

LUBBOCK FAMILY BURIAL GROUND – A SHORT HISTORY

In 1913, John Lubbock, the first Lord Avebury, passed away following a short period of heart trouble. He was 79 years of age. The Times of the 2nd of June 1913 begins a description of his funeral thus.

FUNERALS

LORD AVEBURY

The funeral of Lord Avebury took place on Saturday in Farnborough Churchyard. It was wholly simple. There was no hearse, there were no carriages; all the mourners walked. The plain oak coffin was borne on the shoulders of men he had known and was followed by his family, a few intimate friends, and groups of tenantry and servants. The procession from High Elms wound in a long line down the drive across the public road, and, entering a wood, passed along a wide grass lane, altogether some three quarters of a mile, to the church, which was crowded with friends and neighbours.

During the next four years of World War I that followed John's young widow, Alice, was to lose two of her sons, Eric and Harold and a son in law, Adrian Grant Duff. Adrian was killed at the battle of the Aisne in the opening days of the war in September 1914. Eric was a member of the Royal Flying Corps (the RFC, a precursor to the RAF). He was shot down over Belgium in 1917. Harold was killed at Arras in Northern France in 1918.

The Lubbock family burial ground was created in 1916 when Alice decided to create a more elaborate memorial to her husband John. She had his body exhumed and transferred to a consecrated plot in family owned woodlands about 100 yards from the St Giles graveyard.



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Between then and 1980, a number of family members were buried there, although not everyone who has their name on a monument actually is interred on the site (for example Harold and Eric are buried in British war cemeteries near where they were killed). In 1930 the graveyard looked like this.



The tomb of John Birkbeck Lubbock, the 2nd Baron Avebury, who died in 1929, is shown at the upper left and that of his brother Harold is shown at the upper right. In the lower left, you can just make out the roundel on the wing of a stone aeroplane that marked Eric's grave.

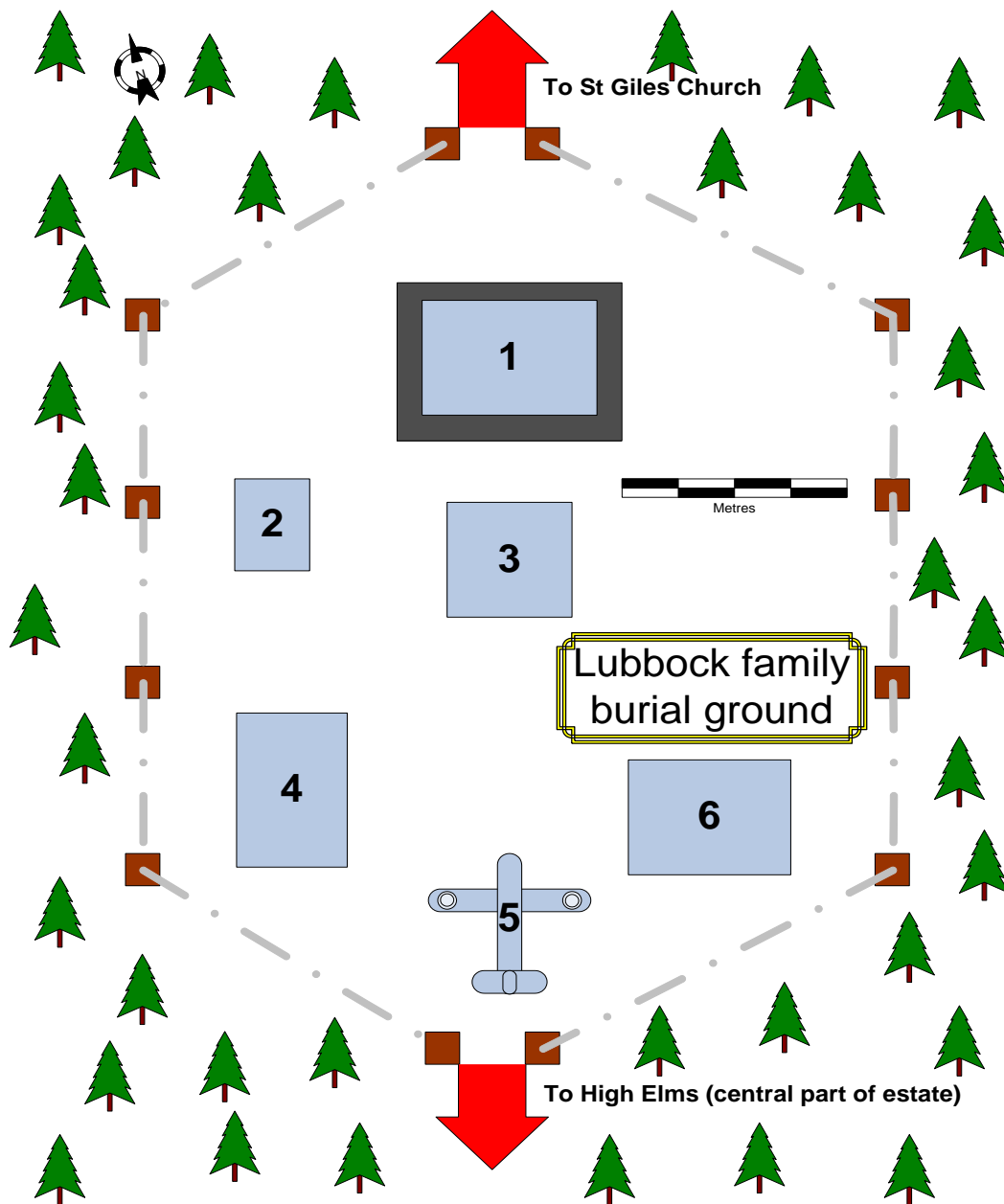
Alice Lubbock grieved greatly for her sons lost in the war – so soon after the loss of her husband. She took to wearing nothing but black from that time until her death in 1947. Each member of the family was given an elaborate gravestone – each decorated with both family crests and some reference to the lives they led.

