

# The Mystery of Impetuous Youth, glamour and Lynsted Lodge

*A voyage of discovery from a small newspaper cutting - Nigel Heriz-Smith.*

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***Now amended and elaborated with the kind help of Catherine Evans, a visitor to these pages who is researching the story of Gustav Hamel's life as an early flier and great friend to Henry Astley, or better known to his friends "Otto Astley" ... [read our summary of Catherine's contribution](#). We have included in the addendum a photograph of Maisie when she was in The Arcadians (April 1909), probably where Otto first saw her (with thanks to Catherine Evans for her permission to use this image).***

## The Plot

Today, it might be called "stalking". In the years before World War 1, parts of this story may have raised an aristocratic eyebrow or 'tutting' disapproval by the recently prosperous and self-conscious commercial and professional families. This story takes a sideways glance at two young men born into the prosperous class of the so-called 'middling sort'.

Recently, I found a Probate Notice from 1912([fn1](#)) about the tragic death of a young man giving an address of "Lynsted Lodge, Sittingbourne". Because the Society had no record of the family name in the Parish I was curious to see what a bit of digging might uncover. The result is a mixture of surprises, twists and turns.

The plot opens and closes with an obsessive young man who survived a melodramatic, lovelorn, suicide attempt but who later grew into adulthood and stature through the First World War, which he survived. These two early twentieth century "playboys" never actually met.

What joined their stories was their taste for glamorous actresses and one actress in particular who marries them both.

## The Players

**Shirley Douglas Falcke** – an impetuous youth who comes good in the service of his country and afterwards moves to Australia and America. The only son of a wealthy American stockbroker and antique dealer. He obsessively pursued an actress who witnesses his melodramatic suicide attempt and may well have saved his life.

**Iris Hoey** – (pictured right) gifted, trained and well-known early twentieth century actress; a renowned beauty and the object of Shirley Falcke's youthful obsession. Later, she moved successfully into movies including *Pygmalion* (1938), *Those Were the Days* (1934) and *Her Reputation* (1931).

**Douglas Falcke** – A wealthy American stockbroker and antique dealer based in London. He strongly disapproved of his son's obsession.

**Henry Jacob Delaval Astley** – a playboy, disinherited for his love of an American actress. Brought back into his family and into his inheritance. Moves to Lynsted with his glamorous wife. To his friends he was "Otto".

**Mary Ruth Kinder** – an American actress ("May Kinder" - pictured right), "pretty and charming". A Philadelphia telephone operator, unable to make her mark as an actress in America. She moves to England in search of fame and fortune. A minor actress, first reported in England as one of the twins in a newly written *Peter Pan* stage play. To her friends she was "Maisie".

**Colonel Tyler** – 'old money' who lets his country residence (Lynsted Lodge) to 'new money' at a time when inheritance tax was eroding the old estates.



## Act 1: A Sideways Glance

The beginning of this tale belongs to the obsessive Shirley Douglas Falcke (b. 5th May 1889, Kensington) and his pursuit of a glamorous actress, Iris Hoey, four years his senior, which was destined to fail. When Shirley tried to force matters, the result was painful and disastrous.

Who was Iris Hoey? Born on 17th July 1885 in London, her given name was Iris Wilhelmina Winifred Hasbach, daughter of Wilhelm Anton Hasbach. She studied for the stage at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

In 1905, Iris first came to public notice on the stage. She was quickly identified as a stage beauty and promising actress. She was reported as "that bright newcomer" when she appeared as "Ariel" in *The Tempest*, playing in Manchester. In 1906, Iris sang a soprano role (*Blanche Marie*) in the theatre musical *"The Little Michus"*. In early 1907, she is billed in the seasonal pantomime *"Babes in the Wood"*, in Manchester's Theatre Royal. Iris Hoey then moved to London with the production of *"The Tempest"* (April 1907) and *"Julius Caesar"* (May 1907), both in His Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket. Towards the end of May 1907, she joined a new musical entertainment, *"Butterflies"*, at The Apollo Theatre that ran through 1908. She was destined for a long and successful career on stage and in film.



1907 was the fateful year in which Shirley Falcke fell for Iris Hoey. According to Shirley Falcke's wealthy father, Douglas, his eighteen-year old son had been 'led on' during the spring

of 1907 to the point that Shirley Falcke abandoned his clerk's job in the Anglo-Egyptian Bank to follow Iris to Bedford. Douglas Falcke reported<sup>[fn2]</sup> that his son met Iris Hoey when dining at the Savoy Restaurant, after which he

"...followed her to her address – a dingy street somewhere in Paddington, where she had rooms – and he himself took a room in the house, eventually getting an introduction to her through the landlady of the house.

He saw her a few times after that, but I can find no letters from her in the house, so I do not suppose that she wrote him here – if she ever did write."

Douglas Falcke went on, saying that when he learned that his son was 'throwing over' a promising position as a clerk in the Anglo-Egyptian Bank, he sent a telegram to Iris Hoey in Bedford saying – "Why take my boy away? You ought to know better."<sup>[fn3]</sup> This was a bit rich as it is clear that events were being driven by Shirley Falcke's youthful obsession. His parents believed their son was blameless and chose instead to focus their disapproval on the actress, whatever the facts.

"On the following morning my telephone bell rang, and a woman's voice spoke to me from Bedford. I said to her: 'Are you the woman who has taken my boy away'. She gave me some answer, and I told her exactly what I thought about it all. She remarked that someone was listening at her end of the telephone, and I replied that I did not care who heard, it was the truth."

But Shirley's obsession continued through 1907 as he followed Iris back to London. Iris was taking part in the Shakespeare Festival that year, appearing in *The Tempest* and *Julius Caesar*.<sup>[fn4]</sup>

On 1st July 1907, we find Iris embracing her professional successes through the annual grandly extravagant and glamorous "theatrical garden party" in the botanic gardens, Regent's Park, London. Large crowds of up to 14,000 enjoyed theatrical tableaux that spilled out of marquees and tents spread across the gardens. Entertainments continued throughout the afternoon. Actors and actresses strolled through the crowds who were captivated by the glamour, colour and excitement. ".....amongst the most notable of the figures were Miss Pattie Browne as an irrepressible Harry Lauder, Miss Decima Moore as Little Bo Peep, and Mr James Welch and Miss Iris Hoey as the Babes in the Wood."<sup>[fn5]</sup>

By the time Iris appeared in the musical theatre production of "Butterflies"<sup>[fn6]</sup> at The Apollo, the youthful 'romance' reached breaking point. Shirley's parents had told Shirley he must leave England for Canada, leaving on 28th July 1907, to break the association. Shirley's melodramatic response, after a farewell dinner, was to threaten suicide.....

## **Act 2: The Voice of an Actress.**

At 1.30 am, 22nd July 1907, the crisis breaks. A shot rings out from a handsome cab and the police are called.

Iris's voice needs to be heard. Two days later, she explained her predicament in newspaper reports<sup>[fn7]</sup>,

"Miss Iris Hoey, the young actress whose name has so unfortunately been identified with the attempted suicide of a youth named Falcke in a hansom cab, has given an "Evening News" representative the story of the youth's infatuation. He followed her about everywhere and

wanted her to marry him, although from the first she explained that she was already engaged and could not accept his attentions.

