

wine industry is the enduring name of Richard Hamilton!

I am deeply indebted and immensely grateful to Dr Richard Hamilton, Proprietor of Leconfield and Richard Hamilton Wines, and to Kate Mooney, the Marketing and Events Co-ordinator [www.leconfieldwines.com](http://www.leconfieldwines.com), for their invaluable help with providing details of the history of the family and for their patience in answering questions raised in the research for this story. Also my sincere thanks to Martin Gordon, who has researched the Hamilton Wine history and who wrote the scripts for Richard Hamilton's two highly decorated

documentary films "WineLine 1" and "WineLine 2 Odyssey". I would also like to acknowledge information derived from the book "Colony" written by Reg Hamilton in respect of Old Dover and the Hamilton wine making industry as well as providing an interesting insight into the history of the democratic processes and institutions of South Australia. In fact a brief review of the book "Colony" has previously been given by the Newsletter's illustrious Editor in March 2011 issue number 70 page 27. Reg Hamilton is a sixth-generation descendant of Richard Hamilton and a grandson of Sydney Hamilton. He lives in Melbourne and is Deputy President at Fair Work Australia, being a judge of that court.

## The Dover Millionaire

Derek Leach

In the 1970s a box containing 100 love letters from Helen to Frank was found in a Lloyds Bank safe, having been deposited some time during the First World War. The finder put them in his loft for 40 years before passing them on to an author living in Toddington.

The incredible story of Helen Nelson was pieced together from the love letters and some research. Her colourful life included running a pub in Toddington for 34 years. Before she was 21 she married Edward Randell, proprietor of the Dover Empire Palace of Varieties in Market Square. Helen's father was absent and she was given away by her brother; the best man was ill and was replaced by a local man. There were no relations of the groom present. Even stranger, the married couple did not attend the reception for 60 people, but left straight away from the church for

their honeymoon in Scarborough.

What do we know about the groom who was born Edward Randell Smith in 1878; Smith being the surname of his unmarried mother, Emily Jane, who married the father three years later despite her being 32 years younger. Father was a City businessman who left £12,699.11s.1d to his widow (worth about £1million today), who died three years later aged 43, leaving £1558.15s.2d to her son, Edward, then aged 16, when he became 21. Before he married Helen and less than six months after his 21st birthday in 1899, he and Mr. J. Engleman took over the management of Chevers Palace, Dover's music hall on a seven year lease and changed its name. Edward soon became known as 'Dover's Millionaire'.

Helen and Frank lived at 3 East Cliff, but

only five months after the wedding in January 1900 Edward disappeared. He had spent a fortune in 12 months and was deep in debt. Summoned for non-payment of rates he was thought to be in South Africa and was then declared bankrupt. His partner bought Edward's share in the Empire, which helped to pay off some of the debts. (Unfortunately, Engleman was also declared bankrupt in 1901, blaming it on Edward).

Abandoned Helen, two months pregnant, went back to the family pub in Toddington. Following the death of both her parents, she married again in 1905, describing herself as a widow, even though Edward could still be alive. Her husband was Bertie Armstrong. In 1907 they became joint licensees of the Sow and Pigs in Toddington.

Unfortunate in her choice of men, Bertie ran off to Canada in 1913, but Helen continued to run the pub. In the same year Helen met the love of her life: James Norbury Franklin-Smith, called Frank, who worked for an auctioneering firm. He soon moved into a room at the pub, but Bertie turned up in 1914 and joined up. Bertie apparently had women in Canada. Helen stays loyal to Frank who has also joined up and stays at the pub when on leave, but he



*The Sow and Pigs Pub at Toddington*

was posted to France in 1915 and did not return to England until after the war, hence several love letters a week.

Both men came home at the end of the war. On 21 November 1918 Helen applied for an uncontested divorce on grounds of desertion and adultery, which was granted and on 27 November 1919 she married Frank, now a Lieutenant Colonel. Her second bigamous marriage. Bertie went back to Canada. They sold the pub and bought an egg farm in Cornwall, but went bankrupt in 1922, running another pub thereafter. In 1949 Helen applied to have her first husband declared dead and intestate. As the lawful widow she received £591 from Edward's estate after all debts were paid; her current and past marital status were not questioned!

Frank died in 1953, aged 71, leaving £9.12s 6d and having spent 34 happy years with Helen. She retired when she was 74 and died in 1968 aged 82.

Source: *'Bigamy, Bankruptcy, War and Divorce - the tangled life of a Toddington landlady'* by Richard Hart and Paul Brown (History Press, 2019).



*Chevers Palace of Varieties Market Square Dover*