

## ***The Gardiner Family, Dublin, and Mountjoy, County Tyrone***

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### **Origins of the Gardiners**

The northside of Dublin, with its frequently neglected but still elegant streets and squares, is perhaps the best surviving monument to the Gardiner Family, which was primarily responsible for the creation of this sector of the Georgian city.<sup>1</sup> The origins of the Gardiners remain obscure, the first of the name to come to prominence in the early eighteenth century being Luke Gardiner. Gardiner's parentage remains unknown, and it does not appear that he came of any very prominent family. Madden recounted a story that Gardiner had risen from menial status in the service of a Mr White of Leixlip Castle. Madden, who was in the habit of interviewing contemporaries of his subjects and therefore may have been well informed, also described Gardiner as a 'sturdy parvenu of Irish descent'.<sup>2</sup> The implication is that Gardiner was of native and possibly Catholic stock, and if this were true, it would help explain the liberal attitude of descendants to the cause of relieving Catholics from the penal laws. On the other hand, the surname Gardiner is usually considered to be of English or Scottish origin and in Ireland is a name of low frequency associated principally with Antrim and Dublin.<sup>3</sup>

The main cache of surviving Gardiner papers is in the National Library of Ireland, but unfortunately is composed mainly of title deeds with little correspondence, which might have provided fuller personal details of family members, if not more clues concerning origins.<sup>4</sup> Attention has been drawn to Gardiner property transactions relating to lands in Kilkenny in 1677-88 and 1742, which raise the possibility that the family had a longstanding connection with that county.<sup>5</sup> Mention should also be made of the fact that arms were registered by Ulster's Office in 1683 to a William Gardiner of Dublin, which bear close resemblance to the arms later used by the Gardiners (blazon: 'Or, a griffin passant azure, on a chief sable three pheons' heads argent').<sup>6</sup> There is a Prerogative Will probated in 1690 relating to a William Gardiner, resident in Chester in

1 A version of this article was originally published in Rory J Stanley, Editor, *Féil-Scribhinn Liam Mhic Alasdair: Essays Presented to Liam Mac Alasdair*, Genealogical Society of Ireland, Dun Laoghaire 2009, pages 89-97.

2 Richard R Madden, *The Literary Life and Correspondence of the Countess of Blessington*, 1, 2nd Edition, London 1855, page 46, accessed Google Books, <http://books.google.com> 21 November 2009.

3 Edward MacLysaght, *The Surnames of Ireland*, Dublin 1991 Edition, page 306; Robert E Matheson, *Special Report on Surnames in Ireland*, Dublin 1909, page 49.

4 Gardiner Papers, c1667-1898, National Library of Ireland, Manuscript Collection List 67, [http://www.nli.ie/pdfs/mss%20lists/067\\_Gardiner.pdf](http://www.nli.ie/pdfs/mss%20lists/067_Gardiner.pdf), accessed 21 November 2009.

5 Edith M Johnston-Liik, *History of the Irish Parliament 1692-1800*, 4, Belfast 2002, page 260.

6 Arms Grants, National Library of Ireland, Genealogical Office MS 104, page 4a; Burke's *General Armory*, London 1884 Edition, page 387.

England, but formerly of Dublin.<sup>7</sup> It has not yet proven possible to establish whether these two Williams are the same individual and if there is a relationship with our Gardiner Family. The question of the origins of the Gardiners therefore remains obscure, in the case of Luke Gardiner one suspects perhaps deliberately so, and it might be conjectured that a reason other than poor background, for example, illegitimacy, could provide an explanation for suppression of such key information as names of parents.

### **Luke Gardiner the Elder**

The foundations of the Gardiners' wealth and status in Ireland were laid by the first Luke Gardiner, so-called to distinguish him from his grandson of the same name with whom he has sometimes been confused. Luke the first appeared in Dublin City as a banker in the first decade of the eighteenth century, being a member of the partnership Gardiner and Hill.<sup>8</sup> Luke married Anne Stewart, grand-daughter both of William Stewart, 1st Viscount Mountjoy, and Murrough Boyle, 1st Viscount Blessington, connections which were to prove of crucial importance in the family's rise.<sup>9</sup> Luke and Anne's children were Charles, Sackville, Henrietta and Mary.<sup>10</sup>

