

## CHAPTER 3

### Kirkcudbright; Castledykes; and John Halliday of Antigua

(1650-1770)

(i)

Up to now the story has mainly concerned itself with the historical background against which the Hallidays lived. It has illustrated the precariousness of life in those days with the religious as well as political complications with which they had to contend; it has also told something of the lands in The Stewartry that they owned. Increasingly from now onwards their lives became more concerned with Kirkcudbright; it may be said that it was from here that the family connection with the West Indian island of Antigua began.

The first Halliday mentioned in Kirkcudbright archives was Johne Halyday in 1622; his name appears in an old Stent Roll. Johne is believed to have been a member of the Grobdail family and to have been a brother of David Halliday — the earliest Halliday recorded there. This David was the owner of house and land property in the burgh as early as 1633. On his death in 1634 this property was included in his son Alexander's inheritance.

Another brother of David, the first of the family recorded as having been of Grobdail, was named William. In 1642 he was a councillor of Kirkcudbright. In that year he was amongst those deputed to oversee the construction of a new steeple, clock and chime of bells for the town church. It is thought that this William was a Writer or at least in some way connected with the law; he became treasurer of the burgh in 1644.

By 1714, from the evidence of an old Valuation Book, it appears that the family's possessions in Kirkcudbright had become extensive. This was even more so when in 1697 Castledykes was added by John Halliday to their holdings; it contained the site of the ancient castle of the Douglas family. The property adjoined Kirkcudbright and lay towards the mouth of the River Dee that ran up to the town.

This John Halliday was the eldest son of John Halliday of Lochdougan, who was himself a member of the Grobdail family. He had been born in 1650, and in 1681 married Margaret Gibson whose father was a burgess of Kirkcudbright. John succeeded his father in 1683, inheriting not only Lochdougan but much town property; to this, as said above, he added Castledykes. He was a man of property when, in a few years time, he became the treasurer of the burgh. The close relationship with the Grobdail family was made even stronger when his daughter Isobel married her cousin Robert Halliday of Grobdail in 1715. By this time, too, John Halliday had bought a house in the high street — this he acquired from his uncle, James Halliday of Brocklock, close to the town.

John Halliday, the 1st of Castledykes, died in 1716. His children were: one son John, born in 1682; and three daughters of whom the youngest, Isobel, has already been mentioned.

The heir to the Castledykes property and most of the other possessions, both in the town and outside, was this only son John. In 1710 he had married Margaret McKie, the eldest daughter of Patrick McKie, the former owner of Castledykes. On succeeding, he lived in the old family house in the high street. Some time about 1738 he bought another; this was in St. Mary's Wynd and became the residence of Castle mains.

John Halliday's farming operations were not always in harmony with the burgh magistrates' views, as the following extract from the records shows:

In 1726 a complaint was made to the magistrates by several inhabitants of The Moat against John Halliday of Castledykes...for putting dunghills near the public well...and thus polluting it for upwards of twenty months. Decree granted for removal.

This 2nd John Halliday of Castledykes died on 18 October 1758. He was buried in St. Cuthbert's churchyard, Kirkcudbright. The inscription on his tomb reads:

Here lies the corpse of John Halliday who died on 18th October 1758, aged 74. As also the remains of James, Janet, and Margaret Halliday, children of the said John Halliday, and of Margaret McKie his spouse who died on 18th April 1778, aged 88.

John's widow remained at Castledykes for the rest of her life; she lived there with a nephew, William Lidderdale, of whom more later. The offspring that her husband had left at his death were: another John, the 3rd of Castledykes — although he was never to live there as his mother held it for her life; James, who died young; David, who according to the burgh records was to become treasurer in 1738; and Margaret. There is, too, a belief that William Halliday of St. Kitt's was another son, but nothing is known of him or of his career. The heir, John, had been sent out to Antigua in 1738, as a merchant.

It is worth noting that, whatever may be the present opinion of those who take office in what is now rather superciliously called 'local government', this was not the view held in Scotland at the time in question. The Scots of the 17th and 18th centuries did not hold the condescending view that is so often the case nowadays in England. Many writers attest to the part played in managing local affairs, and in civic events in general, by the gentry. Incidentally they took the same attitude to commerce, and many younger sons of even the great landowners were entered to trade as part of this practical attitude — and the fortunes originally made in commerce were welcome, nor was the source a matter to be hidden.

