

CONNECTING THE DOTS!

a deviation from our Medical Prowses Saga, inspired by Albert Samuel Whitchurch's comment about having attended the first performances of many of the D'Oyly Carte Gilbert & Sullivan performances at the old Savoy Theatre.....

Highlighting the stories of the:

Keith Prowse & Co. business connection
The D'Oyly Carte-Prowse connection
William Jeffery Prowse & W.S. Gilbert
Paul Revere & Prowse Farm
Montague & Gerald Prowse

THE KEITH PROWSE & CO - D'OYLY CARTE - GILBERT & SULLIVAN - PAUL REVERE - PROWSE FARM, Connecticut, USA, CONNECTION

A scribbled note by Mary Prowse(1925-2011) at the bottom of Volume X, page 3, of my grandfather, Arthur Bancks Prowse (ABP), Manuscript book, stated "For Pedigree of Gerald & Montague Prowse, see page 112, Volume X1". Such are the innocuous snippets of information that can unleash vast earthquakes of new knowledge!

The text in question was about the Long Wittenham branch of the Prowse family, one of whom emigrated to South Africa in 1876. (See the entries on William Byass Prowse, M.D., Oxon; & also on Simon Pickstone Taylor, M.B., Ch.B., in the South African section of this book). Following that note in ABP's article is a copy of a letter written to a "Mrs. Prowse", by one Montague Prowse from Port Said on September 20, 1918, while he was serving in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (he had joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in 1914).

It turns out that Montague Prowse, and his younger brother, Gerald, were connected to the Prowse family of "Keith Prowse & Co., London", the company that started out with the partnership in 1858 of William Prowse (1830-1881), musical instrument maker & music publisher, and Robert William Keith (1767-1846).



Carte's family: clockwise from top left, Blanche, Helen, Lucas, and Rupert

William Prowse's youngest daughter, Blanche Julia Prowse (1853-1885) married Richard D'Oyly Carte in 1870. He was 26 years old & she was 17! As a teenager she had participated in amateur theatricals with Carte. They had 2 sons, Lucas (b. 1872) & Rupert (b. 1876). Among many other major accomplishments, Richard established the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company & built the Savoy Theatre to host the Gilbert & Sullivan operas. Blanche Julia died of pneumonia in 1885 at the age of 32, and two years later, Richard remarried his assistant, Helen Lenoir.

Another gifted Prowse, the humorist, William Jeffery Prowse (1836-1870), who died so young of consumption, often used to visit with W.S. Gilbert of Gilbert & Sullivan fame at Gilbert's chambers in London. Here, young critics, writers, dramatists & journalists met every Saturday & soon challenged 'Punch' magazine with their own 'Fun' magazine.

Montague, whose brother Gerald Prowse was killed in action in France on April 12, 1917, while serving with the Royal Sussex Regiment, was descended from Thomas William Prowse, who had married Sara Warren of Southampton, & who was also the older brother of the William Prowse of Keith Prowse & Co. fame. Thus, Montague & Gerald were William's great nephews. Montague' parents were Thomas William Warren Prowse & Clara Warren Fox of Eastbourne in Sussex, & he was their first son & 4th child - & this is where it becomes even more interesting!

Montague Prowse meets an American lady, Martha Peabody, daughter of General Francis Peabody, of Canton, Massachusetts, USA, and marries her on September 18, 1923, in the Church of the Holy Spirit in Mattapan, Massachusetts. Martha's father gives them a wedding gift of a farm property he owns. This becomes known as "Prowse Farm" and, because it lies on land of historical importance, it becomes the center of a huge controversy upon Martha's death in 1975, as she has died without issue. Intriguingly, Montague had preceded her in death, on the 24th November, 1954, at age 63, while a passenger on the ocean liner, "Queen Mary, approaching Southampton", which fact is printed in the Daily Telegraph newspaper of the day.

Death in Liner. — Mr. Montague Prowse, 63, of Boston, Mass., died in the Queen Mary as the liner approached Southampton.

Prowse Farm, comprising of several hundred acres, has some historical buildings on it, including the Doty Tavern, where the "Suffolk Resolves", which form the basis of the American "Declaration of Independence", were drafted by the Colonial Patriots & were carried to the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia by none other than Paul Revere! A huge industrial corporation (Motorola), who bought the site of the Prowse Farm after Martha's death, wanted to develop that land industrially. For 7 years, a legal battle raged between

CONNECTIONS, continued:

the Industry together with the local Town Council leaders against the citizens of the town joined by nationwide and Canadian conservationists headed up by such well-known Americans as Dave Cowan, the professional basketball star, and the film actor, Robert Redford, as well as Arnold Palmer, the famous golfer. Unfortunately, on October 18, 1980, during the early hours of the morning, the corporation, in defiance of a promise to the Town of Canton, bulldozed 13 of the 18 historic buildings on the site! Today, the Prowse Farm (named after Montague & Martha Peabody Prowse) is owned by a non-profit organization and is open to the public as a historic site and museum.

