

Conservative Cottage, Kirk Ella – Part 1

Introduction

Originally a farmhouse on the south side of Godman's Lane in Kirk Ella, 'Conservative Cottage' was completely rebuilt in white brick around 1836 by Anthony Wilkinson, a Hull merchant. It was a substantial house having two bays with a shallow slate roof. An east wing with a large basement workroom was built in 1906 for Mr. Allan Twistleton Hall who bought the house in 1897. The house was demolished in 1967.

In Part 1, we learn about the life and times of Anthony Wilkinson, who was born in 1767. He lived at the newly built Conservative Cottage for only a few years before his death in 1845. Although his antecedents heralded from County Durham, Anthony Wilkinson also had long-standing connections with Kirk Ella which are recounted in this story.

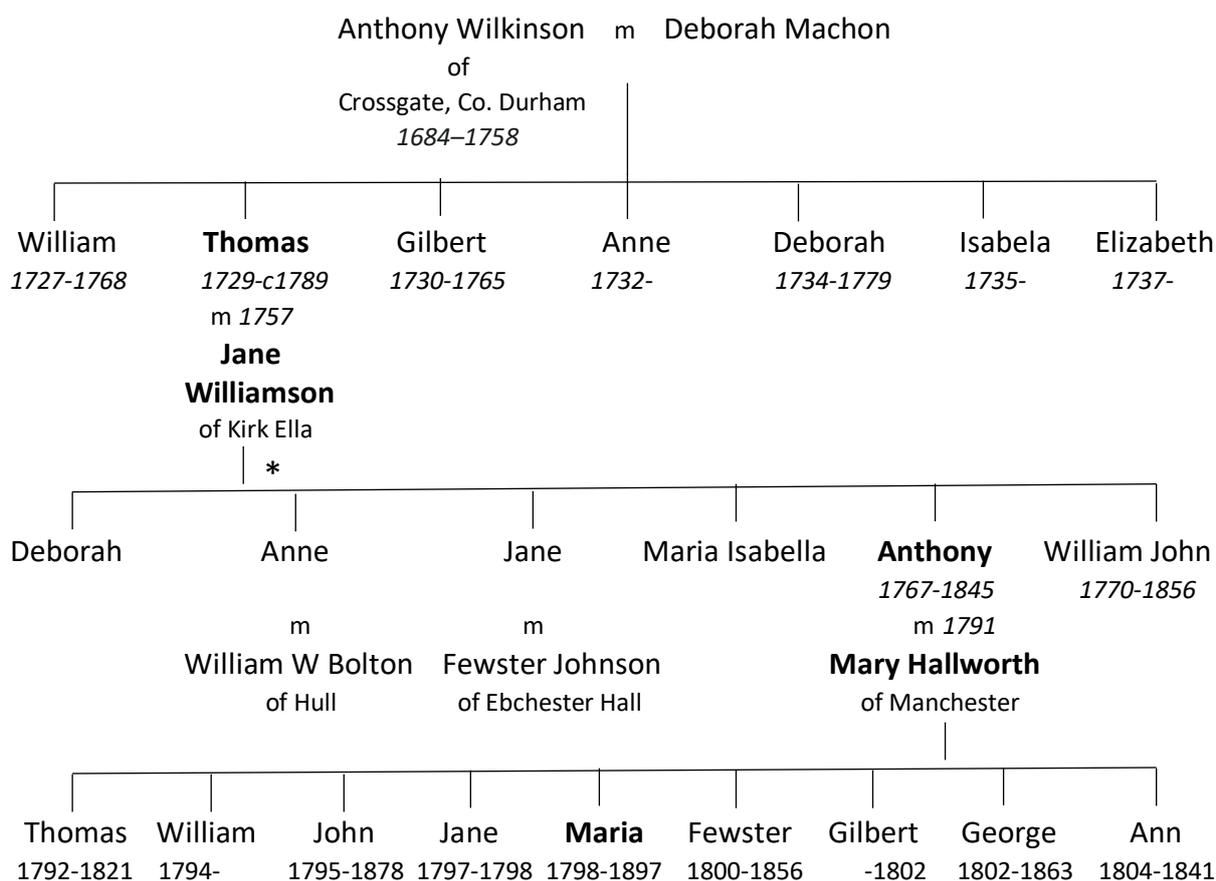


Conservative Cottage, c1910

Anthony Wilkinson – Family Background

The name of the occupant of the original farmhouse in Godman’s Lane, Kirk Ella, is not known, but much of the plot on which Conservative Cottage was built in the 1830s was owned by the Williamson family, who were substantial landowners in Kirk Ella at this time. A smaller, adjacent plot occupied by the farmhouse was owned by a man named Dodsworth. The property was purchased by Anthony Wilkinson in 1833¹ and the new house that he built was completed in 1837.

