

ART. II.—*The Irtons of Threlkeld*. By COLONEL FRANCIS HASWELL, C.I.E., M.D.

*Read at Carlisle, April 19th, 1923.*

THIS family appears to have been a branch of the family at Irton, although where they branched off I cannot state and can only begin with:—

I. CHRISTOPHER IRTON, stated to be of Irton, who married Matilda, daughter of Richard Redman of Levens and whose subsequent marriages caused an interesting legal suit.

There was a Christopher Irton at Irton from 1535 to 1562, who had a son Richard, but the first mentioned Christopher of what became the Threlkeld family is stated in his wife's Inq. P.M. to have had an only son and heir and can hardly be the one concerned. He died before 1567 and his wife married again to Thomas Leigh of Isell, who only survived for five years and had no issue, but left considerable estates to his wife for life. She again married (Wilfred Irton says—p. 19 *infra*—two months after) to Sir Wilfred Lawson, who obtained all her property and gave it to his relatives. She died 21 September, 1624 (Inq. P.M.). Christopher had an only son:—

II. CHRISTOPHER of Cockermouth who was Bailiff of Cockermouth Castle. Concerning him there is the following information. In 1591, Sir Wilfred Lawson was made Lieutenant of the Honor of Cockermouth by the Earl of Northumberland, with the custody of the Castle. The Earl being concerned in the Gunpowder Plot, a warrant was issued for his arrest and in 1605 Sir Henry Widderington was ordered to seize all the Earl's castles. Sir Wilfred, who had made his step-son, Christopher Irton,

his Bailiff, wrote on 14 Nov., 1605, to Lord Salisbury, begging him that Cockermouth should not be seized:—

The castle itself is for the most part ruinous. My wife's son dwells in the gatehouse by my direction.

On 16th Nov., 1605, Sir Wilfred writes from Carlisle to Christopher Irton:—

You will do well to send your wife and children away, and to remain at Cockermouth Castle until the coming of Sir Henry Widderington, who will put you forth and put others in.

However on 24th November, Sir Henry wrote saying:—

I have received letters from the Council, desiring that I should forbear to seize or enter Cockermouth Castle and that it should continue in your keeping.\*

Christopher Irton apparently stayed there. He was dead before 1632. His wife was named Marie and they had the following children.

1. Wilfred, admitted Gray's Inn, 8 Nov., 1616, as son and heir of Christopher Irton of Cockermouth. He was the man who began the interesting suit, mentioned on the brass in Threlkeld Church and which led to this paper. He was born about 1598 and married Matilda Leigh, a distant relative by Matilda Redman's second marriage.

2. George, living 1624.

3. Jason.

4. William

5. Henry.

6. Isabella.

7. Barbara.

8. Matilda, wife of Thomas Wybergh of Clifton and St.

Bees.†

9. Mary, wife of Henry Swinburn of Hewthwaite.†

III. WILFRED of Threlkeld. With reference to him, it would be best to begin with the Chancery case mentioned

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\* Muncaster MSS.

† Dugdale's Pedigrees.

on his sepulchral brass. The brass is on the east wall of Threlkeld Church, in a position difficult of access; a rubbing was kindly made for me by the Vicar.

Infra in hoc loco jacet Corpus Domini Wilfridi Irton sepultum 13<sup>mo</sup> Die Novembris Annoq Domini 1650<sup>mo</sup> Semilter que Corpus uxoris ejus Dominæ Matildæ Leigh que sepulta erat 16<sup>mo</sup> die Martij Annoq Domini 1667<sup>mo</sup> quæ Creditur esse verus et Leigitima Hæres de Issell ita a nobis } Dorathea Pearson  
testatur &  
} Mariâ Parsons.

It is the only case I know of where persons have fixed a sort of legal affidavit in the church. On investigation I find there is a Bill of Complaint dated 12 Oct., 1632 in the Chancery Proceedings which I propose to read to you:—

Plaintiffs, Wilfred Irton of Isell, gentleman and Matilda, his wife.

Defendants, William Lawson of Isell, gentleman, Sir Edward Musgrave, of Hayton, Sir William Musgrave of Crookedale, [*sic*] William Musgrave of Hayton, Esq., Wilfred Lawson, Thomas Blakeson, Marmaduke Blakeson, Humfry Blakeson, gent., Mongey Ribton of Cockermouth, Michael Studholme of Urgton, gent., and Roland Scott of Isell.

