 29 May 1906.

<sup>105</sup> While the Royal Navy had already taken the strategic decision to shift to oil-fired engines, many of its ships still relied on coal.

<sup>106</sup> Fred was not the only Molteno involved in this battle - for a full account of the Battle of Jutland and Captain Barkly Molteno's role in it, see Ch. 19.

<sup>107</sup> Information from his nephew, Denis Lee.

<sup>108</sup> This is the judgement of Jenny Molteno who has seen Mabel's letters to her brother-in-law in Australia, Bert Molteno.

and get formally certified. This was not possible on a small island like Guernsey. What's more, his mother could not afford the fees for him to do it elsewhere. Luckily his aunt, Letitia Emily Ann Cooke, was prepared to pay.<sup>109</sup> She had never married and was very attached to both her nephew Len and niece Elsie Molteno. Len travelled to the mainland and found lodgings in Clifton, a suburb of Bristol. But money was still very tight. The school where he had to do his teaching practice was a large boys school called Redcliffe, and getting there involved a daily walk of several miles each way. Len worried about wearing out his shoes.<sup>110</sup>

As the end of his training approached in July 1914, he thought about going somewhere in Africa or Canada where teacher salaries might be higher, but his mother felt he would be better off saving on the expense of emigration.<sup>111</sup> To complicate matters, he had got engaged without telling his family and had even sent the young woman money to buy a ring.<sup>112</sup> All his plans, however, were aborted by the outbreak of the First World War the very month after he had completed his course.

He volunteered like his brother Fred and joined the local Gloucestershire Regiment as an ordinary soldier. Like hundreds of thousands of other young men, he was soon rushed over to France, and from April 1915 was in the trenches, in order to fill the always depleting lines on the Western Front that stretched all the way from the Belgian coast to Switzerland. The enthusiasm, even naivete, of these early recruits led to several of Len's comrades being killed in the first weeks of their deployment as a result of their eagerness to peer over the parapet at the German lines.<sup>113</sup>

Len's friends and family on Guernsey sent him various comforts like chocolate, cigarettes and tobacco, and Georgiana even sent him a cake. He also received socks they had knitted for him. This was probably more important because the trenches were often reduced to a mud bath and constantly sodden socks threatened foot rot. It's no surprise that he missed his home on Guernsey intensely, but he remained cheerful and Elsie told Betty Molteno later now 'he was liked by everyone and a splendid character'.<sup>114</sup>

In July the following year, his unit was thrown into the Battle of the Somme, which, far from breaking through the German lines, simply ended up as one of the biggest slaughters of the First World War. Len, now a Lance Corporal, was killed in action on 23 July 1916. He was only 22. He was buried at Thiepval Memorial in France.<sup>115</sup> He is also commemorated on the White family Memorial Tombstone, headed 'In loving Memory of Prudence Wood', St Peter Port, Guernsey

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<sup>109</sup> She was the eldest daughter of Len's grandmother, Letitia Molteno (nee Jones), and her second husband, William Cooke. They had married in 1850, following the death of Letitia's first husband, William Molteno, in Jamaica in 1846. Information from Jenny Molteno, May 2009.

<sup>110</sup> Len Molteno to his mother, Georgiana Molteno, 23 Jun. 1913.

<sup>111</sup> Georgiana Molteno to Len Molteno, 18 Mar. 1914.

<sup>112</sup> Information kindly provided by Jenny Molteno, 23 May 2009.

<sup>113</sup> Georgiana Molteno to her son, Bert Molteno, 9 Jun. 1915.

<sup>114</sup> Elsie Lee to Betty Molteno, 10 Mar. 1922.

<sup>115</sup> Plot: Pier and Face 5A and 5B.

### Marriage and good fortune - Elsie Lee (nee Molteno) and her family in Hereford

Elsie's life turned out very differently from her brothers, Fred, Bert and Len. Several years before the War, in 1909, she had married Arthur Lee. Arthur, who was the same age as her, was a corn chandler from Hereford and they had met when Elsie was a trainee teacher in nearby Leominster. They lived their entire lives in Hereford.