(ii)

Kirkcudbright in the 18th century was a town of some

1,200 inhabitants. The streets, unpaved and muddy in winter, were laid out in the pattern in which we find the old part of the burgh today. The houses, certainly by the middle of the 18th century, were mostly substantial and of stone with tiled or slated roofs. The town had been administered sensibly for a very long time, and was a thriving community.

Many of the inhabitants were engaged in meeting the needs of the farming community of The Stewartry providing cloth, groceries and those things that even the most self sufficient could not provide for themselves. There was also a good deal of miscellaneous trading with Northern Ireland; cattle figured largely in this and a large number of beasts were regularly imported.

Also there were some who were engaged in trade with countries much further afield than Ulster. There seems to have early grown up a considerable trade with the West Indies. Tobacco, rum, and sugar were the chief imports, whilst cloth and hams appear to have been the most important exports. Possibly the presence in, for instance, Antigua of many refugees from the Covenanting days, and now thriving, gave the Kirkcudbright merchants an opening. The West Indies indeed had many links with Galloway.

The world of the 18th century was not a peaceful one. It must have been a time of great anxiety for those whose interests required that they should themselves venture on the high seas or risk their fortunes by sending cargoes to distant lands. No doubt, on the other hand, this was a time at which the rewards for those with courage to risk their lives and money were great indeed. The troubled state of the world was no doubt a factor in the rise to riches during this century of many — and not least the Hallidays of Kirkcudbright and of Antigua.

(iii)

The first member of the family to go to Antigua had been James, who had fled there from Grobdail as a refugee during the Covenanting troubles. He had then been joined by William, in similar trouble. This island was to play a major part in the family's fortunes until the early years of the 19th century.

Antigua had been first discovered in 1493 by Christopher Columbus; he named the island after a church in Seville — Santa Maria La Antigua. Although it had been discovered over a century before, the first settlers were a small band of British who had gone there in 1633 from the nearby island of St. Kitt's.

In 1633 King Charles II made a formal grant of the island to Lord Willoughby. The latter at once sent out a large number of colonists. During fighting that was always endemic in the West Indies at that period, for a short time it fell into French hands. Finally, in 1667, the Treaty of Breda formally made Antigua over to Britain.

Traditionally, as has been said, James was the first Halliday in Antigua, followed shortly by William. Finally, in 1738, a third Halliday arrived: this was John from Castledykes.

We are only told (S.C.H.) that John Halliday was 'sent out as a merchant'. There is, alas, no record of how he reached Antigua. Did he sail from Kirkcudbright? Or did he embark at Glasgow or Liverpool? Both of these ports had contacts with the West Indies. Nor do we know

with whom he stayed on arrival at St. John's. Did he join his cousins already there? Was he trading on behalf of his father in Kirkcudbright? And what were his business interests?

There is so much about which we must now always remain in ignorance. S.C.H.'s history only tells us that 'the Hallidays were connected by marriage with some of the leading families in Antigua, viz the Martins, Dunbars and Yeamans, and the Wilsons of St. Kitt's, and the Delaps'. However we can make a reasonable guess: at least on his first arrival in the colony, John was probably under the wing of his cousins who had been established there for some considerable time.

Whatever may have been the circumstances of John Halliday's arrival, he undoubtedly quickly flourished and succeeded in his enterprises. He was soon the owner of rich sugar estates both on Antigua and on its close neighbour St. Kitt's. In 1741, about 3 years after his arrival, he married Elizabeth Delap. She was the elder daughter and co-heiress of Francis Delap of Antigua. The Delaps were descended from the ancient Scottish family of Dunlop — of which, they claimed, Delap was a corruption. Their family had been amongst the earliest British settlers. From his father-in-law John Halliday inherited extensive sugar plantations.

Delap was not the French name it sounds; they had come to Antigua from Scotland via Ireland, where in County Sligo they had long been settled as part of the British domination of that land. Perhaps this roundabout route from Scotland does something to explain how the original Scots name had been so corrupted, but this is not to say that there had never been any French influence in this corruption. At all events it was this Delap connection, and the rich sugar estates that came through it, that explains why the name Delap occurs so frequently attached to Halliday names in the 18th century.

Soon after arriving in Antigua John had joined a troop of local Carbineers — run on the lines of the Yeomanry in England. As much as for the defence of the island, this volunteer force was for what we would now call 'internal security'. They had the task of protecting the scattered plantations from the slaves in case these should brew an uprising. The chief interest in John's enlistment in this troop is that this is the first recorded occasion on which a member of the family took service in any shape under the crown — there were to be many in his wake.