*Bill of Complaint* states that Thomas Leigh, late of Isell, esquire, deceased, was seised in his demesne as of fee in the manor and rectory of Isell and in lands in Orton, Plumland and Warthold. That he died about sixty years ago and the premises descended to his cousin and next heir, John Leigh, who died without issue, and they then descended to Robert Leigh, brother and next heir of John, who died leaving an only daughter, namely, the oratrix Matilda, who ought to inherit the property. That about sixty years ago the said Thomas Leigh married Matilda Irton, widow, relict of Christopher Irton of Irton, esquire, grandfather of the orator, Wilfred Irton; and about 11th Elizabeth conveyed the said property to Matilda, his wife, for the term of her life. That about two months after the death of the said Thomas Leigh, Matilda married Wilfred Lawson, gent., late Sir Wilfred Lawson of

Isell, knight, deceased; who got into his custody the said property and took the profits thereof, etc. That Matilda lived about fifty years after her marriage with Lawson. That about twenty years ago Lawson urged a marriage between the oratrix, Matilda and Wilfred Irton, her now husband, promising to make them his heirs, and the marriage was brought about by Lawson and Dame Matilda, his wife, who said that thereby they "caused lawe and conscience to be joyned together"; Wilfred Irton being the eldest son (*sic*) of Christopher Irton, the first husband of the said Dame Matilda, and the oratrix Matilda being the lawful heir to Thomas Leigh, her second husband, the orators supposed that it was the intention of Sir Wilfred Lawson and Dame Matilda that all the lands, as well of the said Christopher Irton, the said son of the said Dame Matilda and father of the orator Wilfred Irton, as also the inheritance of the lands of Thomas Leigh, should be settled on the orators and their heirs.

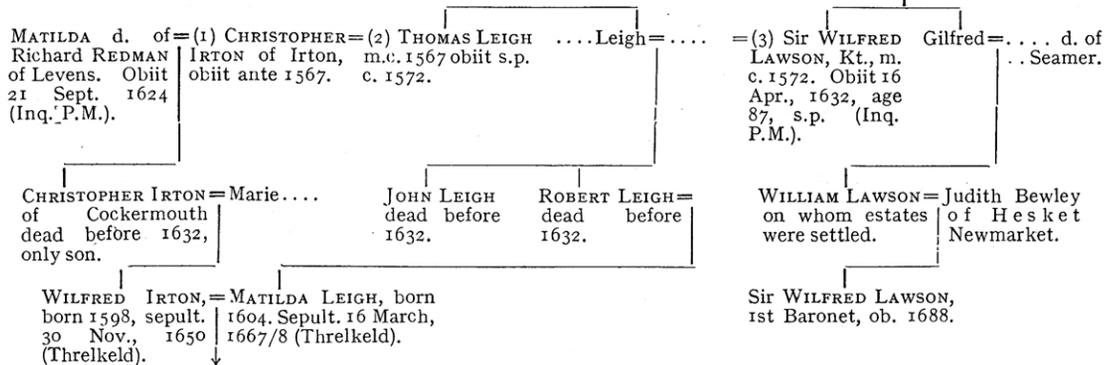
That the marriage of the orators took place about fifteen years ago, both being infants, Wilfred 15 years of age and Matilda 13. That Dame Matilda died in 21 James I (1623-4) and that Sir Wilfred promised to settle the lands on the orators but had since taken a great liking to one Matilda Irton, grandchild to Dame Matilda and daughter of Christopher Irton, son of Dame Matilda, and desired to marry her. She and her friends refused the marriage on account of affinity of kin and since then Sir Wilfred took a great dislike to her, the orators and all their kindred. He died in April last (1632).

That William Lawson of Isell, gent., claims the lands by conveyance and will of Sir Wilfred, and has combined with the other defendants, who say that the inheritance of the lands was settled by Thomas Leigh upon Dame Matilda and her heirs; that she made an estate in tail unto Sir Wilfred Lawson and that, Matilda having no children by him, he destroyed the entail and settled the lands on himself in fee simple, by process of a common recovery.

The orators say that Sir Wilfred did not intend to disinherit them by the common recovery, but only to make provision for Marie Irton, widow, mother of the orator, Wilfred Irton, and for her younger children, his brothers and sisters.