#### Elsie Rose Molteno and Arthur Lee's Children

Birth	Names	Marriage	Spouse	Children	Death	
1910	'Denis' Arthur Lee	c. 1947	Winsome Bettie Cochrane (dvd)	1. Richard Denis Lee  2. Gillian Margaret Lee  3. Vivien Mary Lee  4. Marion Joyce Lee	1996	
1912	'Kenneth' Robert Lee	1959	Alida Jeffreys Florian	Caroline Alida Lee	1992	
1920	'Richard' John Lee	1953	Pauline Bayley	1. Mary Elizabeth Lee  2. Simon Richard Lee	Deceased	

Marrying a grain merchant was a big step up the social ladder for Elsie, and in terms of income, compared to her brothers. Arthur was, she said, 'a very conscientious man'. He worked terribly hard 'from 9 til 9 at night', and had to visit markets all over the district. Although he employed several clerks, they knocked off at 6pm and he had to spend the evenings doing his own correspondence.<sup>116</sup> Owning his own business, however, meant that he and Elsie were able for a while to send their two elder boys, Denis and Kenneth, when still very young, to boarding school in Llandrindod Wells in order to escape what Elsie felt was the damp air of Hereford. Although she never was aware of it, by an extraordinary coincidence her South African cousin, May Murray, and her husband Dr Parker, were running a little nursing home in Llandrindod Wells at the very time Elsie's boys were at school there.

<sup>116</sup> Elsie Lee to Percy Molteno, 6 Dec. 1921.

Things weren't always easy financially for the Lees. In the early 1920s, Arthur had two partners whom he had brought into the business, presumably in order to access the additional capital that post-war inflation and buying wheat from farmers on a wholesale basis required. They were moneyed men who, according to Elsie, 'just dabble in the business when they feel inclined and often speculate too freely, causing us to lose a great deal of money'. Arthur couldn't get rid of them, nor get out and start his own rival business.<sup>117</sup> Things reached such a pass in 1922 that the Lees had 'to economise in every way' and removed the two boys from their boarding school.

The situation eventually improved. The family went to live in Putson Manor, reputed to be one of the oldest houses in Hereford.<sup>118</sup> It had been completely rebuilt in 1520 and its vast stone fireplaces and beautiful oak panelling dated back to those Tudor times. Arthur and Elsie were also now able to send Denis and Kenneth to a minor public school, Allhallows, near Lyme Regis in Dorset. The boys, who were only ten and eight, were homesick and Denis, in particular, hated being away from home again.

Elsie was a talented woman; she played the piano and was good at drawing - a skill that was passed on to her sons. She was also strong-willed, not to say on occasion domineering, and was sometimes felt by her brothers to put on airs. This came particularly to the fore when their mother, Georgiana, got old.

### **Georgiana Molteno's last years**

Georgiana, Frederick's widow, had become increasingly frail towards the end of the First World War. She decided to sell her boarding house, leave Guernsey and take up Elsie's invitation to spend her last years with her in Hereford. But things did not work out happily. In particular Georgiana with her strong Protestant faith could not understand her daughter's refusal to attend church on Sundays. She decided to return to St Peter Port and stay instead with her sister at 16 Mill Street in the flat above the shop.<sup>119</sup>

When she got seriously ill a few years later, the family in Guernsey took good care of her. But Elsie came over from Hereford and took over. She arranged for a professional nurse, but then moved her mother into a hospice. Georgiana wrote to Bert in Australia that she was horribly worried by all the expense which she could not afford. In fact, she got better and returned home, but then had a relapse and died in 1926. Elsie rushed over from the mainland again and took all the funeral arrangements out of the hands of her elder brother, Fred, and the White family. Everybody was very hurt. And things got worse when the time came to pay all the costs of the funeral and Elsie declared that she had no money; it was all her husband's. She also took away what jewellery her mother had and shared none of it with her brothers; she told Bert it would not be safe to try and send any of it to him in Australia.<sup>120</sup> This led to years of breach between her and Fred in particular. Both of them lived to a ripe old age. Elsie, as she got older, fell in love with the up and

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid. Arthur's agreement with his partners prohibited him from taking this step.

<sup>118</sup> Kenneth Lee to Fiona Lorimer, 3 Dec. 1981.

<sup>119</sup> Kate Molteno to Bert Molteno, 30 June 1919.

<sup>120</sup> Information from letters received by Bert Molteno's from the family, including Elsie, that Jenny Molteno has in her possession.

coming card game of Contract Bridge. Her husband died in 1962 and she five years later, the same year as Fred.

### The next generation of Lees

Denis was the eldest of Elsie and Arthur's three sons. Particularly when seen in profile, he had what can only be described as the characteristic beaked nose that several other members of the family, including his distant cousin, Sir John Molteno, possessed.

At Allhallows School, he was in the Cadets and became a member of the Officers Training Corps (OTC), an institution which almost all public schools possessed. When in the late 1930s war with Nazi Germany looked ever more likely, Denis, who was working at the time in a bank in Hereford and hating it, joined the Territorial Army. He was posted as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in June 1937. So unlike his working class uncles Fred and Len who joined up in the First World War as ordinary soldiers, Denis entered the Army as a commissioned officer, his appointment being listed in *The Times*.<sup>121</sup> He fought in the Shropshire Light Infantry and took part in the long drawn out and difficult Allied conquest of Mussolini's Italy in 1943-45. At the end of the fighting he took the opportunity to visit the village of Molteno and met the village priest, as several South African Moltenos had done half a century before.

