The Schill’s Brother. On the right, a photo of Olive and Melland on the terrace of uncle Paul’s mansion at Withington Hall.

We are extremely grateful to Mr. Graham Dilliway for his invaluable historical research, which proved to be fundamental to develop the bio of ‘our’ Olive Schill. He presented a paper at the Alderley Edge History Group on 25 September 2017, and made a short speech on the Schill family at the Manchester International Law Centre on 21 November 2017.

**Name:** Olive Bertha Schill

**Date of birth/death:** 1893 – 1958

**Family:** The Schill family had lived in the country of Wurttemberg (now Baden-Wurttemberg in Germany) for generations. Nonetheless, the security situation of the country, affected by internal strife and coveted by Austria and Prussia, might be the reason that convinced Hermann and Johanna Schill to leave Wurttemberg and eventually settle in Manchester with their children, Paul Hermann, Charles Henry, and Helene Caroline Schill. In Manchester, Paul Hermann and Charles Henry developed the ‘Schill Brothers’ as an international trading business.

Charles Henry Schill, Olive’s father and born in 1863, was a merchant in the South American trade, described once as a gentle and sensitive stamp collector by Katharine Chorley, who also mentioned that as a
young man Mr Schill undertook an expedition to the Amazon to collect butterflies and moths when he was out representing his firm in South America.\(^1\) Charles Hendy Schill donated his collection to the Manchester Museum in 1900\(^2\), when he ‘decided to discontinue collecting Lepidoptera’\(^3\). The Charles Henry Schill collection of Lepidoptera (1027 drawers and store-boxes) contains some 40,000 specimens of over 8,000 species. It is worldwide in scope and includes all families of butterflies, larger moths and also micro-Lepidoptera\(^4\).

Charles was married to Millicent Melland, born in 1866. A number of men from the Melland family became doctors and practised in Bakewell and later in Manchester. Millicent and Charles had four children: Edward Melland Schill (born in 1891 and killed in action in 1916), Olive Bertha Schill, Henry Hermann Schill and Charles Norman Schill. Henry and Charles died in their infancy. The family moved to Croston Towers in Alderley Edge in 1910, shortly after the mansion was extended to become one of the grandest villas in an extremely affluent location.

\textit{Olive’s brother, Edward Melland Schill} \(^5\)

Edward Melland Schill was educated at Charterhouse School in Godalming, and then studied history in Oxford. After university he adopted the name Melland instead of Edward. With a first in history, Melland was representing Schill Brothers in Valparaiso when World War I broke out in 1914. Once back home, he enlisted in the Seventeenth Lancashire Fusiliers. He was gazetted as a Second Lieutenant on 14 December 1914. Initially, because of health reasons he remained in England training recruits in musketry. Edward Melland Schill was promoted to Lieutenant in April 1916 and went to France and Flanders in June with the British Fourth Army. He was wounded in action on 24 August 1916, during the battle for Trônes Wood against the German Second Army. Trônes Wood was just one of the many battles of the Somme. Edward Melland Schill died of his wounds later that day at No. 5 Casualty Clearing Station at Corbie, east of Amiens. After temporary interment near the battlefield, Edward Melland Schill now lies forever with his comrades at Corbie Communal Cemetery. ‘A tragic irony is that the grandson of a couple who in about 1850 had left a country that was to become part of Germany was killed some 65 years later by the German army’.

Edward Melland Schill’s commanding officer wrote to the Schill family, “I heard this morning that Edward has died of wounds received whilst leading his men forward in a very gallant advance. It may, perhaps, help just a little to know that the advance in which he played such worthy a part was completely successful. We – myself as his commanding officer, his fellow officers and his men – can only express to you our deepest sympathy. During the time your son has been with us, he had made himself a favourite with all ranks with

\(^{2}\) Report, 1899-90.  
\(^{3}\) Schill’s letter to the Owen’s College Museum of 1/02/1900 in the Minutes of Manchester Museum’s Committee, Vol.2: 158.  
\(^{5}\) From G. Dilliway’s notes and http://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/fallen-alumni/lieutenant-edward-melland-schill.
his charming disposition and his soldierly qualities. I saw him as he was being carried out, he was splendidly brave and smiled at me and apologised for being hit. That is the sort of man he was.”

The inscription on Edward’s headstone reads ‘Freely to freedom we gave pledges, till life should be spent’ and is taken from the poem ‘A Watch in the Night’ by Algernon Charles Swinburne, written in about 1868. The memorial to the Manchester Pals of which Edward was one, and from the Salford Battalion’ is at is at Montauban, just a few km east of Corbie. Edward Melland Schill is also commemorated on the village War Memorial at St. Philip’s Church.

