

Virtute Fideque (virtue entrusted)

[motto of the Murrays of Elibank]

The Genealogy of James & Lewis Mortlock, and relating to Kirtling, Cambridgeshire

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James and Lewis Mortlock were two seafaring brothers¹, the first the discoverer of the two sets of Mortlock Islands in the Pacific, and the latter the hero of a Channel fight against the French while in command of HMS *Wolverine*. The stories of both these men can be read in the May 2002 and May 1998 numbers, respectively, of *Mariner's Mirror*. They were born Lawson but in 1784 changed their name by Royal Licence to Mortlock, the maiden, and perhaps only legal name of their mother Mary (1740-1817), who was born in Kirtling, Cambridgeshire, the daughter of Lewis Mortlock of Kirtling (1699-1774). This Lewis hailed originally from Denham (Denham St Mary, the one near Bury St Edmunds) in Suffolk, where his eponymous great-grandfather had South Wood Park. He moved to Kirtling, where his sister Elizabeth had been married in 1718, some time between 1737 and 1740. There had been a William Mortlock in the village in the early 1680s. Usage of the name Lewis Mortlock can be traced back to an entry in Essex Feet of Fines for 1549. James and Lewis' paternity is a riddle that this short article seeks to solve.

In 1554 Edward North, MP for Cambridge, was summoned to Parliament as Baron North of Kirtling, Cambridgeshire. The family seat, Kirtling Tower, is still to be seen, although a shadow of its original grand self; most of the house, then called Kirtling Hall, that Mary Mortlock would have known, was pulled down in 1801. It incorporated a Catholic chapel, which survived the demolition and which may throw some light on the 6th Baron's loyalties. This descendant of Edward, William 6th Baron North and 2nd Lord Grey (1678-1734)², was a general in the army whose hand was shot off at Blenheim. However he was implicated in the 1715 Jacobite rising, was banished by George II and subsequently served as a general for the King of Spain. He died without issue in exile in Madrid. His widow, Maria Margareta, of Dutch extraction³, whom he had married in 1705, remarried in 1735, by which time she would of course have been beyond childbearing, to Patrick Murray, 5th Baron Elibank (1703-1778)^{4,5}, whose company she may have

¹ This point proven by Lewis' will [National Archives, PROB11/1318 f.53]

² See DNB, and Burke's Peerage

³ She was the daughter of Cornelius de Yonge, Lord of Elmeet in Holland and Receiver-General of the States of the United Provinces. See reference 5.

⁴ See DNB, and Burke's Peerage. Patrick was first a soldier, serving as a Lieutenant Colonel at the siege of Cartagena; later he was celebrated as a literary patron.

⁵ For his life, and several of his letters, and much other detail used in this narrative, see *The Five Sons of Bare Betty*, Arthur C Murray, Murray 1936 (loan copy in the London Library)

enjoyed during her husband's exile, although this is not at present substantiated. His Lordship's main seat was Ballencrieff Castle⁶, a few miles east of Edinburgh, although the title was taken from Elibank Tower in Selkirkshire⁷ which had been acquired by Sir Gideon Murray⁸ in 1595. Maria Margareta died in 1762. Her personal fortune, by inheritance and as a widow, restored the almost extinct Elibank finances (and Ballencrieff Castle, his work described elsewhere as 'an ill-advised Georgian makeover'⁹), which was convenient for her second husband; but he truly mourned her when she died and she seems to have understood his need for younger solace - infidelities which he as a widower retrospectively regretted - and she seems to have had a genuine affection for at least those of his illegitimate offspring that she knew about; but no record of her personal feelings towards Mary Mortlock has come down to us. Lord Elibank's success with a variety of women is certainly not explained by his short stature and 'shrill prating voice' - but Maria Margareta's money may well have proved a compensating attraction, and he was clearly a brainy man of some wit. The ethos of the Georgian period is such that there is even the possibility that Mary Mortlock was bought from her father or, like Emma Hamilton, was won at the gaming table. But that's just being mischievous.

The Elibank-North connection is illustrated by the fact that a formal inventory¹⁰ of possessions left behind by Lord Elibank in Kirtling Hall was taken in 1783. This suggests that he was lodging there on a fairly regular basis.

The Elibanks are buried in their own aisle in Ballencrieff church, but have none of the effusive memorials one would expect; the story is that Patrick actually ran through all Maria Margareta's money and was, as a 'heritor', unable to pay his one-third share in the rebuilding of the church - so, rebuilt, all Elibank memorials were suppressed by the then minister, who also had the outside door to the private aisle stopped up. [The Elibanks were Protestant in spite of being Jacobites and Knights Templar]. However, there is a memorial to Maria Margareta, put up some time after her death after Lord Elibank had received a verbal roasting from his great friend Dr Johnson for neglecting this - the good doctor, during his celebrated tour of Scotland, having spent three nights under Lord Elibank's roof .