Who was Anthony Wilkinson and by what means had he derived the wealth necessary to build such a grand mansion? The following family tree shows four generations of the Wilkinson family and this may prove a helpful reference as our story unfolds. We will encounter various members of the family in the narrative.



*Thomas and Jane Wilkinson are said to have had a total of ten children.² Anthony is stated in a Codicil of his father’s Will, as being the second son. William John was the

¹ Allison, K.J., *‘Hull Gent Seeks Country Residence’*, East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1981, p29

² Bickford, J and Bickford, M., *The Vicars of Kirk Ella*, St Andrew’s Church, Kirk Ella, 2020, p1

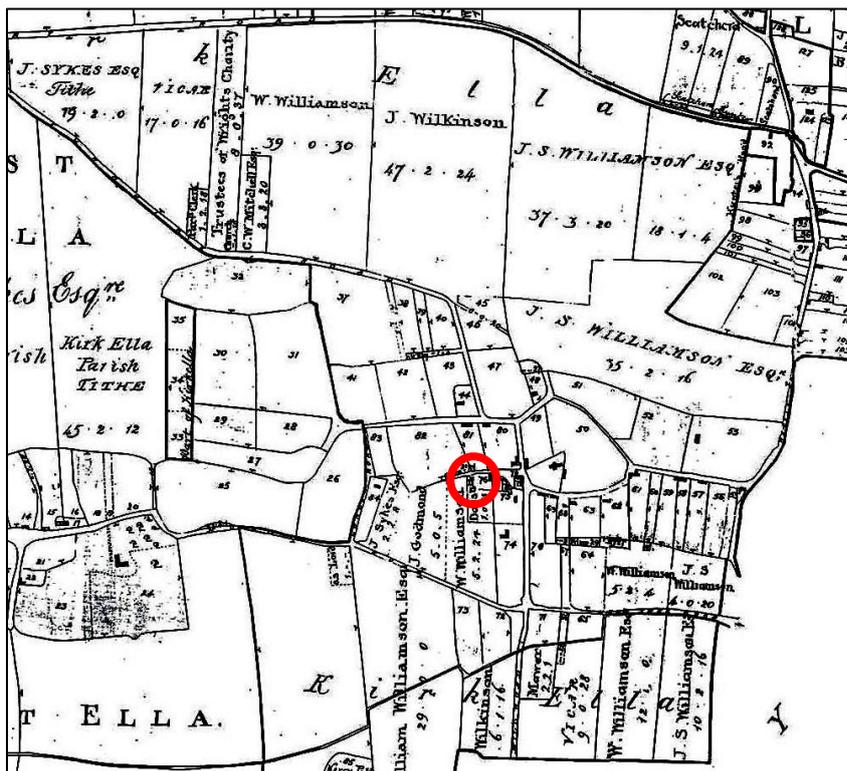
youngest of the ten children³. The order of birth indicated above may not be chronological. The main characters in the story are shown in bold type.

Anthony Wilkinson was born in 1767 into a prosperous family having its roots in County Durham. He was the second son of Thomas Wilkinson, a Hull merchant, who, on 16th June 1757, had married Jane Williamson of Kirk Ella at St. Andrew's Church, Kirk Ella.

