

The Koettlitz Family

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By the publication of a book in 2011, reprinted in 2013 and 2014, entitled "Scott's Forgotten Surgeon – Dr. Reginald Koettlitz, polar explorer" by Dover Society member Aubrey A. (Gus) Jones (whose wife Ann is youngest of the three daughters of the third Maurice Koettlitz (1903 -1960), who was Dr. Reginald Koettlitz' nephew), and with the unveiling in 2016 of a plaque (reported in the Dover Society newsletter no.88) at Dover College to Reginald Koettlitz himself (1860-1916), attention has been focused upon the extraordinary story of the Koettlitz family itself and its connexions with Dover.

There exist two publicly available websites devoted to the Koettlitz family genealogy which record their astonishing European background and diaspora. In his book Gus Jones also recounts the family history, so it is with great respect that I would like to enhance his account and perhaps suggest a few additions and amendments based on my own research together with most welcome additions and corrections made by Colin Dowdeswell, a direct descendant, who is the fount of the family archive. To older generations of Dover folk, however, awareness on a more personal level of the Koettlitz family arises from the two family doctors Koettlitz, both forenamed Maurice, practising firstly from no.20 London Road and later on the other side of the road at Charlton House, 305 -306 London Road, reported upon by Derek Leach in the August 2002 Dover Society newsletter no.44. That report featured the former YHA building which had been the Koettlitz family home and surgery up until 1960 when the second Dr Maurice Koettlitz died. The fine imposing period house and annexe, a grade II listed building, have now

been converted into flats. Both doctors Koettlitz were held in high regard, the elder being remembered as the doctor with the beard. Their surgery was noted all the more by the large stuffed polar bear which stood within it, and which is now in the Dover Museum. This fine animal had been brought to Dover by Dr. Reginald Koettlitz (who apparently had shot it himself) after his expedition to the arctic (1894-1897).

Koettlitz is a Germanic surname which occasionally appears at Kottlitz with an umlaut sign over the "o" and pronounced "curtlitz" but sometimes cheekily rendered to English ears as "cutlets." It also appeared as Kettlitz or Kittlitz. It is very unusual in the United Kingdom, almost all references to it being to interrelated people but it has now all but disappeared from our shores. I believe it takes its name from the village of Koettlitz in the upper palatinate region (*Oberpfalz*) of Germany, southeast of Leipzig, towards the present border with the Czech Republic. One branch of the Koettlitz family claim noble heritage and take the name von Koettlitz with the title *Freiherr* (baron).

Maurice was the first name of three successive generations of the Koettlitz family between 1815 and 1960. As with these forenames, many of the early family names were of French type and spelling. The French language was dominant in Europe during the 1700's and 1800's. It was common for educated families to speak both French and German and have names with both a French and German heritage.

Progenitor of this clan was Jean Frederic (or Johann Friedrich) Koettlitz. He was baptised at Schoeneck in West Prussia (now

Skarszewy, Poland) near Danzig on 19th February 1781, the son of Jean Christophe Koettlitz, a police inspector, (*Polizeiburgermeister*) and Florentine Concorde (née Nehring). He married on 26th May 1811 at the French Protestant Church in Koenigsberg, East Prussia one Ulrica Huber, from Brunswick-Wolfenbuettel.

Danzig and nearby Koenigsberg were ancient German free trading cities of great magnificence and learning situated as ice free ports on the Baltic Sea at the eastern extremity of the German empire. Both cities were almost totally destroyed in the Second World War. Koenigsberg is now the Soviet rebuilt and immigrant Russian populated city of Kaliningrad in the isolated enclave of the same name. These family connexions with Prussia are interesting as Gus Jones in his book on Reginald Koettlitz states that the original family estates were in Tilsit, now Sovetsk, on the Nemen river border with Lithuania. Whichever way one looks at it however, the mobility across the continent of Europe of this family through and after the time of Napoleon and before the advent of railways is astonishing to say the least.

Maurice Koettlitz (1) (1815-1892) was the third child and second son of Johann Friedrich Koettlitz and Ulrica Huber and was baptised in Koenigsberg at the French Protestant Church (the baptismal record and names written in French) on 28th September 1815.

The family legend claims their family's noble title (*Freiherr* or baron) was lost in the 1700's when a family member killed a rival landowner during a duel (which was forbidden during those times).

Johann Friedrich completed his foreign service exams and entered Prussian

government service as a "*Staatsbeamte*" or civil servant. His graduation coincided with the height of the Prussian empire, and he was posted to Trier (Treves) when the Congress of Vienna awarded new European territories to Prussia as a reward for their military support to the defeat of Napoleon. Johann Friedrich's career began in Trier and later in the Prussian regional capital of Koblenz, where he was responsible for supervision of the government's customs and tax collections. He died around 1865 at Ehrenbreitenstein across the Rhine from Koblenz, to where he had retired.