'On the Saturday we went to supper at the Carlton, and it was while there that I said "now, Shirley, do tell me where you are going to?" He said "I am going to kill myself." I must confess that I did not take it seriously, and dreadful as it may seem, joked with him about it and asked what he meant doing it with – water, knife, or revolver? He answered "Revolver." I said "Through the brains or feet?" He said very sternly, and looking straight at me, "Through the heart; that is where the pain is." ....When she realised that he was actually about to carry out his threat she seized his hands and struggled to prevent him until she was exhausted. She then heard a shot ring out, and Falcke fell with two frightful groans on the floor of the cab."

In her "Signed Statement" reported by the Hull Daily Mail [\[fn8\]](#):-

"He was very downhearted (in the cab), and said, "This is the last time I shall see you, and I mean to do what I have said. I then realised for the first time that he was in earnest, and I refused to let him go home alone, and I jumped back into the cab after him and insisted upon taking him home to his father's house. He was still lamenting the fact that he was very unhappy, and that this was the last time he would see me.

I did not know he had a revolver. I held his hand to try to keep him from telling the cabman to stop and take me home. Suddenly he succeeded in tearing one hand away, and I next saw the glitter of the revolver. The fire followed, the cab stopped, and Mr Falcke, who had fallen down in a heap in the cab, was lifted out by a policeman, and I was assisted by a lady and gentleman who were passing at the time. Mr Falcke exclaimed to the policeman, "I have done it all myself."

I was delirious for a time, but I next remember going to the hospital in a cab and then being taken home in a cab. I was in a semiconscious condition all the time."

The next day, she got a letter from the hospital (23rd July):-

"St. George's Hospital, Monday.

Will you forgive me? I am not quite done up, but I am waiting for an operation. I have acted like an awful blackguard, but there will be no harm done to your name. If you forgive, could you send me a note by return, or come and see me one day? - From Shirley."

### **Act 3: The Cab-driver's Peep-hole**

The *London Star* interviewed the cabman in charge of the Hansom cab (reported by the *Evening Telegraph* on 24th July):

"I was on the Carlton Hotel rank at twenty minutes past twelve on Sunday morning," said the cabman, "and was called over to pick up a young gentleman and lady – Mr Falcke and Miss Hoey.

"They told me to drive to the Grafton Galleries. On the way there I heard some words between the young couple, and a sound as though there were a scuffle. Then up came the flap, and the lady told me to drive to a house in Taviton Street, Gordon Square, Bloomsbury.



"The couple were jangling all the way there. When I pulled up at the house the lady started to get out, but the young man made some sudden remark, and she got back inside the cab.

"She seemed to be trying to persuade him to change his mind about something, and they sat and talked earnestly in the cab for some minutes. "Will you wait while I go in?" I heard her ask once. "No, I am going," the young man replied. "There were a few more words, and the lady got out on the pavement. Again the young man made a remark, and she jumped back into the cab, and ordered me to drive to the young man's address in Cromwell Road.

"Before I could turn the horse round there was a terrible tussle in the cab, and the man's opera hat came flying out into the road.

### **PEEPED THROUGH FLAP.**

"I jumped down and got the hat, and gave it him. He seemed very pale. He was quite sober.

"Going down Piccadilly the young lady's voice was raised several times, and once or twice, fearing trouble, I peeped at them through the flap. "I saw him leaning back in the corner of the cab with his hand on her shoulder. Her hand was on his shoulder, and they seemed to be holding each other back in the corners. She was begging him to do something.

"It seems to me now almost as though he had threatened to do away with himself, and that the lady, determined to prevent him, was for that reason accompanying him home.

"Several times on the journey I looked down. Each time I saw them leaning back in the corners, hands on each other's shoulders.

"Outside the Museum at Kensington we were following another hansom carrying a lady and gentleman. I was very quiet. "Suddenly I felt a struggle in the cab, and looked down through the open flap. She was leaning towards him, and I heard her cry out, 'No, no! Don't!' "We were at Queen's Gate Gardens when the cry was repeated. Then came the pistol shot, and a shriek.

"I pulled up. So did the cabman in front. The young lady, screaming, rushed out of my cab, and a lady and gentleman got out of the cab in front. "I got down, and found Mr Falcke lying doubled up in a heap on the floor, groaning. I called and whistled for police.

"'Who's done this?' I said. 'I have,' he replied. "I saw the revolver, and I grabbed that quickly and put it in my pocket for safety. Then the police came.

"We got him out on the pavement, and laid him on the cushions of my cab. 'Who did it?' asked the sergeant. 'I did!' said Falcke. 'Get me some chloroform; I'm in shocking agony!'

"We called a four-wheeler, and took him to St George's Hospital. Meanwhile the lady and gentleman took Miss Hoey, who was in a terrible state, into a house near by the scene of the shots.

"Later I took Miss Hoey and the lady and gentleman to the hospital, where we heard Mr Falcke was not dead, and that the doctors were looking for the bullet, and then I drove the young lady to her house in Taviton Street."

Shirley Falcke survived the removal of the bullet from his chest and was 'grounded', at least until the outbreak of World War 1. Electoral Registers and phone books from that time place Shirley firmly at home with his parents, 235 Cromwell Mansions, Kensington and Chelsea. His angry parents' response was reported (22nd July, Sheffield Evening Telegraph) "When, afterwards, I questioned my boy, he replied: 'I am sorry I have not done for myself.' He has always been a very good boy, and is the soul of honour." ...Mrs. Falcke, who was very much distressed, could only praise her boy's good conduct at home. She and his father did not approve of his acquaintance with the young lady, and had tried all they could to get him to give her up." .... Mr. and Mrs. Falcke visited him in St. George's Hospital yesterday afternoon, and the youth, who brightened up at the visit of his mother, muttered, "No one is to blame for this, mother. I hope I shall get well now."

Douglas Falcke took the view<sup>[fn9]</sup>:

"On Saturday night [Shirley] went to Terry's Theatre. When he left home in evening dress I did not dream for a moment that he was going to meet her, otherwise I certainly should have prevented him. My son knew also that I should have sent him off to Canada immediately had I suspected he was still meeting her."

Anyway, when I was informed of the incident early on Sunday morning by the police I was extremely angry. The police-inspector, however, informed me that an independent witness – the cabman – had seen him shoot himself. I think it is shameful that any boy should be granted a license to get a revolver with such ridiculous ease!"

Iris Hoey was left in peace, freed from the youthful infatuation. She was later to marry Max Leeds and then Cyril Raymond<sup>[fn10]</sup>. Living a long and productive life.

This is not the last we hear of Shirley. But let us introduce Henry Astley who was at this time leading a very different but very dramatic life, which included a secret marriage to an American actress.....

#### **Act 4: Lynsted Lodge's aviator**

This part of the tale falls into three 'sub-plots'.

##### **a) An Illicit Marriage with an American actress and a mother's disapproval**

On 29th October 1909, Henry Astley secretly married May Kinder, an American actress who came from Philadelphia where she had been a telephone operator. She tried acting with limited success in New York so she decided to try the English stage. Unlike the story of Shirley Falcke whose infatuation was halted by indignant parents and a bullet, Henry secretly went against social convention ready to face his mother's wrath after the event!

