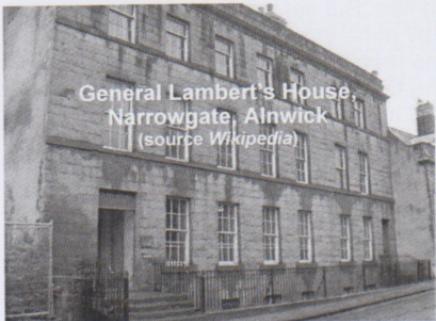


## 'General Lambert's House', Narrowgate, Alnwick

### Who was General Lambert? Part 2

By Eleanor George



In the last edition of the *Bridge* Newsletter, I explained that on the evening of Monday 18 October 2021 Sue Wood (Head Archivist of

Northumberland Archives at Woodhorn) gave the Felton & District History Society a thought provoking talk on the fate of the records of the Alnwick solicitors, Dickson, Archer & Thorp, whose business premises in Narrowgate were known latterly as 'General Lambert's House'. I also explained that although the building had been owned by a family by the name of Lambert, General Sir John Lambert GCB, the man said to have lived there by Stablewood Leisure Ltd who now owns the building, could not possibly be the man after whom the house is named.

The Lamberts who had owned the building, had originated in the Berwick area where, from at least the late 1600s, they had been wealthy merchants and had moved in the highest levels of Northumbrian society. In 1714 Anthony Lambert [1] had married Mary Pye, the granddaughter of John Pye who had attended Christ College, Cambridge and in 1646 became the Rector of Morpeth. Many of Mary Pye's uncles were also clergymen or solicitors. Anthony Lambert [1] and Mary had four sons and three daughters. Their second son, Anthony Lambert [2], became a well-known, and greatly respected, merchant in Tweedmouth. He died, aged ninety-five, in 1819.

Anthony Lambert [2] also had a son named Anthony [3] born in November 1754. Anthony [3] was not destined for the life of a merchant but for that of a man of law. When he became sixteen, in November 1770, he began a five year apprenticeship with Charles Grey, an attorney in Tweedmouth. The apprenticeship cost his father, the not insubstantial sum of £85 (about £16,500 today). Seven months before his apprenticeship was due to end he was sent to London, and he completed his apprenticeship with Thomas Collingwood at Gray's Inn. Gray's Inn is one of the four Inns of Court in London. To be called to the bar in order to practise as a barrister in England and Wales, an individual must belong to one of these inns.

After a few years gaining experience in London, Anthony [3] returned to the north. He bought a large house, with a stable, yard and grounds behind, at Bridge End in Berwick, and began offering his services as an 'attorney at law', working from an

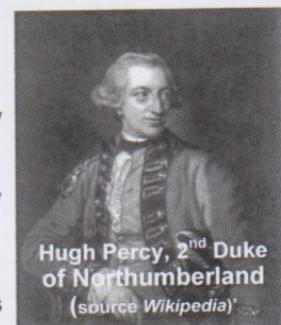
office within the house. In February 1777 he married Cicely Proctor, the daughter of John Proctor, a merchant in Berwick, who not only owned a house in Berwick, but also owned Softlaw Tower near Kelso, and Proctor's Stead (formerly Dunstan Hall) at Dunstanburgh. In 1787 Anthony [3] sold up and moved, with his wife and children, to Alnwick. Entries in the *Newcastle Courant* show that his property in Berwick was being advertised for sale or to be let, in June 1787, and that in February 1788 he was contracting legal business in Alnwick. No records have been found to show where he lived, or had his business premises, in Alnwick at that time. However he very rapidly became part of the upper layers of society in the town. In February 1791 he was appointed under-sheriff for the county of Northumberland, and in August 1798, when the country was in fear of invasion by France, he was appointed one of five captains of the Percy Tenantry Volunteer Cavalry by Hugh Percy, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Northumberland.

John Lambert, born on 3 February 1784, was Anthony [3] and Cicely's eldest surviving son. He followed his father into the law and by 1806, aged twenty-two, he had joined his father in the practice. Their offices were advertised as that of 'Messrs Lambert, Solicitors of Alnwick', but unfortunately with no address. Then in 1811 the Lamberts bought two small properties on Narrowgate and converted them, with extensions at the back, into Narrowgate House. This then became both their offices and living accommodation.