Luke Gardiner was also involved in urban development in Dublin from an early stage, at first buying land on the southside near Sir John Rogerson's Quay in 1712. He then turned his attention to the northside, progressively purchasing parts of the former Estate of Mary's Abbey. The lands were laid out in streets for development, including most notably Henrietta Street, dating probably from the 1720s (and not necessarily named after Luke Gardiner's abovementioned daughter). While admittedly presenting a generally rundown appearance, this street remains striking today, and Luke Gardiner's own house may be seen at number 10. Gardiner also carried out developments in Dorset Street and Great Britain Street, now Parnell Street, and constructed a private residence in the Phoenix Park. Gardiner's greatest achievement was to lay the basis for Dublin's premier street, called first Gardiner's Mall, subsequently known as Sackville Street and now of course O'Connell Street.<sup>11</sup>

Having retired from the banking business about 1739, Luke Gardiner was appointed a Privy Councillor and Deputy Vice-Treasurer of Ireland. Gardiner continued to develop his northside Dublin estate and died in 1755, a man of considerable reputation and wealth. Dated 5 November 1755, his will is a lengthy document. Having provided for a modest funeral not to exceed £50 in cost, Gardiner proceeded to bequeath his substantial properties in Dublin via nominated trustees. Luke's eldest son and successor Charles is mentioned prominently as might be expected, but a rider to the will discussed below tends to indicate that he was something of a black sheep.<sup>12</sup>

7 Betham's Abstract of Prerogative Will of William Gardiner, probated 1690, National Archives of Ireland, BET 1/31, page 10, MFGS 38/4; Sir Arthur Vicars, Editor, *Index to the Prerogative Wills of Ireland, 1536-1810*, Dublin 1897, page 188.

8 Maurice Craig, *Dublin 1660-1860*, London 1992 Edition, page 102.

9 GEC [George E Cokayne], Editor, *Complete Peerage*, 9, page 352.

10 Baronets' Pedigrees, NLI GO MS 112, pages 50-51; *Debrett's Peerage*, 2, London 1825, page 984, accessed <http://books.google.com> 21 November 2009.

11 Craig, *Dublin*, pages 102-4.

12 Copy Prerogative Will of Luke Gardiner, 1755, National Archives of Ireland T 13,251; see also an earlier will or wills in NLI MS 36,624/1-3.

### **Charles Gardiner**

Born about 1720, Charles is probably the least outstanding of the Gardiners, and it was said of him that he 'was more interested in playing the flute than in urban development'.<sup>13</sup> Luke Gardiner's will contains a rider stating that he had been informed that his son Charles was 'indebted to several persons', and ordering therefore that such debts should be charged to his estate, 'not exceeding ten thousand pounds in the whole'. Luke's grandson and Charles's son, Luke the younger, seems in fact to be the heir most favoured in the will, and it would appear that Gardiner's intention was to limit his eldest son's capacity to damage the estate.

Although he was thus apparently of spendthrift disposition, Charles was unable to circumvent the posthumous controls placed on him by his father, or perhaps he moderated his behaviour, and the family fortune and estates remained intact. Development of the Dublin Estate continued, including commencement of the New Gardens, later called Rutland Square, and now Parnell Square.<sup>14</sup> Charles married Florinda, daughter of Robert Norman of Lagore, County Meath, with whom he had children Luke, William, Robert, Anne, Florinda and Mary.<sup>15</sup> The will of Charles Gardiner is dated 28 October 1765 and is a much shorter document than that of his father.<sup>16</sup> Charles appointed his wife Florinda sole executrix, and his son Luke was the chief beneficiary of his estate, with provision also for his wife Florinda and other children. The comparative brevity of Charles's will is undoubtedly explained by the fact that the bulk of the Gardiner Estate had been tied up in trust, and as noted, his father Luke had perhaps taken even more precautions than usual to keep the family estates intact. Charles died on 15 November 1769, was buried in St Thomas's Church in Marlborough Street, Dublin, and was succeeded by his eldest son Luke.<sup>17</sup>

### **Luke Gardiner, Viscount Mountjoy**

Luke Gardiner the second was born on 7 February 1745. He attended Eton from 1759-62, and was admitted to Cambridge in the latter year, graduating BA in 1766 and MA in 1769.<sup>18</sup> In the company of his younger brother William (who had an illustrious career in the British Army, rising to the rank of Lieutenant-General), Luke Gardiner embarked on a grand tour during the years 1770-72, visiting Florence, Venice and Rome. Luke Gardiner became a noted connoisseur and patron of art, his commissions including works by Francis Cotes, Gavin Hamilton and Sir Joshua Reynolds. Gardiner married on 3 July 1773 Elizabeth, daughter of Sir William Montgomery Bart of Magbiehill in Scotland. Elizabeth was famously portrayed with her sisters Barbara and Anne in Reynolds's 'Three Ladies Adorning a Tree of Hymen', a work commissioned by Gardiner.<sup>19</sup> Less felicitously, Elizabeth was the inspiration for the naming of Dublin's

13 National Council for Educational Awards, *Gardiners' Dublin: A History and Topography of Mountjoy Square and Environs*, Dublin 1991, page 23.