As the New York Times reported it<sup>[fn11]</sup>:

##### **"ACTRESS NOW MRS. ASTLEY; May Kinder of New York Marries Well-Connected Young Englishman.**

LONDON, Oct. 25. 1909 -- Confirmation was obtained to-day of the report current for some time of the marriage of an American actress to one of the best parties among the young commoners of England. The Bride is May Kinder, who came from New York a couple of years ago and made her debut as one of the twins in "Peter Pan," later appearing in musical

comedy. The bridegroom is Henry Jacob Delaval Astley, who, though untitled, belongs to one of the oldest families in England. An Astley was created Baron Hastings in the thirteenth century, and the present holder of the title is the twenty-first Baron.

Henry Astley came of age only a year ago, when he succeeded to The Chequers, Bucks, one of the finest estates in England, his father having died in 1904. The marriage has been kept secret owing to the opposition of the young man's mother, who contracted a second marriage with the Hon. Claude Willoughby, son of the Earl of Lancaster.

As Miss Kinder's stage experience was slight and as she is a very pretty and charming girl, various members of her husband's family have taken her up and hope to overcome Mrs. Willoughby's objections."

Those "objections" apparently took the form of a year of disinheritance.

In its obituary for Henry Astley, the New York Times (24th September 1912) spiced up its account of the marriage by reporting links to Oliver Cromwell and Chequers Court[[fn12](#)]. On the same date, a more detailed account of his ancestry was given in the Aberdeen Journal[[fn13](#)].

## **b) Lynsted Lodge comes available**

At the end of August 1910, Lynsted Lodge was advertised "to let" by Colonel Tyler[[fn14](#)] and it is likely that, soon after, our wealthy young adventurer took the lease and moved into our Parish.

Why choose Lynsted Lodge? Just possibly it was because Lynsted Lodge struck a good balance between easy access to London and the Continent, and its close proximity to the Isle of Sheppey. Early in the 20th Century, Sheppey was a significant centre of pioneering flight, aeroplane manufacture and innovation. Flying was capturing the imagination of young men around the world. Lynsted Lodge offered comfort and status.

In the April 1911 Census, Lynsted Lodge is shown as under the management of a caretaker ("Family not arrived")[[fn15](#)]. Henry Astley was staying at Browns Hotel, London.

## **c) Flying, fame, and fortune**

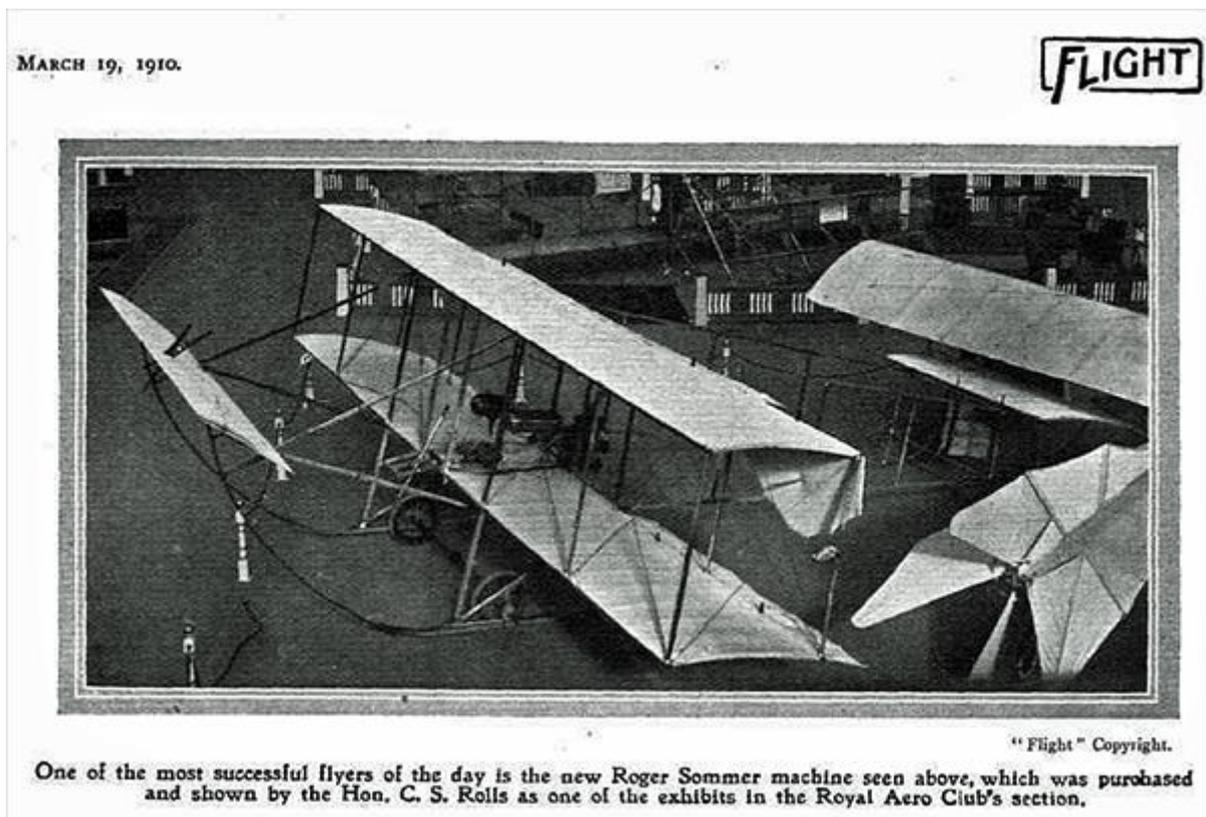
Early in 2010, the Lynsted with Kingsdown Society hosted a presentation about Sheppey as the cradle of early aeroplane development in England. In 1909 and 1910 Shellbeach (south of Muswell Manor, Isle of Sheppey) was a place visited by the Wright Brothers. The Wright Brothers licensed their designs for local manufacture (in a collection of sheds on the Island of Sheppey). From those modest beginnings came the development of the more widely known Short Brothers production that later moved to Rochester. It was a surprise, in 2014, to uncover a link between those early airmen and our Parish.

To wealthy adventurers, like Henry Astley, the 'need for speed' was initially satisfied through racing cars, but the emerging and hugely expensive sport of flying was irresistible to the most wealthy. Other airmen were drawn from the army and navy.

At the presentation to the Society we heard about the more famous Charles Rolls, who made the first British Flying Exhibition in Bournemouth on 12th July 1910. One month later, Henry Astley was in a group of 17 who were elected as a New Member of the Aero Club of the United Kingdom[fn16].

It was only a short while after, on 31st December 1910, that Henry Astley got his Royal Aero Club Aviator's Certificate at Brooklands. He became only the 48th certificate holder".

At that time, Brooklands was famous for both its car racing track and flying field.



After winning his Certificate in a Sommer Biplane (a popular early trainer and sport aeroplane), Henry Astley was also performing Exhibitions at home and abroad, based at Brooklands. Like many others he soon began an adventure to set new records and win races and challenges.

Frenchman Roger Sommer built Henry's plane in 1910 only two years after he had himself started flying! These dates give you a sense of the pioneering nature and risk-taking that attracted wealthy young glamorous thrill-seekers at that time. They could attract huge crowds with their flying.

