

John Wedderburn

Born 1700.

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1. Early life

John Wedderburn was the son of Alexander Wedderburn, the 4th Baronet, "who had been deposed from his office as Clerk of Dundee in 1717 for supporting the Stuarts in the previous uprising of 1715" (the Jacobite rising of 1715 in support of the Old Pretender).

John Wedderburn had a sister, Elizabeth, who married Alexander Read of Logie, Dundee in 1715; their daughter Catherine Read was a noted portrait painter[and their son Alexander Read was the grandfather of "Bold" Webster, husband of Frances Annesley, and friend of Lord Byron.

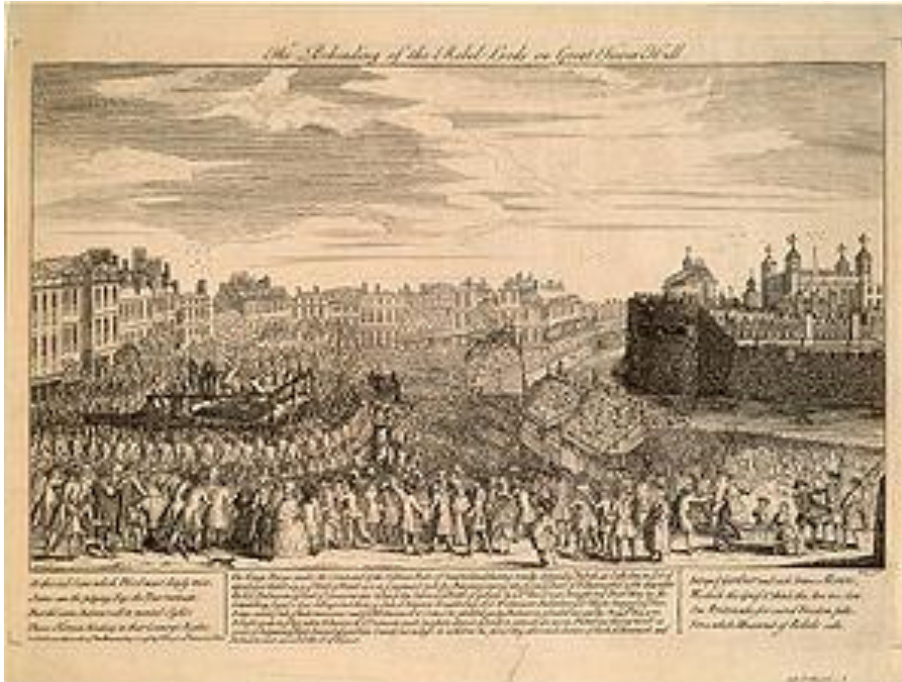


Wedderburn's expectations of an inheritance were not fulfilled, and he fell on hard times. He raised his family in "a small farm with a thatched house and a clay floor, which he occupied with great industry, and thereby made a laborious but starving shift to support nine children who used to run about in the fields barefoot".

2. The "Forty Five"



In 1745 Sir John joined the rebellion of Charles Edward Stuart against the Hanoverian Crown, serving as a colonel in the Jacobite arm. He was captured at the Battle of Culloden and taken to London to face trial. He was indicted for treason at St Margaret's Hill, Southwark on 4 November 1746, and was found guilty, despite arguing in his defence that he had not personally taken up arms against the Crown. He was executed at Kennington Common on 28 November 1746.



Public execution of Jacobite rebels, including John Wedderburn, at Kennington Common in 1746. He was hung, drawn and quartered.

3. Marriage and Descendants

According to the genealogist Joseph Foster, Sir John married in 1724 Jean Fullerton, who lived till 1766. Foster only records details of two sons, John and James.[8] He also had daughters, for they are recorded as having been taken in charge by the aforementioned Catherine Read, the portrait painter, after his execution.

