

THE DANNREUTHER FAMILY



The Dannreuther family was well-known in Battle in recent decades, and Stephen Dannreuther's name is on the town's war memorials for 1939/45. He was an unmarried man aged 21, a Third Radio Officer on the SS *Harperley* of London. This vessel of 4586 tons was on its way in convoy from Milford Haven to Buenos Aires when it was some 500 miles south of



Newfoundland, where it was attacked by submarine U264 early on 5 May 1943. 39 men survived but ten died. Dannreuther's name is also on the Mercantile Marine memorial on Tower Hill in the City.¹ To those of later generations it may seem odd that a journey to South America was being undertaken via Newfoundland, but in 1943 the overwhelming need was for as short as possible a crossing of the Atlantic to avoid the U-boats always on the prowl. In this event the attempt failed.

From Dannreuther family tree, ancestry.co.uk

It is probable that very few Battle people realised the considerable talents of this family. Stephen's father Wolfram (1875-1950) was a market gardener running the fruit farm in Marley Lane, the site of which is now mostly covered by the houses of Norman Close. He had come to Battle early in the twentieth century from a family with strong Hastings connections and had at first been in partnership with Henry Hooper, an arrangement dissolved in 1912.² Wolfram was one of five children of Edward George Dannreuther, a name well-known to historians of music and commemorated by a plaque on his house at 12 Orme Square, Bayswater.

Edward Dannreuther (1844-1905)

Edward was the son of Abraham George Dannreuther (1814-61), a piano manufacturer. He was born at Strasbourg in 1844, then in France but German from 1871 to 1919, and as a child went to the USA with his father. He returned to Europe after his father's death and was trained as a pianist at the famous Leipzig Conservatoire and he performed in London among other places. He came to settle in London in 1871 and married Chariclea, a British woman of Greek descent, one of the Ionides family closely associated with the Pre-Raphaelites. They married in the Greek church in London.

The Ionides family were friends and patrons of many well-known 19th century artists. Constantine Ionides, son of Alexander and brother of Chariclea Dannreuther – Edward's wife – bought and commissioned works by Rossetti and Millais and eventually bequeathed his collection of old masters as well as 19th century paintings to the Victoria and Albert Museum. Aglaia Ionides, daughter of Alexander and sister of Chariclea Dannreuther was drawn by Rossetti and was a confidante and correspondent of both Rossetti and William Morris.³

Chariclea was brought up in the cosmopolitan environment of Tulse Hill, and, from 1864, 1 Holland Park, London, with their constant flux of artist, musician and writer visitors. Guests

included George Frederic Watts, Alphonse Legros and the musicians Figdor Joachim and his nephew Joseph. Legros made five attempts at painting Chariclea's portrait but gave up and painted her brother Alecco instead in 1864.

On her marriage to Edward Dannreuther, Chariclea came to live at 12 Orme Square, London. Her father had permitted the marriage only after Edward had reached an annual income of £1,000.



Edward Dannreuther, a friend of Hans Richter, the first conductor of Wagner's Ring Cycle at Bayreuth in 1876, was London's leading promoter of Wagner. He was founder of the London Wagner society and a dedicatee of Henri Fantin-Latour's Wagnerian lithographs. In 1876 Wagner stayed with the Dannreuthers at Orme

*Chariclea Dannreuther, by Frederick Hollyer, about 1885
(© National Portrait Gallery). The child is her son Hubert.*

Square. Edward Dannreuther had been a classmate of [Sir] Arthur Sullivan in Leipzig from 1859 to 1863, studying under Moscheles, Hauptmann and Richter. He made his debut as a pianist at the Crystal Palace in 1863, taught at the Royal Academy of Music and with Sullivan campaigned for revision of the copyright law in favour of composers. He was among those who attended a mesmeric session at D.G. Rossetti's home along with JW, George Price Boyce, F. R. Leyland, J. E. Boehm and Luke Ionides on 27 July 1870.