This seems to me interesting for Wilfred Irton, having married Matilda Leigh, seems to have been clearly entitled to the property; if the reason of Sir Wilfred Lawson's difference is correct, it only makes the matters worse, but I suppose the Irtons had got into monetary difficulties or

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they would never have agreed to the negotiations stated in their grandmother's Inquisition, viz:—

And although Wilfred Irton grandchild bore himself "incondite anglie verie disorderlie" against him in the Court of Wards and Liveries for the manor and rectory of Isell, yet the said Sir Wilfred left him and Matilda Irton, his wife, the messuage, which they inhabited in Isell Old Park of the yearly rent of 26s. 8d. and the yearly value of £10 (the said yearly rent excepted) with tithes of grain, to hold for the life of the said Wilfred Irton with remainder to Matilda, his wife, as long as she remains unmarried, with remainder to Lawson Irton, their son, and the heirs of his body; on condition that Wilfred Irton makes a release of the rest of the premises.

But the end of this suit was evidently a compromise, for Gilpin in a note to Denton's *Accompt* says

Mary Irton, heir general of Maud Redmain [meaning Matilda] who had long time before continued in hopes that he would have settled it upon her, but being disappointed in that, she attempted to recover it by law against William pretending that Maud Redmain had not made a legal conveyance to Sir Wilfred, and that what she did was the effect of Horrible threatenings and violence. But the suit was at last ended by composition, William Lawson giving her for her title the tithes of Blencrake and the demesne of Threlkeld, worth together about £200 per annum.

This is evidently the time when the family settled at Threlkeld and Wilfred had three sons and two daughters.

1. Lawson of Threlkeld Hall, who married Elizabeth, d. of Leonard Dykes of Warthall. He was evidently a quiet man, as in 1659 he was recommended by the Quakers as fit to be a Justice of the Peace, being "a moderate man" and not a persecutor of them (*Extracts from State Papers relating to Friends*). He died without issue and was buried 16 Nov., 1659 (Threlkeld Register). His wife was also buried there 31 Oct., 1658.

2. Christopher of Threlkeld Hall who succeeded his brother.

3. Robert, admitted to Gray's Inn, 14 Feb., 1654/5. He appears to have married, as Christopher mentions in his will a nephew and several nieces.

- a. Christopher.
- b. Margaret, wife of . . . . Bacon.
- c. Matilda, wife of . . . . Ravell.
- d. Mary, wife of . . . . Gibson.
- e. Sarah, wife of . . . . Loraine.
- 4. Henry, sepult. 19 June, 1693(T).\*
- 5. Dorothy, wife of Robert Pearson, to whom there is a brass in Wetheral Church.

Here lieth the body of Dorothy Pearson  
Widow and Relict of Henry Pearson late  
of Dunthwaite, eldest daughter of Wilfred  
Irton of Threlkeld Hall Esq. deceased.  
She dyed the 16th of January, 1685.

- 6. Mary, wife of . . . . Parsons.

These are the two ladies who make their testimony on the Threlkeld brass.

IV. CHRISTOPHER of Threlkeld Hall married Grace d. of Robert Highmore of Armathwaite (Dugdale, *Visitation*) and had a numerous family:—

- 1. Wilfred, b. 30 Apr., 1662 (T); sept. 15 May, 1573 (T).
- 2. Robert, b. 20 Mar., 1663/4 (T); sept. 13 May, 1695 (T).
- 3. Charles, b. 1666 (T) of Threlkeld Hall.
- 4. John, b. 23 Apr. 1668 (T); sept. 9 July, 1670 (T).
- 5. Matilda, b. 27 Aug. 1669 (T); unmarried, 1693.
- 6. Grace, b. 3 Mar., 1671/2 (T); wife of William Harrison of Castle Sowerby, m. 26 May, 1713 (T).
- 7. Elizabeth, sept. 2 June, 1671 (T).
- 8. Joseph, sept. 9 Aug., 1675 (T).
- 9. Christopher, sept. 27 Oct., 1696 (T).

Christopher Irton was probably the builder of the house in the middle of Threlkeld, now the Horse and Farrier Inn, which has over the doorway c.<sup>1</sup><sub>G.</sub> 1688. He was buried at Threlkeld 25 May, 1694 and his will is given below:—

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\* (T) Threlkeld Register.