So popular were these early aeronauts that it was not long before they employed agents to manage demand for exhibitions and negotiate fees, often bringing fliers together to 'compete' with each other in what were often stage-managed events. These sporting celebrities traded on their ability to take risks and more often than not were able to walk away from their frequent crashes that tended to take place at relatively low speeds ... but not always.

"Flight" Magazine records several of Henry Astley's experiences. On 2nd April 1910, it reported:

**"FLYING AT BROOKLAND - Saturday Last at Brooklands.**

....."During the afternoon Mr. Graham Gilmour and Mr. Morison on Bleriots, and Mr. Astley and Mr. Lane on Lane monoplanes made some very good flights, whilst two Roe triplanes were also out, although they did not get off the ground for any appreciable distance...Later, Barnes made the two remaining flights for his pilot's certificate and during the evening Astley and Lane were out on Lane monoplanes.....

During December, he joined a group of wealthy fliers who travelled to America. "Amongst the more active flying members of the [Aero] Club present were Mr. Cecil Grace, Mr. Astley, Mr. Sopwith, Mr. Greswell, Mr. J.T.C. Moore-Brabazon, and Mr. Morimer Singer, who, everybody was glad to find, was completely recovering from his bad accident at Heliopolis"

*14th January 1911, Flight* gave an account of Henry Astley's skills in a near miss:

**BROOKLANDS AERODROME.**

Practically no flying was possible on the first days of last week, but on Thursday there was a calm, which was immediately taken advantage of. Blondeau was out on the Farman accompanied by Mrs. Hewlett, and she occasionally took charge of the machine. Ducrocq was also flying on his racing Farman with a lady passenger. Another machine in the air was Mr. Gibbs' Sommer, piloted by Mr. Astley, who, during a twenty minutes flight, made several rounds of the aerodrome. Several of the other occupants of the sheds were out on their machines making hops in a straight line. Saturday was also a busy day, there being four or five machines in the air at once. Mr. Astley was again out on the Sommer biplane, and showed his control over the machine by a splendid bit of manoeuvring, which averted what seemed to be a certain collision. He was following Mr. T. Conway Jenkins on a triplane when the latter came to earth somewhat suddenly. Mr Astley also began to descend, but finding that he would not be able to stop in time to avoid a smash, very smartly steered his machine between the disabled triplane and a telegraph pole, there being only about a couple



Mr. H. J. D. Astley on his Sommer biplane at Brooklands. —Mr. Astley, on this machine on Saturday, gave a remarkable display of his airmanship when he had to steer between a telegraph pole and Mr. Conway's smashed triplane, with only about 2 ft. clearance to spare.

of feet clearance. On landing Mr. Astley was complimented upon the promptness of his manoeuvring by the other aviators."



DAILY MAIL CIRCUIT OF GREAT BRITAIN.—Sketch map of the route showing the various sections and distances.

On 22nd July 1911, *Flight* reported Henry Astley as the second-named pilot in a group of 30 who set out on the Daily Mail round Britain Circuit. This challenge attracted substantial prizes and sponsors that included £250 from Sir George White, chairman of the British and Colonial Aeroplane Co. "for the first machine which completes the race with most of its previously stamped parts in place" *Flight* continued:

"It will be noticed that a great difference between this event and the others which have recently taken place on the Continent is that an endeavour is being made to ensure that at least some essential parts of the original engine and machine which starts out shall go to make up the machine which finishes. In the three great cross-country events recently

concluded, as soon as a machine went wrong, the pilot simply changed over to another mount, with which he continued on his way."..... "Five parts of each machine and a similar number of parts of the motor will be stamped or sealed, and at least two of each of these five parts must be in position on arrival at each control. This regulation does not, however, affect landing chassis or propellers."

This pattern of competition, innovation, and financial incentives continued for Henry Astley until 1912.

## **Act 5: The fateful day in Belfast – 21st September 1912**

*[Flight Magazine Archives - 1912: The Dublin-Belfast Aeroplane Contest. - Mr. H.J.D. Astley getting away on his 70 h.p. Bleriot from Leopardstown, Dublin.*

### **20th September: The day before the accident**

#### **MR H.J.D. ASTLEY'S FATAL ACCIDENT<sup>[fn17]</sup>**

"British aviation could ill afford to lose the services of such an able and enthusiastic pilot as Mr. H.J.D. Astley, who met his death at the Balmoral Show Grounds, Belfast, last Saturday. So successful had the flights on the previous Saturday proved that arrangements were made with Messrs. Valentine and Astley to repeat them. Mr. Valentine was first up and gave a ten minutes' exhibition on his Deperdussin, after which Mr. Astley ascended, but with no definite intention as to what form his flying would take. In endeavouring to keep within the limits of the oval shaped ground Mr. Astley made some sharp turns, and in one of them apparently the machine side-slipped. The pilot evidently realised that a fall was bound to come, and set to work to keep the machine clear of the mass of spectators. This he succeeded in doing, and the monoplane crashed down inside the track. Mr. Astley received such injuries to the head through being pitched violently forward from his seat that he died two hours later, despite the endeavours of Professor Sinclair, the eminent surgeon, who happened to witness the fall. At the inquest on Monday the jury, after hearing the evidence of Mr. Harry Delacombe, Manager for Messrs. Astley and Valentine at Belfast, and the medical evidence of Professor Sinclair, returned a verdict of "Accidental Death," adding a rider to the effect that Mr. Astley died in his efforts to save others by getting his machine clear of the spectators. To readers of FLIGHT and of the AUTO, it is unnecessary to refer in detail to Mr. Astley's career either as an aviator or as a driver of racing cars, in which sport he took great interest previous to taking up aviation, but one of his best performances was his recent attempt for the Pommery Cup when he flew with Miss Trehawke Davies from Paris to Bonn."

In a later edition<sup>[fn18]</sup>, Flight magazine covered an inquiry by the Royal Aero Club of the UK that concluded

"Mr Henry J. Delaval Astley was an experienced aviator, having made a large number of flights both in Great Britain and abroad." ..... "The Committee is of the opinion that the accident was entirely due to an attempt to make a very sharp turn at too low an altitude. At the last moment, the aviator made this attempt in order to avoid the spectators." ....

**"Recommendation:-** The Committee is of opinion that the ground in question was unsuitable for the sort of exhibition flights which Mr. Astley was attempting. It was too narrow for an aviator to attempt sharp turns at a low altitude and between spectators on either side of the ground. The inevitable danger from this condition of affairs should be made known to promoters and aviators."

A slightly less complementary account was reported in the New York Times [Telegram: London, September 21, 1912].

**"THREE AVIATORS FALL TO DEATH. Astley, Daredevil Englishman, Killed at Belfast When His Machine Turns Over. NARROW ESCAPE 4 DAYS AGO. His Woman Passenger Wrote as They Dropped – Two German Army Officers Also Killed.**

That H.J.D. Astley, the aviator, was certain sooner or later to come to a tragic end because of his daredevil temperament has long been whispered in aviation circles, and his fatal fall in full view of the spectators at the Belfast cattle show grounds this afternoon, while causing a painful sensation here, evoked little surprise.

Only last Wednesday, while flying at Lille with Miss Trehawke Davis as a passenger, he had a miraculous escape from death, falling 200 feet and having his machine badly smashed. Miss Davis made notes of her sensations during the tumble.