In 1877 the architect Philip Webb was commissioned to work on the Dannreuther's studio at Orme Square. In the early 1890s they settled in Hastings with Alexander Ionides senior in Windycroft, two regency cottages turned into a single house [*in Hastings; see below*]. It was decorated with William Morris wallpapers, and boasted a Roman hall with a marble mosaic floor, light fittings by W. A. S. Benson and pictures by Rosa Bonheur, Fantin-Latour and JW.⁴ [JW = James Whistler]



Edward was indeed a champion of Richard Wagner, whom he had met at Leipzig. His music was perhaps a little odd to Victorian English ears but soon became established here. It might be hard to call him a friend of the composer; one would imagine that acolyte might be a better term. Wagner, who stayed with Edward for five weeks in 1877,⁵ was the godfather of Edward's

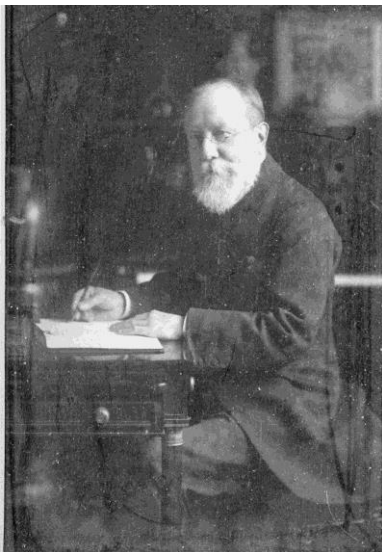
From Stephen Dannreuther

fifth child, Hubert, who died as late as 1977. Hubert's siblings were all Wagnerian: Sigmund, Wolfram, Tristan and Isolde. Edward is regarded as a major influence on some British composers, among them Hubert Parry. Parry came under his influence in 1872 'which he was wont to describe as the chief in artistic result in his life [*sic*]; and at Mr Dannreuther's most interesting concerts a great number of chamber compositions by Parry were heard for the first time.'⁶ These concerts ran for many years and were held at Edward's house in Orme Square (which must have had a sizeable room for the purpose). So when one sings or hears *Jerusalem*, perhaps there is an echo of Edward Dannreuther there.

Edward was first and foremost a pianist, and there are many descriptions of his playing. For example,

... one of the finest pianists living as regards poetic rendering and delicacy of touch ...⁷
His residence in London seems, as far as we can see, the only obstacle which prevents Mr Dannreuther from being counted among our leading pianists ... but few musical prophets receive due honour in their own country.⁸

But as well as playing, Edward composed songs, wrote for Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, and published several books. His obituary remarked that for years he struggled against feeble health.⁹ If so, it was a characteristic not inherited by his children, all of whom reached respectable old age, up to 96 years.



Edward was professor of piano at the Royal College of Music for the last ten years of his life. Shortly after his death a subscription was opened to support a prize in his name at the Royal College of Music, where he had been an examiner before being appointed professor of piano there, a post that he held for ten years until his death. Those wishing to contribute to the fund were asked to send their donations to Mrs Thomas Gair Ashton of Vinehall, Robertsbridge, whose Whistler descendants still live in Battle. The award is still made: one recipient, in 1969, was David Helfgott, later made famous through the film *Shine* in 1997.

Edward George Dannreuther (1844-1905).
From Dannreuther family tree, ancestry.co.uk

Towards the end of the century the family moved to Hastings, living in High Wickham in the Old Town. The Ionides family bought 15 High Wickham for Edward in 1880, and the property next door in 1882. In 1883 they were demolished. The single house Windycroft rose in their place, to remain in the family until 1978.¹⁰ It is graded II* for its interiors:



Red brick with elevations of tile hanging with courses of scalloped tiles. Red tiled hipped roofs. Coved eaves. Projecting bays with hipped roofs. Rusticated stucco basement. 3 storeys, attic and basement. Sashes with glazing bars. Asymmetrical plan. Hipped dormer. Balcony with cast iron balustrade on cast iron brackets. Brick chimney stack. Interesting interior: with

Windycroft, Old Town, Hastings
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grade_II*_listed_buildings_in_Hastings

mosaic floors, a double staircase hall, a large music room based on acoustically correct dimensions. Wall papers throughout the house are original William Morris. Tiling by De Morgan to many fireplace surrounds. Fine timberwork to all rooms.¹¹

Tristan Dannreuther

Tristan, the eldest child, inherited Windycroft. He had been born in 1872 at Holland Park (where the Ionides family lived) and joined the Royal Navy as a cadet; the first mention of him in the press is dated 1887. Thereafter he rose in the ranks: Acting Sub-Lieutenant in 1892, Sub-Lieutenant in 1893, Lieutenant in 1895. During this period he was engaged in the Sudan war of 1898, on HMS *Leander*, and was awarded the Khedive Medal and Clasp of Egypt. He was appointed Commander at the end of 1905 and was recorded as commanding the battleship HMS *Mars* early in 1914. He was appointed Captain in July 1918, and won the standard war medals and the French Croix de Chevalier. In 1919 he was brought to the notice of the Admiralty for valuable service during the war.

