

Medlicott
of Co. Kildare Ireland

By Turtle Bunbury
(Revised Edition 2013)

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Medlicott of Co. Kildare, Ireland

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Original illustrations/ Photographs

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Preface

(Excerpt from Turtle Bunbury's Introduction to The Landed Gentry & Aristocracy of Kildare)

One can take refuge in the past. It a comfortable zone because it's already happened. It can't be changed. It simply is. The people written about in this book were real, living people. They acted in accordance with their upbringing and education, their mindsets honed by the political and social backdrop of the time in which they lived. Up until the 18th century, it seems to have been a game of survival. There followed close on two hundred years in which the Protestant gentry and aristocracy – the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy – held absolute power in Ireland. I don't have a notion how many people in Ireland today would deem themselves "Anglo-Irish". The term was perhaps useful in times gone by. It meant you were a wee bit Anglo but also rather Irish. Posh as port yet wild as the mountains once the port had been consumed.

After independence, of course, the map changed dramatically. Of the eighteen families covered in The Gentry & Aristocracy of Kildare (now out of print) only four – Charlie Clements of Killadoon, John de Burgh of Oldtown, John de Robeck of Gowran Grange and William Fennell of Burtown House – still reside in the house where their forbears lived a century ago. Robert Guinness of Lodge Park represents the completion of a circle that started with Richard Guinness in Kildare 300 years ago and returned to the county after World War Two. Morristown Lattin, Harristown House and Oakley Park are also in private ownership. Straffan House, Carton House, Kilkea Castle and Ballyna have been converted into golf and country clubs. Kildangan and Forenaghts are now incorporated into equine studs. Castletown House is owned by the state and open to the public. Donadea Castle is a ruin. Oakley Park and Moore Abbey are run by the St. John of Gods and Sisters of Charity respectively.

It will not be long before the last of the tweed-clad, Spaniel toting gentlemen vanishes in his entirety, taking with him a remarkable chapter in Irish history.

This is a short potted history. It is not intended as an authoritative compendium of pedigrees but rather as an exercise in reincarnation.

Medlicott of Dunmurry

An invitation to manage the Ormonde estates in post-Restoration Ireland changed everything for the youngest sons of a prominent London barrister. In 1714, the younger brother George Medlicott acquired an estate at Dunmurry. Despite a series of complex changes in ownership, the house remained the family base until 1955. George's descendents excelled as horse riders, both hunting in Kildare and in action with the British Army overseas

Medlicott Early Ancestry

According to *The Visitation of Shropshire* (1564), the Medlicotts trace their ancestry back to an 11th century knight, Sir Roger de Meibron, who fathered three sons, Llewellyn, Kynnard, Hughe. The eldest styled himself Llewellyn de Modlicott and his line runs straight through the Middle Ages to Thomas Medlicott of Pontesbury who had lands at Haberly, Shropshire, in the time of Queen Elizabeth.

Thomas's grandson James was born in London on 5th July 1596 and educated at the Merchant Taylor's School. He was a common councillor for London's Queenhithe Ward. In 1621 he married Elizabeth, daughter of Edmund Joyner of Newbury, Berkshire. He died in January 1663 and was buried at St Peters in London's Billingsgate. His 36-year-old eldest son Thomas Medlycott, a Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, succeeded. Thomas subsequently became a prominent barrister in the London, serving as Bencher (1677) and Treasurer (1691) of the Middle Temple. In 1688, the year of the Glorious Revolution, he was elected Whig MP for the Berkshire town of Abingdon. He died aged 90 in December 1716. By his marriage to Anne Whicker, he left five sons.

The First Medlicotts in Ireland

The eldest son James, a barrister and MP, settled at Ven House in Somerset and was ancestor to the Medlycott baronets. The next brothers Charles and Edmund remained in England. The younger sons George and Thomas moved to Ireland. It is believed these latter brothers were close friends to the Earl of Ossory, eldest son of the James Butler, the “Great Duke” of Ormond. During the Cromwellian Interregnum, Ormonde and Ossory joined the future Charles II during his exile in France. The Butler family was thus considerably favoured following the Restoration of the monarchy in 1661.



Ven House

George appears to have arrived in Ireland shortly after the Restoration while Thomas was sent over to manage the Ormonde estates on behalf of Ossory’s son, the 2nd Duke of Ormond. For his efforts, Thomas was granted lands in Counties Kilkenny, Tipperary and Waterford. Thomas also served as Chief Commissioner of Revenue in Ireland, as well as MP for Milbourne Port (1706) and Westminster (1708-10,1713). In March 1701 he further increased his property ownership by purchasing

lands from Ossory's brother, the Earl of Arran, around Newport, Co. Mayo. Thomas's grandson John settled at Rocketts Castle, Portlaw, Co. Waterford and his descendents remained at Rocketts through to the 20th century.

The Medlicotts of Dunmurry descend from the youngest brother George. He was also well connected with the Butler elite. Between 1712 and 1714 he purchased lands in Co. Kildare at Youngstown, Tully, Ardscull, Ardneecross and Dunmurry, from John Berkeley, Viscount Fitzhardinge.¹



Mary Bagot

¹ Fitzhardinge's mother was the beautiful Mary Bagot, Lady to the Bedchamber of Queen Anne. There is a portrait of her by Lely at Hampton Court Palace. There is also a second more macabre portrait of her in the Althorp collection where she is portrayed holding the cannon ball which killed her husband, a close friend of Charles II, during the battle of Southwold Bay on 1665. From 1685 to 1693, Fitzhardinge was Colonel of the Princess Anne of Denmark's Regiment of Dragoons, a cavalry unit later renamed the Queen's Hussars.

