

## Meredith and the Wedderburn's.

The 1839 title map for Tibberton shows a property called 'Drew's Farm' on the hill 300 yds. to the south of 'Driver's Farm'. At one time this farm was occupied and worked by Mathew Hook who died 8th Feb. 1809 and is buried in the churchyard. Later tenants were the Loveridge family, John, Elizabeth then James, followed by James Smith in 1851. As early as 1793 this property had been owned by Hubert Bower, a tanner of Newent and later by Hubert Bower Meredith, his nephew, who died a bachelor in 1849.

The property was subsequently inherited by Lady Henrietta Louisa Wedderburn, the wife of Sir John Wedderburn 2nd Bt. of Balindean who had been in the Indian Civil Service from 1807 to 1837. Hubert Bower Meredith was the brother of her mother Henrietta Milburn whose maiden name was Meredith. See Fig.

It was in 1854 after a long tour in England and Wales that Sir John and family stopped at Gloucester to enable them to visit the property belonging to his wife and which later was to become Meredith. David, one of the sons, later noting in his journal, said that by a unanimous vote of the family, Gloucestershire was the most beautiful county through which the tour had led them. He describes a day spent at Tibberton looking at Lady Wedderburn's property. They found a roomy and comfortable farmhouse, with barns and other buildings in a state of dilapidation, and a farm of nearly 100 acres, thoroughly satisfactory in its distribution of arable, pasture, and orchard land. Back at their Gloucester quarters in the evening, they ended up by tracing the plan of the Tump Farm as they described it, (Drew's Farm) on tissue paper.

In the same year Mr James Medland, architect of Gloucester, took into partnership Mr W A Maberley and amongst the later work they carried out was a residence for Sir John Wedderburn Bart. at Tibberton. Sir John's youngest son, William, entered Edinburgh University that autumn, and by 1856 was preparing for the Indian Civil Service. In 1857 his eldest son, also called John, and who was a Civil Servant in India, being Magistrate and Collector of Hissar, was along with his wife and infant child, murdered by mutineers at Hissar in Upper India, after raising a troop of irregular cavalry who treacherously turned upon them.

At Easter 1859 Sir John and family collected for some weeks at Gloucester while he superintended the building of the new house, which was to be called 'Meredith'. Thereafter the spring months were spent there to avoid Lady Wedderburn (Henrietta Louisa) having to spend the cold time of the year in Scotland. Sir John died in 1862 and the property in Tibberton, six miles west of Gloucester, became his widow's permanent home.

Alicia, one of the daughters married General Sir William Hope, who commanded the 71st Highland Light Infantry in Central India after the Mutiny above. Lady Wedderburn's younger son William, who had joined the Indian Civil Service in 1860, and was to spend over a quarter of a century in the service of India, would spend part of every leave from India with his mother, finding pleasure in laying out the grounds at Meredith. William's youngest sister Louisa Jane married in 1869 another member of the Indian Civil Service, Edward Hope Percival. In 1878 Louisa came home to Meredith to have her only surviving daughter, her husband returning also at the end of that year. They continued to stay at Meredith and during this time Edward was having a house built for them by Samuel Waller (architects), at Upton St Leonards, called Kimsbury House, to which they moved in 1882.

Lady Henrietta survived her husband by twenty years, dying on the 7th April 1881 in London whilst visiting her niece Lady Mary Hope. Her elder son David, who had inherited his father's title, was one of the best informed men of his time on all subjects relating to the Indian States. He became a member of the Scottish Bar and M P for South Ayrshire 1868-74 and later for Haddington, Burghs. He died only a short while after his mother, at Inveresk Lodge, Musselburgh, Scotland, on the 18th September 1882, in his 47th year.

Thereupon the estate passed with the title to his younger brother William, who at this time was the District and Sessions Judge of Poona. He had married in 1878, Mary Blanche, daughter of Mr H W Hoskyns, North Perrott Manor, Somerset. In the summer of 1887 William, then being Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay, retired from the Civil Service in India, he and his wife Mary Blanche, (the new Lady Wedderburn) with their two daughters, Griselda and Dorothy, went to live at Meredith.

Following his retirement he twice returned to India to preside at the annual sessions of Congress, at Bombay in 1889 and at Allahabad in 1910 when there were 800 delegates and 4,000 visitors present who stood up and greeted him with ringing cheers. On this later occasion, Mr Surendranath Bannerjee, in formerly moving the election of the President spoke upon Sir William's noble life, his self sacrifice and his devotion to India's interests. He paid a tribute to his ceaseless endeavours in Parliament (where he served from 1893 to 1900 as M P for Banffshire) to obtain a commission of enquiry into Indian affairs.

In 1904 he accompanied Sir Henry Cotton when he went out to preside at the session held in Bombay. He was held in such deep veneration in Congress circles that the advice he tendered in frequent manifestos was rarely challenged, although it was often quietly ignored by the more able leaders.

Sir William's eldest daughter Dorothy, married an old family friend, Hugh Fownes-Luttrell, who sat as Liberal member for Tavistock from 1893-1900 and again from 1906-1910 and whose family seat (held by his elder brother) had been Dunster Castle. His younger daughter Griselda after returning with her father from the Congress visit to India in 1905, married Lieutenant (afterwards Captain) Charles Freemantle R N, the younger son of the Hon. Sir Charles Freemantle K C B.

It was owing to Sir William's experience, and that of Cannon Park, vicar of Highnam, that in 1908 a new road was opened between 'Barbers Bridge Station' and Hartpury. The road was named after Cannon Park, whilst the little bridge built at the same time over the River Leadon was called the Wedderburn Bridge.