In April 1821 Anthony [3] died, aged sixty-six, less than five years after the death of his wife, Cicely. He was buried, at his request, with his wife in the 'most private manner in the family burying place' in Tweedmouth. In his will he left legacies of between £1,000 and £2,000 to each of his four daughters (between £117,000 and £234,000 each today).

John, now aged thirty-seven, continued with the law practice alone. He was listed in Narrowgate as an attorney in White's *Directory of Northumberland* in 1827 and Pigot's *Directory* of 1829 and 1834, as well as being listed as a member of the 'nobility, gentry and clergy' living in Narrowgate in the same directories. In the census taken in 1841, he was again listed living in Narrowgate. With him were his wife, his eldest two children, and five servants.

In January 1812, aged twenty-nine, he had married nineteen-year-old Juliana, the daughter of Robert and Mary Mounsey of Castletown in the parish of Rockcliffe near Carlisle in Cumberland. Robert



Mounsey was a prominent Carlisle attorney. In 1802 he had bought the 4,000 acre Castletown estate and commissioned Peter Nicholson to build a grand mansion house in the Grecian style, on the estate. The house was completed in 1811, not long before Juliana's marriage.

John Lambert was one of Alnwick's leading philanthropists, financially supporting many schemes which aided the working classes. With William Burrell Esq of Broome Park he established the Alnwick

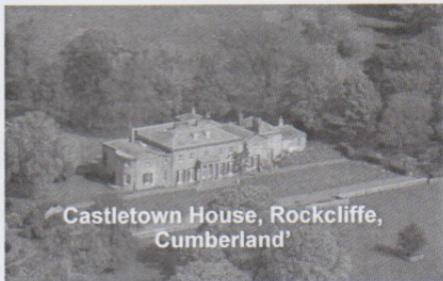
Dispensary where the poor of the town could get medical advice and assistance, and he subsequently served on its management committee as

secretary and treasurer. He originated the Alnwick Saving's Bank which was a benefit society for working men. He gave land for the building of the Alnwick Infant School, and supported it financially. He also financially supported the establishment of two other schools in Alnwick, the British School which was dedicated to educating poor children of every religious persuasion, and the National School which aimed to educate poor children in accordance with the teachings of the Church of England.

He was one of the founders of the Alnwick Scientific and Mechanical Institute, its vice-president and its most generous benefactor. The institute was first suggested in 1825 and he was said to have 'zealously advocated it ... so highly did he estimate education as a means of promoting morality and social order'. The institute was a great success and several years after its foundation he donated the land on which its permanent home was built.

He died in 1849 and was buried in St Michael's churchyard in Alnwick. There is also a plaque in St Michael's in his memory. His will gives an indication of the extent of his wealth. As well as Narrowgate House he owned farms and lands in the parish of Bellingham at Low Newton, as well as a variety of property in other parts of Northumberland including in Elswick and Greenbat Close in Alnwick. He also owned a large quantity of valuable furniture, linen, china, plate, wine and books.

He left Narrowgate House to his son Anthony [4] and his heirs. He left a third share of the value of the house contents (excluding his books) to his wife, and the remainder, and his books, to Anthony [4]. He directed that all of the rest of his real estate be sold, and the money invested in government securities, to provide his wife with an income of £250 a year, free of tax, his eldest, widowed, daughter with an income of £100 a year, free of tax, to provide one-off payments of £2,500 to his married daughter, and to each of his three youngest sons, and a sufficient sum to provide for the 'maintenance and advancement' of his



Castletown House, Rockcliffe, Cumberland'

youngest son until he reached the age of twenty-one. His second son had predeceased him, and his third son had already received his inheritance.

After his death his widow, Juliana, went to live with her brother at Castletown House. She died there ten years later, aged sixty-six, but her body was brought back to Alnwick to be buried alongside her husband in St Michael's churchyard.

In 1833, aged sixteen, Anthony [4] had joined his father as his apprentice, and on qualifying had become his father's partner. Only a few months before his father died he had married Hannah Elizabeth Head, the daughter of the Reverend Oswald Head who was the vicar of Lesbury, the rector of Howick, and Earl Grey's personal chaplain. After his father's death, he took over the law practice and lived with Hannah in Narrowgate House and their two children, John Oswald and Elizabeth Juliana, were born there in 1850 and 1852.