To-day's accident occurred while Astley was 150 feet in the air. He had been flying brilliantly, and after several graceful evolutions began a spiral volplane. Apparently, he banked the machine too sharply, and the aeroplane, catching at the same time a gust of wind, was dashed straight downward, the aviator being flung from his seat against the wing post.

Flying at the same time was James Valentine, who raced to the scene of the disaster, only to find that Astley was mortally hurt. He helped remove him to a hospital, where death followed during an operation on his skull, which was badly fractured.

Mrs. Astley, wife of the aviator, was at Hendon watching the flying there at the time of the accident."

British newspapers were more deferential. Nottingham Evening Post read[[fn19](#)]:

**"A HERO'S DEATH. ASTLEY GIVES HIS LIFE TO SAVE OTHERS. A DESCENDANT OF CROMWELL.**

The first Irish aviation fatality occurred on Saturday, when between 10,000 and 11,000 people were witnesses to a fatal accident to Astley at Balmoral, the beautiful exhibition grounds outside Belfast.

Astley died a hero's death, for it may be truly said of him that he gave his life to save the people. He had just made a couple of circuits of the ground and was volplaning to earth again when, apparently afraid that he might come down among the spectators on the popular side of the area, he gave his machine a sharp turn upwards.

As he did so a gust of wind caught the monoplane, tilted it over, and man and machine dashed to the ground. The distance of the fall was small, but the Bleriot in its course hit some palings. Several stays were broken, and those penetrated the aviator's body. Death was not immediate, but on removal to hospital Astley died while undergoing an operation.

The flight was one of the opening events of the aviation exhibition. Valentine, another airman, made the first flight, which the crowd greatly enjoyed. Then Astley ascended and performed a number of daring and picturesque evolutions in the course of a double circuit of the ground. When 150 feet in the air he started the descent, which was to be fatal.

Mrs Astley, the aviator's wife, formerly Miss May Kinder, the actress, was at Hendon on Saturday afternoon watching the flying. When she left the aerodrome the news of the accident had not reached London. On hearing of her husband's death, Mrs. Astley at once left for Belfast.

## LAST WEEK'S ADVENTURE

Mr. Astley's amazing adventure only as late as last Wednesday will be fresh in the recollection of all. He started to fly from Liege to Hendon with Miss Trehawke Davies as a passenger. His machine fell at Lille from a height of 200ft, and was wrecked, but both he and Miss Davies escaped without injury. Miss Davies was writing notes during the flight, and the last entry in her diary was "Planing madly to earth ... bits of us flying now."

This accident was caused by a breakage of the floor of the fuselage in which Mr. Astley's foot became wedged, preventing him from exercising proper control. "He died a man's death," said Miss Davies, who was informed in Paris on Saturday night of Mr. Astley's death."

They then provided a list of recent British fatalities.

"The following is a list of **Britishers** who have lost their lives in flying disasters:-

Hon. C.S. Rolls, July 12th, 1911, Hendon.  
V. Smith, May 27th, 1911, St. Petersburg.  
G.F.G. Napier, August 1st, 1911, Brooklands.  
Lieutenant T.J. Ridge, August 18th, 1911, Aldershot  
Lieutenant R.C. Cammell, September 17th, 1911, Hendon.  
Hubert Oxley (with passenger), December 19th, 1911, Filey.  
D. Graham Gilmour, February 17th, 1912, Richmond.  
D.L. Allen, April 18th, 1912, Irish Channel.  
E.V. Fisher (with passenger), May 13th, 1912, Brooklands  
Captain Loraine, July 5th, 1912, Salisbury Plain.  
Staff-Sergeant R.H.V. Wilson, July 5th, 1912, Salisbury Plain.  
Lindsay Campbell, August 3rd, 1912, Weybridge.  
R.C.Fenwick, August 13th, 1912, Weybridge.  
Captain Hamilton, September 6th, 1912, Hertfordshire.  
Lieutenant Wyness Stuart, September 6th, 1912, Hertfordshire.  
Lieutenant E. Hotchkiss, near Oxford, September 10th, 1912.  
Mr. Astley, at Belfast, September 21st, 1912.

The following eight **army airmen** have met with fatal accidents, those marked with the *asterisk* being members of the *Royal Flying Corps*.

Lieutenant T.J. Ridge.  
Lieutenant R.C. Cammell.  
\* Captain Loraine.  
\* Staff-Sergeant Wilson.  
\* Captain Hamilton.  
\*Lieutenant Wyness Stuart.  
\* Lieutenant E. Hotchkiss.  
\* Lieutenant C.A. Bettington.

Amongst **continental airmen** the death roll now stands approximately at 200.

An inquest looking into Henry Astley's death took place on 23rd September 1912 [[fn20](#)]:

### "HOW MR ASTLEY WAS KILLED.

A verdict of accidental death was returned at Belfast yesterday as a result of the inquest on Mr Astley the British aviator, who was killed on Saturday.

Mr Harry Delacombe, deceased's manager, in evidence, said that Astley was using a Bleriot two-seater machine of 70 horse-power. Astley said he was going up to try the air, and jocularly added "I will just fool around." After making three sharp turns, he came up the ground on the grandstand side, apparently following the cinder track. He was driving along at 60 to 66 miles per hour. On reaching the end of the cinder track he immediately banked, as he had come on the oval bend too suddenly, but he banked excessively. Nothing could then prevent what airmen called side-slip.

Deceased thinking of the mass of spectators, and knowing that the fall had to come, was employed up to the last moment in heading the machine round to fall inside the enclosure. He fell vertically 25 to 30 feet. One wing of the aeroplane crumpled like an accordion.

Professor Sinclair said that after Astley had circled over the grandstand he dipped and rose again. Then the machine suddenly turned to one side, losing its steering way. It dived vertically 50 feet, striking the cinder track within a few feet of the spectators. Witness found Astley suffering from compound fracture of the upper jaw-bone, nasal bones, and base of the skull. His face had collided with the beam or bar of the machine, crashing in the front of the head and face. Death was due to collapse."

Separately **in the same newspaper** an account was given of flying at Hendon. Henry Astley's wife, **May Kinder**, was watching the aviation at Hendon at the time of the accident, and "receiving congratulation as her husband's escape from an accident in Belgium a few days ago."

### **"PLAYING WITH DEATH. DARING FLIGHTS IN BOISTEROUS WEATHER.**

Seldom, if ever, has there been witnessed such a display of daring flying as was given on Saturday evening, at the London Aerodrome, Hendon. It was early realised that the wind was much too strong for the competitions to take place, and it was generally understood that there would be little in the way of exhibition flights attempted.

With a wind blowing at the rate of 35 to 40 miles an hour, it was announced, however, that Lieut. Fox (who, with Capt. Dawes and Mr. Gordon Bell, had put up at the aerodrome on their way back from the army manoeuvres) and Mr. Gustav Hamel would give exhibition flights, but very few people present realised what was to follow. Lieut. Fox, mounted upon a military biplane, and Mr. Hamel on a Bleriot monoplane, both exceedingly fast machines, ascended, and it soon became evident that they were in for a rough voyage. The machines were buffeted about considerably, and several times it seemed as though they must collapse and fall to the ground, but in the hands of such expert aviators all difficulties were overcome.