The KEITH PROWSE & CO., FIRM

A London firm of music publishers & sellers & musical instrument makers and dealers, it became a hugely successful theatre ticket agency worldwide. Founded in 1775 by Robert William Keith (1767-1846), who started to make flutes in Rathbone-place, Oxford Street (London), he was joined in partnership by William Prowse (1801-1886) in 1829.

The principal earliest addresses of the partnership of Keith & Prowse were at 131 Cheapside (1829-32) and 48 Cheapside (1832-46). William married Mary Anne Keith on 8 April, 1830, at St. Peter Westcheap, whom we presume (reasonably!) to have been his partner, Robert Keith's, daughter. In 1830, they expanded still further and "began selling theatre boxes for the Royal Italian Opera to rich business men in the City. They employed runners at that time", usually young boys. (*taken from a newspaper article dated 1875 headed "His 5,000th FIRST NIGHT. MR SMITH OF KEITH PROWSE"*)

Keith died in 1846 and Prowse continued operating the company under his own name until 1865, when he was joined by H. Bryan Jones & the company became known as 'Keith Prowse & Co.' William Prowse retired in 1876 and died in 1886.

From an article entitled "Old Days in Bohemian London", in the London "Evening News" of 1919, was this paragraph: "D'Oyly Carte, an accomplished musician, who played the piano divinely, married Keith Prowse's daughter. Keith Prowse then owned a small shop near Northumberland Avenue, where he not only sold, but made, musical instruments. The prominence given to the firm is directly due to D'Oyly Carte's association as managing director of the Savoy & the Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Company, & his marriage with "Miss Keith Prowse", - this statement helped to perpetuate the myth that there really was only one man called Keith Prowse!

A big business born almost by accident

TO millions of theatre-goers, Keith Prowse was the ticket to top West End shows — but the man never really existed, writes Alex Hendry.

The world's biggest ticket agency, with worldwide sales for almost all theatre or sporting events, began almost by accident nearly 150 years ago in London's Cheapside.

Flute and clarinet maker Robert Keith started his partnership with William Prowse as music publishers.

But one of their clients, a wealthy city merchant, asked them to book him a box at Covent Garden for

the Royal Italian Opera, which was causing a stir in London society at the time.

Demand for tickets made them difficult to obtain. The Keith Prowse business of supplying them was born.

Such was their success that Keith and Prowse bought up tickets for all West End shows in advance.

Their agency really took off in the 1870s, helped by the invention of the telephone, the popularity of music halls and the growing number of London theatres.

Keith Prowse's slogan was: "You Want The Best Seat — We Have Them."

July 1991
10 Sept 1991

RICHARD D'OYLY CARTE who marries BLANCHE JULIA PROWSE

Richard D'Oyly Carte, born 3 May, 1844; dies 3 April 1901, was an English talent agent. Theatrical impresario, composer & hotelier during the latter half of the Victorian era. He built two of London's theatres and a hotel empire, while also establishing an opera company that ran continuously for over a hundred years and a management agency representing some of the most important artists of the day.

Carte started his career working for his father, Richard Carte, in the music publishing and musical instrument manufacturing business. As a young man he conducted and composed music, but he soon turned to promoting the entertainment careers of others through his management agency. He believed that English comic opera could be as popular as the risqué French works dominating the London musical stage in the 1870s. To that end he brought together the dramatist W.S. Gilbert and composer Arthur Sullivan and nurtured their collaboration on a series of 13 Savoy operas. He founded the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and built the state-of-the-art Savoy Theatre to host the Gilbert and Sullivan operas.