If his rise was not quite to the heights achieved by his younger brother Hubert it was still an achievement. As always in the Royal Navy he served on, and later commanded, a wide



variety of ships. He retired at his own request in 1922, moving permanently to Hastings. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geological Society as early as 1897, when he was only 25. He also developed a keen interest in entomology, and became a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society. He gave numerous talks and wrote various papers. His pamphlet *The dragonflies of east Sussex* can be

Tristan Dannreuther (© National Portrait Gallery)

be read at the East Sussex Records Office. He was also involved in the University Extension Association.¹² Still resident at Windycroft, he died in 1963. He never married.¹³

Sir Sigmund Niklas Dannreuther

The next son of Edward and Chariclea was Sigmund. He too achieved high repute, though more quietly. One reference described him as 'one of the most retiring men in the country',¹⁴ which was probably as well for the senior civil servant he had become. Born at Orme Square in 1873, he was sent to Eton as a collegier (i.e. a scholar of the original foundation) and proved an excellent sportsman as well as student. He moved on to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was elected to a major scholarship in the same year as the



slightly older Bertrand Russell and where he won a prize for classics, in which he graduated. In 1896 he applied for the Home Civil Service and came very narrowly second in the examinations, a very long way in front of the remaining successful candidates. He joined the War Office which, as the Great War developed, was of much greater importance than before. In 1915 he moved to the

From Dannreuther family tree, ancestry.co.uk

new Ministry of Munitions under David Lloyd George, which had been set up to direct efforts that would ensure a steady supply of munitions in contrast to the sorry shell shortage of that year.

In 1917 he was appointed CB (Commander of the Order of the Bath) and made Controller of Munitions and Finance – a difficult job because the structure of Government accounts did

not then conform to elementary principles of accounting: they did not distinguish between capital and revenue, for example. Giving evidence to a committee of investigation in 1918 he was reported as saying “the estimates are not worth the paper they are written on from the point of view of Parliamentary control”, just one of many comments that led to speedy reform. He was knighted in the New Year Honours of 1919, thereafter becoming first Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Munitions and then Deputy Secretary of the new Air Ministry. It appears that he failed to obtain an Italian honour for his war work, despite general complaints that those in other ministries did so but that the Italians were failing in respect of the Ministry of Munitions; the matter was not pressed because of Foreign Office opposition to doing so.¹⁵ After retirement in 1934 he and his wife lived at Stoke Green in the parish of Stoke Poges in south Buckinghamshire, where he died at the age of 87.

Sigmund married Margaret Ethel Burbrook in Bayswater in 1901, both of them recorded as living at 23 Princes Square. Margaret was the daughter of a jeweller, and had been born at Kensington. They had three children but no known further descendants other than one granddaughter. Their second child and elder son, Denis was, like his father, clearly destined for great things. A collegier at Eton, he was a scholar of Balliol and won a double First. He was elected a Fellow of All Souls in 1927 and was called to the Bar in the same year. His engagement was announced in June 1939 but withdrawn in the following month; two days later he was dead of double pneumonia. He was not told that he was no longer engaged to be married.¹⁶ Perhaps misleadingly, he died at Brentwood Mental Hospital. (The second son, Edward, also died at a mental hospital at Aylesbury; he is recorded as an inmate there in the 1939 Register.) On Denis's death the then Sir Walter Monckton KC, one of the country's best-known barristers, wrote of him:

... he seemed destined for outstanding achievement in the Law. Ill-health prevented this, but could not impair the fine quality of the work that he did in the Temple and as a Parliamentary draughtsman. If he never suffered fools gladly, he was critical of himself and intolerant of anything less than his best work ...¹⁷