From the 1930s no new graves were created. Instead, deceased family members were buried within existing tombs – most often under the Celtic cross which was John Lubbock's grave. Their presence was marked by inscription on the sides and base of the cross. These can still be viewed today.

The shape of the burial ground is hexagonal as shown. Surrounding it was a chain link fence with 12 white wooden posts. At the north and south end were two wrought iron gates. A path led to the graveyard from the field just south of St Giles and another led from it going down towards the gatehouse lodge in Shire Lane. By the time I grew up in the 1960s the cemetery had become a place of peaceful contemplation. The ground was grassed over and well-kept. At one side there was a small bench where one could sit looking inwards – roughly as the photo above shows the view.

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At about this time the location of the tombs was recorded by my grandmother. The layout of the ground is illustrated below.



Key to memorials

PLOT 1 = Harold Lubbock, (Ursula) Moyra Williams (nee Lubbock), John Lubbock, 3rd Baron Avebury block tomb with names at base

Captain Harold Fox-Pitt Lubbock (1888-1918), of the Old Hall, Langham, was the fourth son of the first Baron Avebury and his second wife, Alice, and was born in London on 10 June 1888. He was educated at St. Aubyns, Rottingdean, and afterwards at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took his degree as Master of Arts in 1909. George Phillips wrote: "On leaving the University Harold followed the hereditary family profession of banking, and after some years' experience, became a partner in the firm of Coutts and Co., with which his father, the first Lord Avebury, and his brother were so long associated. Always fully alive to the duty which attaches to every patriot of taking part in the defence of his country, he held for several years a