Maurice (1) next appeared on record in Brussels, Belgium in 1839 as a tobacco merchant. Belgium gained its independence in 1830 and was for a time the leading industrial and colonial power in Europe. He was subsequently listed in 1844 as an engraver in Brussels, then a resident of Louvain before becoming a theological student in 1854-1855 at Lausanne, Switzerland. In 1855 as Lutheran pastor he founded the German Mission Church in Ostend, Belgium (on the Wittenonnenstraat/Rue des Soeurs Blanches, later demolished to become the onetime main post office) and thereafter the English Church, built in 1868, on the Langestraat, which still stands today under renovation. Also, in 1868 with his English second wife and their six Ostend born children, he moved to Dover just as the English industrial revolution was taking off. The family set up under his wife's (Rosetta Dowdeswell) governance, a school for young ladies at 75 Folkestone Road in the parish of Hougham Without. This building is now the Norman Guest House overlooking the Dover Priory Station and bridge, whose internal rooms still give hint in layout to their use as a school. In 1871 he was described in the census of that year as a "pastor without the care of souls", against

which an unknown hand has added in the margin the word "spy"! Maurice (1) died at this house on 19th February 1892 and was buried in the churchyard of St Lawrence, Hougham. His legible headstone still stands there today as testament to a kaleidoscopic life's journey from East Prussia to a small east Kent village.

Maurice Koettlitz (1) was first married on 16th February 1839 in Brussels to Sibille Amelie Ottenthal (born 14th May 1804 in Castel, northern France) by whom he fathered several children, of whom only two apparently survived, namely Hortense (1839-1928) and Jenny (1840-1926). These ladies went on to become joint governesses at a school known as Grove House at Koblenz on the Rhine in Germany. They both remained single, Hortense dying at Trier, Germany on 27th February 1928 and Jenny, who had settled later in life in England, at Dover on 1st December 1926, having lived at the house still known as Waldeck on Green Lane at Temple Ewell. (Waldeck was the ancestral German home of the Koettlitzes). Her will notes that she desired to be buried in the churchyard at Temple Ewell in a grave surrounded by an iron railing with a granite curb and memorial in the shape of an obelisk engraved with the inscription "In memory of Jenny, daughter of the Reverend Baron Maurice Koettlitz, late of Dover." No trace of this memorial, if it was ever erected, can now be found.

It seems that Maurice Koettlitz (1) was widowed sometime after 1849 but no record of the death of his first wife has yet been found. Precisely who looked after the then orphaned young children is also not known. However, some nine years later, while Hortense and Jenny, as very young women, were running their girls' school, Grove House at Koblenz, there was also working there as English governess one

Rosetta Ann Jane Dowdeswell (1833-1929). It was thus that their father's second marriage came about. Rosetta had followed her local church's (St Georges Hanover Square) priest Reverend Tucker who had been sent as part of the Archbishop of Canterbury's initiative to establish an English church in Koblenz, Germany.

Maurice Koettlitz (1), by then based in Ostend, was married to Rosetta Dowdeswell by the said Rev Tucker on 10th December 1858 at the said English Church (destroyed in the Second World War) in the Palace of H.R.H. Prince Regent of Prussia (later Kaiser Wilhelm 1, husband of Queen Victoria's eldest child Vicky). Maurice and Rosetta must have moved to Ostend directly, as their family of six children began there a year later thus:

1. Maurice (2), born Ostend 28th November 1859. Highly esteemed local doctor. Married. Moved to Dover *en famille* 1868. Naturalised British subject 1892. Died 6th February 1935 at Dover. Buried at Hougham with or near his father. No headstone. Family detailed below.

2. Reginald, born Ostend 23rd December 1860, Distinguished doctor, entomologist, pioneer colour photographer, explorer in various world regions, surgeon to Scott in the Antarctic 1901-1904. Old Boy of both the Dover County School (Ladywell) and Dover College. Naturalised British subject. He was married on 2nd March 1901 to Marie Louis Butez of Calais. They had no children. Subject of Gus Jones' biography as above. Died Cradock, South Africa 10th January 1916, where a memorial to him and his wife who died almost at the same time stands to this day.

3. Rosetta, born Ostend 6th March 1862. Teacher, unmarried. Lived as a companion to her mother. After the first war for reasons unknown moved with her mother and also unmarried sister Elise, to the west country, latterly at South View House (which still stands), Shepton Montague

near Wincanton where she died 17th February 1936. Buried at Bratton Seymour, Somerset, without headstone.