Thomas Wilkinson (1729-c1789), owned land in Kirk Ella, perhaps gained through his marriage, and this passed to his wife, Jane, after his death. Jane, was the daughter of wealthy Hull merchant, Richard Williamson, and his wife Mary⁴. Richard Williamson was the owner of West Ella Hall when he died in 1744. Following her husband's death, Mary Williamson continued to live at West Ella Hall with two daughters, Anne and Jane, until after the former's marriage. Anne married Rev. William Cayley of Bishopthorpe in July 1756 and it was about this time that West Ella Hall was sold to Joseph Sykes, Hull merchant. Less than a year later, on 16th June 1757, Jane married Thomas Wilkinson at St. Andrew's

Church, Kirk Ella. At that time, Thomas was described as, 'of the Parish of St. Mary in the Town and County of Kingston upon Hull'.

Much land in Kirk Ella was allotted to the Williamson family following the Enclosure of the village in 1796 (see map to left). The Williamsons were second only to Joseph Sykes in



Enclosure map of 1796 showing land ownership in Kirk Ella. The red circle shows the approximate location of the future Conservative Cottage. St. Andrew's Church is slightly to its right on the map.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Mary Williamson was the daughter of Towers Wallis, a merchant and former alderman of Hull. She married Richard Williamson in 1719.

the acreage they owned in Kirk Ella and Willerby following Enclosure. Thomas Wilkinson had married well.

Kirk Ella Farm

Prior to purchasing West Ella Hall, Richard Williamson had bought a house known as Kirk Ella Farm on Church Lane, during the 1730s. He greatly enlarged the house, which stood opposite St. Andrew's Church, and, in 1757, the house



Blue plaque outside No. 4 Church Lane, aka Kirkella Rise

was described as a 'capital messuage'. It was certainly a substantial property, being taxed on 35 windows in the 1770s. The house still stands as No. 4 Church Lane⁵, opposite St. Andrew's Church. It is said to be the oldest house on Church Lane and one of the oldest in Kirk Ella. Jane Williamson, along with her sister, Anne, inherited a half-share in this property following the death of their father in 1744.

It is to this house that Mary Williamson moved following the sale of West Ella Hall to Joseph Sykes in 1756. It appears that she remained living at the house until her death in 1788. It is probable that by this time Thomas and Jane Wilkinson had removed from Hull and were living in a Wilkinson family property at Brancepeth in County Durham. A Codicil in Thomas's will, executed in Durham and dated 11th December 1777....



No 4 Church Lane, from St. Andrew's churchyard (2021)

....ordained that all that undivided moiety of a certain capital messuage or tenement, gardens and close in Kirk Ella, in the Town and County of Kingston upon Hull, and then, or late, in the occupation of Mary Williamson, mother of the Testators then wife should, after the death of the said Mary Williamson, the said Testator and his said wife, respectively, be and remain to the use of and in trust for his second son, Anthony Wilkinson⁶, and the heirs of his body, with such remainders over in default of such issue as in the said Codicil are mentioned.

⁵ Also known as Kirkella Rise.

⁶ Anthony Wilkinson would have been only ten years old at the time of this Codicil, hence the property being left 'in trust'.

Which Codicil was executed in the presence of Martin Wilkinson, city of Durham, attorney-at-law, Jos. Sanderson, city of Durham, gent and Thos. Weller, city of Durham, yeoman.

Mary Williamson died in 1788, her name appearing in the Kirk Ella Burial Register on 2nd June, although no memorial to her survives in the churchyard. Thomas Wilkinson, her son, died before 1789, as his wife, Jane, was described as a widow in that year.⁷ From the above Codicil, it is, therefore, assumed that Anthony Wilkinson inherited the property in Kirk Ella following his mother's death, although the date and place of Jane Wilkinson's decease have not been discovered.