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commission in the West Kent (Queen's Own) Yeomanry. At the outbreak of war he was at once called up with his regiment and, when despatched to form part of the unfortunate Gallipoli expedition, he accompanied them as adjutant. He took part in all the hardships of that strenuous campaign, from the time he landed at Cape Helles until the evacuation which closed that disastrous chapter in our military history, only redeemed by the heroism and resourcefulness of the officers and men who composed the expedition. He afterwards saw some active service in Egypt and Palestine, and while there was promoted to the rank of captain. In July 1917 he transferred to the Grenadier Guards and on 28 December went out to join the 2nd Battalion in France. He took part in the fine resistance to the great [German] offensive on 21 March in the second Battle of the Somme." Harold was killed instantly by a shell in the front line on the morning of 4 April 1918, south of Arras and was buried near Ficheux in Boisieux-Au-Mont Communal Cemetery, grave 3. A brother officer wrote: "Wherever he went he introduced the most valuable element. Whatever the conditions he was always alert, quick and keen, and strongly infected others with the same qualities. War was repulsive to him in every way, yet he never showed it, and so the vitality and charm which he radiated was not merely a natural 'joie de vie,' but sprang from a heart of real courage and fortitude." All who knew him testify to his splendid qualities both as a man and an officer. He seems to have been fearless to a fault, and as sound and capable as he was brave. The urbanity and charm which characterised his father, the first Baron Avebury, better known to his own generation as Sir John Lubbock, the eminent scientist and author, were reproduced in his son, who inherited the keen business instincts of his race." Harold was married, on 10 June 1914, to Dorothy Charlotte and left two children, John, born 13 May 1915, who became the third Baron Avebury, and (Ursula) Moyra, born 5 December 1917. Moyra Williams (nee Lubbock), Harold's daughter was briefly married to Dorian Williams, the BBC show jumping commentator. John, the 3rd Baron Avebury, was Harold's son. He was married three times and had one daughter, Emma. His passion in life was cars and in the 1930's he briefly opened a works in Green Street Green selling his own design the "Lammas Graham", a luxury model.

PLOT 2 = Norman & Edith Lubbock flat gravestone

Norman was one of John's sons by his first marriage to Ellen Hordern. He had married his cousin Edith, the daughter of John's brother, Neville. They lived at Gorringes Farm at the top of High Elms Road.

PLOT 3 = John Lubbock and many others stone cross

John Lubbock, the 1st Baron Avebury was Alice's husband and the first occupant of the cemetery. Sir John Lubbock was the MP who gave us Bank Holidays, steering the Act through Parliament in 1871. The days were so popular that they were initially called St Lubbock's Days. As a child, John had made friends with the newly arrived Charles Darwin who moved in as a neighbour in Downe in 1842. This friendship was to last the rest of their lives. John lived all his life at High Elms except for a brief spell from 1861 until 1865 when he resided at a house called Lammas in Chislehurst on what is now named as Lubbock Road. He returned to his family estate at High Elms, Farnborough on the death of his father. He was an accomplished amateur scientist and author, writing on subjects as diverse as prehistory, entomology, geology and politics. Many of his works were translated into multiple languages and were published in multiple editions. He was an eminently successful banker, creating the cheque clearing system still in place today (just) and he was the most successful law maker of his time. He should be remembered for passing the Shop Hours Act, Open Spaces Act, Public Libraries Act, The Ancient Monuments Act, which paved the way for the

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creation of English Heritage, as well as the Bank Holiday Act among many others. He married Ellen Hordern, a distant cousin, in 1856 and they had six children together (one dying in infancy). Sir John was a great cricket lover, for some years acting as secretary to West Kent Cricket Club; he was good friends with Philip Norman who wrote the annals of the club. Sir John became an MP for Maidstone in 1870 and his long political career with the Liberal party began. He continued his scientific interests, keeping a pet wasp and training his pet dog to read! Ellen his wife died in 1879 and in 1884, John married his second wife, Alice Pitt Rivers, by whom he had a further 5 children. In 1888 he was made President of the London Chamber of Commerce and a Privy Councillor in 1890. A peerage was conferred on him on Christmas Day 1899; he took the name Lord Avebury after the stone circle in Wiltshire which he had brought in order to protect it from builders. His memorial cross at St Giles, Farnborough, shows some of the interests of his life, ancient monuments, Bronze Age axes and a bee skep.

