

## **Samuel Charles Umfreville JP (1820 – 94) of Ingress Abbey and his Fight with the Cement Makers**

I came across the Umfreville family tomb in East Hill Cemetery whilst recording monumental inscriptions. The tomb is large and clearly belonged to a wealthy family, so I decided to find out more about them.

Samuel Charles Umfreville was born on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1820 in Cawsand, Cornwall. His father, also called Samuel Charles Umfreville, was in the Royal Navy (his biography is in the British Naval Biographical Directory, 1849 on Ancestry.com). He joined the Navy in 1805 as a boy and was involved in several actions during the Napoleonic wars. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 1813, married Jane Clark in 1817 and served in the Coast Guard from 1821 to 1848. His rank when he retired was Commander. Samuel junior had an elder sister as well as a younger brother (Henry) and five younger sisters.

The 1841 census shows Samuel (senior) and Jane Umfreville living in Swanscombe with most of their children. Samuel junior is not listed with his parents and I cannot find him elsewhere. On 16 Dec 1847 he married Emma Harmer Chaplin at Stone Parish Church. This was an extremely good match for him, as Emma was a granddaughter of James Harmer, a wealthy lawyer and newspaper owner who in 1833 built Ingress Abbey, Greenhithe. Samuel was aged 27, Emma was 23. Witnesses to the wedding were Samuel's parents and Eliza Cook, a successful poet and journalist who was a friend of James Harmer. More information on the lives of Eliza Cook and James Harmer can be found in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography ([www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com), free if you enter your KCC library card number).

Samuel's occupation stated on the marriage register was "Captain of Free Trader to East Indies". I haven't been able to find any further information on Samuel's maritime career. However, he would have been a Captain of a sailing ship (steamships didn't become common until later). The Suez Canal had not been built when Samuel was at sea, so he would have sailed to the East Indies via the Cape of Good Hope, a long journey!

Samuel and Emma don't seem to be listed in the 1851 census – perhaps they were abroad or at sea when the census was taken? Samuel's parents and five of his sisters were living at 86 Galley Hill, Swanscombe.

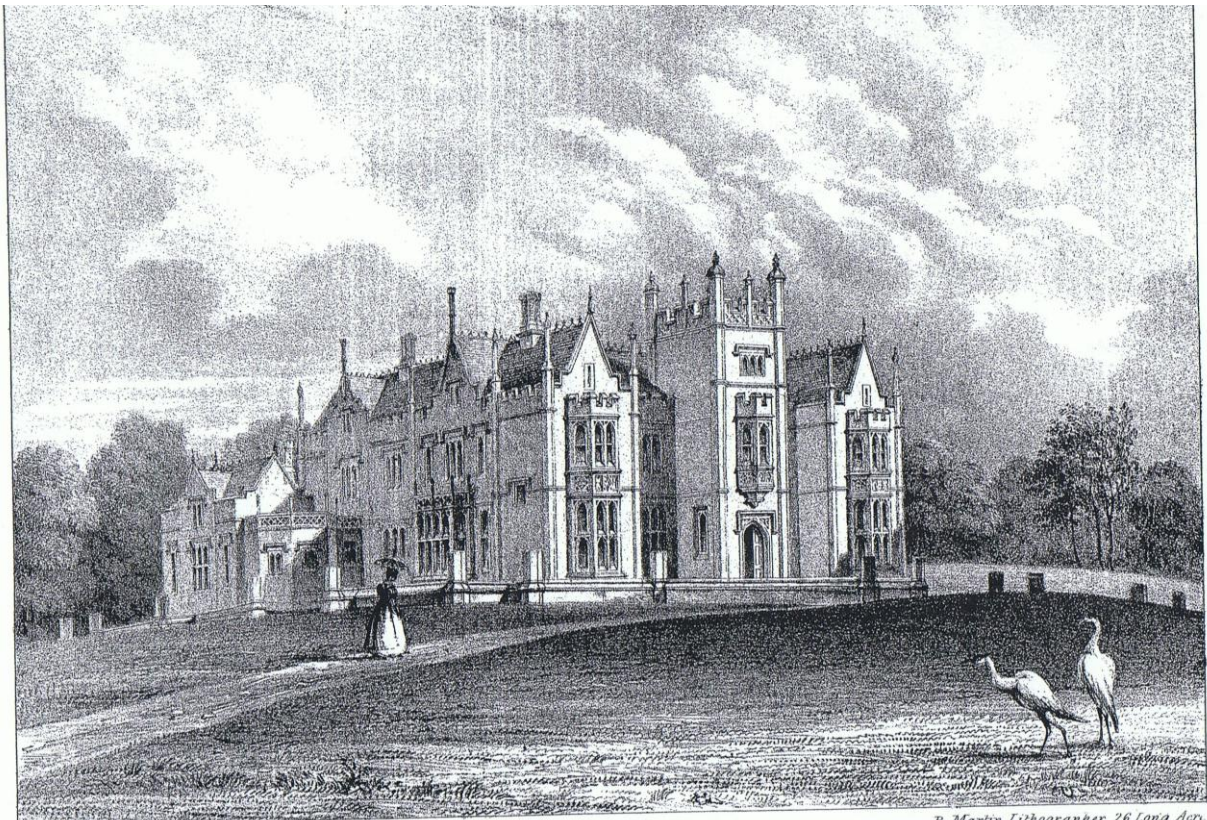
James Harmer died in 1853. The death duty record says that his estate was valued at £160,000 (equivalent to about £115 million now). He left legacies to a large number of people including £5,000 to his granddaughter Emma Harmer Umfreville. She also inherited the residue of his estate, valued at £37,642, making a total of £42,642 (equivalent to about £31 million now). It seems that her inheritance included Ingress Abbey.