Richard D'Oyly Carte

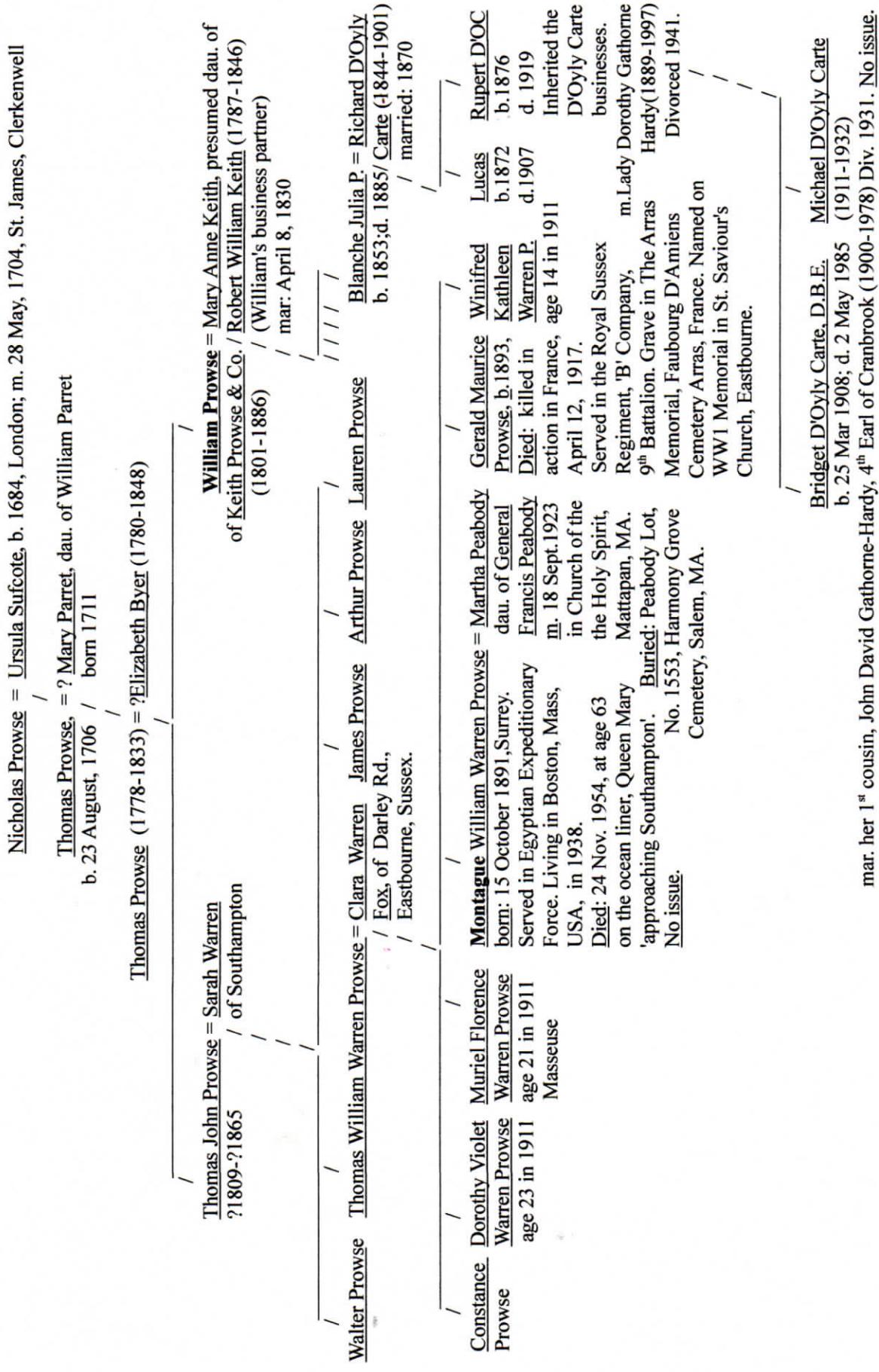
Eight years after opening the Savoy Theatre, Carte built the Savoy Hotel next to it, & later acquired other luxury hotels. In 1891 he erected the Palace Theatre, London. His partnership with Gilbert & Sullivan and his careful management of their operas and relationship, created a series of works whose success was unprecedented in the history of musical theatre. His opera company, later run by his widow Helen (2nd wife) & then by his son, Rupert (by his 1st wife, Blanche Julia Prowse) & his granddaughter, Bridget, promoted those works for more than a century, & they are still performed regularly today.

Carte was married twice. His first wife was Blanche Julia Prowse (1853-1885), the daughter of William Prowse, a partner in the Keith Prowse & Co. business. As a teenage, she had participated in amateur theatricals with Carte. They married in 1870, and had two sons. Lucas (1872-1907), who became a Barrister, and Rupert, who inherited the family businesses after Carte's 2nd wife, Helen Lenoir, died. Blanche had died of pneumonia in 1885, at the age of 32 & Richard had remarried his assistant three years later. Lucas, who was not involved in the family's business contracted tuberculosis of which he died at the age of 34.