In the Name of God Amen. I Christopher Irton of Threlkeld Hall and County of Cumberland gent<sup>n</sup> being not in health but of sound and perfect mind & memory praise be therefor given to Almighty God doe make & Ordaine this my present Last will & testament in Manner and form following that is to say First & principilly I commend my soul into the hands of Almighty God hoping through the merits death & passion of my Saviour Jesus Christ to have full and free pardon and forgiveness of all my sins and to Inherit everlasting life and my body I commit to the Earth to be descently buried att the discretion of my executor<sup>s</sup> hereafter named And as touching the dipositions of all such temporell Estate as it hath pleased Almighty God to bestow upon mee I give & dispose thereof as followeth Impr<sup>ms</sup> I give & bequeath unto *my daughter Mattilday Irton* the sume of One hundred pounds w<sup>ch</sup> is in the hands of Leonard Dykes Esq<sup>re</sup> as p Bond under his and his son Fretcvell's hand & seall may appear Item I give unto *my daughter Grace Irton* the sume of one hundred pounds. Item I give unto *my nephew Christopher Irton* the choice of the best horse or mare that I now have for his own pper use & service Item I doe give unto *my four Neces Margrat Baccon Mattilday Ravell Mary Gibson & Sarah Loraims* [or ? Loraine] unto every one of them the sume of ten shillings to buy them every one a Gould ring in Remembrance of mee Item I doe give unto my *two sisters in Law Judeth Highmore and Jane Highmoor* to either of them five shillings All the rest & residue of my goods and chattles moveable and Immoveable my debts legacies & funerall expences paid and discharged I doe give & bequeath unto my dear Lov: *wife Grace Irton* and to my *sonn Robert Irton* whom I doe make and Appoint to bee joynt execut<sup>rs</sup> unto this my present Last will & Testament And I doe revock dissnull & make void all wills by mee formerly made and doe declare this to be my last will and Testament. In Wittness whereof I have hereunto sett my hand and seall this One and thirty<sup>th</sup> day of October in the year of Our Lord God 1693. Sealled signed and delivered

In the prsence of us

Christopher Irton.

Brigham Lowthr

Thomas Grane jurat

Thomas Handcock his mark T jurat.

Apud Penrith 8 Decemb'r 1694 p<sup>o</sup>batu' fuit hmodi Testamentu ac Ad<sup>co</sup> bonor' com' fuit Gracie Irton vid' & Robto Irton fil' Executoribz noiat jurat &c.

V. ROBERT was the heir of his father, but only for a short period, as he died was buried 13 May, 1695 (T).

VI. CHARLES of Threlkeld Hall married Susanna . . . . who was buried 9 Feb., 1729/30 (T). They had a large family, many of whom died at an early age.

1. Wilfred, b. 13 May, 1697 (T), his heir.
2. Susanna, b. 3 Aug., 1699 (T); sept. 23 May, 1703 (T).
3. Charles, b. 31 July, 1701 (T); sept. 19 Mar., 1703/4 (T).
4. Joseph, b. 18 Mar., 1702/3 (T); sept. 19 Mar., 1703/4 (T).
5. Matilda, b. 25 Oct., 1704 (T); sept. 1 Mar., 1715/6 (T).
6. Grace, b. 6 Nov., 1705 (T); wife of John Jackson, m. 14 May, 1728 (T).
7. John, b. 4 June, 1709 (T); sept. 5 June, 1709 (T).
8. Joseph, b. 18 Oct., 1711 (T); sept. 22 Mar., 1712/3 (T).
9. Mary, b. 18 Feb., 1713/4 (T), wife of Joseph Ware of Scarness, obiit 1741, buried at Bassenthwaite (not married in 1736).

Charles Irton was buried at Threlkeld 22 Sept., 1736 (T).

VII. WILFRED of Threlkeld Hall was the last of the male line. His wife was Mary Wren, d. of Christopher Wren of Castlerigg, m. 4 Jan., 1720/1 (Crosthwaite register), and she was buried 13 June, 17 33 (T). They only had two daughters, one of whom died in infancy.

1. Susanna, b. 16 June, 1722 (T). I have not been able to find what ultimately happened to her, but the property, as mentioned in her father's will, was sold to John Spedding of Armathwaite.

2. Anne, b. 15 Mar., 1724/5 (T); sept. 18 Mar., 1725/7 (T).

Wilfred Irton was buried at Threlkeld, 28 Feb., 1736/7, and his will is appended.

