

# House Histories

*The history of the houses of Strawberry Hill*

**Thornton Lodge – 95 Pope’s Grove**



**Written by Andrew Miller for Strawberry Hill Residents' Association  
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## House histories – 95 Pope’s Grove

In the spring 2019 issue of the Strawberry Hill Residents’ Association Bulletin an offer was made to all residents of the area. Peter Lamb of the SHRA Committee had offered a service which would involve research on the history of the houses of Strawberry Hill. This fits with another undertaking by SHRA to research and publish, via its website, a number of street histories under the name, *Streetwise*. Clearly, the two projects are linked as streets comprise collections of individual houses. SHRA also publishes and periodically updates a local history, *Strawberry Hill: A History of the Neighbourhood*, which has information about interesting houses and residents of the area.

At a minimum, the research work involves:

- searching through various online genealogical databases, e.g. Ancestry, find my past, for Census data and other records;
- searching the British Newspaper Archive for references to the street and house residents;
- visiting the Local Studies section of the Richmond upon Thames Library;
- writing a report to present a coherent house history.

In 2022, I joined the Royal British Legion and the Twickenham Branch at the same time. I have always been intrigued by the typically eclectic Victorian façade and was interested in finding out about the Strawberry Hill residents who lived there before it became the Legion.

### 1860-1890 – Minister Family

Thornton Lodge was probably built in the late 1850s (according to Twickenham Museum the date was 1860), as by 1860 it was occupied by the Minister family. Edward William Minister (1813-1900) was born on 28 October 1813 in Finsbury, Middlesex. In 1839 he married Elizabeth M Barnett (1816-1884) in St James, Westminster. They had four children: Mary Margaret (1840-), Edward Charles (1842-1870), Randolph Litchfield (1848-) and George (1849-1914). In 1859, the family lived at 1 Arragon Villas, Twickenham.

He became editor and publisher of the *Gazette of Fashion & Cutting Room Companion: a Guide to Victorian Fashion* (pictured). The periodical was an essential handbook of Victorian male, female and children’s fashion for the middle class. The family were in the house for the censuses of 1861, 1871 and 1881, but by 1891 it was not occupied. Elizabeth died in 1884 and she is buried at Twickenham Cemetery with her eldest son, Edward Charles, who died in 1870, aged just 27. Edward is still listed as being at Thornton Lodge in the 1886 Polling District book. By 1891, Edward Minister had retired and moved to Greenwich, where he died intestate in 1900.



## 1891-1903 – Toovey-Hawley Family

At the time of the 1901 Census Thornton Lodge was occupied by William Henry Toovey-Hawley (1844-1923) who was a wine shipper's clerk born in Camden Town on 28 October



1844. He married Ayliffene (aka Ayffhene) Isabella Langford (1845-1910) on 14 December 1867 and they had five children: Henry John Langford (1869-), Laura Drusilla (1870-1871), Guy Langford (1871-1929), Maude Agnes (1873-1952) and Reginald William (1876-1927). In 1901, the married Toovey-Hawleys lived with their unmarried 28-year-old daughter, Maude, at Thornton Lodge. By 1911 William Henry was widowed and living at 27 St Margaret's Road, East Twickenham.

William Henry's father was Henry John Toovey-Hawley (1817-1874) a solicitor who lived at Box Cottage in the Hampton Road in 1860. His grandfather was Robert Toovey-Hawley (1795-1888) who fought at Waterloo as a Second Lieutenant in the King's Dragoon Guards (pictured).

## 1904-1930 - Lewis Family *(acknowledgements to Richard West's biography of his great grandfather and to Richard for the photographs of the family)*

By 1904 the house was occupied by its final private residents, the Lewis family. James Henry Lewis (1856-1924) was born in Leigh, Worcestershire, in 1856 to James Lewis, a nursery man and employer (who was also illiterate). In 1881, he married Annie Roff (1860-1930) at Great Malvern, Worcestershire. They had seven children in 15 years: Daisy Roff (1882-1953), May Winifred (1884-1957), Vincent James (1884-1917), Elizabeth Maud (1885-), Dorothy Evelyn (1889-1978), High Portman (1891-) and Denys Mervyn (1897-1917).

He was a self-styled Professor of Music (pictured right) who founded the Victoria College of Music at the iconic house at 158 Holland Park Avenue. He received an honorary degree in music from an American University (University of South Tennessee) which many regarded as not a legitimate qualification. There were also outreach centres across the country where people could take examinations. He received criticism for including his own compositions in the exams ahead of other well-known composers as he stood to gain from the purchase of his sheet music.