Sadly Anthony [4] died in May 1856 only six years after his father. In his will he instructed his executors to sell all his property, including Narrowgate House, and everything else that he owned, to provide for his wife and two children, then aged just six and four. The auction of the entire contents of the house, except his books, was advertised in the *Newcastle Courant* three months after his death in August 1856. The list of house contents gives some idea of his accumulated wealth. Apart from the large quantities of 'valuable furniture', and china, there were pianos, damask curtains, carpets from Brussels, 2,000 oz. of silverware, a Broadwood grand piano, some 'very fine oil paintings and prints by eminent masters', a Greenwood's map of Northumberland, sixty dozen (i.e. 720) bottles of 'choice port, sherry, claret, hock and other wine', 'a few gallons of prime Irish Whiskey' and a 'very fine bust of the late Earl Grey'.

The auction of his books and the house was advertised in the *Newcastle Courant* a month later, and again the details give an indication of the grand style in which he had lived. The library contained 3,000 books and took three days to auction. The house was described in detail in the newspaper: *All that valuable Freehold PROPERTY, situated in Narrowgate-street, Alnwick, lately in the occupation of Anthony Lambert, Esq., deceased, consisting of a large and substantial dwelling house, with a sunk area in front, communicating with the kitchen department; two kitchens; butler's pantry; larder; wine cellar, etc. On the ground floor – spacious entrance, library, dining-room, and three commodious rooms for offices etc. On the first floor, a drawing room, five bedrooms, dressing room, and bathroom, supplied with hot and cold water; and on the second floor, four bedrooms, and store-room. Behind the house is a garden and attached thereto a commodious yard with carriage entrance, containing three-stalled stable, coach house etc. Will be SOLD by AUCTION at the Star Inn, Alnwick on Wednesday, the 16th Oct., 1856, at six o'clock in the Evening. The house has lately been thoroughly repaired, painted and papered, and gas inserted; water has been laid on from the town mains and led to various parts of the house.*



The house didn't sell. It was probably too large, and too expensive, for most purchasers. Work began to divide it into two separate dwellings, and in January 1858 it was once again put up for auction, the details being advertised in the *Newcastle Journal*:

**TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION** At the Star Inn, Alnwick, on Thursday January 28, 1858, at Six o'Clock ... all that valuable **FREEHOLD PROPERTY** situated in **NARROWGATE STREET**, Alnwick, formerly in the Occupation of the late Anthony Lambert, Esq. Deceased. The property has recently been divided into Two Dwelling Houses, viz:- One Dwelling house, now in the occupation of Dr Easton, containing Dining Room, Drawing Room, Six Bedrooms, Attic, Surgery, Two Kitchens, Servant's Hall, Coal and Wine Cellars, Coach-house, Stable, and garden behind, with a Back entrance. The other Dwelling House contains Dining Room, Drawing Room, Three Bed Rooms, Two Kitchens, with Larder, and Cellars below and a small Garden behind. Both houses are in excellent condition, and have had the Water and Sewage laid on.

Again the house didn't sell and, in the census taken in 1861, its largest section was still occupied by Dr George Easton, his wife and family. Dr Easton was a general practitioner who had qualified in medicine at Edinburgh University and was also a member of the

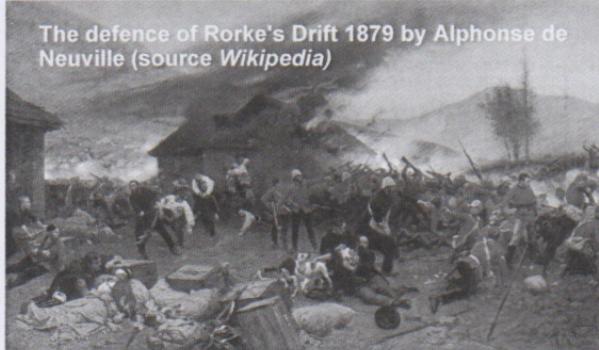
remarriage of her mother, to live in Castletown House with the same grandmother and her grandmother's brother. When Juliana died the following year, Elizabeth continued to live there with her great uncle and his two bachelor sons, all solicitors. She died aged ten in 1862.