Particularly durable proof that Mary Mortlock was the mother of at least two of Lord Elibank's children has come down to us in stone. In the Protestant Cemetery in Florence, Italy (otherwise known as the English Cemetery) is a memorial to Ann Murray, 1769-1843, daughter of Patrick Lord Elibank and Mary Mortlock¹¹. She is, confusingly as will be seen, styled 'Lady Don' in a

⁶ I am indebted to Peter Gillies, the current owner of Ballencrieff Castle, for much of the detail about the Elibanks. The castle itself was built, as a large tower house, in 1507 but was burnt out in 1868 and stood roofless until it was restored and sold in the 1990s, when all external traces of the Elibank 'modernisation' were suppressed.

⁷ An extinct county in the Borders, lying south-east of Edinburgh

⁸ See DNB for lurid details of Sir Gideon's chequered career

⁹ *Observer*, 20.11.2005

¹⁰ Held in the North Archive in the Kenneth Spencer library of the University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS. Not very accessible to researchers in England!

¹¹ <http://www.florin.ms/cemetery1.html>

transcription that seems to conflate her with her sister. There are also two columns, one to her - 'Ann Murray, spinster, obiit May 6 1843, Florence' and the other to 'Lady Don, widow of Sir George Don GCB GCH, for many years Governor of Gibraltar, died at Florence 15 January 1855 aged 90 years'¹². I am indebted to Sam Benady of Gibraltar, biographer of Sir George Don¹³, for further information about these ladies. Firstly, there must have been a third sister at least, as he finds a reference to 'Mrs Don, as she then was, being visited "by her sisters"'. Maria Margareta jnr, named after Lord Elibank's late wife - what Mary Mortlock thought of that is unrecorded - had been taken out to Minorca by her uncle, Lieutenant General the Hon. James Murray, in 1775 as a companion to his first wife but also one supposes as one of the fishing fleet? Anyway, there she met the then Captain George Don, with useful connubial results. In 1783 Lord Elibank settled £5000 on her when they married at Oare in Sussex¹⁴. Much later, in 1830, the Dons entertained Benjamin Disraeli who commended Lady Don's gardening and described her as 'although very old [67!] .. excessively acute .. with an aptitude of detecting character .. her eye so brilliant ..'¹⁵ It would be unreasonable to expect the sister of Lewis and James Mortlock to be a shrinking violet.

Maria Margareta, Lady Don, had had an interesting life, following the drum after her soldier and later in Jersey where he was Lieutenant Governor 1806-14, and then in Gibraltar 1814-31, again as Lieutenant Governor. She was clearly a keen and knowledgeable gardener; not only at The Convent and other residences used by the Dons, but she is also credited with a key part in the conception and founding of the New Almeda gardens which Don established for public use on the Rock. Soon after her husband died on New Year's Day 1832, aged 76, she left Gibraltar for England and then retired to Italy for the last twenty years of her life.

Ann, who lived with the widowed Lady Don outside Florence - presumably in the Villino Strozzi named in the burial register - and as above in the end predeceased her, is mentioned in Lady Don's will along with their brother Patrick Murray. As Patrick Murray of Simprim in Forfarshire he reappears in Burke's Peerage where his youngest daughter - another Maria Margareta -

¹² <http://www.women.it/les/storia/cimiteri.htm> gives:

i. [column with urn] SACRED/ TO THE MEMORY OF/ LADY DON/ WIDOW OF/ GENERAL SIR GEORGE DON/ G.C.B. AND G.C.H./ FOR MANY YEARS GOVERNOR OF/ GIBRALTAR/ DIED AT FLORENCE/ 15 JANUARY 1855/ AGED 90 YEARS

Note: previous ref. gives 'Villino Strozzi, près Florence' and

Burial record: 561/ GL23777/1 N° 212, Burial 18/10; Plot No: B19F

ii. [column with urn] SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF ANN MURRAY/ SPINSTER/ OBE[?]IT MAY 6 1843/ FLORENCE

Note (from previous reference): d of Patrick Lord Elibank and Mary Mortlock, born Guildford Surrey, died 06-05, Burial 07-05, aged 73.

Burial record: 263/ GL 23774 N° 50; Plot no: B19Q

¹³ *General Sir George Don*, Sam Benady, Gibraltar Books, 2006

¹⁴ Marriage settlement of George Don and Maria Margareta Murray, Scottish Records Office GD2/250 (as cited by Benady)

¹⁵ *Home Letters Written by the Late Earl of Beaconsfield 1830-1*, ed. R Disraeli, John Murray 1885, pp8-10 (Letter II); quoted in précis from an excerpt of Mr Benady's draft Don biography graciously copied to me by e-mail.

married, on 9th August 1842, the 4th Lord Talbot of Malahide, heir to two and a half thousand acres of Scotland. Her sister Susan married Captain Brunswick Struther Topham, RN. I drop these names to show that, whatever the circumstances of their birth, the eventual offspring and descendants of the 5th Lord Elibank were well provided for and held their heads high in society.