After the War, he married Winsome Bettie Cochrane<sup>122</sup> and they had four children. He did not return to a job in banking. Instead he wanted to go into the corn trade with his father, Arthur, but one of the partners who also had a son whom he wished to have in the firm, objected. Denis was greatly disappointed at Arthur not insisting in his also being able to join the firm. He got a position in a rival outfit, also in Hereford, where he worked right up until retirement, but the incident caused some coolness between him and his father.

Two of Denis and Bettie's children, when they grew up, emigrated to Canada where they married and had families. Marion Lee married Klaus Boehm, a German Canadian whose family had left Germany in the early 1950s and her sister, Vivien, married an Armenian Canadian called Van Dickson. Van's grandfather had been caught up in the Armenian genocide in Turkey in 1919; he had fled southwards into Lebanon, and from there eventually reached the USA. His son, Van, later decided that Americans couldn't cope with Armenian names. So he took the first syllable of his father's name which sounded like Dik, added 'son' to it (after all, he said, he was indeed the son of his father), and changed his surname to Dickson! So here are two more stories where war and persecution lead to migration, and the ethnic connections of Molteno descendants continue to widen, generation by generation

Kenneth, the second boy, was never in very robust health. During the Second World War he worked for the Bristol Aeroplane Company (formerly British and Colonial) which as early as 1912 had started designing and building war planes. After the War he returned to Hereford, joined the Town Planning Department and lived the rest of his life in the city

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<sup>121</sup> *The Times*, 16 Jun. 1937.

<sup>122</sup> *The Times*, 31 Mar. 1947.

where he had grown up. He had a deep knowledge of and love for its local history and architecture. Despite his somewhat fragile health, 'he made so much of his life in many ways,' his brother Denis wrote, 'with his painting, writing and country pursuits, especially salmon fishing, to say nothing of his lifelong dedication to family history and "the tree"'.<sup>123</sup>

Judging by the beautiful water colour miniature he painted of his mother, he was an accomplished artist. He advertised his services in *The Tatler* and elsewhere, and people used to get him to paint their portraits. Several of his paintings were hung in the National Portrait Gallery in London. He used oils, water colours and pastels, and particularly loved to paint rural scenes and landscapes.

He also wrote a number of novels. Putnams published the first four - *Suragoes' Raft*, a mystery set in Putson Manor where he had grown up, *Surgery Bell* and *The Medicine Chest*, both based on his wife's knowledge of the world of nursing and general practice, and *Rendezvous with a Battleship*. This last book was actually reissued by Robert Hale Ltd in 1981. When he died, a drawer was found full of the manuscripts of other novels he had written but never been able to get published.

Such was his love of fishing that, when he got married late in life (in 1959), his wife, Alida, took it up, too, for fear of never seeing him otherwise! He had a stretch of river on the Arrow near Presteigne and on the Humber on the further side of Dinmore Hill. He even fished for salmon on the Wye from where today they have almost disappeared.

Kenneth became a historian of the Molteno and White families. It all started when he had been ill for a long time as a young man in the 1930s, and his mother, Elsie, 'dumped a mass of ancient papers in front of me and suggested that I might like to work on the family tree'.<sup>124</sup> Over the years he amassed copies of wills, birth and marriage certificates, and other documents. Unfortunately, his enthusiasm often led him to make factual assertions and connections that were based on hearsay, not documentary records, as I discovered in the writing of this history.<sup>125</sup> When his brother Denis expressed some scepticism on one occasion that the White family were really descended from the famous Prime Minister William Pitt, Kenneth took great offence and refused to discuss his family researches with his brother any further!<sup>126</sup>

Richard, the youngest boy, took up photography and all his life loved it, including making old 8mm home movies. He began to work for Kodak just before the Second World War and then served with the RAF in aerial reconnaissance, which of course drew on his professional expertise in photography. After 1945, he moved to Hastings on the South Coast and became a director of Judges, the famous picture postcard manufacturers. He

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<sup>123</sup> Denis Lee to Fiona Lorimer (nee Molteno), 28 February 1992.

<sup>124</sup> Kenneth Lee to Fiona Lorimer (nee Molteno), 3 December 1981.

<sup>125</sup> One example among many: Kenneth came across a 19<sup>th</sup> century artist called Francis Molteno. He jumped to the conclusion that Francis was actually female and the daughter of John Molteno and Caroline Bower (Kenneth Lee to Tim Ashfield, 19 Oct. 1981). In fact, Francis was a man, his surname actually Moltino, and no relation of the Moltenos at all. In a previous letter to Tim Ashfield (4 Sept. 1981), Kenneth made an even larger number of factual mistakes about his grandfather, Frederick John Molteno.