I have looked at the Mercantile Navy List for 1857. Samuel is not listed in it, so it seems that he had ceased to be in the Navy by then. His brother Henry (who died in 1862) is listed as a Captain.

Greenhithe was an attractive village surrounded by pleasant countryside in the 1850s with little industry. Its railway station opened in 1849 and housing was built for middle class and wealthy commuters.

Sadly, Emma died in 1859 aged only 34. Samuel's father died in 1860 (aged 67) and his mother in 1861 (aged 68). The 1861 census shows Samuel (aged 40, a land and householder) living at

Ingress Abbey with his unmarried sisters Ann Darling (28), Maria Susan (25) and Mary (23) as well as five servants.



*Drawn from Nature & on Stone by J. J. Rawlins*

*R. Martin Lithographer, 26, Long Acre*

INGRESS ABBEY.  
*The Seat of James Harmer, Esq.<sup>re</sup>*  
Alderman of the City of London.  
*For the Epitome of the History of Kent.*  
1838.

Ingress Abbey in 1838 (from Dartford Library local studies collection)

Later in 1861, Samuel married Anna Eliza Wilson. His new wife, born in Hawkhurst, Kent, was aged 23 (18 years younger than him). They were married in London and went on to have six children : Samuel Charles (b1863), Gilbert Hamilton (b1866), Percy (b1868), Mabel (b1869), Sybilla (b1871) and Harry Kirwan (b1873). In 1871 the family, living at Ingress Abbey, consisted of Samuel (a landowner and magistrate), his wife Anna and their children Samuel, Gilbert, Percy and Mabel. There were also eight servants.

The area around Greenhithe was good for cement manufacture because of the large quantities of chalk (a raw material for cement) in the North Downs and its proximity to the Thames, which could be used to ship clay (another raw material) and coal (needed to fire kilns to operate the process) in and cement out. In 1872 Johnson and Co purchased land between Stone and Ingress Abbey with the intention of erecting cement works. By June 1873 they had built six kilns and started to operate them, with plans to expand the cement factory further. Samuel Umfreville and Frederick William Murray (rector of Stone church) filed a Bill of Complaint (held by the National Archives) with the Court of Chancery. It alleged that the cement factory would generate “poisonous and noxious fumes” and “dense volumes of smoke” which would prejudicially affect the health and comfort of those living in the neighbourhood, damage Ingress Abbey and Park as

well as land at Western Cross Farm owned by Samuel. Stone rectory and a nearby school (both built in 1864 before the cement works appeared) would also be adversely affected. The bill requested that the court order that no further building of cement works be allowed on the site and that the owners be prevented from operating processes that caused damage or annoyance to the plaintiffs. Affidavits filed by the plaintiffs included statements from local people stating that emissions from the cement factory caused a nuisance. A separate filing from the defendants described patented processes that would be operated at the factory to reduce the emissions and statements from other local people saying that they had never noticed any emissions! The case was heard in April 1875 and reported in The Times newspaper. The Vice Chancellor's judgement was to issue an injunction preventing the defendants from operating their works in a manner that caused a nuisance. An appeal by the defendants was heard in July 1875. This time the court ruled that the Reverend Murray, whose rectory directly overlooked the cement works, had a better case than Samuel Umfreville, as Ingress Abbey was 1,300 yards away. Lord Justice James said "*The evidence of any nuisance resulting to Umfreville from the works of the defendants was slight and speculative and not sufficient to put the defendants under the restraint of an injunction. But with respect to the plaintiff Murray, the decree of the Vice Chancellor must be sustained.*" Samuel was ordered to "*pay any additional costs caused by his having been joined as co-plaintiff.*"