Manchester

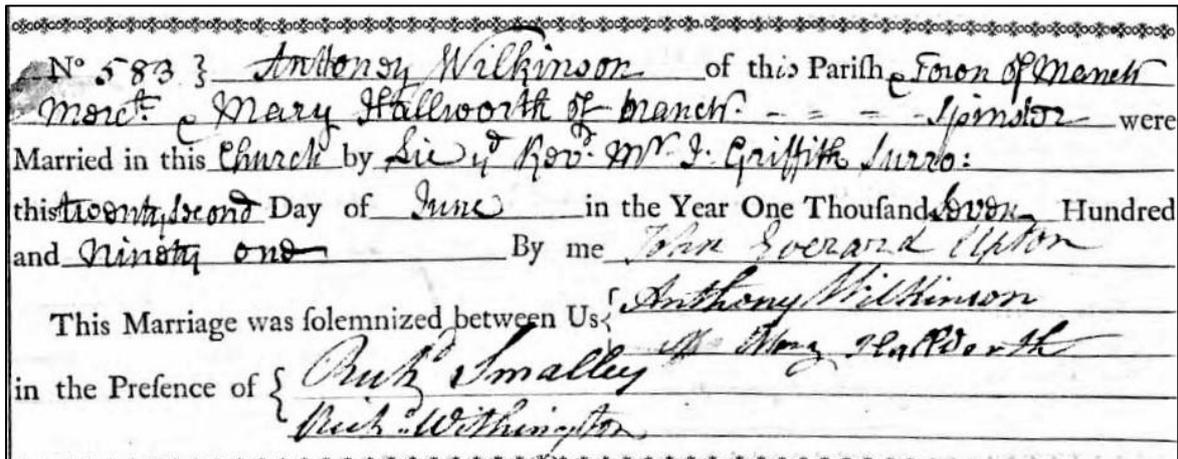
Little is known about the early life of Anthony Wilkinson but, by 1790, at the age of 23, he was pursuing his career in Manchester. Although the nature of his business in the town is not fully known it was possibly related to the iron-ore importation business in which his father had been involved. It is in Manchester that he met his wife, Mary Hallworth, who was six years his senior. She was the daughter of Benjamin and Jane Hallworth, her father, perhaps, being involved in the Manchester textile trade.⁸ Anthony Wilkinson and Mary Hallworth were married at the Collegiate and Parish Church of Christ, Manchester,⁹ on the 22nd June 1791.

The couple lived in Manchester for six years following their marriage, during which time Mary gave birth to four children – Thomas (b.1792), William (b.1794), John (b.1795) and Jane (b.1797). All were baptised at St. Ann's Church, Manchester. Apart from these major events, there seems to be no other record relating to Anthony Wilkinson's sojourn in Manchester. His name does not appear in local, contemporary directories and the nature of his business in the town is not documented.

⁷ Assignment of £840: Jane Wilkinson of Brancepeth, widow (grand-daughter of Towers Wallis), & Leonard Belt of Bossall to Edward Wolley & Thomas Swann of York, 25th June 1789, Hull History Centre, ref. U DDHO/30/85.

⁸ A Benjamin Hallworth is described as a 'callenderman at Manchester' in *The Naval Chronicle: Volume 21, January-July 1809: Containing a General and Biographical History of the Royal Navy of the United Kingdom*, edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur, 1809, page 42.

⁹ In 1847, the church became Manchester Cathedral, following the creation of the Diocese of Manchester.



Marriage of Anthony Wilkinson and Mary Hallworth, as recorded in the Marriage Register of the Collegiate and Parish Church of Christ, Manchester, Page 192, Entry 583.

Hull

During 1797, circumstances brought Anthony and Mary Wilkinson and their young family to Hull, where they settled for the remainder of their lives. At first, they lived in the town, at a house on High Street opposite 'The Black Boy' inn.¹⁰ Following their move to Hull, Anthony and Mary Wilkinson became parents to at least five more children – Maria (b.1798), Fewster (b.1800), Gilbert (b.????, d.1802), George (b.1802) and Ann (b.1804). All were born and baptised in Hull, although there remained a strong connection to Kirk Ella. No. 4 Church Lane was still in the possession of the family, although it was probably being rented out at the time. During this period, the Kirk Ella parish Register contains the following records:

- 4th March 1798 - Burial of Jane, daughter of Anthony Wilkinson of Hull, merchant
- 11th October 1802 - Burial of Gilbert, son of Anthony Wilkinson of Hull, merchant

Both children died in infancy, although no memorial remains in the church or churchyard at Kirk Ella. The fact that the funerals of the children took place in Kirk Ella provides evidence that the Wilkinsons retained strong connections with the village where relatives on Anthony's mother were still influential residents.