John Wedderburn of Ballendean, 6th Baronet of Blackness (1729–1803), was Wedderburn's eldest son. After the failure of the '45, he made his way to London to plead with such friends as his family still had for his father's rescue and pardon. The boy's mission failed, and he had to witness his father's execution as a traitor by hanging, drawing and quartering. He returned to Scotland, but, with limited prospects there, decided to try for a new life in the New World. In Glasgow he found a ship's captain prepared to let him work his passage on a ship bound for the Caribbean. He spent many years as a planter in Jamaica, returning to Britain a wealthy man, enriched by slave sugar. He brought back with him a slave named Joseph Knight, who took him to court in a freedom suit which set a precedent in Scots law. Eventually John Wedderburn climbed back up the social scale, and his daughter Louisa married General John Hope, 4th Earl of Hopetoun.

James Wedderburn was Wedderburn's second son. He also went to Jamaica, and there apparently fathered Robert Wedderburn by one of his slaves[citation needed]. Following Robert's rejection by his father's family, he wrote *The Horrors of Slavery*, which was circulated by the abolitionist movement.[10] A descendant of Robert was Bill Wedderburn, Baron Wedderburn of Charlton (1927-2012). James's children by his wife, Hon. Mary Louisa Eden, fifth daughter of William Eden, 1st Baron Auckland, include Andrew Colvile, governor of the Hudson's Bay Company; Jean, who married Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk; and James Wedderburn, Solicitor General for Scotland until his death in 1822. The other surviving son was Peter Wedderburn Ogilvy, who became a sea captain.

4. Notes on the Wedderburn Family

The following notes about the Wedderburn family, including Sir John Wedderburn, are extracted from the Wedderburn Book by Alexander Wedderburn.

Alexander Wedderburn, b. 4/11/1675 [e.s. of James W., Clerk of Dundee, and Elizabeth (Bessie Davidson)] became 4th Bt. of Blackness in 1723 on the death of his (second) cousin John, b. 2/12/1700, the second but eldest and ultimately only surviving son of Sir Alexander W. (b. 1672), 2nd Bt. of Blackness, and Elizabeth Seton (d. of Sir Alexander Seton, 1st Bt. of Pitmedden, co. Aberdeen). [On 17/11/1712, John was a witness at the baptism of John, the third but younger surviving son of Alexander W. (b. 1678, e.s. of Peter W. & Catherine Man) and Grissell Watson. (W.B. p. 243, footnote³.)]

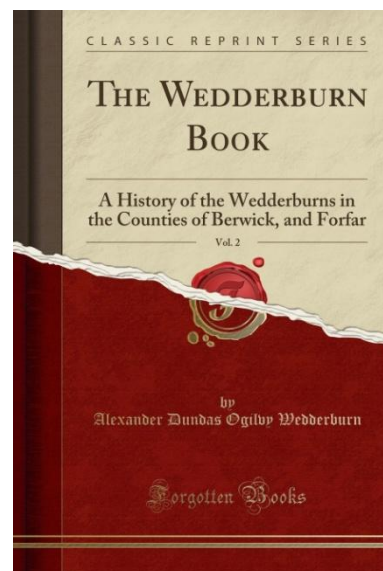
On 15 Nov. 1697 Alexander m. Katharine Scott, b. 16 Sept. 1680 (youngest d. of John Scott, merchant and late bailie of Dundee, and Christian Watson - W.B. p. 261 & footnote¹).

[Helen Scott ('d. of John Scott'), the wife of Thomas Watson 'of Grange of Barrie' and mother of Grissell/Grizell Watson who, on 22 July 1702, m. Peter Wedderburn's & Catherine Man's elder son, Alexander (b. 1678) - bailie and mariner - was perhaps Katharine's sister? - Peter W. (b. 1652, is the seventh but third surv. s. of Sir Alexander W., Kt. of Blackness (b. 1610) & Matilda Fletcher.]

Between 1698 and 1718 Alexander (b. 1675) and Katharine Scott had eight sons and seven daughters, of whom four sons and three daughters survived to adulthood.