By April 1871, when the next census was taken Narrowgate House was occupied by Thomas Alder, his widowed daughter and his grand-daughter. Thomas Alder was a man of some wealth. He was described as a gentleman, and when he died, in 1875, he was buried in St Michael's churchyard in Alnwick with a grand, and intricately carved headstone. He was the cousin of Thomas Thorp, another of Alnwick's well-established attorneys, and one of the executors of his will was William Dickson, yet another Alnwick solicitor, who also happened to be Thomas Thorp's brother-in-law.

William Dickson had trained with his father (another William Dickson) and, by 1850, they had formed the partnership of W. & W. Dickson, with a solicitors' office in Bailiffgate. The elder William died soon after Thomas Alder, and the younger William moved the law firm, still known as W. & W. Dickson, to Narrowgate House, taking over one of the sections. It is probable that he was only a tenant of the property, as Thomas Alder's unmarried grand-daughter had remained living there after Thomas Alder had died, and she continued to be listed in the Alnwick Directories as 'Miss Alder' in Narrowgate, until her death in 1893.

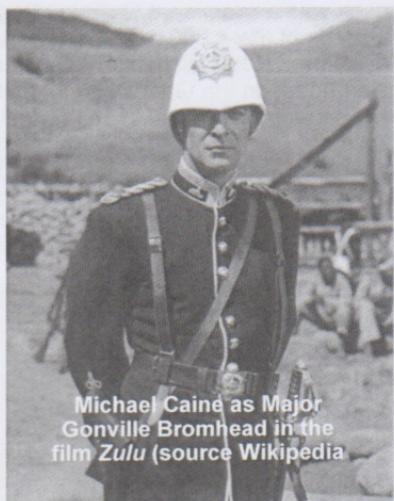
The younger William Dickson retired in the 1880s and moved, with his family, to Pinner in Middlesex, where he died in 1887. His sons did not return to the north-east. Thomas Thorp had died in 1854 and neither of his sons had followed him into the law. So it is unclear what happened to their legal practices after their deaths, but it appears that members of the Dickson, Thorp and Archer families kept the businesses afloat by forming a partnership and employing solicitors, as in 1894 the law firm of Dickson, Archer & Thorp was listed in *Kelly's Directory* at Narrowgate House.

Joseph Archer was a solicitor's managing clerk and by the 1890s his son, Philip William Archer, was also a solicitor's clerk and in the law firm. Thomas Thorp's son was a wealthy vicar (he left over £65,000 when he died in 1919) and was probably keeping the firm going until his son, Thomas Alder Thorp, could qualify



The defence of Rorke's Drift 1879 by Alphonse de Neuville (source Wikipedia)

Royal College of Surgeons. Meanwhile Anthony [4]'s widow, Hannah, had married again. In December 1858 she became the wife of George Hutton Riddell Esq., a banker from Carlton upon Trent, Nottinghamshire. Sadly died less than two years later. An interesting aside is that George married again in 1862 and his bride was Janetta Gonville Bromhead, the sister of Major Gonville Bromhead who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his part in the defence of Rorke's Drift in January 1879, in which a small British garrison of 139 soldiers successfully repulsed an assault by some 4,000 Zulu warriors. Major Bromhead was portrayed by Michael Caine in the film *Zulu*, which depicted the battle. Anthony [4] and Hannah's son, John Oswald, was sent to a small boarding school in Carlisle near the family of his grandmother, Juliana. From there he went to Sandhurst Military College and on graduation became a captain in the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Dragoon Guards. He died in 1880, in Torquay in Devon, aged thirty. His sister, Elizabeth Juliana, was sent, after the



Michael Caine as Major Gonville Bromhead in the film *Zulu* (source Wikipedia)

in the law, which he had done by 1894. The Dickson name may have been kept because of the standing that the law firm of W. & W. Dickson had had in Alnwick. The office of Dickson, Archer and Thorp remained in Narrowgate House until the death of the last managing partner in 2005, by which time the office had spread into every inch of the entire building.