Isolde Dannreuther



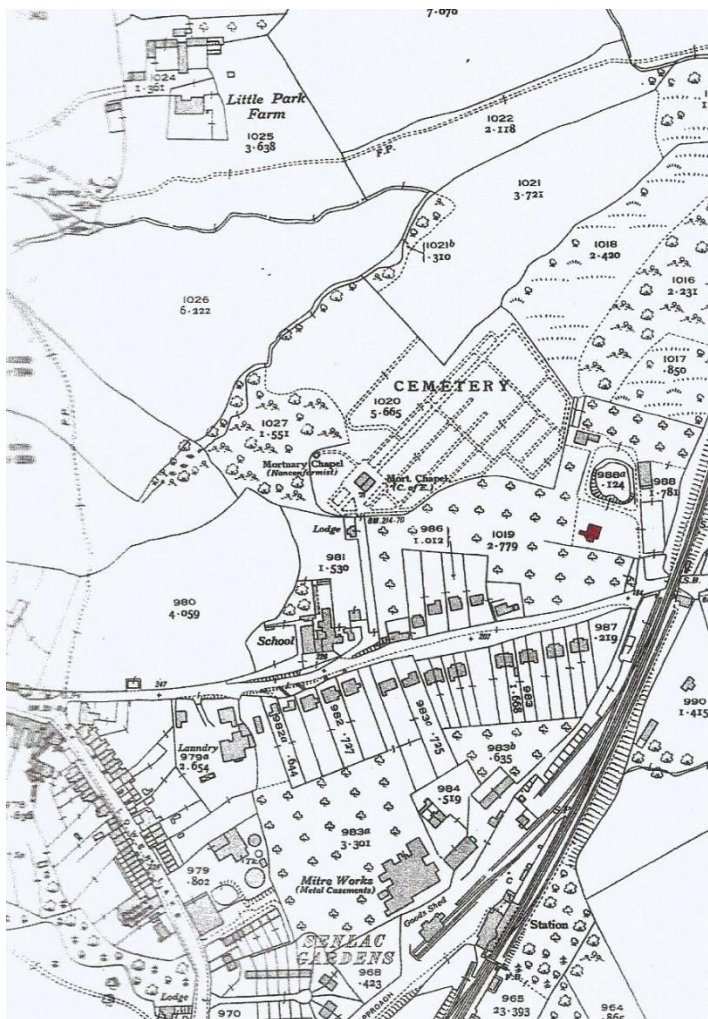
The one daughter of Edward and Chariclea was Isolde (left), but little is known of her and she never married. She was clearly intelligent, there being a Certificate of Merit awarded to her by Wellington College (presumably the one in Hastings) in 1889;¹⁸ but there is nothing else available. She died in a village near Beccles in Suffolk in October 1953.

From Dannreuther family tree, ancestry.co.uk

Wolfram Dannreuther

We can now move back to Wolfram, whose arrival at Battle constitutes the town's link with this family. He was the third son and suffered from ill-health for much of his life. He barely appears in the records, and his star shone less brightly than those of his brothers (and possibly that of his sister), possibly because of his health, which encouraged him to migrate briefly to Australia in 1899-1900. He did not make it to Eton, instead attending Thame Grammar School in Oxfordshire, as the 1891 census shows.

The 1901 census has Wolfram at Windycroft, living off his own means, with his mother, sister, cousin, two boarders and two servants. The 1911 census describes him as a fruit grower at Battle, but he was still living at Windycroft with his mother and sister and a cousin; also recorded are a visitor, a lodger who was a fisherman, and two young servants. His partnership with Hooper having been dissolved in the following year, it is possible that he went on alone; but another partnership is recorded with a man named Gunnery in 1919, when there was a 21-year lease for 'Cottage, buildings and land part of Upper Lidcox and land part of the Brickyard in Battle' at £31 5s p a.¹⁹ This was the land shown by the trees to the north of Marley Lane in the map below. During World War I Wolfram was not fit for action but served in north Africa as a quarter-master storesman.



Wolfram married in 1920. Mary Noël Gregory was 23, born at Edmonton where her father was Vicar; he had died in 1912 when Rector of Much Hadham in Hertfordshire; her grandfather had been Dean of St Paul's. They spent their honeymoon on brother Tristan's motor boat on the Thames,²⁰ quite possibly the one that brother Hubert was to take to Dunkirk and back in 1940. Wolfram and Mary had two children, both male, and the short life of the younger one began this account.