In 1755, showing that by this time he was regarded as a substantial figure on the island, John Halliday was elected a member of the House of Assembly. However, after news had reached the island that his father had died, and that he was now the 3rd Laird of Castledykes, John resigned and returned to Scotland, taking his wife and family with him.

John's resignation letter is reproduced below. It was addressed to the Speaker of the Assembly at Antigua, Colonel Samuel Martin, who held this office from 1753 to 1763.

Sir, I propose going to England by the first convoy, and as the time of my return to the island is uncertain, I think it my duty to my constituents to give them an opportunity of choosing another representative in my room. I therefore pray the favour of you, Sir, to

notify to the House, that I beg leave to resign my seat in the Assembly; and that you'll be pleased to assure them that where-so-ever and in what-so-ever situation I am in, I shall always retain the greatest honour and respect for the Assembly of Antigua; being with all imaginable esteem,

Dr. Sir,

Yr. most obedient humble servant,  
John Halliday.

(iv)

During his visit to Kirkcudbright John went over to Ireland. Ostensibly this was to pay a visit to his aunt Elizabeth Lidderdale (McKie), his mother's sister. He brought back to Scotland with him her son, William Lidderdale. The idea was that this young man should accompany him to Antigua and eventually become his agent on the island. But John's mother who, it will be recalled, held Castledykes for her lifetime, caused this scheme to founder. She, S.C.H. tells us, 'took a fancy for her nephew William Lidderdale, and persuaded him to remain with her as tenant of Castledykes'.

At this time the Lidderdale nephew was aged 29. According to correspondence which S.C.H. had with the Lidderdale family in 1898, 'William Lidderdale became tenant of Castledykes... it was believed by our (Lidderdale) family... that the inducement held out... to remain in Scotland was a promise that the Castledykes property would be left to him at his aunt's death. Her son was most likely already rich. This proceeding was most unlucky for the Lidderdales, as the young man (Martin) who went out in his place made a fortune'.

But in any case Castledykes was entailed to John Halliday, and 'Old Lady Castledykes,' as apparently she was widely known, could not have left this property to her Lidderdale nephew. Nevertheless she left much of her personal estate to this favourite, and in due course he succeeded her as the tenant of Castledykes.

Having failed to take back with him his Lidderdale nephew, in his place John did indeed take out Samuel Martin. This replacement already had relations on Antigua; there were many of his name of the island. At this time it will be remembered that the Speaker of the Assembly was one Colonel Samuel Martin — we may at least guess that he was surely a relative of John Halliday's protege.

For some years John continued to visit his interests in Antigua, so that Samuel remained on a fairly tight rein. Naturally each plantation had its own manager or overseer, but how these were managed as a whole, and how they were co-ordinated, and what central office — if any — John Halliday had in Antigua is not known. Clearly he needed some centralised way of controlling his interests from England, and somebody trustworthy to act for him. As John was to remain actively engaged in Antigua for some years, there was plenty of time to mould his personal representative as he wished, and also to test his reliability.

A further note about this Samuel Martin may be of interest. It is thought that he may have been a son of John's sister — she had married a man called Martin. Certainly Samuel was to be an executor of John's Will as

well as becoming a legatee of it. It also seems probable that Colonel Samuel Martin, the Speaker of the Assembly, was a relative by marriage of John. Was this Colonel Martin his sister's husband? And so was young Samuel their son? That Samuel should be a relation seems to make sense. Yet if Samuel was his sister's son why was he never acknowledged — as far as is known — as being more than John's 'kinsman'?

When John Halliday came home in 1758, and after he had visited his mother at Castledykes, he settled his family in a house at Richmond in Surrey. He possibly chose Richmond since one Robert Halliday, thought to have been a cousin and certainly from a branch of the family in The Stewartry, was already there after also having had a successful career in the West Indies. He is believed to have been a son of William Halliday of St. Kitt's, probably the Covenanting fugitive who has already been mentioned. Although positive proof is lacking, in this case he would have been a member of the Grobdail family and therefore a cousin of John — at least he was some sort of 'kinsman'. Robert Halliday had lived in Richmond since his return to England in 1747.

After this visit to his mother at Kirkcudbright John returned to Antigua taking young Samuel Martin with him. But he was only on the island for a short time and was soon back with his family in Richmond. However, in the following year, 1759, he was again in Antigua. In the same year he was appointed Collector of Customs. At this period two of his children died and were buried at Richmond. One of these was William, aged 8, who died in 1760; the second was his daughter Elizabeth, who died at the age of 16 in 1763.