A Brother in Holy Orders

Strengthening the connections of the Wilkinson family to Kirk Ella was the appointment of Anthony's brother, Rev. William John Wilkinson, as Vicar of St. Andrew's Church in March 1804. Prior to becoming Vicar of Kirk Ella, William had been Vicar of Elloughton (1798-1804), and it is possible that, as this was a

¹⁰ Bickford, J.A.R and Bickford, M.E., The Vicars of Kirk Ella, Kirk Ella Parish Magazine, June 1997.

neighbouring parish, it was he who conducted the funeral services for both the young Jane and Gilbert at Kirk Ella before his induction as Vicar of the parish.

Born in 1770, William John Wilkinson was the youngest of ten children of Thomas and Jane Wilkinson. He entered Christ Church, Oxford in October 1789, graduated B.A. in 1793 and M.A. in June 1800. He had been instituted to the Vicarage of Elloughton on 9th October 1798, perhaps having held a curacy for several years previously. No record has been found of wife or children and it is thought he did not marry.

William John Wilkinson M.A. was instituted to the Vicarage of St. Andrew on 1st March 1804. Rather unusually, he was instituted again on 23rd July 1813, 'the Vicarage having become vacant by the cession of the said W.J. Wilkinson'. No explanation for this interruption of his incumbency has been found in Diocesan or local records. It may be that he resigned but was reinstated shortly afterwards to the living of Kirk Ella, as the absence of his signature in the parish register for a short period suggests he may have been temporarily absent before his re-institution. A possible explanation is that there had been a dispute over the patronage. By 1813, the living was in the gift of Joseph Sykes's third son, Nicholas Sykes of Cottingham.¹¹ Following his reinstatement in 1813, Anthony Wilkinson's younger brother remained Vicar of Kirk Ella until 1837. William John Wilkinson died in York in 1856.

No. 4 Church Lane, Kirk Ella

As previously mentioned, the house at No. 4 Church Lane, formerly known as Kirk Ella Farm, was inherited by Anthony Wilkinson on the death of his mother, Jane Wilkinson, as laid out in his father's Will. Although Jane's date of death is unknown, it must be assumed that it was before 1810, as, at least from that date until 1813, Anthony and Mary Wilkinson were living at No. 4 Church Lane in Kirk Ella.¹² Whence they moved after Anthony Wilkinson sold the property to John Broadley, Hull solicitor, in 1813¹³ is not known, although, as we shall see, at a later date they were living in the village of Sutton a few miles north of Hull.

¹¹ Bickford, J.A.R and Bickford, M.E., *The Vicars of Kirk Ella*, Kirk Ella Parish Magazine, December 1983

¹² Allison, K.J., 'Hull Gent. Seeks Country Residence' 1750-1850, *East Yorkshire Local History Society*, 1981, 30.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Wilkinson, Whitaker and Company

When Anthony Wilkinson came to Hull in 1797 with his young family, the construction of Conservative Cottage in Kirk Ella, under his direction, was still forty years in the future.

On his arrival in Hull, Anthony Wilkinson entered into partnership with Charles Whitaker to form Wilkinson, Whitaker and Company. With offices at 47 High Street, the company eventually became the pre-eminent dealer in Hull in the import and distribution of Swedish bar iron.

The Whitakers were related to the Williamsons who, as we have seen, acquired a great deal of property in Kirk Ella before and at the time of Enclosure in 1796. Charles Whitaker was the nephew of James Shaw Williamson who had substantial landholdings in Kirk Ella and Willerby. As Anthony Wilkinson was the grandson of Richard Williamson, this was very much a family business.

In the fullness of time, two of Anthony's sons, Fewster and George, joined the company and both were listed as partners when Anthony Wilkinson announced his retirement in 1827:¹⁴

NOTICE is hereby given, that the Partnership hitherto carried on by us the undersigned, Anthony Wilkinson, Charles Whitaker, Fewster Wilkinson, and George Wilkinson, at the Town of Kingston-upon-Hull, as Iron-Merchants, under the firm of Wilkinson, Whitaker, and Co. has this day been dissolved by mutual consent, the said Anthony Wilkinson having retired from the business, which will be henceforth carried on by the said Charles Whitaker, Fewster Wilkinson, and George Wilkinson, under the old firm of Wilkinson, Whitaker, and Co.—Dated this 1st day of May 1827.