The owner of the cement works was Isaac Charles Johnson (1811-1911) who described the situation in his autobiography, which was quoted in a 1953 edition of the magazine "Blue Circle":

*"After spending some £26,000 in machinery and other appliances, in addition to the £24,000 purchase money for the estate, lo! an overwhelming trouble arose. Greenhithe suburbs being a residential locality, a lawyer in the neighbourhood, for notoriety and personal gain, stirred up the residents to try to stop our works, leading the people to believe that our works would be a chemical works and would poison the whole neighbourhood. The squire and the parson were enlisted in the crusade and many of the residents filed affidavits; many of them very false ones. Under the leadership of this attorney, there were as good as three Chancery suits and one indictment going on at one time — a beautiful triumvirate PARSON, SQUIRE AND LAWYER, all engaged with their battalions to drive us away." The decision of the Court went against the Company in every case in spite of eminent counsel for defence. Injunctions being granted, the works were stopped, and it was considered impossible that they would ever go again. "However, the works were got into full swing by means of my patent process which condenses and concentrates the vapour by building a chimney shaft 300 ft. high and by making the furnaces tributary to it, I can manufacture without giving real cause of complaint to anyone in the neighbourhood."*

It seems therefore, that although Samuel did not prevent the operation of the Johnson cement works, he did force the owner to adopt measures to reduce the nuisance from it. The Johnson works finally closed in 1970 and were demolished by 1978. The site is now occupied by housing (Worcester Park).

In July 1874, Samuel also instigated a legal action against the proprietors of Swanscombe Cement Works (which had opened in 1837), claiming that their activities were causing a nuisance detrimental to the health of the neighbourhood generally and his family in particular. A demonstration in support of the cement works was held in August 1874, as reported by the Dartford Chronicle

*GREAT DEMONSTRATION IN SUPPORT OF THE SWANSCOMBE PORTLAND CEMENT  
WORKS*

*The legal proceedings recently instituted by Mr. W. A. Plunkett, solicitor of Greenhithe, on behalf of Mr. S. C. Umfreville, J.P., of Ingress Abbey, and a few others, against the extensive cement manufactories of Messrs J. B. White Bros., of Swanscombe, previously noticed in these columns, have excited great disfavour in the neighbourhood, and in testification thereof a remarkable demonstration was made on Saturday last. The firm are exceedingly popular in the locality, which is not only largely dependent on the prosperity of their works, but their generosity has vastly benefited the place in various ways. The roads running through Northfleet, Stone and Swanscombe presented an unwonted scene. Processions of workmen, their wives and children, &c., to the number of between 4,000 and 5,000, accompanied by bands, and carrying numerous flags and banners, were marching to the Rectory grounds, Swanscombe, lent by the Rev. T. H. Candy.*

The article goes on at length to describe the speeches made. Samuel's opinion of the cement works was definitely not shared by those at the meeting! Samuel's legal action did not cause production at Swanscombe Cement Works to be stopped.

Tragedy struck in 1875 when Anna died aged 37. The Dartford Chronicle had the following item:

*DEATH OF MRS UMFREVILLE. – We regret to record the demise of Ann Eliza Umfreville, wife of Samuel Charles Umfreville, Esq., J.P., of Ingress Abbey, Greenhithe, which event occurred on Tuesday last, under very melancholy circumstances. A short time since the deceased lady received a blow from a stone, whilst out riding in her carriage, and the fright attendant on this occurrence, at a somewhat critical period, brought on serious symptoms. The eminent physician Sir W. Gall and J. H. Lilley were in attendance, but the utmost medical aid failed to avert the untimely decease of the lady.*

There was an item describing the funeral in the following week's newspaper. It included:

*At the close of the burial service the rector of Stone condolingly grasped Mr Umfreville's hand; and even those who most regarded the chief mourner as an uncompromising magistrate must have joined in the general sympathy.*