<sup>126</sup> Denis Lee's recollections, as related to me, May 1997.

was treading in the footsteps of his grandfather, Frederick Molteno, and was the second person in the family to earn his living from photography.

On two occasions, the English Lees met their Australian Molteno cousins. In 1981 Denis took a 5½ week cruise on the P & O liner Oriana. The ship put in at Hawaii (but Denis never knew that he had Molteno relatives on these islands), and on arrival in Australia, there on the dockside to meet him were Ron Molteno (Bert's son) and Ron's brother Frederick and sister Margaret. This was a result of Ron's interest in the history of the family that then had got from his father and which had prompted him to make contact with his Lee cousins in England. A decade later, Ron returned the compliment and visited the UK where he travelled to Hereford. He saw both Denis and Kenneth and was shown the boxes of papers that Kenneth had built up during many years of researching the history of the Molteno and White families.<sup>127</sup> And when returning to Australia, he routed his trip home via Canada and met Denis's two daughters in British Columbia.

## A reflection

So many aspects of the human condition are thrown up by the experiences of this branch of the family. How tough it is to inherit nothing from one's parents. How brutal is the poverty that can blight old age in the absence a welfare state. How slowly higher education became commonplace even in increasingly well off Western countries - in both the English and Australian wings of the family, the opportunity to go to university only really opened up in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

And migration, of course, as one way to earn a better living or build one's life anew. And with it, the never ending process, seeping slowly or coming in as a fast rising tide, of venturing to new countries and marrying across linguistic and cultural boundaries. I am writing this book at a moment when the forces propelling economic globalization, and with it the movement of people across 'national' borders, are prompting in host communities renewed prejudice around being culturally 'swamped', worries about jobs being 'taken', fears that wages will be 'undercut' and social services 'over-burdened'. And yet as the stories told in this chapter make so clear, it was ever thus. And with each succeeding age, humanity becomes more intermingled.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were three main branches of descendants of the original Anthony Molteno who had settled in London in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and become a prominent printseller. Of his and his wife Mary Lewis's children, eight survived into adulthood, five of whom married - four of their sons and one daughter. James Anthony Molteno, their eldest boy, had a large family; so did the next boy, John Molteno; and also their only daughter to marry, Mary Molteno, who became a Bristow. The children of these three naturally all grew up in London and became the third generation of Moltenos to live there. Once grown up, however, a number of them - both men and women - left the country in order to earn their living. Several emigrated permanently to some

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<sup>127</sup> Ron Molteno to Dr J. C. ('Pook') Williamson (son of Carol Molteno) in Tasmania, 21 Aug. 1996. This letter now in the possession of Pook's sister, Margaret Gibbs.

other part of the world - a process that has been repeated in every generation of the family ever since. But others continued to live in London or, much more rarely, in some other part of the country. As a result, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were some fourth generation Moltenos still in London. In previous chapters, I have related the increasingly divergent histories of two branches of these Moltenos - James Anthony's offspring and John Molteno's - who remained living in England. We will now find out what happened to the third branch - Mary Molteno's Bristow descendants.

### Mary Molteno's Bristow descendants<sup>128</sup>

I have already told the story of Mary Molteno's marriage to Charles Busby Bristow in 1811,<sup>129</sup> and his unsuccessful life as a businessman in London. Also how one of their three sons, Whiston Bristow, responded to the family's impoverishment following his father's disappearance by emigrating. First to Jamaica, and then to the United States, where his Aunt Rose Molteno joined him in the middle of the century.<sup>130</sup> Nothing more was heard of Whiston or his children, nor of his elder brother Charles.

The Bristow family today traces its ancestry through Mary and Charles's youngest son, Robert Anthony Bristow, who was born in 1820. He was educated at Christ's Hospital in London which described itself as 'a school for sons of deceased or impoverished gentlemen',<sup>131</sup> and then went on to Edinburgh University and became an apothecary.<sup>132</sup> Robert in 1849 married Margaret Swan 'of a lusty yeoman stock in Kent' (to quote his grandson, Sir Robert Bristow, in his *Memoir* of the Bristow family) and had seven children. The girls - Mary, Louisa and Margaret - all married, but regrettably I have come across no account of what happened in their lives or their descendants. Of the boys, Alfred died as a child, Whiston Molteno Bristow joined the Post Office where he worked most of his life, and the third boy, Charles Robert Bristow, followed his father and became a pharmacist (as apothecaries had come to be called by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century). It was through the fourth boy, however, Robert Alfred Bristow, that the main line continued.