Anthony Wilkinson.

Charles Whitaker.

Fewster Wilkinson.

Geo. Wilkinson.

In 1835, George resigned from the company, leaving Charles Whitaker and Fewster Wilkinson in control. No doubt, Anthony Wilkinson still kept a close eye on the health of the business and would have been pleased at its progress. The following table shows the company's imports, in tons, of Swedish bar iron into Hull over a twenty-year period from 1832:

¹⁴ The London Gazette, Issue 18362, Page 1091, May 1827

<i>1832</i>	<i>1837</i>	<i>1840</i>	<i>1842</i>	<i>1845</i>	<i>1847</i>	<i>1849</i>	<i>1852</i>
<i>590</i>	<i>1,540</i>	<i>1,805</i>	<i>1,542</i>	<i>4,542</i>	<i>5,686</i>	<i>6,387</i>	<i>5,311</i>

By the late 1840s, Wilkinson, Whitaker and Company was the largest company of its type in Hull.

Thomas Wilson

During the early 1800s, Wilkinson, Whitaker and Company took on a young clerk by the name of Thomas Wilson. Thomas was born in Hull on 12 February 1792 and had gone to sea as a boy, beginning his apprenticeship in the iron trade as a teenager at 47 High Street. One of his tasks in the early days with the company was to keep the Wilkinson children entertained and, to this end, he would take them on walks around the town. Many years later, one of those children, Maria, would recall those days.

Young Thomas's talents were soon recognised and he was appointed as the company's commercial traveller in the Sheffield area. A number of innovations in the iron and steel industry had made Sheffield the leading centre of steel production in England and it was an important market for the raw materials imported by Wilkinson, Whitaker and Company. This was, therefore, a key appointment for the company.

In 1822, Thomas branched out on his own and, initially, in partnership with John Beckington, established a new iron ore importing business, which became very successful. Through the use of ships for transporting ore, he quickly saw a potential opportunity and became a noted specialist shipowner. Two of Thomas's sons, Charles and Arthur took the business forward and by the end of the nineteenth century the Wilson Line had become the largest shipping company in Britain.

Thomas Wilkinson (1792 -1821)

Thomas, the eldest son of Anthony and Mary Wilkinson, joined the military when in his late teens. Whether he saw action at Waterloo is not known but several years later his unit, under the command of Colonel Stanhope was to be found in India and was involved in attempts to eliminate piracy in the Kathiawar peninsular in the far north of India's western coast. Here, "the final blow was not given to the pirates of Kathiawar till 1819 when a British force under Colonel Stanhope escalated Dwarka and put the whole garrison, who refused to ask for

quarter, to the sword.”¹⁵ Soon after this event, in 1821, Thomas Wilkinson’s death was announced and the following report pays him tribute and informs us that his heroics at the ‘Seige of Dwarka’ were mentioned in despatches:

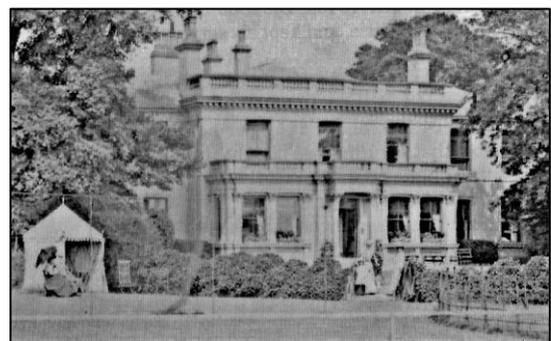
Thomas Wilkinson Esq

Feb. 9th At Kattywar in the East Indies, to the great grief of his parents and friends, Thomas Wilkinson of the 2nd Bombay Native Cavalry, Assistant Adjutant General to the Field Force under the command of the Hon. Col. Stanhope and eldest son of Anthony Wilkinson Esq. of Hull. This highly promising young officer, thus early cut off, had been on active service during a period of nearly ten years in which time he had frequently distinguished himself but at the late memorable siege of Dwarka, on the 26th of November last, his services were such as to call forth the admiration of his commanding officer and were publicly acknowledged in the official dispatches of that affair. The sweetness of his disposition and his general inclination to render the duty of his profession pleasant to all around him, had long endeared him to his brother officers. By his commanding officer, Col Stanhope, in particular, he was highly valued and esteemed, by whom, and all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance, his loss will be deeply felt. As a last sad testimony of respect to his memory as a soldier and as a man, his brother officers have caused a monument to be erected over his remains at the village of Juna in Kattywar.¹⁶

No doubt, in their bereavement, Anthony and Mary Wilkinson derived some comfort from this glowing tribute to their eldest son, following his death so far from home.

Sutton Hall

Apart from his business premises in Hull at 47 High Street, where, perhaps, Anthony Wilkinson and his family lived for a time, the first known address we have for him is at Sutton Hall, in the village of Sutton just to the north of Hull and this was where they lived during the 1820s. Sutton Hall had been built in 1804 by Henry Bedford, a Hull banker, who



Sutton Hall

¹⁵ https://cultural.maharashtra.gov.in/english/gazetteer/greater_bombay/history.html (accessed 10 May 2021)

¹⁶ The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle, July to December 1821, Volume 91, Part 2, page 378.

lived there until his death in 1815 when it passed to his son, James. James Bedford owned the house until he sold it in 1836. Thus, it is likely that Anthony Wilkinson and his family lived in the house as tenants. It is known that they lived there, from at least 1823 to 1831.¹⁷ It was during his tenancy at Sutton Hall that, in 1827, Anthony Wilkinson elected to retire from Wilkinson, Whitaker & Co. at the age of sixty.

Wyton Hall

Following his departure from Sutton Hall, it is likely that Anthony Wilkinson moved to Wyton Hall a few miles to the east of Hull. It is known that he lived there between 1834 and 1837. Again, it is likely that he was a tenant in the



Wyton Hall

property, which was owned, at the time, by Robert M. Craven, a Hull surgeon. Craven acquired the house in 1830 after which he lived there for a short time himself. The house remained in his ownership until 1852.¹⁸ It is during Anthony Wilkinson's time at Wyton Hall that he hatched plans to build a house in Kirk Ella.

Kirk Ella

Anthony Wilkinson already owned property in Kirk Ella, inherited through his grandfather, Richard Williamson. In the mid-1830s, his younger brother, William John was Vicar of Kirk Ella, his son, Fewster, was resident at The Old Hall, Kirk Ella, and Fewster's business partner, Charles Whitaker, lived nearby at Ivy Cottage in Willerby. Family connections with Kirk Ella could not have been much stronger. In 1833, Anthony Wilkinson bought a farmhouse in Kirk Ella in what is now Godman's Lane. No record of the transaction seems to have survived but, in 1796 at the time Enclosure, the farmhouse and adjacent yard had been allotted to a man called Dodsworth. A much larger, adjoining plot to the west belonged to the Williamsons.

Building of Conservative Cottage (also known as The Cottage), in white brick, commenced in 1836, the house comprising two bays, one of which, perhaps,

¹⁷ Allison, K.J., 'Hull Gent. Seeks Country Residence' 1750-1850, East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1981, 39.

¹⁸ Ibid, p49.

incorporated part of the original farmhouse. Both bays were covered by a shallow slate roof. In 1837, the house was ready and Anthony and Mary Wilkinson moved in.¹⁹

Notwithstanding William John Wilkinson's appointment as Vicar of Kirk Ella from 1804 until 1837, the Wilkinson family had developed a strong affiliation with St. Andrew's Church over the years. There are a number of memorials in the church commemorating various members of the family. One of the most prominent is to Frances Wilkinson, wife of John, Anthony's son, who died in May 1831. Her death, at the age of 29, occurred following a 'severe illness' only a few weeks after she had given birth to a son²⁰ in early April. Although John Wilkinson and his family were 'of Sculcoates', the funeral service for Frances was held in Kirk Ella and would have been conducted by John's uncle and Anthony's brother, Rev. William John Wilkinson.²¹



Memorial to Frances Wilkinson in St. Andrew's Church, Kirk Ella.