Richard died at his London home from dropsy & heart disease in 1901, just short of his 57th birthday. He is buried in the churchyard of St. Andrew's Church in Fairlight, East Sussex, near his parents' graves. He left an estate valued at £250,000. He left the theatre, opera company, hotels & his other business interests to Helen & her London & touring companies continued to present the Savoy operas in Britain & overseas. At her death, Helen passed the family business to Rupert & the Savoy Group remained in the control of the Carte family & its associates until 1994. Carte's hotels have remained among the most prestigious in London. Rupert refreshed the opera company's productions & when he died in 1919, he left a strong company to his daughter, Bridget D'Oyly Carte. However, mounting costs forced Bridget to close the company in 1982, but the Gilbert & Sullivan operas continue to be produced world-wide, & Richard's vision of wholesome light operas that celebrate Great Britain endures.

(Source: Wikipedia)

**PEDIGREE of MONTAGUE PROWSE, who married Martha Peabody of PROWSE FARM, CANTON, Mass., USA
& of his Great-Uncle WILLIAM PROWSE, co-founder of 'Keith Prowse & Co.'**



WILLIAM PROWSE, MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MAKER AND MUSIC PUBLISHER

1830 8th April, married Mary Ann Keith at St. Peter's, Cheapside

1830 went into partnership with Robert William Keith, making musical instruments

1834 8th September, birth of daughter Agnes, baptised on 5th October 1834

1837 20th May, birth of daughter Marian, baptised on 5th July 1837

1837 October, death of daughter Marian

1840 July, birth of daughter Fanny Rebecca

1841 census : William Prowse aged 36, Music Publisher, living at 48 Cheapside with wife Mary aged 29 and daughters Agnes aged 6 and Fanny aged 11 months and Joseph Keith aged 15, apprentice Music publisher

1844 April, death of daughter Agnes, buried 10th April 1844 at Camden

1845 Post Office London Directory : William Prowse, Musical instrument maker, see Keith & Prowse

1847, birth of daughter Helen Ann

1848 London Directory : William Prowse, 48 Cheapside - musical instrument maker

1851 census : William Prowse aged 46, Musical Instrument maker & Music Publisher, living at Stroud Green, Hornsey with wife Mary Ann aged 39 and daughters Fanny aged 10 and Helen Ann aged 5

1853, birth of daughter Blanche Julia

1856 Post Office London Directory : William Prowse - pianoforte maker & music publisher - see Keith, Prowse & Co.

1860 marriage of daughter Fanny Rebecca to William Bryan Jones, Insurance Agent

1861 census : William Prowse aged 56, Musical Instrument maker, living at Stroud Green, Hornsey with wife Mary Ann aged 49 and daughters Helen Ann aged 13 and Blanche Julia aged 8

1865 London Directory : Keith, Prowse & Co., 48 Cheapside - Music and musical Instrument Sellers

1870 24th August, marriage of daughter Blanche Julia aged 17 to Richard D'Oyly Carte, Musician aged 26, son of Richard Carte, Musical Instrument Maker at St John the Baptist, Kentish Town, Middlesex

1871 census : William Prowse aged 66, Music Publisher living at Stroud Green, Hornsey with wife Mary Ann aged 59

1881 census : William Prowse aged 76, retired Pianoforte maker living at Stroud green, Hornsey with wife, Mary Ann aged 70

MONTAGUE WILLIAM WARREN PROWSE (1891 - 1954)

1891 15th October born in Surrey

1911 census, aged 19, assistant cashier at Colonial Bank, living as a boarder at 273 Brixton Road, London SW1

1914 13th October, London Gazette, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve : Temporary Commissions : sub-Lieutenant Montague William Warren Prowse

1915 28th February, Navy List : Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve : Temporary Commissions : Lieutenant Montague William Warren Prowse

1915 9th March, London Gazette, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve : Temporary Commissions : Lieutenant Montague William Warren Prowse

1914 -20 served in Royal Naval Division, Egyptian Expeditionary Force as Lieutenant, Captain, Major

1918 passenger on the "Carmania" from Boston to Liverpool

1926 Banker, aged 34, passenger on S.S. "Majestic" from Southampton to New York with his wife Martha Peabody Prowse, aged 40, an American born in Boston, Mass. on 14th January 1896

1927 Banker, aged 35, passenger on the "Samaria" from Boston to Liverpool

1930 US Federal census, Banker, aged 38 living with his wife Martha at Blue Hill River Road, Canton, Norfolk, Mass.

1935 passenger on "Lafayette" from Southampton to New York

1936 passenger on "Empress of Britain" from Southampton to Quebec

1942 US Draft Card : Montague William Warren Prowse of Blue Hill River Road, Canton, Norfolk, Mass. USA, aged 50, nok Mrs Martha Teabody Prowse