The Kildare Medicotts in the 17th & 18th Centuries

George built his home at Tully, close to the present day National Stud. George subsequently served as High Sheriff for the county. On 22nd June 1672 he married Elizabeth Bagot, daughter of Sheriff Edward Bagot of Harristown, Co. Offaly. George died aged 68 in the summer of 1717 and was buried in the grounds of Kildare Cathedral. His widow died on 29th December 1725, leaving seven sons and seven daughters. Records of this generation are sadly lacking although we do know that Dunmurray ultimately passed to the fifth son, Samuel, who died in 1737 leaving four sons and five daughters.

Samuel's eldest son, James of Ardsull, died unmarried on Christmas Day 1771. The previous year he assigned all his estates at Youngstown and Ardsull to a cousin, Charles Dowling, who thereupon adopted the name of Medicott. However, on the death without children of Dowling's only son in 1812, these estates reverted to the original Medicott family in the form of the elderly Edward Medicott of Dunmurry, a younger brother of James of Ardsull.

Edward had two sons and two daughters. The elder son James was born in 1737 and married, in 1774, to Jane Wood. Their only son Alexander went to India with the army as a young man but died soon after. James was married a second time in 1784 to Mary Graydon, by whom he had a further five sons and six daughters. Most of these children appear to have died unmarried although the youngest son Graydon moved to North America and has descendents still living.

The Celebrated James Medicott

During the 1798 Rebellion, old James won considerable respect from the Catholic population when he personally intervened to save the life of the "*universally loved and respected*"

parish priest of Kildare who was about to be hung from a tree by a renegade mob of loyalist soldiers.

James was a close friend of the 2nd Duke of Leinster – they referred to one another as “Jimmy” and “George”. The Duke offered James the lease of lands (formerly known as "Murrin's Farm") running from the Dunmurry boundary of "Featherbed Lane" and the "White fields" to the Curragh Edge for the nominal rent of 5/- an acre for ever but he Duke died before the lease could be signed.

James was a keen sportsman, with his own pack of hounds kenneled by the pond at Dunmurray. At the age of 90, he drew widespread applause when he became the only member of the Kildare Hunt to give chase to a fox that had broken down from Dunmurray Hill across the valley and up towards the "Chair of Kildare", a journey considered hazardous by even the most fearless of horseriders. The old man died not long after this gallant performance in 1827.

The Medicotts in the 19th Century

James was succeeded by his eldest surviving son Edward, also a noted horse-rider. Edward generally rode a small horse by name of "Little Peter." During the 1820s he met and fell in love with a beautiful young woman named Anne Speer. Her father, a Dublin barrister named Solomon Speer, rented a house at "Granitefield" near Monkstown, Co. Dublin, every summer. Her mother had been a Donovan of Ballymore Castle, Co. Wexford. During his courtship, Edward would clamber upon Little Peter and canter the 35 miles from Dunmurray to Granitefield. They married in February 1827. Edward later served as JP for Co. Kildare. Anne died in August 1866 and Edward in January 1868.

They left three sons.² The eldest, James, born in December 1827, succeeded to the family estates. Like his father before him, James was JP for Co. Kildare. In fact, he was only 21 years of age when appointed a magistrate. He also sat at the Rathangan Petty

² The second son, Edward, was a Sub-Inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary but died of small pox aged 40.

Sessions. On 12th October 1859 he married Margaret Davidson, daughter of Dr. Joshua Henry Davidson, MD, HM Physician in Ordinary. Margaret died in September 1904 and James in January 1913. He had the distinction of being the oldest magistrate and Grand Juror in the county of Kildare, being in his 85th year at the time of his death. He was a keen sportsman and was usually foremost rider to the hounds. They had five sons and seven daughters.

Major Richard Frederick Cavendish Medlicott, OBE

The eldest son Henry was born in January 1863 and died unmarried in July 1910 when succeeded by his brother, Major Richard Frederick Cavendish Medlicott, OBE. As a young man, Richard served in the South African Defence Force during the Boer War and again in Zululand in 1906. On the outbreak of the Great War, he and his younger brother George served with the 3rd South African Infantry in the German South West African campaign. Richard was awarded the Military Cross in 1915 but George was killed in action in France on 15th October 1916. Major Medlicott was subsequently awarded the Order of Danilo in Montenegro. On 29th September 1920 he married Augusta Hargrave, daughter of Henry James Bennett Hargrave, MICE, of Rathgar, Co. Dublin. The Major died on 11th January 1936 leaving two sons and a daughter.

The Medlicotts in Modern Times

The Major's eldest son Edward was born on 13th August 1921 and educated at Aravon School in Bray, St. Columba's College in Rathfarnham and Trinity College Dublin. On 15th October 1946 he married Althea Leila, daughter of Reginald Croker of Barrow House, Monasterevin, Co. Kildare. He died prematurely on 8th January 1954, leaving two sons - James (b. 1947) and Philip (b. 1952) and a daughter Julianne (b. 1954). Dunmurry was sold in 1955 and Althea Medlicott moved her

young family to Bognor Regis in Sussex. Edward's brother Henry served as a captain with the Royal Artillery during World War II, married Kathleen Copley of Castlerea, Co. Roscommon and settled in Alberta, Canada, with his daughters Helen and Kyra. Edward and Henry's sister Anne was born in 1925 and lives in Cheshire.

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