So from 1811 when Anthony Lambert [3] and his son, John, bought the house in Narrowgate, to Anthony [4]'s death in 1856, no-one who can be identified as General Lambert lived or worked on the premises. Anthony [4]'s son, John Oswald, whilst in the army, never became a general so the house could not have been named after him. Further investigation of the Lambert family was needed. This revealed that John and Juliana had two daughters and five sons apart from Anthony [4]. Their daughters were Mary Juliana, born in 1813, and Cicely, born in 1819. Mary married William Shortreed, a captain in the Bengal Light Infantry, on 7 January 1846. Very sadly William died only four months later on 14 May 1846, and he was buried in St Michael's churchyard, Alnwick. He is remembered on a plaque in St Michael's Church dedicated to Mary's brother, John. Mary died aged forty-five in 1858 at Castletown House but is buried with her husband in Alnwick. Cicely married Roger Biston of High Biston Hall in 1843. She died in Whitby in 1899.

John and Juliana's sons were Anthony [4] born in 1817, John junior born in 1821, Robert Mounsey born in 1822, George Craster born in 1825, William Francis born in 1828 and Charles Grey born in 1832. John junior, like his sister Mary's husband William Shortreed, joined the Bengal Light Infantry. He fought in Afghanistan in 1838 (aged seventeen) and again in



1839 and 1845. By 1846 he had achieved the rank of lieutenant, but he died in March of that year having been mortally wounded leading his company in a charge at the Battle of Sobraon in the Punjab in the First Anglo-Sikh War. There is a plaque to his memory in St Michael's church in Alnwick.

Robert Mounsey Lambert joined the army in 1841 and by 1856 had been appointed a captain in the 96<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot. On the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854 he was sent, for additional training, to Camp Curragh, Kildare in Ireland. He died of a fever there the following year. He is remembered on the same plaque in St Michael's as his parents, and three of his siblings.

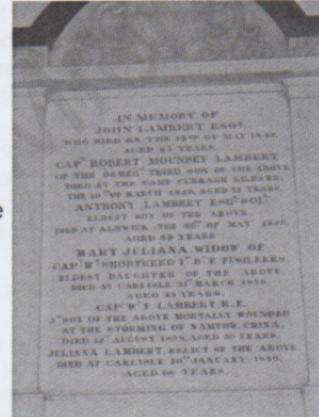
George Craster Lambert enlisted in 1845. He too served in the Sikh Wars. He also served in Burmah

and on the North-west Frontier. He was rarely on leave in England. In 1871 he was at the army camp at Aldershot serving as the Lieutenant-Colonel of the 101<sup>st</sup> Regiment, the Royal Bengal Fusiliers. In 1876, aged forty-nine, he married Isabella Browne, the twenty-seven-year-old daughter of Alexander Browne of Doxford Hall. By 1881 he had retired with the rank of major-general, and had taken up residence, with his wife and children, in Loanend House near Horncliffe in the very north of Northumberland. By 1891 they had relocated to Breamish House in Powburn. George died in 1898 at Bolton Hall in the parish of Edlingham and is buried at Edlingham. William Francis Lambert attended the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, where he excelled in Mathematics and Draughtsmanship, and passed out top of his year. By 1858

he was a captain attached to the 59<sup>th</sup> Foot, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Nottinghamshire Regiment, and serving in China in the Second Opium War. At the storming of Namtow in August 1858, he was one of three officers who led the assault on the town, but was hit by a bullet fired by one of his own men and died the following day. He too is remembered on the plaque in St Michael's.

Charles Grey Lambert became an articled clerk to his brother Anthony [4] in 1854. However a career in the law wasn't for him and he emigrated to Canada. He died, unmarried, in the town of Coburg in Ontario in 1877.

So it appears that, although several of the Lamberts were military men, not one of them attained the rank of general. George Craster Lambert comes closest having attained the rank of major-general by the time he retired. So perhaps he is the reason that Narrowgate House later became known as General Lambert's House, even though he had never lived in Alnwick after enlisting in 1845. However just to add to the puzzle, although the house was listed with English Heritage as General Lambert's House in 1977, it does not appear to have been generally called by that name previous to that date, and even after that date, to the majority of Alnwick's residents it was still Narrowgate House. So who listed it as General Lambert's House and why? Unfortunately when the details of English Heritage's listed properties were computerised, the information on who had requested buildings to be listed was not considered important enough to be saved. So unless the person who requested the listing wishes to explain their actions, whilst we may now know the 'who', we will probably never know the 'why'!



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