John (b. 4/8/1704), their fourth but eldest surviving son, m. Jean Fullarton (e.d. of John Fullarton of Fullarton, co. Perth) on 22/10/1724. They had seven sons and four daughters. On the death of his father, in 1744, John became the 5th Bt. of Blackness. (W.B. pp. 285-287)

'A.W.' says of Sir John W. that "during his father's lifetime he lived in Dundee, and is thus termed 'indweller' there when on an inquest, 18 Oct. 1743, and a letter from him to his brother-in-law David Scrymgeour of Birkhill, is also dated from Dundee 22 Sept. 1744, and it is there that, two days later, he signs a bond by his brother Thomas, to which he and his other brother, Robert, were cautioners". [I will come to them later.] "On his father's death, however, there can be little doubt that he found himself in very straightened circumstances. I do not find that he ever succeeded him as collector of excise, an office which would have kept him much in Dundee, and it seems more probable that he has little to favour his remaining there, although, as appears from one of his letters, his wife retained a furnished house there in which she resided after his death".



“He thus moved, towards the end of 1744, or early in the following year, to a small farm known as the Mains of Nevay, by Newtyle, co. Forfar, lying about eleven miles to the north-west of Dundee, and sixteen to the north-east of Perth. [The Mains of Fullarton are roughly equidistant from Nevay and Newtyle.] “Here he was living, far from prosperously, when, in the July of 1745, Prince Charles Edward set foot in Scotland and started on the gallant enterprise, with Sir John Wedderburn’s share in which I have now to deal as far as possible from the available evidence.....” . [There follows (W.B. pp. 265-284) a very full account of the events leading up to Sir John’s trial for treason, which took place some months after he was taken prisoner following the last battle of the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion, at Culloden, near Inverness. (There are also various letters to and from him during his imprisonment in Southwark Gaol.)]

Sir John Wedderburn, 5th Bt. of Blackness, was found guilty and, with others, was hanged, drawn and quartered on Kennington Common, London, on 28th November, 1746.

“Blackness” had been sold in 1741 to redeem some of the massive debts which Sir John’s father, the 4th Bt., had inherited from his predecessor [it was not “forfeit to the Crown after the ’45” as John Wedderburn ‘of Auchterhouse’, ‘A.W.’s’ grandfather, wrote in his “Genealogical Account of the Wedderburn family”, published in 1824] but ‘A.W.’ believed that stories of Sir John’s extreme poverty were somewhat exaggerated at his trial. One such account, which he quotes, was in a Dr. Doran’s “London in the Jacobite Times”, Vol. II, p. 186:

“The new baronet with his wife and family took up his residence near Perth in a thatched hut, with a clay floor and no light except what came through a doorway. It was placed on a very small piece of land from which Sir John could not be ousted. He tilled his half-acre with ceaseless industry and he made what was described as ‘a laborious starving shift’ to support his wife and nine children. They all went about barefoot.....Put upon trial he pleaded his poverty, his starving family and his light offence. He was, however, condemned, though those more guilty offenders had unaccountably escaped. He bore himself with a calm dignity till the adverse verdict was pronounced, and then he could not completely control an emotion which sprang rather from thoughts for his family than for himself. The lowest and loyallest of the Londoners acknowledged that Sir John was a gentleman and deserving of pity. After his death the King afforded pecuniary relief to his wife and family.” (W.B. pp. 282/3)

“This last account”, says ‘A.W.’, “is obviously very wide of the mark and what the authority for the picturesque account of Sir John’s poverty is, I know not, though it is clear that his circumstances were fairly desperate before he ‘went out’.His plea is also misstated.....nor do I think it likely that the family received assistance from the Crown.” (W.B. p. 283)

The dates of birth of the last three children of Sir John W. and Jean Fullarton are not fixed. - Alexander, the sixth son, “was, perhaps, born in 1737, the date of a blank entry in his father’s register, in which his name does not occur..... It was certainly, however, not earlier than 1737, and not later than about 1742. He is named in a

bond dated 10th Aug. 1744, by David Wedderburn of that ilk to his grandmother and to his father's children". (W.B. p. 285)

Four of their sons went to Jamaica after Sir John's execution in 1746, including Alexander "who died there unmarried according to the record, in 1803, of his nephew, Sir David W. - apparently before 31st July 1866, the date of the entail of 'Wedderburn', in which his name does not occur, as, had he been then on life, it unquestionably would have done".

[Details about Sir John of Balindean, b. 21/2/1729 (second but eldest surviving s. of Sir John W., 5th Bt. of Blackness & Jean Fullarton), and his children and descendants - other than David (b. 1775, afterwards 1st Bt. of Balindean - see below) are on W.B. pp. 288-302 inc.]