Mr. Hamel, especially, did several daring things. He banked at awe-inspiring angles, and when the sightseers expected the machine to collapse it generally resumed the normal angle. The machines lurched over again and again, only to be put right, however, at the crucial moment. The flight was concluded by right and left-hand spiral volplaning. Both men were loudly applauded for their plucky work, their demonstration being a superb achievement. Mr. Hamel later ascended to a height of 6,000 feet, and, subsequently, several of the Graham-White school machines made flights at the aerodrome. Mr. Gordon Bell also started for Farnborough in the military biplane, in which he had been attending the manoeuvres."

Henry Astley's widow left when she heard of her husband's fatal accident

## Act 6: Ripples reach Shirley Falcke

At the beginning of this story, we saw one playboy's unsuccessful pursuit of an actress that very nearly ended his own life. The death of Henry Astley created ripples, some of which then reached Shirley Falcke.

After his suicide attempt, Shirley turned his hand to art dealing – appearing from time to time in reports on American and British dealing – close to his father's early business interests in antique dealing [fn21].

New York Immigration records of 14th December 1912 show Shirley travelled for his art dealing business between Britain and America. That same year we find Shirley declared bankrupt. From the London Gazette, Tuesday, August 6th, 1912. "Order Made on Applications for Discharge of Bankruptcy. – "Falcke, Shirley Douglas (described in the Receiving Order as Shirley Falcke), Half Moon-street (July 11) – discharge suspended for two years." So, he wasn't immediately relieved of his debts and obligations.

At the end of 1912, the ripples from Henry Astley's death were set in motion with newspaper speculation rife in America.

*New York Times: Special Correspondence, London December 10th 1912.-* "Another chapter has been added to the romantic story of Mrs. Mary Ruth Astley, at one time known on the stage as May Kinder. It is announced that she is to inherit an estate of nearly \$400,000 [£65,601] under the will of her husband, Henry J.D. Astley. .... Astley became an enthusiastic airman, and participated in many aviation meets in Great Britain. He was killed in a flight at Belfast last September. Now that May Kinder is an heiress, her friends are wondering what destiny has next in store for her.

He also left £2,000 each to his sister, Olive Joan Astley, and an uncle, and all his other property to his wife, Mrs. Mary Ruth Astley, of Lynsted Lodge, Sittingbourne, Kent."

Her tenure of Lynsted Lodge ended as the ripples between Henry Astley and Shirley Falcke met in a short newspaper notice in the South Eastern Gazette[fn22]: "A marriage has been arranged, and will shortly take place, between Shirley Falcke, 3. Cleveland Row, St.James's, and Mary, widow of Henry Jacob Delaval Astley, of Lynsted Lodge, Sittingbourne." They married on 8th July 1914, in St. Martins, London, but divorced a while later.

## Act 7: Full Circle for Mary

The following year, Mary Falcke (nee Astley) was speculated imminently to be travelling to her hometown in America while Shirley Falcke joined his regiment (1915). It is not clear that she actually travelled as anticipated by her mother (or speculated by newspapers).

*According to the Evening Ledger, Philadelphia (February 18, 1915, Page 3):*

**"BELLE OF ROXBOROUGH" TO VISIT OLD HOME HERE. "Pretty May" Kinder, Who Married Into Two of Britain's Proudest Families, Pines for Walk Along Wissahickon and Sight of Friends of Her Youth.**

Mrs. Shirley Falcke, of London remembered by her childhood friends as "Pretty May" Kinder, former telephone operator and daughter of a Roxborough weaver, who married into two of England's leading families, is coming home.

"The Roxborough beauty," whose charms won successively a millionaire rancher, the son of one of the proudest families in Great Britain, and a fortune of 100,000 pounds left by her second husband, the son of Lady Florence Willoughby, is pining for the scenes of her childhood. Her present husband, Shirley Falcke, son of a millionaire London art dealer, has joined his regiment and his beautiful wife wants to trudge "through the winding hills she used in going to her duties at the switchboard and climb around the historic spots at Indian Rock where she went on her school-day picnics."

All this is contained in a letter which has been the first recent news of the beauty to reach Roxborough since the cables were busy with the news of her latest wedding. Mrs. Falcke writes that she is "longing for the old Falls of Schuylkill." She wants to walk along the Wissahickon drive again and see the girls who romped with her when she carried her father's dinner pail when he worked in a Manayunk blanket mill.

Mrs. Falcke's home is one of the show places in London. It is said she cannot count her servants. The home which saw her childhood days here is at 398 Ripka avenue, Roxborough. It is a two-story frame dwelling, situated on a hill. For the last week Mrs. Falcke's mother has been bustling about the little cottage. She confided to neighbours that "May is coming home for a visit." For the last week Ripka street has been agape. The beauty's homecoming has been the one subject of conversation in Roxborough.

That small portion of Philadelphia which was the only one to know the young beauty is anxious to see her again. Accounts in English papers say she has not lost any of her beauty."

We now understand that this newspaper report is sloppy on a number of 'facts' - see Addendum below

While married to **Mary (Astley)**, war was declared and Shirley enlisted on 13th August 1915 to join the Royal Horseguards as a Second Lieutenant. During the Great War, Shirley was promoted to Captain. He is reported wounded (Birmingham Daily Post, 1916-04-18). No official records survived other than his Medal Card.

The only newspaper article to confirm Mary's occupation of **Lynsted Lodge in 1915** concerned an injury to a servant. *The East Kent Gazette of 19th January 1916 reported:*

**"SEQUEL TO AN ACCIDENT.** - "At the Faversham County Court on Friday in last week, before his Honour Judge Shortt, Mr. A.K. Mowll applied for leave to issue an execution against Mr. Shirley Falcke, of Lynsted Lodge, to recover an award and costs, amounting to £12/12/8, obtained at the Court in July last, by Violet Hamilton, a domestic servant, who had an accident

The image shows a military medal card for Shirley Falcke. The card is filled with handwritten information in red and blue ink. At the top, it says "Campaign: - 1914-15 Star". Below this is a table with columns for Name, Corps, Rank, Reg. No., and Roll on which included (if any). The first entry is for (A) FALCKE, Royal Horse Guards 2/1st, R. Horse Gds. The second entry is for (B) S. Douglas, Capt. \* Off/36/2. Below the table, there is a section for "Action taken" with a table of dates and pages. Further down, there are sections for "theatre of War" (France), "Qualifying Date" (13-8-15), and "EF9/54" and "67/9/2476". At the bottom, there is a section for "Address" which reads "42 Park Lane W. I." and "Guards Club. Brook St W".

Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)
(A) FALCKE	Royal Horse Gds	2/1st		R. Horse Gds
(B) S. Douglas		Capt. *		Off/36/2.

Action taken	ROLL	PAGE
3	Off 36	11
7	do	do
x 15 STAR	Off 36	2

theatre of War: France. EF9/54  
 Qualifying Date: 13-8-15 67/9/2476  
 Address: 42 Park Lane W. I. Guards Club. Brook St W

while employed at the Lodge. Mrs Falcke wrote saying that her husband was on active service. His Honour, under these circumstances, adjourned the case."

In the meantime, in 1919, Lynsted Lodge Estate went under the hammer.