1943 passenger from

1945 passenger on "New Zealand Star" from Liverpool to New York

1946 flew from Hurn to New York, described as 5'11", fresh complexion, brown eyes and brown hair with occupation of Trustee

1948 passenger on the "Media" from Liverpool to Halifax

1950 November, passenger on the "Mauretania" from New York to Southampton

1950 December, passenger on the "Caronia" from Southampton to New York

1954 aged 63, passenger on "Queen Mary" from New York to Southampton

1954 24th November, died at sea on the "Queen Mary"

CONNECTIONS, continued:

GERALD MAURICE PROWSE

Younger brother of Montague William Warren Prowse (1891-1954) who became owner of **PROWSE FARM** in Canton, Massachusetts upon marrying Martha Peabody, daughter of General Francis Peabody on September 18, 1923. Gerald was also the great nephew of William Prowse of 'Keith Prowse & Co.'

GERALD MAURICE PROWSE (1893 - 1917)

1893 born son of T.W. and Clara Warren Prowse of Darley Road, Eastbourne, Sussex

1911 census, aged 18, clerk in auctioneers, living in Eastbourne with father Thomas William Prowse aged 49, electric agent, mother Clara aged 50, and siblings Dorothy Violet Warren Prowse aged 23, Muriel Florence Warren Prowse aged 21, masseuse, Winifred Kathlee Warren Prowse aged 14

Temp. Second Lieutenant in Royal Sussex Regiment, "B" Coy. 9Th Bn.

1917 12th April, killed in action

Grave on the The Arras Memorial at Faubourg D'Amiens Cemetery, Arras, France

named on WW1 War Memorial in St Saviour's Church, Eastbourne

PAUL REVERE

For those of you who may not have heard about this folk hero and patriot of the American Revolution (is there really anyone who has not done so?!), he was born about January 1, 1735, in Boston, Massachusetts, and his dramatic midnight horseback ride on the night of April 18, 1775, warning Boston-area residents that "The British Are Coming", was immortalized in a ballad by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (& in which quite a lot of historical liberties were taken!).

Earlier, Revere had joined the Boston Tea Party, dumping tea from the British East India Company into Boston's harbor. Revere did in fact serve for years as the principal rider for Boston's Committee of Safety, making journeys to New York and Philadelphia in its service, so would have been familiar with the route when he took "The Suffolk Resolves", the basis for the American "Declaration of Independence", from the Doty Tavern in Canton, Mass, (on land belonging to the now-named '**PROWSE FARM**') to the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

Revere became a successful industrialist after the War of Independence and set up a mill for manufacturing sheet copper in Canton, Massachusetts .

(Source: Encyclopedia Britannica)

PROWSE FARM

Canton, Massachusetts, USA -

Houses an educational center and museum depicting the remarkable history of this unique site.



So.....we have managed to **CONNECT the DOTS** from:.....

.....**PAUL REVERE** – carrying 'The Suffolk Resolves' – the basis of the American 'Declaration of Independence' - from 'The Doty Tavern' (on **PROWSE FARM** lands) where they were first drafted, to the First Congressional Congress in Philadelphia in 1775.....

.....to **WILLIAM PROWSE**, born just 26 years later in 1801, & great-uncle of Montague Prowse (*see below*) & also partner of Robert Keith, whose business venture, Keith Prowse & Co., flourished when they got into the theatre ticket agency operation, leading.....

.....to **RICHARD D'OYLY CARTE**, who married the daughter of William Prowse, & whose entertainment empire has entranced millions in the past 180 years or so (*including this author who, not only saved up all her pocket money in the 1950s to take the train up to London from Hampshire to go to see the **Gilbert & Sullivan** operettas at the Savoy Theatre performed by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, but who also played the piano for all her school's public performances of various musicals, usually G&S or Mozart operettas, being introduced to these magical musical treats when seeing her sister, Anne Prowse Cash, perform in the leading role of Ralph in HMS Pinafore in 1952*).....

.....to **MONTAGUE PROWSE**, who married the heiress of the **PROWSE FARM** land in Canton, Massachusetts, USA, Martha Peabody, taking us back to the 1775 War of Independence & 'The Suffolk Resolves' - Full Circle!

Phew!

And finally – a view of Rupert D'Oyly Carte's country home, Coleton Fishacre, near Kingswear in South Devon, with its 24 acre garden, built between 1923 and 1926.