14 NCEA, *Gardiners' Dublin*, page 25.

15 NLI GO MS 112, pages 50-51; *Debrett's Peerage*, 2, London 1825, pages 984-85.

16 Copy Prerogative Will of Charles Gardiner, 1765, NAI T 13,250; see also an earlier will in NLI MS 36,624/4.

17 Madden, *Countess of Blessington*, 1, page 459.

18 John A Venn, Editor, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, part II, vol III, Cambridge 1947, page 10.

19 John Coleman, 'Luke Gardiner (1745-98): an Irish Dilettante', *Irish Arts Review Yearbook*, 15, 1999, pages 161-68.

Montgomery Street,<sup>20</sup> later a part of the infamous redlight district ‘Monto Town’ and since renamed as Foley Street.

Gardiner was elected MP for Co Dublin in 1773 and served continuously until 1789. Although generally a supporter of government, he displayed a marked degree of liberalism, distinguishing himself in particular by his efforts to relieve Roman Catholics from the effects of the Penal Laws. The first of two Catholic relief acts which bear Gardiner’s name was passed in 1778, enabling Catholics to lease land for a period up to 999 years and to inherit on the same terms as Protestants. In a letter to Burke dated 11 August 1778, Gardiner explained that he had accepted limitations to this act in order to secure its acceptance by the Irish Parliament, with the intention that the balance of the Popery Laws ‘might remain for the business of a future session’.<sup>21</sup> This gradualist strategy was pursued with Gardiner’s second act of 1782, which allowed Catholics to acquire land and removed restrictions on Catholic clergy and conditions of worship. Gardiner was appointed a member of the Irish Privy Council in 1780, and he was also active in the Irish Volunteers, being a colonel in the Dublin Company.

A contemporary, Rev John Scott, described Gardiner’s bearing in parliament in the following terms: ‘Mr Gardiner’s voice is good, clear, strong and deep, and his action though perhaps too theatrical has often both grace and strength. His language is plain, simple and flowing . . . His matter is commonly very good, for he is a man of learning . . .’ Scott noted also that Gardiner had been for a long time the ‘devoted servant of administration, labouring with incessant assiduity for the attainment of a peerage’.<sup>22</sup> Gardiner’s ambition was realised when the title of his Stewart ancestors was revived in his person, and in 1789 he was created Baron Mountjoy of Mountjoy, Co Tyrone, and subsequently in 1795 Viscount Mountjoy.

Luke Gardiner continued building development in Dublin, his finest achievement being Mountjoy Square, commenced in 1772. The Gardiner development scheme proceeded by issuing building leases for single or multiple sites to builders and speculators. A degree of building uniformity was achieved by inserting covenants in the leases controlling height, brickwork, windows and doors. The tone of the area was also preserved by forbidding residents to engage in trades such as tallow-chandler, soap-boiler, sugar-boiler, baker, distiller, butcher and so on. These provisions did not entirely remove scope for a pleasing variety still to be observed in the surviving building stock on the northside of Dublin City.<sup>23</sup>

Gardiner’s principal residences in Dublin were 10 Henrietta Street and Mountjoy House in the Phoenix Park. The Henrietta Street house is currently occupied by the Daughters of Charity and has been carefully restored in recent years,<sup>24</sup> while the Phoenix Park residence has long been in state ownership and is currently part of the headquarters of the Ordnance Survey. The already substantial family landholdings were greatly augmented when Gardiner successfully claimed title to the County Tyrone estate of the late Earl of Blessington, by virtue of his relationship through his grandmother

20 C T McCready, *Dublin Street Names Dated and Explained*, Dublin 1892, reprinted by Carraig Books 1987, page 70.

21 *Works and Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, 1, London 1852, pages 374-5.

22 Falkland [Rev John Scott], *A Review of the Principal Characters of the Irish House of Commons*, Dublin 1789, pages 26-28.