After the First World War, Shirley Falcke moved his life and business firstly to Australia "to breed ponies" and then to America as an art agent with mixed success.

In 1923, Shirley Falcke married **Marjorie Wells**, in Marylebone. The Argus, Melbourne Thursday 19 July 1923 p. 7 reported "Among the arrivals yesterday by the P. and O. liner Narkunda Mr. S. Falcke, formerly a captain in the Royal Horse Guards, and Mrs. Falcke ; Mr. Falcke contemplates breeding polo ponies in Victoria."

By 1931 , the American Art Association Anderson Galleries, Inc. of New York, USA Announces the opening of a London Office at 77 Brook Street, Grosvenor Square, W.1. Telephone Mayfair 3310. Information and advice with regard to the disposal of art and book collections by auction at the New York Galleries may be had from Shirley Falcke – London Representative.

And the pond became glassy.

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## Footnotes

1: *South Eastern Gazette, 28th December, 1912*. "RECENT WILLS. Property of the value of £65,601 has been left by Mr. Henry Jacob Delaval Astley, of Lynsted Lodge, Sittingbourne. Mr. Astley, it will be remembered, was killed while flying at Belfast, on September 21st. He was 24 years of age, and was a grandson of the third Marquis Conyngham, and a descendant of Oliver Cromwell. He left all his property (with the exception of two legacies to relatives) to his wife, who, before her marriage, was Miss May Kinder, an actress."

2: *24th July 1907, Dundee Courier, p5*.

3: *22nd July 1907, Sheffield Evening Telegraph*.

4. *17th May 1907, The Times*: HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE. TO-NIGHT, at 8, JULIUS CAESAR: Mr. Tree, Messrs Henry Neville, Basil Gill, Lyn Harding, J.Fisher White, Julian L'Estrange, Charles Quartermaine, Herbert Grimwood, Alfred Goddard, Robert Atkins, J.Cooke Beresford, A.Corpey Grain, A.B.Imerson, F.Brerton Hine, Clive Currie; Miss Alice Crawford, Miss Iris Hoey, Miss Constance Collier.

5. *1st July 1907: The Times*

6. *26th May 1907: The Times*: APOLLO THEATRE, Shaftesbury-avenue. THIS EVENING, at 8.15, New Musical Play. BUTTERFLIES. Louis Bradfield, I.Hayden Coffin, Willie Warde, Laurie de Frece, Fred Edwards, Kempa Lawson, John Bardsley; Stella St.Audric, Lucie Caine, Iris Hoey, Jessie Lonnen, and Ada Reave. Notices continued to the end of 1908.

"THE MERCURY" PRESS REVIEW: 23rd May, 1908 – "*Butterflies*". "Lilting, light-hearted music, pretty faces, pretty frocks, pretty scenery, laughter and brightness - and Miss Ada Reeve full of dash and merriment - such is the sum total of "*Butterflies*," which delights crowded houses at the Apollo Theatre. The play is above the average of musical plays, with their perpetual boulevard and "*Gay Paree*" scenes; for the play is the "*Palace of Puck*," which Mr. W. J. Locke, on second thoughts, has turned into a jolly musical comedy. The plot is kept intact. We have

the material Christopher Podmore, admirably played by Mr. Fred Edwards, disapproving of everything that makes life merry, until he becomes one of Puck's butterflies. We still have Puck (Mr. Louis Bradfield), and his fantastic palace of happy-go-lucky Bohemians such as Max Riadore (played by Mr. Hayden Coffin), and Peter, the young man without a penny. But on Miss Ada Reeve's shoulders the burden of the play falls. She is the life and soul of the piece, with her rippling laughter and sweet voice. When she sang "I want someone to be fond of," it was good to look round at the audience smiling in enjoyment. The music is of the kind that sets the feet tapping, and the choruses have a swing and a go that carry one right into the Palace of Puck itself. ....**Miss Iris Hoey's** rendering of "*The Lily and the Grub*" calls for special mention even among so many bright and tuneful items.

7. 24th July 1907, *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, p4.

8. 24th July 1907, *Hull Daily Mail*, p3.

9. 24th July 1907, *Dundee Courier*, p5.

10. **Max Leeds** is an actor, known for *It's in the Blood* (1938) and *Sparrows* (1916).

**Cyril Raymond** was born on February 13, 1899 in Rowley Regis, Staffordshire, England as Cyril William North Raymond. He was an actor and writer, known for *Brief Encounter* (1945), *Angels One Five* (1952) and *Don't Talk to Strange Men* (1962). He went on to marry **Gillian Lind** and died on March 20, 1973 in Ripe, Sussex, England.

11. Special Cable to *THE NEW YORK TIMES*. October 26, 1909, p1.

12. Since 1921, Chequers has been the official country residence of British Prime Ministers.

13. 24th September 1912 – *Aberdeen Journal* - **A DESCENDANT OF CROMWELL**

"Mr Henry Jacob Delaval Astley belonged to an old and esteemed country family in Buckinghamshire, where he owned the beautiful and interesting estate called Chequers Court, near Great Missenden. He was in his 25th year, having been born on March 3, 1888, and was the only son of Mr Bertram Frankland-Russell-Astley by his marriage with Lady Florence, youngest daughter of the third Marquis Conyngham, who became a widow in 1904, and married in 1905 the Hon. Claud Heathcote-Drummond-Willoughby, M.P., third son of the first Earl of Ancaster. The Russells of Chequers Court derive their descent from the marriage of the Rev. Samuel Greenhill, of Swinscombe, Oxfordshire, with Elizabeth, youngest daughter of John Russell, Governor of Fort William, Bombay, who was the youngest son of Sir John Russell, third baronet, of Chippenham, by his wife, Frances Cromwell, daughter of the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell. The son and heir of the Rev. Samuel Greenhill succeeded to Chequers Court on the death of his cousin, Mary Russell. His only son, Sir Robert Greenhill Russell, Bt., who was a lineal descendant of Sir Thomas Frankland, Bt., and his wife, Elizabeth, daughter of the Sir John Russell of Chippenham above mentioned, Sir Robert Frankland died in 1849, and left five daughters as co-heiresses, of whom the youngest, Rosalind Alicia, married in 1854 Lieutenant-Colonel Francis l'Estrange Astley, brother of the Earl of Hastings. Mrs Astley in 1872 assumed the additional names of Frankland-Russell, in compliance with the terms of her mother's will, and from her Chequers Court was inherited by the dead aviator's father, the late Mr Bertram Frankland-Russell Astley. Mr H.J.D. Astley married Miss May Kinder, an actress. Chequers Court is at present let to Mr Arthur Lee, M.P."

14. *Hastings and St Leonards Observer*. 20th and 27th August 1910. "**TO LET, LYNSTED LODGE**, five miles from Sittingbourne, 2½ miles from Teynham, LCDR [London Chatham and Dover Railway], a charming Country Residence, practically unfurnished, except for entailed pictures, etc; contains four reception-rooms, billiard room, six bed and dressing-rooms, six servants' rooms, bath (h. and c.), and the usual domestic offices; stabling for five horses, harness room, coach-house, cow house, and piggeries, etc. The grounds, in all 30 acres, include one tennis lawn, rookery, small orchard, two walled-in good gardens and conservatory, and 18 acres pasture. The 18 acres pasture and rough shooting over about 300 acres can be let by arrangement.- Apply to Colonel Tyler, 85, Warwick-street, London, S.W."

