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Where was Wellington Born?, Thomas Murray, T.Murray,Trim, 1992, 0951416324, 9780951416327, . .

Wellington, the place and day of his birth ascertained and demonstrated , John Murray (A.M.), 1852, , . .

The Life of Wellington: The Restoration of the Martial Power of ..., Volume 1 The Restoration of the Martial Power of Great Britain, Herbert Maxwell (Sir.), 1899, , . .

The Quarterly Review, Volume 124 , William Gifford, Sir John Taylor Coleridge, John Gibson Lockhart, Whitwell Elwin, William Macpherson, William Smith, Sir John Murray (IV), Rowland Edmund Prothero (Baron Ernle), 1868, , . .

Sir Herbert Maxwell The Life of Wellington and the Restoration of the Martial Power of Great Britain vol 1 p 2-3 suggests that the baptismal register of St Peter's may never have adopted the new Gregorian Calendar introduced into Britain in 1752, and was therefore running almost a fortnight out of kilter: 30 April OS was the equivalent of 12 May NS; a reasonable date for a baptism for a baby born on 1 May. This is ingenious, but it seems unlikely that a baptismal register would remain out of step with the prevailing calendar for as long as seventeen years; and it does not explain the date given by Exshaw's Gentleman's Magazine.

The date of Wellington's birth became important in 1790 when his election to the Irish House of Commons was challenged on the grounds that he was not 21 at the date of the election, but no evidence was taken on this point: see Murray Wellington: the Place and Date of his Birth p 15-20 and p 22 of the main text of this biography.

Many other theories have been advanced for the date and place of Wellington's birth, but there is little or no evidence to support them. G. R. Gleig muddies the water by claiming that 'an old Dublin newspaper' states that Wellington was born in Dublin on 3 April 1769, and that the family nurse maintained that it was 6 March (G. R. Gleig The Life of Arthur, Duke of Wellington p 2). The reference to the nurse is probably an echo of reports circulating at the time of the petition against his election, and it should be noted that it was clearly in the family interest to make the date of his birth before the election.

A further complication is that Lord Mornington only signed the lease of no 6 Merrion Street (now no 24 Upper Merrion Street) on 16 August 1769, so either the family were in residence months before the lease was signed, or Wellington was born elsewhere; and the Complete Peerage records an oral tradition that they took a short lease on a house (now demolished) opposite no 6 while it was being painted. This would still be compatible with the newspaper references to the birth 'in Merrion Street'. See Guedalla The Duke p 479-80 and the Complete Peerage.

According to A. P. W. Malcomson, a leading authority on the Irish peerage of the eighteenth century,

Ireland was under-represented in the peerage in the mid-eighteenth century; that there were a number of peerages created in 1760 to mark the new reign; and that Garret Wesley's control of the two member borough of Trim gave him some political weight. So that the promotion was not quite as odd as it otherwise appears (Private letter dated 30 September 2006).

Evidence of AW's relations with his mother, especially in childhood, is naturally scanty and unreliable, however there seems little reason to doubt the frequent statements of her lack of warmth and affection: see Gleig *Life of Wellington* p 2, H. Maxwell *Life of Wellington and the Restoration of the Martial Power of Great Britain* vol 1 p 4, Muriel Wellesley *The Man Wellington* p 10-11, S. G. P. Ward *Wellington* p 17 and Longford p 18-19.

In maturity Lady Mornington was not an endearing character. Because she became cold and demanding, none of her children much loved her – not even Richard, on whom she doted. She nonetheless raised a remarkable brood: the brothers' talent and intellect came from both parents, but their ambition and energy came from Anne. There is, however, a very narrow line between ambition and pretension, and it is impossible to tell on which side of that line Lady Mornington stood. Reconstructing the relationship between Anne and Garret is impossible, but when their children arrived, the personalities of Lord and Lady Mornington went in opposite directions. There is no question Anne dominated the marriage (p 16)

Severn also writes that "Poorly educated but very clever, Anne discovered that few took her husband seriously." And "Anne grimly pushed her family onward and upward; in the process she became a hard woman." What she accomplished was nearly heroic: she bore nine children, supported a husband who needed as much care and discretion as the children, and successfully promoted her family despite diminishing means. When the young Wellesleys reached school age, she patched together the family's resources as best she could, and she did so very dispassionately. (p 20). All of this is quite plausible, it is not clear that there is much evidence to support it and much of it appears to be Severn's own speculative interpretation. For example, what basis do we have for saying that Anne was "every clever"; that Lord Mornington was as ineffectual as Severn suggests; or that the success of her sons owed very much either to her character or to the start she gave them?

Mrs Calvert, who met Lady Mornington in 1804, gives a very different impression of her: "As for Lady Mornington, she is a common-place character, with soft, gentlewoman-like manners, and has that sort of conversation and manner which makes her please more perhaps than would a more learned woman, or one of more distinguished intellect." She is mother to Lord Wellesley, now Governor-General in India. (Calvert *Irish Beauty of the Regency* p 25).