### Robert Bristow - the boy with 'the fastest swerve ever known'

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<sup>128</sup> This account relies heavily on the privately published *Memoir of the Bristow Family with notes on the Family of Molteno of Milan and South Africa* by Sir Robert Charles Bristow, Kt., C.I.E., M.I.C.E., M.I.M.E, F.R.S.A, 1944, 46pp; also his hand-drawn family tree of part of the Bristow Family (1944); and greatly supplemented by information kindly told me by David Potts (a great great grandson of Mary Molteno and Charles Bristow); David's sister, Sue Hindle; and their uncle Anthony 'Tony' Bristow, November 1998.

<sup>129</sup> See Ch. 3.

<sup>130</sup> See Ch. 3.

<sup>131</sup> Founded in 1552 in Newgate Street, London, it is one of England's oldest boarding schools. In Tudor times it aimed to educate children, both boys and (remarkably for the time) girls, of London's poor. See <https://www.christs-hospital.org.uk/about-ch/history-of-the-school/>

<sup>132</sup> Sir Robert Bristow, *Memoir*, op.cit.

Robert, Mary Molteno's grandson, was sent to St Mark's College, Chelsea where he became a fine rugby player, and was remembered for having been 'the fastest swerve ever known'. Apart from that, however, he always said he never learned anything at school.<sup>133</sup> When he grew up, his father advanced him the necessary capital to get established in business in London as a wholesale merchant, but Robert was never a very successful businessman and his huge family was often sorely pressed financially. His primary interest was politics, not money-making; he was a vehement reformer and supporter of William Gladstone and Lord Rosebery, the towering Liberal political leaders of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Robert married Laura Ann Webb in 1877. They had a typically enormous Victorian family. Of the sixteen children Laura Ann gave birth to in rapid succession, nine survived into adulthood. It is for this reason perhaps that Sir Robert Bristow, the family historian, asserts his mother came from 'healthy and practically minded yeoman stock' who he believed had been 'engaged in town and country pursuits for long generations past'. Laura's father earned his living as a lawyer, as had previous generations of Webbs; and Sir Robert suggests that 'some of the present generation seem to have inherited a double dose of argumentative tendencies from Webbs and Moltenos'!

But the law was not what really interested Laura's father Mr Webb was an eccentric who spent most of his energy and money producing inventions of great ingenuity but little practical value. One example was a machine which 'reduced copperplate handwriting through a succession of diminishing gears to microscopic proportions.... Nothing legible was visible to the naked eye, but under a microscope what looked like a pin point became, for example, the Lord's Prayer.'<sup>134</sup>

One consequence of the cost of developing these impractical inventions was that Laura probably inherited little or no money from her father - which made supporting her and Robert's large family all the more difficult.

Laura was the rock on which the family stood and her son, Sir Robert Bristow, paid lovely tribute to her in his *Memoir* 'for courage and endurance, for integrity of principle, for downright sacrifice and unselfish devotion, combined with domestic resource and ingenuity, I do not think I ever met anyone like her.'

#### Robert Alfred Bristow and Laura Ann Webb's children

Birt h	Names	Spouse	Death	Details
1878	Whiston Alfred Bristow	1.Gertrude Stretch (dvd) 2.Mina Blackburn		Colonel. M.I.E.E., M.I.Ae.E. Of the RAF. MD, Low Temperature Carbonization, London. Had one son, also called Whiston Bristow.

<sup>133</sup> As he told his son, Sir Robert Bristow.

<sup>134</sup> Sir Robert Bristow, *Memoir*, op.cit.

1880	Robert Charles Bristow	1.N. L. Law (dvd) 2.Gertrude Anne Kimpton		Knighted. C.I.E., M.Inst.C.E. Of the Admiralty & Government of India. Built Cochin Port. No children by either marriage.
1882	Charles Francis Bristow	Norma Law	c. 1866	Major. I.S.O., of Baden-Powell's Police during Boer War, served in the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> World Wars, and the Kenya Police
	Laura Margaret Swan Bristow	Henry Gore Gardiner		Husband a chartered accountant.
	Anthony Molteno Bristow	Edith X		Lieutenant, Territorial Yeomanry in World War 1 - served in Egypt, Gallipoli, and the Western Front in France. Subsequently a businessman.
	John Trotman Bristow		1915	Artist with W.H. Smith; farmed in Australia; volunteered in World War 1; died at Gallipoli.
	Mary Bristow	Robert Roberts		Husband optician and chemist.
	Ewart Bristow	Elizabeth X		Squadron Quartermaster-Sergeant. Fought in World 1. Later in CID, Kenya.
	Katherine Bristow	Bernard Woodmancy		Husband a wireless expert; managed factory during World War 2.