At Meredith notwithstanding constantly recurring ill health, Lady Wedderburn fulfilled the duties of hostess to an almost continuous stream of visitors, with Sir William keeping open house for Indians to discuss with them the affairs of their country. A man of substantial means, he devoted his civilian pension of about £1,000 per annum to the Indian political cause.

The latter years at Meredith were filled with quiet occupations and spent in that serene enjoyment of which Sir William held the secret. Soon after coming into possession of the place, he had extended and improved the gardens, and when he sold Inveresk Lodge, the old family home at Musselburgh which was retained until 1910, he added to the house a dinning hall which provided adequate space for the tapestries and ancestral portraits brought down from Scotland.

Sir William lived the traditional life of a country gentleman of the quiet and cultivated sort. He conducted family worship, reading from the Book of Common Prayer and almost invariably choosing his text from the New Testament. Nothing in the garden escaped his eye, and he was constantly occupied in it. On winter evenings he rarely missed his game of bridge.

With the passage of time Meredith became more and more the centre of his affection and care. From 1891 until Sir William's death on 25th January 1918, he was Chairman of the Tibberton Voluntary School Management Board and its official correspondent. He was J.P and Deputy Lieutenant of Gloucestershire. For nine years he represented Newent on the County Council and was disappointed when no place was found for him on its Education Committee. He was a stalwart Liberal.

Through his kindness, during the early years of the first World War, a large group of wounded soldiers numbering about 100 were entertained at Meredith, accompanied by Commandant Mrs C Lee Williams (daughter of Mr W P Price) and nurses. Transport being supplied by Sir William.

The failure of Sir William's health was apparent as he approached his eightieth year. He still continued to take his annual health cure at Llandridod Wells, and in the summer of 1917 this seemed to have been particularly beneficial. The end came however at Meredith on January 25th 1918, the baronet passing peacefully away at 4.45 in the afternoon.

His death cast a gloom over the neighbourhood in which he had so long resided, and where his kindly genial presence and practical philanthropy were much evident. Eleven days before his death, Hugh Fownes-Luttrell, the husband of his eldest daughter, Dorothy, died and to make the triple tragedy, the younger daughter Griselda died on March 21st. of the same year, of a painful illness, at Falmouth. On August 11th 1918 Sir William's widowed elder daughter, gave birth to a daughter (Catherine Grisselda).

It was largely through Sir William's steadfastness that Sir Charles Dilke was enabled to recover his place in Parliament. The Dilke Memorial Hospital begun in 1922 owed its initiation to Sir William's unceasing effort.

The old Scottish family of which Sir William was head before his death, was founded by a Walter de Wedderburn who swore fealty to Edward I at Berwick on Tweed 28th August 1296. A Baronetcy of Scotland was conferred in 1704 but forfeited in 1746 by the fifth holder of the title, Sir John, who was taken prisoner at Culloden. He was subsequently executed on Kennington Common for his share in the Stuart rebellion. His successors however continued to assume the title until his grandson, who would have been seventh baronet of Scotland, received a new patent of the United kingdom in 1803.

Finally the families connection with Meredith ended on the death of Lady Mary on the 7th October 1933. Their bodies are interred in the graveyard of the little church of Holy Trinity in the village of Tibberton, the grave is marked by a tall granite obelisk. A sum of money was left annually to maintain the grave in good order and in default the money would be forfeited and paid instead to Taynton Church.

**Monument in the Churchyard.** A Granite Obelisk with Plinth & large Kerbstones.

In memory of / Sir John WEDDERBURN / Bart. Bombay Civil Service / third son of / Sir John WEDDERBURN / Bart. / of Ballindean / Scotland, who died on / 2nd of July 1862 / in his 74th year The memory of the just / is blessed. *Proverbs 10.7* / And of his wife / Henrieta Louisa who died on the / 7th of April 1881 / in her 78th year /

Also to the memory of / Sir William WEDDERBURN / fourth Baronet / Bombay Civil Service / Third son of the above / who died on the / 25th January 1918 / in his 80th year / and of his wife / Mary Blanche / who died on the 7th October 1933 / aged 79 years.

South Side. Elizabeth / daughter of / Sir John WEDDERBURN / Bart. / died on the / 26th of August 1876 / Christ in you the hope / of Glory. *Col. 1.27* / Margaret Griselda / wife of Commander / Charles FREMANTLE / Royal Navy / and daughter of / Sir William WEDDERBURN / Baronet / who died at Falmouth / on the 21st March 1918 / in the 34th year of her age.

**"Hindu Mahatma"**

Milton sang of his life as self-consecrated in the service of God. Of Sir William Wedderburn we say that his is a dedicated life in the service of India. Fifty Years ago he came out to this country [India] as a member of the Indian Civil Service. But he was truly an Indian patriot in the garb of an English official. If his lot had been cast in more superstitious times, his contemporaries would have regarded him as the reincarnation of some great Hindu Mahatma born again in the flesh for the well-being of his people.

- Surendranath Banerjea

In the muster-roll of distinguished Englishmen who have loved India with an abounding love and have served her with passionate devotion, Sir William Wedderburn will be one of the most distinguished Englishmen. How many of us, children of the soil, can claim to have exhibited in the record of their life's -work, the selfless devotion, the unflinching self-sacrifice and the supreme love for India and her peoples, which have always been the dominating features in the public career of Sir William Wedderburn ?

**Acharya Ray.**

The Latter Owners.

Meredith was subsequently bought by Brig. Gen. Urquhart who died 1968, and then purchased by Dr Chambers.

I have a photo of Lady Wedderburn and also a poorer one of Sir William.

DJ PARKIN

TIBBONON COURT

1976