The *Times* 4 March 1794 reports her death on the previous day, suggesting that she was living in or near London at the time. Guedalla *The Duke* p 14 calls her Mary-Elizabeth and makes her the youngest child, but the family tree in Joan Wilson *A Soldier's Wife*. Wellington's Marriage p 171 gives her name and dates as above, and this supported by Muriel Wellesley *The Man Wellington* p 3n and John Severn *Architects of Empire* p 58

Lord Holland was also at Eton at the time and in his *Further Memoirs of the Whig Party* p 229 he says: "I remember him, though he is older than myself, at Eton." He was in no way distinguished there. Soon afterwards, both in his regiment and in Ireland, he was, perhaps from contrast with his elder brother, reckoned below mediocrity. In Dublin Castle his companions treated him as a good-humoured, insignificant youth. This is plausible, but needs to be treated with care: Holland knew him at Eton, not in Ireland, and the rest of his account (p 222-32) is that of a decided political opponent, and is neither fair nor accurate.

In 1844 Bentley's *Miscellany* (vol 16) published a series of articles "Eton Scenes and Eton Men" by the Author of "Doctor Hookwell" of which the third part opens with a number of anecdotes of Wellington at Eton, stressing his hardiness and spirit of daring and mischief (p 434-5). There seems no good reason for regarding any of this material as trustworthy or authentic.

The Standard of 21 October 1844 reported that on the previous Saturday but one the Duke paid an impromptu visit to Eton whilst on a visit to the Queen at Windsor accompanied by the Duke of Rutland, and was shown his old room and "was much gratified in recognizing and pointing out to his illustrious companion several relics which were familiar to his grace's recollection, although it is 65 years since he occupied this apartment." [The story makes no mention of the "playing fields" which tends to support the idea that the remark was invented later "see below].

Elizabeth Longford has debunked this famous remark attributed to Wellington, stating that it first appeared in print in 1855 by the French writer and parliamentarian, Count de Montalembert, after he visited Eton (Longford p 16). This appears to be correct, even though Google Books shows it appearing in 1850 in Home Truths the eighth in a series of tracts by John Ryle, the Bishop of Liverpool p 254. Home Truths was published between 1850 and 1872, the eighth volume appeared well after 1855. Longford's statement appears to be based on a letter from the seventh Duke of Wellington to The Times published on 14 August 1951 (p 7), which draws conclusions from the correspondence produced by a previous letter, also from the Duke, published on 17 July 1951.

The explanation usually given is the need for economy, and this was clearly a consideration, but it was not the whole truth. Lady Mornington told Richard as early as July 1781, when Arthur and Gerald had barely started at the school, "I fear the Boys cannot be kept at Eton", the expense being the problem (Butler Eldest Brother p 36). Nonetheless, Arthur remained for three years, Gerald for longer, and was followed by Henry, so the expense was not an insurmountable problem.

John Armytage: born 15 December 1768, died 25 March 1861. He was the son of Sir George Armytage MP (see History of Parliament 1760-90 vol 2 p 27-8) who died in 1783. Married in 1790 Anne (or Annette ?) daughter of John Harvey Thursby of Abington Abbey, Northamptonshire. One son, two daughters.

Armytage received his commission as cornet in the Royal Horse Guards on 10 November 1784, before his year at Brussels, but was presumably given leave to study abroad (he was very young). He was promoted lieutenant on 6 February 1788 and sold out of the army in 1790. (Information in both these paragraphs from Ron McGuigan, drawing on the Complete Baronetage and the Army List, respectively).

John Armytage knew AW at the time the decision was made to send him into the army, so his impression that AW was reluctant may be correct, especially as it was not the obvious thing for him to say; however it would carry more weight if we had it directly, rather than filtered through Gleig. The Duchess de Gontaut claims that when she met AW at Cheltenham in 1805 he told her that "I had an ardent desire to enter the army", however this is embedded in an account of his wooing of Kitty Pakenham almost all of the details of which are wildly inaccurate, so it does not carry very much weight. (Memoirs of the Duchesse de Gontaut vol 1 p 101).

Falstaff remarks "food for powder, food for powder: they'll fill a pit as well as better: tush man, mortal men, mortal men" Shakespeare Henry IV Part 1 Act 4 scene 2; but presumably the phrase had passed into more general use, and Lady Mornington did not mean to be quite so disparaging as this suggests.

When AW drew up his will in July 1807 he expressed the wish that his children receive "the best education that can be given to them and then to choose their profession; but let it not be believed that a finished classical education is not necessary for a gentleman in a military profession." (Quoted in Joan Wilson A Soldier's Wife p 101). Clearly AW felt that he had suffered from not having gone to university before joining the army.

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