23 NCEA, *Gardiner’s Dublin*, pages 31, 43.

24 Dublin Civic Trust, *Numbers 8-10 Henrietta Street, Dublin 1*, Dublin 2003.

Anne Stewart.<sup>25</sup> The rival and ultimately unsuccessful claimant to the estate was George Forbes, Sixth Earl of Granard, and documents relating to the 'mighty lawsuit' with the Gardiners survive in the Granard Papers. Much of the campaigning in the case was conducted by Granard's wife, Selina, and his mother-in-law, the Countess Dowager of Moira, who alleged among other things that Anne Stewart was illegitimate.<sup>26</sup> The County Tyrone estates, comprising over 30,000 acres in Newtown Stewart, Rash and Mountjoy Forest, contained two residences of quite modest size, Rash House and The Cottage.<sup>27</sup> Given his wealth, status and interest in architecture, it is surprising that Gardiner never constructed a large country residence in Co Tyrone, although it was reported in 1791 that he was 'about building' a great house near Omagh.<sup>28</sup>

The hopes and expectations which underlay reforms such as the gradual removal of Penal Laws were not to be realised, and continuing Catholic disaffection was one of the principal reasons for the slide into repression and rebellion in the late 1790s. Although a person of his rank and age clearly need not have done so, Gardiner entered the field in command of a regiment of the County Dublin Militia during the 1798 Rebellion, indicating that his liberalism did not preclude a stern sense of duty and support for the established order in time of danger. On 5 June 1798 Gardiner was slain by the rebels at the Battle of New Ross, although it is not clear whether he was killed as he fought or dispatched after capture, there being a suggestion as well that he had ridden out in an effort to persuade the insurgents to withdraw.<sup>29</sup> The irony of the circumstances of Gardiner's death was not lost on his brother-in-law, the more hardline John Beresford, who lamented that his 'dear friend' had been 'cut off by those villains whose cause he was the first great advocate for'.<sup>30</sup> The body of Luke Gardiner, Viscount Mountjoy, was brought back to Dublin and interred in the family burial place in St Thomas's Church.<sup>31</sup>

Luke Gardiner and his wife Elizabeth had two sons, Luke who died young and Charles John, as well as six daughters, Florinda, Louisa, Harriet, Emily, Caroline and Elizabeth. Gardiner's wife Elizabeth died in 1783 and he married secondly on 20 October 1793 Margaret, daughter of Hector Wallis of Spring Mount, Queen's County, with whom he had a son again named Luke, who also died young, and a daughter Margaret.<sup>32</sup> Mountjoy's will is dated 19 January 1798, and again is a detailed testament reminiscent of that of his grandfather and namesake.<sup>33</sup> Unlike his father and grandfather, Luke appears to have been in good health when he drafted his will, and was

25 *Complete Peerage*, 9, note, pages 352-53.

26 Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Register of Irish Archives, the Granard Papers, J 2-3.

27 Michael Sadleir, *Blessington-D'Orsay: A Masquerade*, London 1933, pages 23-24.

28 Edward McParland, *James Gandon: Vitruvius Hibernicus*, London 1985, pages 112-14, n 31, page 196.

29 William E H Lecky, *A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, 5, London 1913 Edition, page 390; Daniel Gahan, *The People's Rising: Wexford 1798*, Dublin 1995, page 125.

30 Beresford to Lord Auckland, 8 June 1798, in PRONI, *The '98 Rebellion: Educational Facsimiles*, Belfast no date, No 83.

31 Madden, *Countess of Blessington*, 1, pages 48-49, 459. Following the destruction of St Thomas's Church during the Civil War in 1922, the remains in the Gardiner tomb were removed to St George's Church, and were later transferred to Glasnevin Cemetery when that church was deconsecrated.

32 NLI GO MS 112, pages 50-51; *Debrett's Peerage*, 2, London 1825, page 985; Madden, *Countess of Blessington*, 1, pages 47-48.

33 Copy Prerogative Will of Luke Gardiner, Viscount Mountjoy, 1798, NAI T 8723; see also earlier wills dated 1778 and 1783 in NLI MS 36,624/16-17.

undoubtedly aware that his military involvement might lead to death, as indeed it did within that year of rebellion. Luke directed that his funeral expenses should not exceed £100 sterling, and directed that his estate be administered by nominated trustees. Having first provided for his 'dear wife' Margaret and their children, Luke directed that the bulk of the family's estates should pass to his eldest surviving son, Charles John, then still a minor but who duly succeeded to his father's title and estates after his death.