From the Ordnance Survey 1937 © Godfrey maps. Scale approx: 1 cm = 50 m. Battle fruit farm is shown where there are tree images immediately south and east of the cemetery. The house marked in dark red is now called Lockinge and was the Dannreuther family house. Immediately to the north is the pond; to the north east and north, slightly west, are packing sheds. From Godfrey edition of Ordnance Survey maps.

Of John, the elder, beyond his marriage and the fact that he and his German first wife Gerda had two children, we know little. Mary outlived Wolfram by 22 years and Gerda outlived their son John by 32 years (and his second wife by twelve).

The fruit farm is not mentioned as such in censuses before 1911 when Henry Hooper, Wolfram's then partner, was living at the White House in Marley Lane; on the map above this is the first property east of the cemetery approach.



The Dannreuther family house, now Lockinge, off Marley Lane (probably pre-1939). From Stephen Dannreuther.



The fruit farm must have done fairly good business in Wolfram's day, with the import shortages of two world wars and the growing local and regional populations. Among its other customers was Robinsons of Tiptree, which he supplied with blackcurrants.

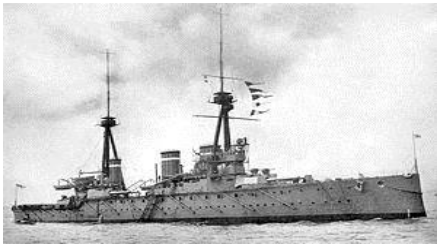
*Wolfram Dannreuther
From Dannreuther family tree, ancestry.co.uk*

Wolfram left over £6455 when he died, which translates into a 2019 purchasing power of about £200,000.²¹ Some of this money may of course have been inherited. Wolfram had the misfortune to contract aplastic anaemia, of which he was to die.

The business continued in the care of his son John. However, in about 1978 John took the decision to give it up and move to Dorset, where he and his second wife were eventually to die. The estate was now designated for housing. It is accessed through Norman Close – a name not liked by the family, who had wanted it called Pear Tree Close after the large pear tree that grew there.

Hubert Edward Dannreuther

The fourth son, Hubert, became well-known through his naval career. Like his elder brother Tristan he rose up the ranks from his cadetship in 1895 to midshipman on the Australia station. By 1902 he was Lieutenant and assigned to the Channel Fleet, moving thereafter to the Mediterranean where he was a gunnery officer. When war came he was on HMS *Invincible* in the battle of Heligoland in September 1914 (an action that confined the German surface fleet to its harbours, albeit for a short time) and in the battle of the Falkland Islands in December 1914 (Mentioned in Dispatches). He was then promoted Commander. The



Invincible was a large and modern battle cruiser commissioned in 1909, the first such vessel in the world. She did not, however, live up to her name. When in

HMS Invincible (Wikipedia)

1916 the Germans tried to escape from their bases into the open seas the battle of Jutland ensued, for which neither side could justifiably claim victory other than that the German surface fleet then holed itself up again. On 31 May *Invincible* was the flagship of the 3rd Battlecruiser Squadron and engaged in a duel with the battle cruiser *Derfflinger*. The precise way in which the ship was destroyed is unclear, but a shell managed to penetrate the magazine:

Up till the moment the ship blew up Commander Dannreuther controlled the fire of "Invincible" in a manner which proved visible and had overwhelming results on the enemy.²² [By 'fire' is meant the firing of the ship's guns.]



No ship could survive that explosion, and like HMS *Hood* in 1941 the *Invincible* sank within fifteen seconds.²³

Hubert later reported that when he recovered consciousness he found himself in the sea, and the ship and its crew had disappeared.²⁴ There were six

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Invincible_\(1907\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Invincible_(1907))

survivors out of 1021 men, and Hubert was the senior officer of the two among them. He was rescued by HMS *Badger*. He returned to Hastings to recuperate²⁵ and was shortly awarded the DSO and given a Russian medal. Now appointed to HMS *Renown*, in 1917 he won the French Croix de Guerre with palms. He was promoted Captain in 1920 and had various other posts in the UK and in Australia before being promoted Commodore in 1931 and then Rear-Admiral in 1932, when he retired.