## WILFRED IRTON OF THRELKELD HALL.

In the name of God Amen. I Wilfred Irton of *Wood End & Threlkeld Hall* in the parish of Threlkeld and County of Cumberland gent. being at this time weak in body but of sound memory perfect mind and understanding (blessed be God) do this 9th day of Jāry in the year of our Lord one Thousand seven hundred thirty and six and in the tenth year of our Sovereign Lord George the Second of Great Britain France and Ireland King defender of the Faith and so forth make and publish this my last will and Testament hereby revoking all other and former wills by me heretofore made my Soul I commend into the hands of Almighty God who gave it me and my body to the Earth from whence it came in hopes of a joyfull resurrection through the merits of my Saviour Jesus Christ and to be decently buried in a Christian like manner at the discretion of my Executors in trust for my *only* daughter hereinafter named and as for such worldly estate as God of his mercy has bestowed on me I will give devise and bequeath the same as followeth. First I do will that all my debts and Funerall Expences shall be justly paid And towards the payment of them I will that my close of Ground lying being and situate near Carlile in the County aforesaid be sold as soon as conveniently may be after my decease by the Executors in trust for my daughter hereinafter named Also I will that all my oak wood in and about the *Old Park* and of late numbered and valued be with all convenience sold by the executors in trust for my daughter. And it is my will that what the sale of the said wood shall amount to over and above the sum of five hundred and thirty pounds British money which is to be applied for the payment of the Legacys hereinafter bequeathed to *my sister Mary Irton* the poor of Threlkeld and to the present Curate there shall be put out for my daughter Susanna Irton's use till she come to the age of one and twenty years. Also I give and bequeath to my sister Mary Irton the sum of five hundred pounds British money and of my wood about the old Park whereof one hundred and fifty pounds to be paid at the first years end after my decease she first releasing my daughter and the executors in trust for her of all manner of other claims and demands whatsoever of me or any other for me One hundred and fifty pounds more at the second year end after my decease and the remainder being two hundred pounds at the third year end after my decease Also if my daughter Susanna Irton shall die without issue in this case I give and bequeath to my said sister Mary Irton her heirs or exors another sum of fyve hundred pounds to be paid by *my sister Grace Jackson* or her heir out of my free-

hold estates in the parishes of *Threlkeld Issel and Torpenno* Also in case my said daughter Susanna Irton shall marry and have a child of her body that shall live to the full and compleat age of fyve years then I give to my sister Grace Jackson her heirs or exors the sum of two hundred pounds British Money to be at that time my daughter's child shall be fyve years old paid to her by my said daughter her heirs or exors. Also I give and bequeath to the poor of Threlkeld the sum of twenty pounds British Money to be added to the poor stock and the interest thereof to be yearly distributed among them on St. Thomas Day And to Alexander Naughley Curate of Threlkeld for his own proper use I give and bequeath the sum of ten pounds British money both which last sums are also to be paid out of my oak wood at old Park at the second year end after my decease And all the rest and residue of my goods chattels and estate real or personal whatsoever I give and bequeath to my said daughter Susanna Irton And I make constitute and ordain Roger Gregg of Myrehouse in the parish of Bassinthaite Hugh Tolson of Cockermouth and William Harrison of Castle Sourbee parish tutors and guardians of my said daughter Susanna Irton and to be my executors in trust for my daughter Susanna Irton till she come to the full and compleat age of one and twenty years And it is my will and I do hereby give full and absolute power to the said three gentlemen of this County Roger Gregg Hugh Tolson and William Harrison that they or any one or more of them as shall be pleased to be exors in trust for my daughter and to act as such that he or they sell and dispose of the said close of ground and Oakwood at old Park and manage all other my concerns for my said daughter maintaine and defend her in the possession and enjoyment of all the real and personal estates that shall fall to her after my decease or only supposed so to do let to farm the estates take up the rents and all for the use of my said daughter Susanna Irton except as above excepted to be applied for the payment of debts and Legacys But so as not to be accountable to my said daughter or any for her or in her name or by her authority for any bad or illegal Bargeans that may unfortunately happen to be made and not intended to the prejudice of the true intent and meaning of this my last will and testament or for any Bad debt or debts that shall be contracted or unfortunate Law Suits that may be commenced or the like and that they shall retain all their damages expences and charges whatsoever in relation to their said trust as guardians of and exors for my said daughter Susanna Irton In witness whereof I the said Wilfred Irton have to this my last will and testament set my hand and Seale the day and year

above written Wilfred Irton signed sealed delivered and published by the aforementioned Wilfred Irton as his last will and Testament in the presence of us and subscribed in his presence by us it being writ on two pages of this half sheet of paper and signed and witnessed this ninth day of Jany A.D. 1736 John Greenhow Sworn Thomas Cockbaine Sworn William Hobson Sworn Alex Naughley.

Proved at Carlisle the 8th of March, 1736.