Oliver’s cousin, Eleanor Schill

Eleanor Beatrice Schill was Olive’s cousin. Her obituary was published in April 2006, few months after her death, at the age of 102: ‘Eleanor Beatrice Schill (Mrs Sykes) Former consultant psychiatrist Withington Hospital, Manchester (b 1904; q Manchester 1927; MBE, DPM), d 26 December 2005. Eleanor inspired many with her philanthropic and social work throughout her long life, being awarded the MBE for her efforts in 1995. The constant theme of raising money for specific causes was central to her life. She was one of the earliest female doctors to train at Manchester University and a founder member of the Marriage Guidance Council in 1946, later becoming vice chairman until 1970. She was consultant psychiatrist at Withington Hospital and a member of the parole board for Styal women’s prison, among other medical roles. She left five children, 10 grandchildren, and 10 great grandchildren’.

The Schill’s mansion in Alderley Edge

In Katharine Chorley’s book ‘Manchester Made Them’, there are descriptions of life enjoyed in Alderley Edge by the merchant princes and factory owners of Manchester and their domestic servants in the run up to World War I. Her book describes the families that were at the top of the social order in the Edge houses. These included the Pilkingtons of glass and tile fame at Firwood, the Hopkinsons at the Ferns, and the Schills at Croston Towers.

Croston Towers appears on the 1876 Ordnance Survey map. The mansion was demolished during the 20. Century, though. A development plot of about 3 to 4 acres was released, while leaving intact the coachman’s cottage, the coach-house and stables, and the lodge. The plot took up all the grounds bounded by Tempest Road, Woodbrook Road, and Macclesfield Road. Within about 10 years, five large detached houses were built on the plot. These have been demolished in turn and replaced by more opulent ‘footballer’s houses’.

The painting below, which was sent to Mr. Dilliway, shows how the mansion Croston Towers was in around 1850.

---

8 From G. Dilliway’s notes.
Olive’s life

Olive was 23 years old at the time of Melland’s death and was working at Endell Street Military Hospital, near Covent Garden, in central London. The hospital was staffed only by women supporting and promoting women’s suffrage. In 1918, Olive went up to Newnham College, Cambridge, and took a second-class honours in history. From the 1920’s Olive demonstrated a lifelong commitment to social causes and carried out a variety of voluntary social work in Manchester, for example as honorary secretary for the Manchester Branch of the National Council of Women and as a member of the committee of the Gentlewomen’s Employment Society (for whom she worked for 34 years).

In 1929 Melland and Olive’s mother, Millicent, died aged 63, never having recovered from the death of her only surviving son. Charles Schill retired and moved to Roundhill, close to Grasmere in Cumbria. Charles spent his remaining years building a rock garden at Roundhill with rhododendrons, and hidden nooks and crannies. He died in 1935, aged 72.

In the 1930’s (17/9/1928 to 31/05/1935) Olive joined the BBC as organiser of the North Region Children’s Hour programme and was later employed in the Talks Department. After a breakdown in health, Olive and her close friend Dorothy Pilkington embarked on a round the world cruise, visiting China for three months, then Japan, and the United States, to which Olive returned several times. In 1937, Olive became the first

---

9 From G. Dilliway’s notes.
secretary to the University on Manchester Appointments Board and was widely admired for her integrity and empathy in advising students on their university pathways and careers.

During World War II, Olive acted as warden for the rest centre at the university and later served on the Miners’ Welfare Grants Committee and a price-control committee investigating cases of black-marketing. She continued her work for the Gentlewomen’s Employment Society and started the Gentlewomen’s Housing Scheme, founding two residential homes for old people in the Manchester area.

Olive was a Governor of the Whitworth Art Gallery and honorary secretary for the Friends of the Whitworth Art Gallery from 1952 until her death in 1958, when the gallery was taken over by the University of Manchester. She never married and moved to Yew Tree House, Butley Town, near Prestbury. She died at Firwood while being nursed by Dorothy Pilkington, her close friend for many years.

**Her legacy**

Olive Schill left in her will a £10,000 endowment in Melland’s name to the University of Manchester to fund lectures and publications in international law.

In 2015, the Women in International Law Network started to work on an initiative that could gather women from all over the world who demonstrate through their lives and careers the importance of international law. Olive Schill was not as famous as her brother and it was difficult, before having the chance to meet Graham Dilliway, to find information on her life. We therefore thank all the institutions, the University of Manchester, and the museums that provided guidance to us. However, from our although short notes, we can draw that Olive Bertha Schill believed, after the horrors of two devastating world wars, that international law could contribute to international cooperation and to a peaceful resolution of disputes. This conviction is what boosts our research every day.

She is and will always be a great inspiration for all of us.