That was not quite the end of his naval experience because he was one of those who took their private motor boats to Dunkirk in 1940 and helped the evacuation of the Allied forces from there.²⁶

Hubert married Jane Hay Thorburn in 1916, a few days after the award of his DSO. Jane appears to have been a tall and strong-willed woman; she was from Edinburgh. They had

Captain Hubert Dannreuther, about 1915

<http://www.britishbattles.com/battle-of-the-falkland-islands/>

three children, two of whom joined the Royal Navy and one the Army. Both Hubert and Raymond rose to be Captains in the Royal Navy. Hubert captained HMS *Eagle*, at 22600 tons then the largest aircraft carrier in the Navy.²⁷ They both served throughout the Second World War.²⁸ Ion, the middle son, joined the army intelligence services in 1941 and after the war, being able to speak German, used to interrogate Germans. Hubert retired in 1966 and Raymond in 1972. The family line continues through these three.



The first son, Hubert Harold, is reported as Acting Sub-Lieutenant in 1938, Lieutenant in 1944, then further promoted, reaching Captain in 1957; he retired in 1966. The third son, Raymond Portal, reached the rank of Commander in 1951 and retired with the rank of Captain in 1972. Between them was Ion Alexander, who joined the Royal Regiment of Artillery in 1941, was promoted Captain in the Second World War and remained in service until at

Jane Dannreuther née Thorburn, about 1976. From Dannreuther family tree, ancestry.co.uk

least 1950. All three sons married and have descendants.

Jane was heavily involved in local affairs, particularly as Deputy President of the Rye Division of the Red Cross Society.²⁹ She had her moment of national fame when she was part of the protest against the brutal development of the Bourne area of Hastings, when a main road was driven through the Old Town. She was particularly concerned about the Stables, and it may be that the building's survival is due to her campaign. She was reported as saying "This resolute few are fighting against the Vandals."³⁰ Looking at The Bourne today, few of us would disagree with her. Her husband was a leader of the successful efforts to convert the disused fishermen's chapel into the Fishermen's Museum and to save the 43 netshops that still stand.^{31 32}

Hubert lived to the age of 96 and Jane to 93.

Conclusion

This was a family of rare distinction, and an account primarily of its relationship with Battle cannot detail its relationships with other well-known families, which include the Coutts and Rothschild banking families.

But we remember it mostly because of the memorial they left behind: to Stephen Dannreuther, who died in 1943. For reasons that are not wholly clear but are probably due to the need to ensure accuracy in regard to missing persons, the Minister of War did not write to Wolfram until early in 1944. The letter is shown on the next page (from his nephew Stephen Dannreuther).

A genealogy and endnotes follow. I wish to point out that much of the information on Battle was given by Stephen Dannreuther, son of John Dannreuther of Battle fruit farm, and I wish to thank him most warmly.



BERKELEY SQUARE HOUSE,
W.1.

31st January, 1944.

Dear Mr. Dannreuther,

It is with the deepest regret that I have learned that your son, Stephen Edward Dannreuther, who was serving in the Merchant Navy as 3rd Radio Officer, has been recorded as having lost his life whilst on service with his ship.

By command of His Majesty The King the names of those members of the Merchant Navy who have given their lives in the service of their country are recorded in the Merchant Navy Roll of Honour. I am now adding Mr. Dannreuther's name to the Roll of Honour and, as I do so, wish to express my admiration for the services he rendered and to convey to you and your family my profound sympathy in your sad bereavement.

Your son worthily upheld the noble traditions of the Merchant Navy and I may perhaps hope that the realisation of this fact may help to soften the heavy blow which has fallen upon you.

Yours sincerely,

Leathes
Minister of War Transport

Mr. W. Dannreuther,
Battle Fruit Farm,
Battle,
SUSSEX.

Sources

Except as given in the endnotes and the text the source of information in this account is from www.ancestry.co.uk.

Notes to the genealogy

In so far as information is available, each cell is arranged as follows:

Full name followed by place of birth, date of birth, date of death, place of death.

Comma, followed by marriage information: place of marriage, date of marriage, name of spouse, place of spouse's birth, date, date of spouse's death, place.

Quarters of the year are A = January to March (and so on). Places cited may be registration districts if not more closely known.

Details of those believed still alive are not given.