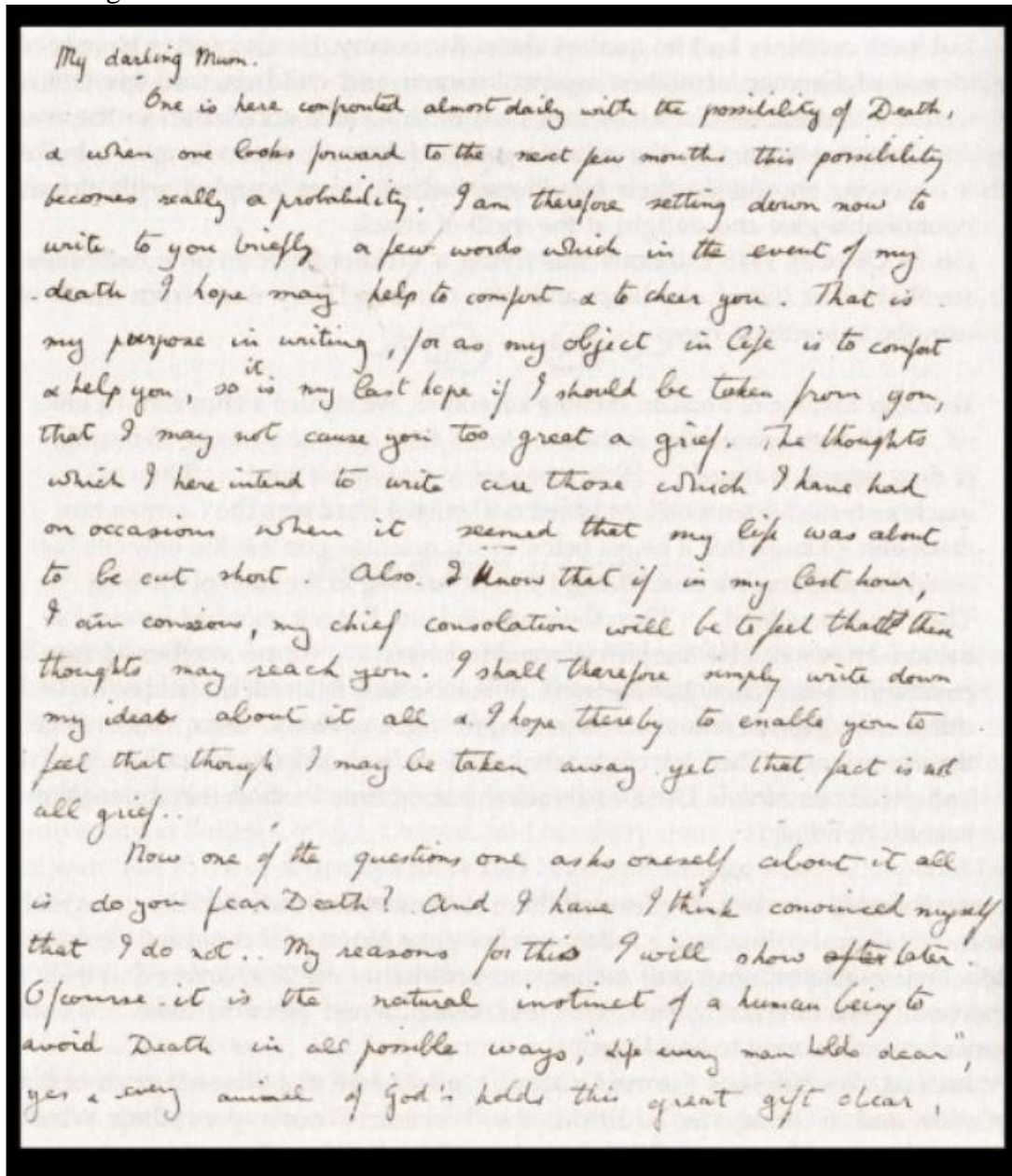
PLOT 4 = John Birkbeck Lubbock, 2nd Baron Avebury block tomb with name at base

