

To Heir is Human

In "The First Written Record of our Kin" (1880) Thomas stated that his grandparents were Thomas Tennant and Judith Butler. Besides their son Thomas (born 1755) who brought his family to Canada were Richard (Item 16, Aghade Records); Robert (wife Sarah) who also signed the petition in 1817 to emigrate; Judith (Item 14); Ann (Item 22) and Mary (Ossory License Bonds, 1793).

The custom of naming girls after their mother or grandmother (14 and 6), although both were informally called Julia supports the identity of the matriarch as Judith Butler.

Soon after the inception of the Butler Society I became a Life Member in hopes that her full identity would be revealed in their publications. The Butler family is so enormous, diverse, and widely scattered that research for a particular individual is very difficult.

Inadequate and erroneous information (as I now view it) was sent to the Journal of Butler Society and appeared in the widely-used "Happy Families" section. Through it, Judge the Lord Dunboyne, Genealogist for the Society offered some suggestions that might be pursued.

Family lore says that Judith was descended from the Earl of Ormonde of Kilkenny Castle. If Judith's father was one of the Butlers of Tullow, near Aghade, he probably was of the Mountgarret line. In another suggestion, Judith might be the only daughter whom Thomas Butler (died 1753), the second son of the 1st. Viscount Lanesborough had by his wife Mary, nee Cummin, and whose paternal aunt and great aunt were both called Judith.

In late June 1984 when Bill and Gert of Saskatchewan visited me, Bill told me a fascinating story. He grew up in Moose Jaw. Fifty years ago as a boy of ten he attended a Park camp near Carlyle which is in the south east corner of the province. There he became great friends with a red-haired Butler boy. When the latter told his mother that Bill's name was Tennant, she immediately exclaimed "Oh, there's a relationship between the Tennants and the Butlers"!

As far as I know, the written record by Thomas was copied and sent to members of his own family only. For years there was little communication with the Tennants who went to the Prairies. So I suspect that it was not until Bill got a copy of my 1963 history that he realized the significance of Mrs. Butler's remark.

The Rev. A.M. Butler who lives near Toronto is a Vice-President of the Butler Society. At the Rally at Cambridge, England, 1979 Mel gave an address about Canadian Butlers. I obtained from him the text of his address. One of the notes referred to the Manitoba Butlers, a junior section of the Cloughgrenan family, Butler baronets of Ballin Temple, near Tullow, County Carlow. They settled in a number of small towns such as Birtle and Solsgirth. These are located in the south-west corner of Manitoba, just a few miles across the provincial border from Carlyle. No doubt this set the scenario for the chance acquaintance of Bill and his Butler pal.

It has been a privilege and great pleasure for me to correspond with Col. Sir Thomas Pierce Butler, Bart., CVO, DSO, OBE, the current owner of Ballin Temple estate. The 12th Baronet, his ancestry goes back to Thomas, 1st Baronet, son of Sir Edmund Butler c 1568. If one looks back two more generations you find Pierce Butler, died 1539, the 1st Earl of Ossory, the 8th Earl of Ormond as it was then spelled. In collateral descent you will also see the Galmoye line, the present Marquess of Ormonde (31st Chief Butler of Ireland), the Mountgarret line, and even Queen Elizabeth II.

The morning of September 12, 1985, at the Butler Rally at Kilkenny, Sir Thomas unveiled a fine oil portrait by Aubrey Davidson - Houston, a tribute which Sir Thomas played a prominent role in commissioning.

I have been unable to locate a picture of the beautiful demesne of the Butlers of Ballin Temple where our ancestor was employed. In the Journal of the Butler Society Volume 2, Number 1, 1980 and 1981, p. 23, Mark Bence-Jones described it as "a Georgian house, now demolished, with a fine Grecian Doric porte-cochere, was the seat of successive Butler baronets of the Ormonde branch."

In the same Journal Sir Thomas related his ancestry. He referred to Ballin Temple as "the house where I was born but destined never to occupy." Also "overlooking the valley through which flows the beautiful river Slaney, while in the distance there is a fine view of Mount Leinster." The house was destroyed by fire in 1917, and no doubt valuable family treasures and priceless documents were lost.

I wrote to the Office of the Chief Herald, Dublin, to enquire if they knew of a repository where there might be a picture of the house. They kindly sent me a xerox copy of page 19, Burke's Guide to Country Houses. The view of the porte-cochere is not clear enough to reproduce here. The brief description follows, and I quote:

"Ballin Temple, Tullow, County Carlow (Butler Bt. of Cloughgrenan Br.). A handsome 3-storey mid or late Georgian house with a 5 bay entrance front, of which the central bay was given emphasis by a Venetian window and a pedimented Grecian Doric porte-cochere; the latter being presumably an early 19th century additon. In the centre of the garden front was a colonnaded semi-circular bow. The house stood as a shell for many years after being burnt; but has now been demolished."

In World War II Sir Thomas escaped from an Italian Prisoner of War Camp. Following the war he was Resident Governor of the Tower of London. (Butlers of Kilkenny Castle, by Lord Dunboyne)

My fairly extensive reading of records and books about the Butler family has yielded few references to the name Judith. In "Testamentary Records of the Butler Families and Abstracts from Diocesan Wills to Year 1800" printed privately in the U.S.A. p. 41, Item 185 the Probate of a Will, August 24th, 1702 is given briefly. Francis Butler of Belturbet (County Cavan) mentions his wife as deceased but her name was not shown. Included in his descendants is a daughter Judith and a granddaughter Judith Butler.

Lacking conclusive dates, I am not certain who was the Mrs. Butler, the subject of "A Legend of Ballintemple". She may have been Sara Maria Newnham of Coolmore, County Cork, wife of Sir Richard Butler, 7th Baronet. There are inferences that she was a kind, loving woman, devoted to her kin. Certainly these characteristics are in accordance with oral history that has come down through our family.

Sir Richard died in 1807 and was succeeded by their eldest son Sir Thomas as 8th Baronet. In 1812 he married Frances Graham Clarke of Yorkshire. At the age of 78 he died and their eldest son Sir Richard Pierce Butler and his wife Mathilda Cookson became the chatelaines of Ballintemple. From their large family one son emigrated to Canada and became the progenitor of many Canadian Butlers.

Who was Judith Butler, a young lady of noble birth who eloped with and married Thomas Tennant, stone-mason who worked on construction of large buildings and bridges in County Carlow? She bore him six children including a daughter Judith and a son Thomas, my great-grandfather. The children were privately educated.

This Thomas was employed on Ballintemple estate as a factor or business administrator and was highly regarded. He and his wife Ann Hill lived in a house on the estate. Mrs. Butler seemed to favour them, I presume because of kinship. The older children, including daughter Elizabeth, also received the benefits of private schooling.

I am convinced that Bill's story is significant. It thus appears to me that Judith Butler was of the Cloughgrenan Branch and close to the Butler Baronets of Ballintemple. How else could the intimacy of a relationship, or marriage between Tennants and Butlers be known and recalled by a Butler family of that line living in Manitoba many years later?