CHART 1 THE FAMILY OF EDWARD GEORGE DANNREUTHER (1844-1905)

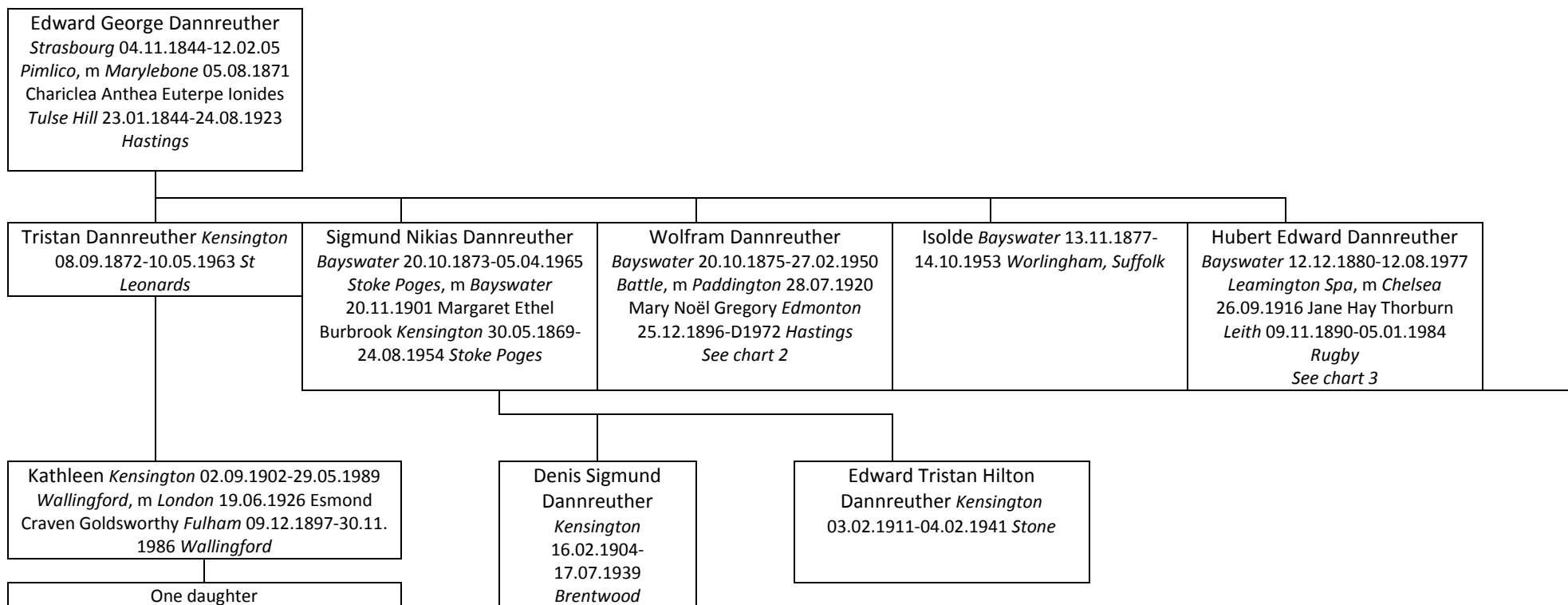


CHART 2: THE FAMILY OF WOLFRAM DANNREUTHER (1875-1950)