This points us part of the way to a possible elucidation of the parentage of Lewis. When he was dying of his wounds in Gosport it is recorded that his mother, Mary Mortlock, was comforted, while attending on him, by his half-brother Patrick Murray. Lewis was Lewis M Mortlock - perhaps his middle initial M stood for Murray? Would Patrick have so danced attendance on a stepmother, and one to whom his father was never married?

I infer from all the above that this Patrick was *full* brother to Ann Murray, above, and that Lord Elibank's acknowledgment of a liaison with Mary Mortlock necessarily post-dated the decease of his wife, who was considerably, perhaps twenty years older than him. We know that James Mortlock was born James Lawson in 1760 - before Mary Margareta died - and it would appear that Lewis, also born as Lawson, was his junior; but perhaps not by much; his writing his will in 1784 suggests that he must by then have been of age, and therefore born before 1764.

James Mortlock states quite clearly, in his naval lieutenantcy papers, that he was born in Edinburgh. Lawsons seem to come from Yorkshire (although in modern times the name has been assumed by incomers from eastern Europe). The provenance of the Lawson surname is that James was baptised to Lawson snr, a "gentleman's" (presumably Lord Elibank's) servant, as James' father. Once Maria Margareta had died in 1762, there was no need for this subterfuge, and the later children by Mary Mortlock and Lord Elibank were baptised as Murrays.

How might Mary Mortlock have met Lord Elibank? We have seen how she was born and brought up in Lord North's Kirtling, and how the North and Elibank lines were linked by Mary Margareta. Mary Mortlock was more of an age with the 8th Lord North (the one who lost us America) (1732-1792), and may well have met her, by then elderly, lover through that later Lord North's social activities in Kirtling. Note that two of the 8th Lord North's granddaughters married Scotsmen.

The link with Guildford is curious; when James married in 1795 he was 'of Weybridge', not far away. The 7th Lord North was created Earl of Guilford (sic) in 1752; but that may be a red herring. The link with Scotland may have cast a long shadow for some Mortlock descendants today seem to think that the name hails from that country. The heralds do not agree; their grant of arms to Sir John Cheetham Mortlock was based on the arms of Mortlake in Surrey, the generally accepted derivation of the surname. Nearly all the Mortlocks in the 1881 census can be traced back to East Anglia, to the southern part of Norfolk, and to Essex, Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk.

It would be genealogically possible for James and Lewis to have been sired by Lawson, but against this is the amount of money needed to educate them. start them in life and to maintain them as gentlemen. I know of at least one other case where a nobleman's illegitimate son was baptised to a servant but the detail of this would be an unnecessary distraction.

Their history indeed shows that both James and Lewis had a bit of money behind them, and Lewis, during his time on the beach when we were fleetingly without a war with the French,

styled himself a gentleman. Both had been found places in the Royal Navy which could only have come through 'interest', i.e. patronage - which for its time is no slur upon their undoubted professional excellence; both had clearly been educated before going to sea, at least in mathematics. If this may have been arranged for them when they were comparatively young, that would explain their being omitted from a list of his illegitimate children¹⁶ that Lord Elibank sent to his brother, General George Murray, in 1777 - presumably feeling the hand of death already upon him - stating what they were left in his will; and this omission may have something to do with the Lawsons reverting to Mortlock and not Murray - who really knows what goes on in families, particularly a polygamous one like Lord Elibank's? Certainly the two sons that are listed have no bequest against their name, presumably because they have already been settled financially. Mortlocks, incidentally, were until the twentieth century observably almost exclusively land animals and in only rare cases were they at all web-footed (I write, of course metaphorically). James' and Lewis' mother took the secret of their paternity to the grave in Maidstone in 1817. If she had ever formally become Lady Elibank her obituary in the Gentleman's Magazine would surely have been so styled. In the 1760s the social gap between the daughter of a yeoman farmer and a peer of the realm was wide indeed. However Mary's, albeit informal, association with the peerage set a record for Mortlocks until the 1960s when Nina Mortlock succeeded in supplanting the then Countess of Shrewsbury and marrying her Earl - one might say a case of the recumbent superseding the incumbent.

As to money in the family, the financial affairs of James' two daughters, Harriett and Eliza, seem to have been managed by the London stockbroker brothers John Lewis and Lewis Mortlock Wolfe. It is at least plausible that their grandmother Ann Mortlock, who married Sam Wolfe in 1756, was Mary Mortlock's older sister.

I come to the, to me inescapable, conclusion that the gallant and capable sons of Mary Mortlock of Kirtling were, in all probability, the illegitimate offspring of the 5th Lord Elibank.

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I have been usefully assisted in this account by Mrs Jill Peacock, a descendant of James (Lawson) Mortlock.

¹⁶ *Bare Betty* again