In the latter year John was once more in Antigua, where he was again elected to the House of Assembly, representing the district of Willoughby. Later in the same year he became a member of the Governor's Council. Finally, also in the same year, 1763, his father-in-law bequeathed to him and his elder son rich sugar estates that had belonged to the Delap family.

John continued to visit Antigua intermittently for the rest of his life. For instance, he was certainly there in 1775 and in 1776. When journeying back to England in the latter year he narrowly escaped capture by American privateers. Nevertheless John was undeterred by this danger, and went out again to the West Indies in 1777 without recorded incident. In the same year he returned to England for the last time. His place as Collector of Customs was taken over from him by his protege Samuel Martin. Now not only was Samuel John's representative in Antigua but he was his successor in this official, and clearly lucrative, appointment.

(v)

John Halliday died at Richmond in 1779; his burial was at Richmond church on 10 November. His widow Elizabeth (Delap) then moved to Somerset Street, Cavendish Square. Here she lived with her younger son, Francis, until her death in 1781. The house in nearby Queen Anne Street, Cavendish Square, in which latterly she had lived with her husband, was left to the heir.

When John died in 1779 he was a very rich man. He provided generously for his wife for the rest of her life; he

also left handsome bequests to all his children, whilst leaving the bulk of his property to his eldest son. This heir, also John, in 1770 had married Lady Jane Tollemache, the youngest daughter of the 4th Earl of Dysart. At this time the Halliday plantations in Antigua were: Gambles (300 acres), Glenville (300 acres), Lavicounts, Weatherills (300 acres), Delaps (200 acres), Boons, Blizzards, Rockhill (320 acres), St. Mary's (303 acres) and Pope's Head (or Dickenson Bay) Plantation.

Weatherill Plantation was left to Francis Delap Halliday, but all the others went to the heir. John also stated in his Will that 'I have already resigned the office of Collector of Customs of the port of St. John's in his favour (i.e. in Samuel Martin's favour) on very reasonable terms'. This was an allusion to the bequest to Samuel Martin of £100. (Samuel is referred to in the Will as a 'kinsman'). This seems to underline the fact that the post of Collector of Customs was a lucrative one to the individual fortunate enough to hold it.

Already in 1776 John had settled £20,000 on his daughter Margaret when she married Richard Wilson of St. Kitt's. No doubt he would have been equally generous to Elizabeth had she not died at Richmond in 1763. He also left £10,000 'to any afterborn child'.

The only mention in John's Will of his slaves is the following:

My Mulatto and her daughter to be free, and to have £15 yearly, her son Robert to have £10 yearly, and her daughter Margaret £10 yearly. To Thomas Halliday, son of Elizabeth Piercy, £500 at 21 and £50 yearly. Louisa to have use of her house for life.

The agitation against slavery was, at that time, very muted; generally speaking it was non-existent. Indeed the anti-slavery movement was not to take shape until the early years of the next century; slavery was not to become illegal in British possessions until 1833. The working of the plantations by slaves was a vital part in the Antiguan economy; it had not yet become the popular line that slavery was degrading both to owner and owned. The ethical rights and wrongs were never considered by ordinary people. In fact, if John's Will is anything to go by, slaves — perhaps especially house slaves — were often generously treated.

Where in Antigua, with his nine plantations, both there and on St. Kitt's, did John Halliday live? There is now no certain evidence on this point. However it seems that for at least some years he lived in the mansion on Weatherills plantation. My sister-in-law, Mrs. Montgomery Hyde, visited Antigua in 1974 and found various Halliday relics at Weatherills. For instance in the compound are what the present owner described as 'Halliday graves'. Unfortunately the head-stones were too timeworn to be decipherable so it is not possible to say whose these really were. Possibly they were the burial places of house slaves, as it is hard to believe that any members of the family would not have been interred in consecrated ground.

This was the end of John Halliday, the 3rd of Castledykes. He had been far from penniless when he had been sent to Antigua in 1738. Between then and his death in 1779 he had become a very rich man, owning

properties in Antigua and St. Kitt's as well as houses in Richmond and in London; in addition there were his properties around Kirkcudbright. Besides his widow Elizabeth (Delap), he was survived by two sons and a daughter. The heir was his eldest son, John, who had married a daughter of the Earl of Dysart and from him the present Halliday family, and that of the Tollemaches of Helmingham, descend.

As a footnote, and to span the years, the following is from S.C.H.'s family history:

My father, F.A.H., mentions in his notebook his uncle (and also his father-in-law) the Rev. C.H. White, Rector of Shalden (who was born in 1766) personally remembering Major John Delap Halliday's father, John Halliday, a flourishing squire of considerable landed property.