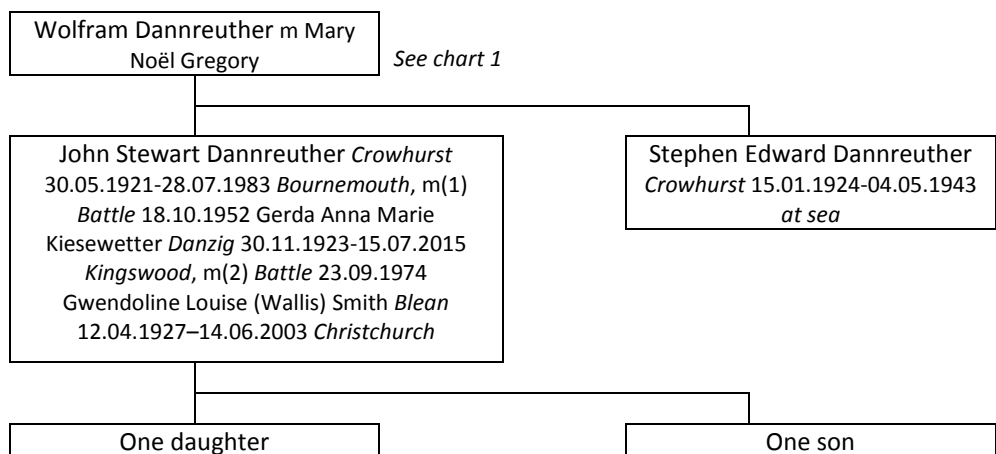
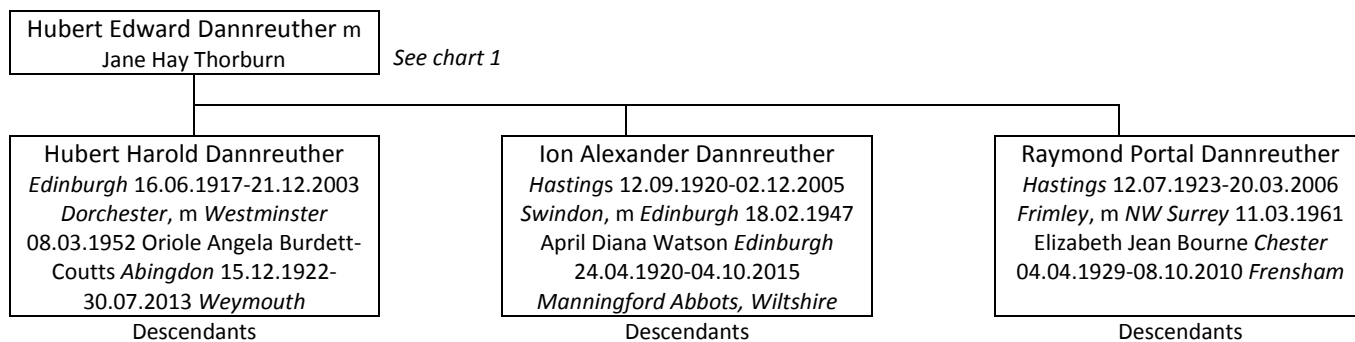


CHART 3: THE FAMILY OF HUBERT EDWARD DANNREUTHER (1880-1977)



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- 1 <http://uboat.net/allies/merchants/2902.html>
 - 2 The London Gazette, 01.03.1912. Hooper appears as a fruit farmer. He had been born in India. No other reference to him has been found in the public records for England and Wales except for his marriage in 1896.
 - 3 <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/rd/b4f2c0e2-ba15-4400-9dcc-d1ff3a6f53da>
 - 4 http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/people/biog/?bid=Dann_Mrs&initial=D
 - 5 As reported on the plaque at 12 Orme Square
 - 6 Obituary of Parry, The Times, 08.10.1918
 - 7 The Times, 06.06.1881
 - 8 The Times, 28.06.1882
 - 9 The Times, 15.02.1905
 - 10 <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/rd/b4f2c0e2-ba15-4400-9dcc-d1ff3a6f53da>
 - 11 <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-293970-windycroft-east-sussex#.Vu1-iuTctok>
 - 12 Hastings Observer, various; for UEA, 27 September 1941.
 - 13 The Times and the Daily Mail, various dates
 - 14 Daily Mail, 24.06.1930
 - 15 <http://www.churchillarchive.com/explore/catalogue?id=CHAR%20%2F121&showDetailsId=CHAR%20/121/65>
 - 16 Daily Mail, 19.07.1939
 - 17 The Times, 18.07.1939
 - 18 http://www.dreadnoughtproject.org/tfs/index.php/Tristan_Dannreuther_Papers_at_the_National_Maritime_Museum
 - 19 ESRO BAT/1811-1813
 - 20 Sussex Agricultural Express, 6 August 1920.
 - 21 <https://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/relativevalue.php>, 21.03.2016
 - 22 The London Gazette, 15.09.1916.
 - 23 Letter from Dannreuther at <http://www.worldwar1schoolarchives.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/War-Record.pdf> (p228)
 - 24 The Times, 13.06.1916
 - 25 Hastings Observer, 24 June 1916
 - 26 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/41798850@N04/4100519482>
 - 27 Portsmouth Evening News, 18 October 1929.
 - 28 <http://collections.rmg.co.uk/archive/objects/486702.html> 15.03.2016
 - 29 Hastings and St Leonards Observer, 9 December 1950.
 - 30 Daily Mail, 12.01.1956
 - 31 http://historichastings.co.uk/hastings_fishermens_museum/
 - 32 <http://hastingschronicle.net/features/history-of-the-hastings-fishermens-museum/>