John Birkbeck Lubbock (1858-1929) was the eldest son of John Lubbock, 1st Baron Avebury by his 1st marriage to Ellen Hordern. He succeeded his father as Baron Avebury upon his death in 1913. He was born, and died, at the same family home, High Elms, Farnborough, Kent. He was educated at Eton College, and then at Balliol College, Oxford where he graduated as B.A. and M.A. in the same year of 1885. was a director of the family banking firm, Roberts, Lubbock and Company, from 1880 until 1914 when it was taken over by Coutts & Co., where he became a director in turn, and of the British National Provincial Bank and a member of the boards of five colonial banks, eight insurance companies and five investment trusts, including the Bank of New Zealand, Lloyd's of London, Royal Exchange Assurance Co, Australian Mortgage Land and Finance Co., and Australian Mercantile Land and Finance Co. He was also a Deputy Lieutenant for the county of Kent. In his youth, he was a keen sportsman. At school he played both association football and cricket although not in their representative XIs, but he won in 1876 a game of Eton Fives with Ivo Bligh who was later famous as the captain of the England cricket team of "Ashes" fame. At university he joined the Oxford University A.F.C., playing with them in the FA Cup ties of 1879-80 up to the Cup Final at Kennington Oval on 10 April 1880 when his team lost 1-0 to Clapham Rovers. He also played against Cambridge University as a football 'Blue' in 1881, and was also a 'Blue' at real tennis when he lost in the doubles. He played cricket for the M.C.C., I Zingari and West Kent, and, later in life, scratch golf. He died unmarried in 1929.

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PLOT 5 = Eric Fox Pitt Lubbock stone aeroplane

Eric Lubbock (1893-1917) was the middle (of 3) sons of John and Alice Lubbock. Like his father, John, Eric was a keen botanist. He attended Oxford University and rowed in the eights there. He broke off his studies to enlist for WW1. After a spell in the army, he joined the fledgling Royal Flying Corps (45th Squadron). He was awarded the Military Cross and mentioned twice in dispatches. He was shot down over Ypres in Belgium during a reconnaissance mission in his Sopwith aircraft, a representation of which forms his grave at High Elms. In anticipation of his death he had written the following letter to his mother in 1915.



This has been widely published as an example of poignant messages home from those at the front.

PLOT 6 = Nevile & Constance Lubbock flat, walled tomb

Sir Nevile Lubbock (1839-1914) was John Lubbock's younger brother. He was married first to Harriet Charlotte Wood, the daughter of a local MP. They lived at North Cray Place in a large country place and then in a house called Leasons, after which Leasons Hill in St Paul's Cray is named. Nevile was knighted for his "services

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to the West Indian colonies”. His wife Harriet died aboard the SS Arno in 1878 whilst out in the Caribbean of yellow fever. His 2nd wife, Constance, was the daughter of the astronomer Sir John Herschel. She wrote a memoir of her early life in 1933 which depicts her life in the Herschel household.

In 1986, or thereabouts, Bromley Council decided to move some of the memorials into the main St Giles cemetery. It is understood that they were concerned that they were hard to maintain and keep from vandalism where they stood. Graves 2, 3 and 6 were moved into the St Giles cemetery. Bromley Council sold off 5 (the aeroplane monument) to a stone mason’s yard in Great Bedwyn, Wiltshire. The base remains of 1 and 4 are still on the site although the blocks have been broken up. The top of 4 lies in two pieces embedded in the ground just north of the base.

The process by which this transfer took place is rather opaque – obscured by history one might say. Bromley claim to have lost all correspondence relating to the matter and no one in the Lubbock family had any knowledge that it was happening at the time. What has emerged since (in 2014) is that the Lubbock family still own the cemetery, a fact that at the time was not known to them.

The London Borough of Bromley have since tidied up the site. They have converted one of the graves into a rectangular railed off spot marking the approximated centre of the cemetery. There were moves to create some more elaborate markers together with more detailed signage but these were eventually shelved – presumably for lack of funds.

Twenty plus years later, it was possible at some expense, to recover the stone aeroplane. This has now been placed in the walled up BEECHE centre at High Elms to allow it to be better protected. The Rev Matthew Hughes performed a rededication ceremony which cemented the return of the tomb in the minds of the family.

Now the family are considering whether the site can be improved. Consultations with Bromley, St Giles, the wider family etc. are underway and any parishioners who have thoughts on the matter would be welcome to have their say - via the church.

Lyulph Lubbock

Nov 2015