4. Elise, born Ostend 17th October 1863. Governess, companion to her mother and sister, unmarried. Died 24th February 1940 at Shepton Montague. Buried at Pitcombe, Somerset, without headstone.

5. Arthur, born Ostend 15th April 1865. Naturalised British subject 1892. Ship's master British India Lines. Burmese river pilot at Moulmein, later settled alone in Australia. Married in Rangoon on 5th March 1895 to Virginie Florence Lecun, but later separated. Three children, two sons and one daughter who moved to Canada at a young age accompanied by their mother, their male descendants adopting, after their mother's remarriage, the surname Blackadder, and female descendant the surname Hansen, now dispersed in Canada and the U.S.A. Died on 18th October 1939 at Gympie, Queensland, Australia. A memorial exists.

6. Robert, born Ostend 25th November 1867. Tea planter, British India. Married 4th January 1897 at Calcutta to Cicely Harriet Goulden (from Dover). He died on 7th December 1929 at Darjeeling, India. No headstone yet traced. There was one son Roland Melville who took his grandmother's surname Dowdeswell and who, after graduating from Cambridge and St Thomas', joined the colonial medical service. He was posted to Kenya and established the medical research centre in Nairobi. He moved to Southern Rhodesia and died there in 1956. His wife Sheila Marguerite Paterson, played at Wimbledon and was Kenya tennis champion. Most descendants are now in the U.S.A. where grandson Dr Ian Dowdeswell is a pulmonologist in Indianapolis. Another grandson, Colin Dowdeswell is family archivist.

The mother of these six children Rosetta Jane Ann Koettlitz (nee

Dowdeswell), widow of Maurice (1) herself lived to the redoubtable age of 95 years. In the care of her two unmarried daughters she died at Shepton Montague on 23rd January 1929 and is buried at Bratton Seymour without headstone.

Maurice Koettlitz (2) (1859-1935) was the older of the two Dover doctors (the doctor with the beard) and had begun the family practice in the London Road as noted in the Dover census of 1901. He had come to Dover from Ostend with his family as boy of 10. He was subsequently a pupil at Dover College and then went on to train as a doctor at Charing Cross Hospital. He worked for some years first as a practitioner in County Durham, where he met and married on 18th August 1896, at Lynesack, Mabel Hannah Hodgson (1873-1953), the daughter of a commercial clerk from West Auckland. By the time of the birth of their first child in 1898 in Dover the couple were established in Dover for good. There were three children, all born in Dover: Rose Florence Garthorne Koettlitz (1898-1964) later Hartman, settled in the U.S.A. with descendants there; Maurice (1903-1960), of whom below, and Mabel Elise Ulrica Mary (1913-1987), unmarried, who lived latterly at "Shepton" (so named after her mother's last living place), Chilton Avenue, Temple Ewell, and is buried in Temple Ewell churchyard (no memorial). She was the main source of Koettlitz family history. Maurice Koettlitz (2) died on 6th February 1935 in Dover and was buried, according to his obituary in the *"Dover Express"* probably in or near the grave of his father at Hougham. (His wife Mabel Hannah was however buried in Temple Ewell churchyard (no memorial) upon her death on 6th July 1953).

Maurice Koettlitz (3) was the second Dover doctor and third and last of the Koettlitz menfolk named Maurice in Dover. He was

educated at Dover College between 1915-1921 where he was a prefect and head of his house. From there he went on to St. John's College, Cambridge and received training at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. He then began work in a sanatorium but on his father's death in 1935 he returned to Dover to take over his father's practice. Many could remember with gratitude his care and attention to them in the 25 years which followed until illness at the age of fifty-seven forced him into early retirement six weeks before his death on 15th July 1960. His great loves were said to be his work and the Free Church. He was a member of the Salem Baptist Church (in Biggin Street) and in 1957 was president of the Free Church Council. This clearly had come down to him from his Lutheran Protestant grandfather. He was cremated at Barham on 17th July 1960. His widow was Joyce Fuller (later Percy), a member of the

Fuller family, whose business was plumber's and wallpaper merchants at 58 London Road (a stone's throw from the Koettlitz surgery), whom he married at the Salem Baptist Church on 27th April 1940.

And thus we come into the modern age. All detail in this account has been taken from publicly available sources, in particular the archives of the *Dover Express* and the two genealogical sites referred to at the outset. Any resulting errors from a very complex story therefore are unwitting and entirely my own for which I stand ready for apology and correction. I particularly wish to thank Ann and Gus Jones and Colin Dowdeswell for their help and support with this essay which I offer as a tribute to a remarkable family, in particular to the two Dover doctors who as it happens were my mother and her family's own practitioners, always spoken of in the highest esteem and merit.

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