Laura's husband, Robert Bristow, did have one stroke of good fortune. A relative of his, possibly his Uncle Charles Francis Bristow, had invented the famous Victorian remedy for eczema, *Bristow's Coal Tar Soap*, and become very wealthy. Not having children of his own, he left part of his fortune, some £35,000, to Robert in 1883. This was an enormous sum in those days. Robert was in business as a printer at the time and he and Laura already had four or five children to provide for. This sudden access of wealth had a profound impact on the older children in the family. For the short time the money lasted, their parents were able to give them a private (what the English confusingly call a public school), i.e. privileged, education.

### **The next generation: Whiston Bristow - from engineer to sudden wealth**

Robert and Laura's eldest son, Whiston Bristow, was born in 1878. He was the first to benefit from his father's unexpected legacy from Uncle Charles Francis Bristow, and went to college and became an engineer. During the First World War (1914-18) he served in the Royal Flying Corps (the predecessor of the RAF) and rose to the rank of Colonel. He afterwards went on to be a successful consulting engineer in England and abroad.

In 1928, a wholly unexpected development transformed his life. An enterprise called the Low Temperature Carbonisation Company (later to have the catchier name, Coalite) was in financial difficulties and looking around for a new Managing Director. Whiston was asked to see the Board in London. Not knowing about the problems facing the company, he assumed it was merely about a possible consultancy. But when he arrived, he found himself confronted by all the Directors who promptly asked him to take over as Managing Director. He was amazed. What's more, he already had a successful career and liked the freedom being a freelance consultant gave him. He asked for time to consider and that evening wrote down his terms, deliberately pitching them so inordinately high that he assumed the Board would reject them. They included a large salary, a flat in London, and a chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce. The next day he presented these conditions, only to have the Board accept them. He didn't know what to do and that night simply couldn't sleep. But eventually he decided to accept and make as good a fist of it as he could. As things turned out, he succeeded in turning round the loss-making business in 18 months. And that is how he became Chairman and Managing Director of Low Temperature Carbonization and the one member of his family to become seriously wealthy.

Another story told about him is that he had a formula which he used in gambling and which unfailingly helped him win. During the 1930s he would regularly go to Monte Carlo on the Cote d'Azur, book in at a swanky hotel, roll up his sleeves and stay there 48 hours until he made enough money to pay for the whole trip!<sup>135</sup>

### **Sir Robert Bristow, builder of the modern port of Cochin**

Robert and Laura's next eldest son was Robert Charles Bristow (born in 1880). He also received a privileged public school education and then trained as a civil engineer. He joined the Admiralty before going on to work for the Government of India for many years (1920-41), during which time he designed and built the modern port of Cochin in Kerala. It was for these services that he was knighted.<sup>136</sup>

Robert was an immensely active man who, among other things, wrote many pamphlets, including his history of the Bristow family which he compiled when in South Africa for a time during the Second World War. As its full title makes clear, *Memoir of the Bristow Family with notes on the Family of Molteno of Milan and South Africa*, he was acutely conscious, and proud, of his family's Molteno ancestry, and his little book has served to keep succeeding generations of Bristows aware of their distinctive ancestry on both sides of their family.

Settling back in England in retirement in 1945, Sir Robert indulged his interest in politics. But unlike his father who had supported the Liberal Party in its heyday, Sir Robert tried to form his own political party, and used up much of his savings in the process. He had worked out that no Bristow lived to be more than 80 years of age; so he spent his capital on various projects (including his political party) on that assumption. Unfortunately, he lived a number of years beyond his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, with dire consequences in particular for his wife, Gertie, who was left in very straightened circumstances after his death.

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<sup>135</sup> These stories, and many of those that follow, were told me by Tony Bristow, 1998.

<sup>136</sup> Robert Bristow, *Cochin Saga* (London: Cassell, 1959).

### **Frank Bristow, colonial police officer**

The third boy in Robert and Laura's large family was Charles Francis Bristow, known in the next generation as Uncle Frank. Born in 1882, his schooling, unlike his elder brothers, was blighted by the financial disaster that struck his father when his business partner absconded with all their firm's assets to Australia while Robert and his family were away on holiday. The Bristows were suddenly reduced to relative penury, with huge consequences for the younger children.<sup>137</sup>

There was no money for Frank to have a university education. Instead, as a youngster of 18 or so, he went out to Southern Africa where he joined a unit being raised by Col. Robert Baden-Powell as part of the British forces fighting in the Boer War (1899-1902). Subsequently, he moved to Kenya where he joined the British East African Police and served there for 23 years. During the First World War he again saw active service, and rose to the rank of Major. On going back to Kenya, he married Norma Law who was the daughter of a British colonial officer in Burma who, it is said, had married a Burmese princess.<sup>138</sup> Frank and Norma had four children, only one of whom, Margaret, remained in Kenya, having married a British farmer in the colony.