He gained musical qualifications from Trinity College and was an accomplished musician. He was a composer who worked with the likes of Ivor Novello. He promoted church music and was a Warden of the Guild of Church Musicians. He was also the church organist at St

Mary's in Twickenham. James's son Hugh Portman Lewis became Secretary of the College until 1959, when 60 years of leadership by the Lewis family came to a close.

In the 1911 Census James aged 55 was living at Thornton Lodge with Annie aged 51. Two children were living with them, Dorothy Evelyn aged 22 (1888-1978) and Hugh Portman aged 19 (1891-). The household was completed by Elizabeth Emily May East aged 16, their general servant.



Three of the Lewis daughters served in the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VADs) of the Red Cross during World War 1 (photo from qaranc.com). The eldest daughter, Daisy Roff had married in 1909 and had two small children when the War broke out. May Winifred who was born in Hartlepool in 1883, enlisted on 29 October 1917 and served until 9 March 1919. Dorothy Evelyn was born on 6 May 1888 in Staines and she served as a VAD from August 1916 until April 1917. Maud Elizabeth was born as the twin sister of Vincent James at Royal Tunbridge Wells in 1884. She was in the VAD from November 1915 until July 1916.



Vincent James Lewis (Reg no. 122382) was a bombardier in 'C' Battery 186<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery (pictured left). He died of wounds on 20 June 1917 and is buried at Mendinghem Military Cemetery, Belgium.



Denys Mervyn Lewis (Reg. no. ) was a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in 'C' Company in the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment when he was killed in action on 25 April 1917 (pictured right). He was just 19 when he was killed and he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Hugh Portman Lewis (No. 508235) also served in the War as a private in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He was gassed and was discharged on 13 March 1918 as unfit for duty.

James Henry Lewis had a brother called Walter who emigrated to Australia, arriving in Sydney on 30 September 1883. He had a son called Walter Harry Portman Lewis (1885-) who became a music hall entertainer. He formed a song and dance act called 'Lewis and Little' with Amy Pennington, an English-born singer, and together they returned to England to work in





the music halls. Apparently they married in Ireland and their England address was given as Thornton Lodge.



Walter Harry Portman Lewis with 2nd wife at Thornton Lodge with James Henry and Annie (nee Roff).

James Henry Lewis died on 25 November 1924 in the famous Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool where he was visiting to examine students for musical qualifications. He is buried in Twickenham Cemetery (section A/grave no.152) together with his wife and the names of sons, Denys and Vincent. Annie (pictured right) died on 15 December 1930. The wills of James Henry and Annie mirrored each other with assets being transferred to each other with all seven children named as beneficiaries (despite two being deceased). Probate was granted to Arthur Edward Baylis (1877-1944), husband of May Lewis.



The picture shows May Winifred Lewis and Arthur Baylis on a visit from Malvern to Thornton Lodge in the late 1920s with Annie sitting in the front garden.



James Henry, Dorrie and Annie in the back garden of Thornton Lodge, probably in the early 1920s.



This photograph shows Annie sitting on a bench in the back garden of Thornton Lodge with Daisy and husband, Pearce Small, with their son.

### **Royal British Legion**

According to Richard West, the ownership of Thornton Lodge is still 'a bit of a puzzle' following Annie's death. His mother (Annie's daughter) used to say that it was a Labour Government (she may have been referring to the National Government 1931-1935 with Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister) that took all the family money. Whether that meant that the property was handed over as part of death duties, Richard is unsure. However, it seems appropriate that having lost two sons in the War, and with three of their four daughters serving as VADs, that the property was bequeathed to the Royal British Legion.

Richard West contacted the national Royal British Legion some years ago and was told that the only information was as follows.

The Royal British Legion began as individual, local groups operating independently. Thornton Lodge was transferred to the national Royal British Legion on 2 September 1965 by the following three trustees:

*Guy Roland Rimmington of 2 Munster Road, Teddington, Middlesex*  
*William Victor Scales of 100 Sixth Cross Road, Twickenham, Middlesex*  
*Wilfred John Stokes of 8 Wellesley Road, Twickenham, Middlesex*

There are no records held at the local branch.

**Andrew Miller, Chair, SHRA**  
**August 2022**