[Details about James Wedderburn of Inveresk, b. 28/8/1730 (third but second surviving s. of Sir John W., 5th Bt. of Blackness & Jean Fullarton), who returned to Scotland from Jamaica in 1773 and m. Isabella Blackburn, or Colvile, and their children and descendants are on W.B. pp. 304-317 inc.]

Peter Wedderburn, b. 2/1/1736 (fifth but third surv. son of Sir John W., 5th Bt. of Blackness & Jean Fullarton) "went out to Jamaica after the troubles of the '45, and was living there in the parish of Westmoreland, co. Cornwall, as a millwright in 1763, when, 30 April, he and his brothers James and Alexander gave a power of attorney to their eldest brother John, who was starting for Great Britain....Peter was living on 6 March 1769, when he granted another faculty, dated at Savannah in Jamaica, to his brother Sir John, to manage his affairs at home, especially those as to his interest as one of the heirs of tailzie of the late James Crnegie of Boysack.... He died unmarried in Jamaica before 10 Aug. 1774, the date of the Will of his sister Susannah, in which his brothers, John and James, are described as the only surviving sons of their father.

David Wedderburn, b. 1740? (the seventh but fourth surv. son of Sir John W., 5th Bt. of Blackness & Jean Fullarton) - after whom Sir John of Balindean named his second son (below) - 'was bred to physic', according to 'J.W.'s MS. - though 'A.W.' could find no evidence for this. David is said to have 'died in London' before 19 Aug. 1763.

Sir David W., b. 3/3/1775 [Alexander's nephew, referred to above - the only surviving son of Sir John Wedderburn of Balindean and his first wife Margaret Ogilvy (eldest d. of David, Lord Ogilvy - e.s. of John, 4th Earl of Airlie, in whose regiment Sir John had served in the '45)], joined the West India House of Webster, Wedderburn & Co. in London in 1796 "and is thus designed merchant in London in 1801". He was created a baronet of Great Britain in 1803, following the death of his father, and became the 1st Bt. of Balindean. He was a partner in the family firm for many years "and was consequently involved in the litigation with the children of David Wedderburn or Webster, of which an account is given in Part V of the W.B.". (W.B. p. 296)

"In 1805, Sir David entered parliament as member for the Perth burghs, which he continued to represent until 1818, and later, in 1823, he was appointed Postmaster

General for Scotland, an office which he held until 1831.” On 21st Sept. 1813, he had been admitted to the freedom of Dundee, “the last of his name to thus honourably connected with the burgh, the affairs of which had long been guided by the wisdom of his ancestors”. (W.B. p. 297)

In 1819-20, Sir David sold Balindean to a Mr. Trotter, provost of Edinburgh, for £67,000. “Sir David’s affairs in the latter years of his life were far from satisfactory. The prosperity of the West India House had reached its zenith early in the century, and had for some years been steadily declining, when in 1827, the children of David Wedderburn or Webster began the law-suit to which I have already referred. It lasted...for almost 30 years, and while it involved those against whom it was directed in anxiety and expense, brought no advantage to those by whom it was started.” (W.B. p. 297)

“After the sale of Balindean, Sir David resided at Luffness, near Aberlady, co. Fife, and, later on, at Rosebank, near Roslin, whence, after the death of Lady Wedderburn, he removed to the house of his unmarried sister at Inveresk. (He died there on 7th April, 1858, and was buried with this wife in the churchyard of Inveresk.) He had m. at Comrie, Perth, on 2nd Sept. 1800, Margaret Brown, b. March 1775 (second d. of George Brown of Ellistoun, co. Roxborough, one of H.M. Commissioners for Excise for Scotland). They had two sons, John James Wedderburn, b. 16/10/1804 in Hanover Square, London, who d. at Brighton on 11/10/1810, and George Wedderburn, b. 16/11/1804 in Hanover Square, who d. at Brompton on 23/5/1823”. Both are buried in the churchyard of Glynde, Sussex, near the seat of their uncle, the then Lord Hampden (whose wife Maria Brown was a sister of Sir David’s wife Margaret).

(W.B. p.293)