### **Anthony Bristow - man of courage, man of principle**

Robert and Laura's fourth son was Anthony Molteno Bristow, born in 1888.<sup>139</sup> He grew up in the newly straitened circumstances of his family and became a clerk working for the Metropolitan Borough of Hackney in London. As a boy, he sang in the choir of one of the famous City churches, St Michael's, Cornhill, and was one of the choristers at the funeral of Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle on 2 February 1901. He also rowed and boxed. When the First World War broke out, he volunteered like all his brothers, and joined the Hertfordshire Territorial Yeomanry with the rank of corporal. He saw service on various fronts during the War - against the Turks in Palestine and at Gallipoli, in North Africa, and in France. The terrible slaughter of the War eventually led to his being made a full-blown officer like a number of other non-commissioned officers, despite his not having had the advantage his elder brothers had had of a public school education.

Anthony used to relate some of his experiences in the War. At Gallipoli in 1915, he and his fellow soldiers were landed on the beaches without proper supply lines being established. For three weeks this incompetence of the British Army's high command - something that characterised the whole Gallipoli fiasco - led to the men having almost nothing to live off but onions, and for the rest of Anthony's life, onions, and anything cooked with onions, made him ill.

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<sup>137</sup> This account comes from the recollections of Tony Bristow, 1998.

<sup>138</sup> Tony Bristow's recollections. Given the pervasive racist prejudice and social segregation in the British Empire at the time, it would be surprising if Norma's mother was Burmese.

<sup>139</sup> Source: his son, Tony Bristow, whom I met in 1998, and his grandchildren, David Potts and Sue Hindle, who have many vivid recollections of him.

Another of his stories was about what happened when he was serving on the Western Front in France. Somehow he managed to get hold of two whole sides of bacon. He swapped one of them with a local farmer for 6 dozen eggs. He then got his platoon frying a full-blown English breakfast of bacon and eggs. It was the first decent meal they had had for weeks and there they were sitting in their trench enjoying it. Anthony, as their officer, made sure he was the last man to be served. Suddenly a German shell hit the bank above their heads, showering mud and earth all over them, and Anthony was the only man not to get his bacon and eggs!

After the War, times were tough for many ex-servicemen. Anthony was able to be employed by Hackney Borough again and at the same time resume his architectural training that the War had interrupted. He met there a woman who was also working for the Council. They were strongly attracted to each other, but Anthony broke it off because she was married and he regarded it as immoral to be the cause of a divorce. She allegedly felt differently. He took what he saw as the only way out: throw up his job and leave London, even though this was only a few months before he was due to sit his final architecture exams.

He thought about joining his brother, Frank, in Kenya. The British East African Police were recruiting in London. Anthony went along with his youngest brother, Edwin ('Eddie') Ewart Bristow, for interview and both got offered jobs. Eddie had also fought in the War, serving as a non-commissioned officer and ending up as a squadron quartermaster-sergeant. By this time, however, their father was a widower and had become very unwell, and the question arose: who was to look after him? Allegedly, the eldest of the six brothers, Whiston, said he couldn't because he was likely to be out of the country much of the time because of his consultancy work. The next brother, Robert, was already overseas in India. Eddie decided in any case to join Frank in Kenya.<sup>140</sup> In effect, they were all saying to Anthony: you're the one who has got to stay in England and look after Father.

So Anthony didn't take up the job in Kenya. But how to earn a living now that he'd left Hackney Council? It so happened that during the War, his superior officer had been a man called Maitland Jacobs of the famous biscuit manufacturing family. Anthony's children remember being told that their father basically ran the regiment for Jacobs who thought the world of him and promised, if ever he needed a job, he would give him one in the family's company in Liverpool. This is how Anthony joined the Jacobs workforce as a sales rep, based in Manchester and covering eight counties. But he loathed the city with its constant blanket of low cloud and endless rain, and he spent only a year there. However, the job did result in his meeting his future wife, Edith Train, who was working for Jacobs Biscuits as a secretary (Anthony allegedly threw paperclips at her to attract her attention). On leaving Manchester, he was sent to open up a new sales territory in the North East, based on Tyneside. And this is where he and Edith made their home. When the question of promotion came up, he wanted the London Region post but Bertie Jacobs would not let him have it. Anthony refused to be posted back to Manchester as Regional Sales Manager there, so he simply stayed in the North East as a senior sales rep for the rest of his working life. His grandchildren remember him as a man of principle who would never compromise - and who paid the price in material terms.