The Loan of a Harmonium

Hymn singing in Anglican churches was becoming more widespread after it became officially approved by the Church of England in 1820 and by the 1840s had become popular at St. Andrew's. One Christmas when accompaniment for carols was required by the church, a harmonium was loaned by the residents of Conservative Cottage. This was said to have given much pleasure to those assembled. By this time, a fund had been started to obtain an organ for the church, although it was 1859 before a suitable instrument was installed.

¹⁹ It may have been coincidental, but in April 1837, almost at the same time as Anthony Wilkinson moved to Kirk Ella, his brother, William John vacated the incumbency of Kirk Ella, his position being taken by Rev. Joseph Thompson.

²⁰ Robert Wharton Wilkinson (1831-1906)

²¹ John Wilkinson was to remarry in 1834. After the marriage at Startforth, near Barnard Castle, John and his new wife (Eliza Emma Catherina Hutchinson) moved in to Welton Grange where they remained for the rest of their lives.

A Memorial in Kirk Ella Churchyard

Conservative Cottage was one of many homes that Anthony Wilkinson had occupied during his life and the only one, as far as we know, to have been built



Memorial to Anthony and Mary Wilkinson in Kirk Ella churchyard (foreground). The neighbouring memorial is to members of the Whitaker family.

specifically for him and his family. It is notable that he took on the task of commissioning construction of such a large house at the advanced age of 70 years. Apart from No. 4 Church Lane, which he inherited, it appears that all his other homes were tenancies. Maybe, as he approached the end of his life, he wished to leave a lasting legacy in bricks and mortar for his family.

Conservative Cottage was to be Anthony Wilkinson's final home. He died on 30th March 1845, aged 77 years, having enjoyed his twilight years close to members of his family in a village that he clearly held in great affection. A year later, his wife, Mary, passed away on 22nd April 1846 at the age of 84 years. Both are commemorated on a family gravestone in the churchyard at Kirk Ella.

Maria Wilkinson

The property at Conservative Cottage was inherited by Maria Wilkinson, an unmarried daughter of Anthony and Mary. Born in 1798 and aged 48 by the time her mother died, Maria was a confirmed spinster. Following the deaths of her father and mother, she was to live at Conservative Cottage for another 50 years. It must have been a large house for one person, although there were a number of servants in residence.

The decennial census of 1851 lists three servants – a cook, a housemaid and a gardener – but states 'Head of Family absent'. At that time, Maria was visiting her brother, John, at Welton Grange. However, she was at home on 7th April 1861 when the census enumerator called, together with two nephews, Gilbert and Oscar, who were sons of her brother, Fewster Wilkinson. The latter was a near-neighbour at The Old Hall in Kirk Ella. Three servants were also in residence at Conservative Cottage. One of them, Eliza Gower, 19 years old at the time, was

to stay with Maria for over thirty years. Eliza was with her in Scarborough on 3rd April 1881, when they were both staying at 13 Pavilion Terrace, not far from the railway station. Their apartment at this address was owned by Martha Ward and her niece, Mary, who were both described as 'lodging house keepers'. In 1881, at the age of 83, Maria Wilkinson was said to be living on dividends and interest on money.

The final census reference to Maria Wilkinson is in 1891, when at the age of 93, she was at Conservative Cottage in Kirk Ella, being cared for by Eliza Gower, her ladies' maid, and Elizabeth Boddy, her cook.

Maria Wilkinson lived to the grand old age of 99 and the inscription on the Wilkinson gravestone in Kirk Ella churchyard reads, "Maria Wilkinson, elder daughter of Anthony Wilkinson, born 8th February 1798, died at Kirk Ella, 3rd June 1897 in her hundredth year". In her Will, she left over £39,000. Inflation during the intervening years means that, in 2021, this would be equivalent to around £5.2m. Maria Wilkinson died a very wealthy lady. However, by the time of her death, she had sold Conservative Cottage to Allan Twistleton Hall. We shall hear his story in Part 2.

Francis Davies
June 2021