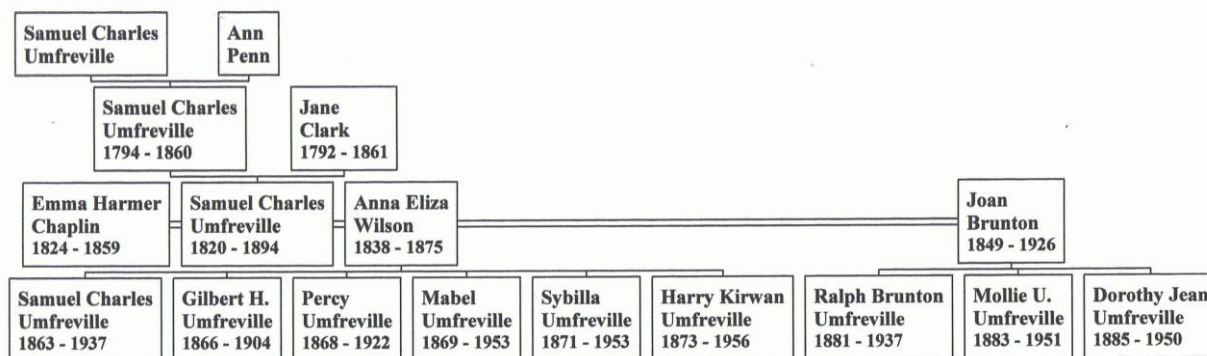
Samuel married again in 1880. His third wife was Joan Brunton, aged 31, twenty eight years younger than him! She was from Morpeth in Northumberland, where they were wed. He was still able to father children, as evidenced by the arrival of Ralph Brunton Umfreville in 1881, Mollie Umfreville Umfreville (yes that was her name!) in 1883 and Dorothy Jean Umfreville in 1884.

The 1881 census shows Samuel (aged 60, a Justice of the Peace for Kent) living at Ingress Abbey with his new wife Joan and his children Samuel (17), Mabel (11), Sybilla (9) and Henry (7). Also listed at Ingress Abbey were his sister Maria Susan, 2 visitors and eight servants (a footman, cook, kitchen maid, nurse, under nurse, parlour maid and two housemaids). There were a further four servants (a coachman, two grooms and a gardener) living over the stables and head gardener in the gardener's lodge. The cost of running a household of this size must have been substantial! Justices of the Peace tried misdemeanours (ie lesser criminal cases) and violations of bylaws. The role was unpaid and was typically performed by local gentry.

In 1891, Samuel (aged 70) is listed as a Justice of the Peace for the Local County of Kent, living on his own means. The rest of the household living at Ingress Abbey were Samuel's wife Joan

(42), his children Gilbert (25), Percy (23), Mabel (21), Sybilla (19), Ralph (9), Mollie (7) and Dorothy (5). There were also eight servants.

*Hourglass Tree of Samuel Charles Umfreville*



(a more detailed family tree may be found in the “umfreville42” database on RootsWeb’s WorldConnect Project website)

Samuel died in 1894. An article in the Dartford Chronicle ran as follows:

*DEATH OF MR. UMFREVILLE*

*We regret to record the death of Mr. Samuel Charles Umfreville, J.P., of Ingress Abbey, Greenhithe. The deceased gentleman had been in impaired health for a long time past, suffering from a bronchial affection, and had lately been staying at Hastings. He grew worse, however, and a fortnight ago returned to his beautiful mansion, Ingress Abbey, where he expired on Monday last, to the intense grief of a large family circle. Mr. Umfreville had attained the age of 73 years. He had for many years been a Justice of the Peace, and until the last year or so had been a regular attendant on the Dartford Bench, where he had for some years held the position of acting Chairman, in the absence of Mr. T Horn Fleet. He was a staunch Conservative, and up till the time of his death the president of the Dartford Conservative Working Men’s Club. He was also president of the Dartford Central Conservative Association, being elected to that important office in April of last year, on the retirement of Mr. R. B. Berens, J.P., when appointed High Sheriff of the county. Mr. Umfreville was likewise vice president of the Dartford Conservative Club, and a member of its committee, and Provincial Grand Master of the National Conservative League in Kent. Mr. Umfreville was thrice married, and leaves a widow and several sons and daughters to deplore his loss.*

The same edition had a description of the funeral:

*THE LATE MR UMFREVILLE, J.P.  
THE FUNERAL*

*The remains of the late Mr. Samuel Charles Umfreville, J.P., of Ingress Abbey, Greenhithe, were interred in the family vault at the Dartford Cemetery on Friday last, when there were a large number of prominent gentlemen present to pay a last tribute to the memory of one who had for so many years led an active and useful life in the district. At 2.30 the cortege left Ingress Abbey for the Dartford Cemetery. In the first coach were Captain Umfreville, Messrs Gilbert Umfreville, Percy Umfreville and Harry Umfreville (sons) .....The Union Jack at the pier head, Greenhithe, was flying at half mast and many villagers, amongst whom were numerous aged people, turned out to make a last farewell to their old and valued neighbour.*

Captain Umfreville was the deceased's eldest son Samuel, who was an Army Captain. The Umfreville family vault is next to the main path that runs north into East Hill Cemetery in the northern central section. The tombstone is inscribed:

*Sacred to the memory of / EMMA HARMER / wife of / SAMUEL CHARLES UMFREVILLE Esquire / of Ingress Abbey Greenhithe / who departed this life March 7<sup>th</sup> 1859 / aged 34 years / Also Capt SAMUEL CHARLES UMFREVILLE / father in law of the above died Janry 2<sup>nd</sup> 1860 / aged 67 years / Also JANE wife of the above / died January 19<sup>th</sup> 1861 aged 68 years / Also HENRY UMFREVILLE / son of the above who died Nov 13<sup>th</sup> 1862 / aged 34 years / Also ANNA ELIZA second wife of the above / SAMUEL CHARLES UMFREVILLE Esq / who died the 26<sup>th</sup> day of October 1875 / aged 37 years / whose death resulted from a blow caused by a stone / which struck her in the eye while driving in the / public road near the entrance of Ingress Park. / Also SAMUEL CHARLES UMFREVILLE JP / of Ingress Abbey Greenhithe / who died March 12<sup>th</sup> 1894 aged 73 years*

Probate on Samuel's estate was granted to his widow Joan, eldest son Samuel and Adam Rivers Steel, a solicitor. The total value was £21,973, equivalent to about £11 million now. Samuel's will left his widow £1,000 plus an annual payment of £300. He left £600 each to his sisters Ann and Rebecca. Samuel's sister Susan was given an annual sum of £100. His sisters-in-law Eliza and Fanny Wilson got annual sums of £130 and £36 respectively. His coachman received £50, two other servants £20 each. All his indoor servants with three or more years service to him were given one year's wages. His property called New Place in Upminster was left to his son Samuel. The residue of the estate was shared between his children.



Ingress Abbey in 2010 (photo by Philip Taylor)

The Umfreville family vacated Ingress Abbey soon after Samuel's death and it was let to tenants. The house was used as a military hospital from 1914 to 18. It was purchased by the Incorporated Thames Nautical Training College in 1920. Ownership transferred to the Merchant Navy College in 1968 and new accommodation for students was built in the grounds. The college closed in 1989. By 1998 the house was derelict and in very poor condition. Crest Homes were given

planning permission to develop the Ingress Abbey estate, providing that they restored the house and several follies in the grounds. The restored house is now used as offices.

After Samuel's death, his widow Joan moved to a nearby house called Parkwood in Mounts Road, Greenhithe. The property is now split into flats and called Mounts Court. It has been recently renovated and enlarged. Joan died in 1926 aged 76.

Several of Samuel's sons had successful careers in the Army. Percy Umfreville reached the rank of Brigadier General and was awarded the CMG (Companion of St Michael and St George) and CBE (Commander of the British Empire). Harry and Ralph both became Lieutenant Colonels. Ralph was awarded a CMG and DSO (Distinguished Service Order).

Philip Taylor © 2011

Email : PhilT42LQS@Yahoo.co.uk

#### Sources

- Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
- Mercantile Navy List at the Maritime Museum Library, Greenwich
- The local studies collection at Dartford Library for The Dartford Chronicle newspaper, information on Johnson's Cement Works etc
- [www.freebmd.org.uk](http://www.freebmd.org.uk) for Births, Marriages and Deaths
- [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) for British Naval Biographical Directory, 1849 and census returns
- The National Archives at Kew for Chancery Court and Death Duty Records
- Probate and will from The Principal Probate Registry, 42-49 High Holborn, London