Anthony's family was always hard up. It had particular difficulty with meeting health costs (this was long before the age of the National Health Service). Occasionally, their wealthy

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<sup>140</sup> Eddie served in the CID in Kenya.

Uncle Whiston (now MD of Coalite in London) would help his brother out financially. The children remember him parking his Rolls Royce outside their house when he visited - and the wonders this did for the family's credit-rating with the local shopkeepers!

## Death at Gallipoli

The last of the brothers, John ('Jack') Trotman Bristow, didn't receive much of an education either. He started his working life as a draughtsman with W H Smith & Son. Seeing no prospects for himself, he emigrated to Australia in the early 1900s and set himself up as a market gardener, only to be virtually wiped out financially by a freak storm that struck just as his vegetables were ready for market. When the War broke out in 1914, he volunteered like all his brothers and was with the Australian Commonwealth forces that landed at Gallipoli. Amazingly, as he was passing through Cairo, he fleetingly saw his brother Anthony who was also bound for the same front. Tragically, Jack was mortally wounded during the bloody, and in the end futile, battle to establish a beach head in the Dardanelles. He was evacuated to Alexandria but died on the way and was buried at sea.

## Reflections

Many of the Bristows retained an awareness of being descended from a Molteno. They were told the stories about their ancestor, Mary Molteno. A number of them were given Molteno as one of their first names. And something they call the Bristow Ring actually incorporates part of the Molteno coat of arms.<sup>141</sup>

The reality, however, is that, after the second generation, there was next to no contact between the Bristows and other branches of Anthony Molteno's descendants.<sup>142</sup> This despite the fact that there were branches of the family in England still bearing the Molteno surname throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and two Molteno descendants, Jarvis and Lenox Murray, were living in Kenya at the time their Bristow cousins, Frank and Eddie, were police officers there.<sup>143</sup>

Significant parallels nevertheless can be seen in the lives of the Bristows and Moltenos. Just as the so many Moltenos had to emigrate, so generations of Bristows also responded to poverty and took advantage of the opportunities created by the British Empire to make better lives for themselves throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Bristows moved to Jamaica and the USA, to Kenya and Australia, and to India; while Moltenos landed up, as we have seen, in these same countries as well as Ceylon and the Cape Colony.

There is another, but more esoteric, parallel. Two family members, Sir Robert Bristow and Percy Molteno, shared an almost quixotic determination to prove the ancient lineage of their respective families. Both were certain they had coats of arms they ought to be entitled to use. Each had a family motto - *Semper fidelis* in Percy's case; *Vigilantibus non*

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<sup>141</sup> Tony Bristow inherited the ring from his father, and had copies made for each of his sons. What its origins are remain obscure.

<sup>142</sup> There was the briefest of contacts between Percy Molteno and Sir Robert Bristow in the 1930s.

<sup>143</sup> See Ch. 18 on how the Murrays became established in Kenya in the early 1900s.

*dormientibus* in Sir Robert's case.<sup>144</sup> Percy pursued the Moltenos' possible origins in early Italy;<sup>145</sup> while Sir Robert devoted most of his family *Memoir* to stories of possible remote forebears in England. He wrote about Rolf the Ganger, an 8<sup>th</sup> century Viking, whose Norman descendants came over with William the Conqueror. And Bristows going on the Crusades, and getting three crescents on a shield incorporated into their coat of arms as a reward. And in Tudor times Henry VIII was supposedly so elated by his successful siege of Boulogne in 1543 that he hurled his hat in the air, and Nicholas Bristow, silk merchant and Keeper of the King's Jewels, managing to catch it, the King responding: 'Bring it to me in London, and you can have your heart's desire.' That was, Nicholas felt, having his own coat of arms - which Henry granted and which has continued in the family ever since.<sup>146</sup>

Sir Robert summed up the pride he felt in his ancestors in no uncertain terms: 'I have not found a case of a Bristow truckling to the high or wronging the law. Our chief assets seem to be a remarkable tenacity and never-failing resource, as well as a very characteristic independence of mind and spirit.' He did go on to concede: 'We [also] have the defects of those qualities, ... a forthright or ingenuous candour where reticence would be wiser in our own interest.' Percy Molteno might well have agreed with him on both counts.

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<sup>144</sup> Which I take to mean respectively something like: 'Remain always faithful' [to what you believe, or those you ought to be loyal to]; and '[Life's rewards go] to those who remain alert to opportunities, not those who sleeping let them slip by'.

<sup>145</sup> See Ch. 1.

<sup>146</sup> Sir Robert's fund of stories about possible Bristow ancestors can be read in his *Memoir*, op.cit.