15. Albert Judges (72), Gardener; Naomi Judges (72), mother of nine children (1 dead); Rose Judges (27), daughter, Caretaker.

16. Royal Aero Club Article:-

### **New Members.- The following new Members were elected (28th August 1909)**

<b>Henry Jacob Delaval Astley</b>	E. Marshall Fox
John A. Banister	Henry Knox
Guy Vernon Baxendale	Lieut. George Frederick Montagu, R.N.
S.F. Cody	Captain Hugh Iltid Nicholl
Le Baron de Beville	Sydney Norris
Le Baron Henri Beville	August Oddenino
Baron de Forest	George F. Underwood
Lady Dunne	G.W.Warne
Miss Dunne	Mrs. Wrohan

17. 28th September 1912 – *Flight Magazine*.

18. 21st December 1912 - *Flight Magazine*.

19. 23rd September 1912 - *Nottingham Evening Post Obituary*.

20. 24th September 1912 – *Aberdeen Journal - Inquest*.

21. 1901 Census

22. 14th July 1914

23. 15th December 1931- *The Times*.

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### **Maisie Kinder and her life with "Otto" Astley and her woes with Shirley Falcke - addendum**

*During March/April 2015, thanks to the generosity of online visitor and historian, **Catherine Evans**, we have been able to improve and correct the Society's account of **early aviator Henry Jacob Delaval Astley and Lynsted Lodge**. Catherine Evans is an historical researcher and biographer for Gustav Hamel, a fellow pioneering flier, who was a great friend of Astley and to the outstanding woman flier, Miss Trehawke Davies (also mentioned in our own account). Our correspondent has her main focus on Gustav Hamel and friends and she plans to publish that exciting and revealing story. So, we cannot publish here the snippets shared with us on that dimension of the story. But, with her permission, I can now flesh out certain details of the story submitted to the Society web-site. If you find the stories behind these earliest daring aviators interesting, keep an eye open for Ms Evans's publication in due course.*

### **Refinements and corrections**

Let us begin with the names of players in this drama: Henry Astley was mostly known by friends as "Otto" Astley; May Kinder, who fell in love with and married "Otto" Astley was also named by friends as "Maisie". The photograph (below) is of Maisie when appearing in "The Arcadians (April 1909)", which is probably where Otto first saw her.

When writing the original article, I was unable to confirm that the "Otto" and "Maisie" Astley ever actually lived in Lodge. The closest to confirmation on this exposed by Catherine the following newspaper certainly places Maisie Lodge after the death of husband. This same illustrates her friendship fliers and gives one reason for leasing Lodge - the extensive parkland allowed easy the gentle gradients North Downs.

*Reported in the Times and Herne Bay 21st June 1913:* "Mr. Hamel on Friday made a flight on his Farman from Hendon to Kent, accompanied by Miss Davies as passenger. He height of 2,000 feet to near Sittingbourne, the of Mrs. Astley, the the young English the evening they flew to to pay a call, returning Lynsted." [Catherine corrects the reference to as more likely to be a plane]



11519 B ROTARY PHOTO. E.C. MISS MAY KINDER AS "CHRYSEA" IN "THE ARCADIAN" ROTARY PHOTO. E.C.  
*Widow of Mr Astley Aviator over* SEC

Lynsted point is Evans in report that in Lynsted her article with other good Lynsted open flying from below the

*Whitstable Herald on Gustav splendid biplane*

Trehawke flew at a Lynsted residence widow of aviator. In Weybridge later to Evans "Farman" "Bleriot"

When reporting in our original article on the "ripples" flowing from the untimely death of "Otto" Astley, I drew a loose connection through "Maisie" between "Otto" Astley and Shirley Falcke. Catherine Evans has delved more deeply into the 'back story' of the players and concluded quite firmly that these two men were poles apart in their personalities. So, we can now more firmly state that "Otto" Astley was a driven man, keen to experience the thrill and adventure that flying offered. His marriage to "Maisie" was founded on real affection. However, Shirley Falcke had already shown himself in our researches as a rather immature, self-serving and controlling man. As we reported, Shirley Falcke attempted suicide in a hansom cab rather than allow actress Iris Hoey to get away from him. Rather unfairly, Iris Hoey was blamed by Shirley's parents for the 'entanglement' and their son, Shirley, could do no wrong.

Catherine Evans has confirmed through her own records that Shirley Falcke was a "cad" of the first water. After marrying "Maisie" close to the outbreak of World War 1 (perhaps primarily for her money) Shirley Falcke proved himself to be something worse than a "cad" through

reports of his brutalising behaviour towards "Maisie" who had, by the time of her marriage to Shirley, lost all her firmest friends to flying accidents or scattering to new challenges at home and abroad (including loss of friends in the fighting of WW1). Isolated, alone and by now living in London without any connection with Lynsted Lodge, "Maisie" struggled to free herself from the abusive relationship during the First World War period, only succeeding after the War. What nowadays is called the "battered wife syndrome" through which a woman might find isolation from friends, family and other allies somehow makes abuse "normal". At a time when women were still regarded in the main as 'chattels', poor Maisie's position must have felt intolerable.

Catherine Evans confirms that Shirley had also proved himself a serial bankrupt before and after his marriage to "Maisie". Although, what little we know of his military career suggests that he was more successful in that direction as he gained promotion to Captain.

So, thanks to Catherine's correspondence, we can paint a more rounded picture of these two men in Maisie's life. "Otto" Astley may have been a playboy and thrill seeker, but he surrounded himself with firm friends and a caring relationship with Maisie. His mother was able eventually to reconcile herself to the match. Shirley Falcke was a much less savoury personality who, having captured his 'prize' of wealth and beauty in Maisie, proceeded to strip her of her independence and vivacity. The "ripples" from the colourful and outgoing "Otto" had become much darker by the time they hit Shirley Falcke.

Finally, Catherine probed the *conclusions made in a newspaper report* copied into the original article that suggested both that May ("Maisie") Kinder had been married before meeting "Otto" Astley (wrong) and that she was on her way in 1915 to visit her hometown in America (this never happened and appears perhaps only to be speculation by her mother). That newspaper article is a fine example of how sloppy reporting can set hares running that have no right to be in this particular field! That same lazy report at least doubled Maisie's large inherited fortune that stood at £65,601 14s. 5d. [Belfast Ireland Probate reported in London National Probate Calendar, 1912].

The wider stories of Maisie's friends Gustav Hamel (a less privileged man than his friend "Otto", who traded on his skill as a flier for his living - he was the 64th man to qualify for membership of the Aero Club of the United Kingdom) and **Miss E.J. Trehawke Davies** (a woman of private means and an outstanding woman aviator in a man's world (although not a pilot, she did join the Aero Club from 12th December 1911. She was often a passenger on the many daring exploits of her friends, no less brave than they). The first woman flier to gain membership of the Aero Club was Mrs H B Hewlett, 29th August 1911. She was followed by Mrs C de Beauvoir Stocks (#153, 7th November 1911)) must wait until publication by Catherine Evans in due course. There is separate research being undertaken into Miss Trehawke Davies - that too should be fascinating when published.