### **Charles John Gardiner, Earl of Blessington**

Charles John Gardiner was born on 19 July 1782 and having succeeded his father as Viscount Mountjoy, he was created Earl of Blessington in 1816. What the earlier thrifty Gardiners built up, a later generation of spendthrifts inevitably dissipated. The Earl of Blessington's relationships and family life were rather more complicated than those of his predecessors. With his first wife Mary Campbell he had a daughter Harriet Anne born in 1812 and a son Luke Wellington who died aged 9 in 1823. The couple also produced two children before their marriage, namely, a son Charles John born in 1810 and a daughter Emily Rosalie born in 1811.<sup>34</sup> Blessington married secondly in 1818 Margaret or Marguerite Power, a celebrated beauty and later a successful author who was born in County Tipperary in 1789, with whom he had no issue.<sup>35</sup>

Blessington and his Countess Margaret were friends of Byron and prominent socialites, and both unfortunately had a tendency to amass debts as a result of high living. The Earl of Blessington died on 25 May 1829 and like his forebears was interred in St Thomas's Church in Dublin.<sup>36</sup> As noted, Blessington's only legitimate son had predeceased him, and all his peerage titles became extinct, by which time also his estates were seriously encumbered with debt. Blessington's will is a short but interesting document, much contemporary scandal being caused by an unusual provision whereby he had made his daughter Harriet Anne's inheritance conditional on her marrying Alfred Count D'Orsay, the celebrated dandy and intimate of both the Earl and Countess. The marriage between the Count and Harriet Anne had in fact taken place in 1827, and while the couple soon separated, D'Orsay now had a call on the diminishing resources of the estate. More positively, Blessington at least had the good grace to acknowledge his natural children in his will.<sup>37</sup> Madden also recorded that like his father Blessington supported the cause of Catholic relief, furthermore that his County Tyrone tenants were of the view that 'a better landlord, a kinder man to the poor, never existed'.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately the Earl appears to have lacked his father's prudence in the matter of managing his estates, while his kindness possessed a no doubt entirely unintended destructive edge.

The Blessington Estate was administered by trustees after the Earl's death, and an Act of Parliament to that effect was passed in 1846. The Estate was further crippled

34 NLI GO MS 112, pages 50-51; *Debrett's Peerage*, 2, London 1825, page 985; Madden, *Countess of Blessington*, 1, pages 58-62.

35 NLI GO MS 112, pages 50-51; *Complete Peerage*, 2, pages 192-93.

36 Madden, *Countess of Blessington*, 1, page 459 (where the year of burial is erroneously given as 1839).

37 Copy Prerogative Will of Charles John Gardiner, Earl of Blessington, 1823, NAI T 8411-12; an account of the marriage and the full text of the will are in Sadleir, *Blessington-D'Orsay*, pages 114-16, 371-72; see also another copy of the will and probate in NLI MS 36,624/10.

38 Madden, *Countess of Blessington*, 1, pages 50, 64.

by a bitter law-suit between Charles John Gardiner and other relatives of the late Earl on the one hand, and the Countess of Blessington and Count D'Orsay on the other. The Countess died in 1849 while D'Orsay lived on until 1852.<sup>39</sup> Sale rentals of the Blessington estate in 1846 and 1848 show its great extent, and in addition to the North Dublin City and County holdings, and smaller County Kilkenny holdings, it included about 32,000 acres in County Tyrone, comprising the Manors of Newtownstewart and Rash, and the Demesne of Mountjoy Forest.<sup>40</sup>

### **Aftermath**

The whole of the Gardiner-Blessington estate was obviously not disposed of in the 1840s sales, for a substantial portion of 5,500 acres remained under the administration of the Court of Chancery in 1876.<sup>41</sup> The Landed Estates Court conveyed a portion of the estate, consisting mainly of Dublin properties together with 18 townlands in County Tyrone, to Charles Spencer Cowper in 1877.<sup>42</sup> Cowper, son of the 5th Earl Cowper, had married Harriet Anne Gardiner in 1852, the same year in which Count D'Orsay died. Cowper, who appears rather as Harriet Anne's saviour, was undoubtedly trying to maintain the estate as a going concern, and his action probably helped it to survive, albeit as a more nebulous entity than before.

It is this unsettled later history which primarily accounts for the rundown appearance of the Gardiner Estate on the northside of Dublin City, as compared with the better managed Fitzwilliam/Pembroke Estate on the southside. However, it should be stressed again that there is still much attractive architecture to be seen in the northside quarter. Streetnames such as Gardiner Street, Mountjoy Square and Blessington Street help to remind us of the family whose members oversaw the construction of the greater portion of north Georgian Dublin, and who it would be fair to say are perhaps not as well remembered today as they should be.

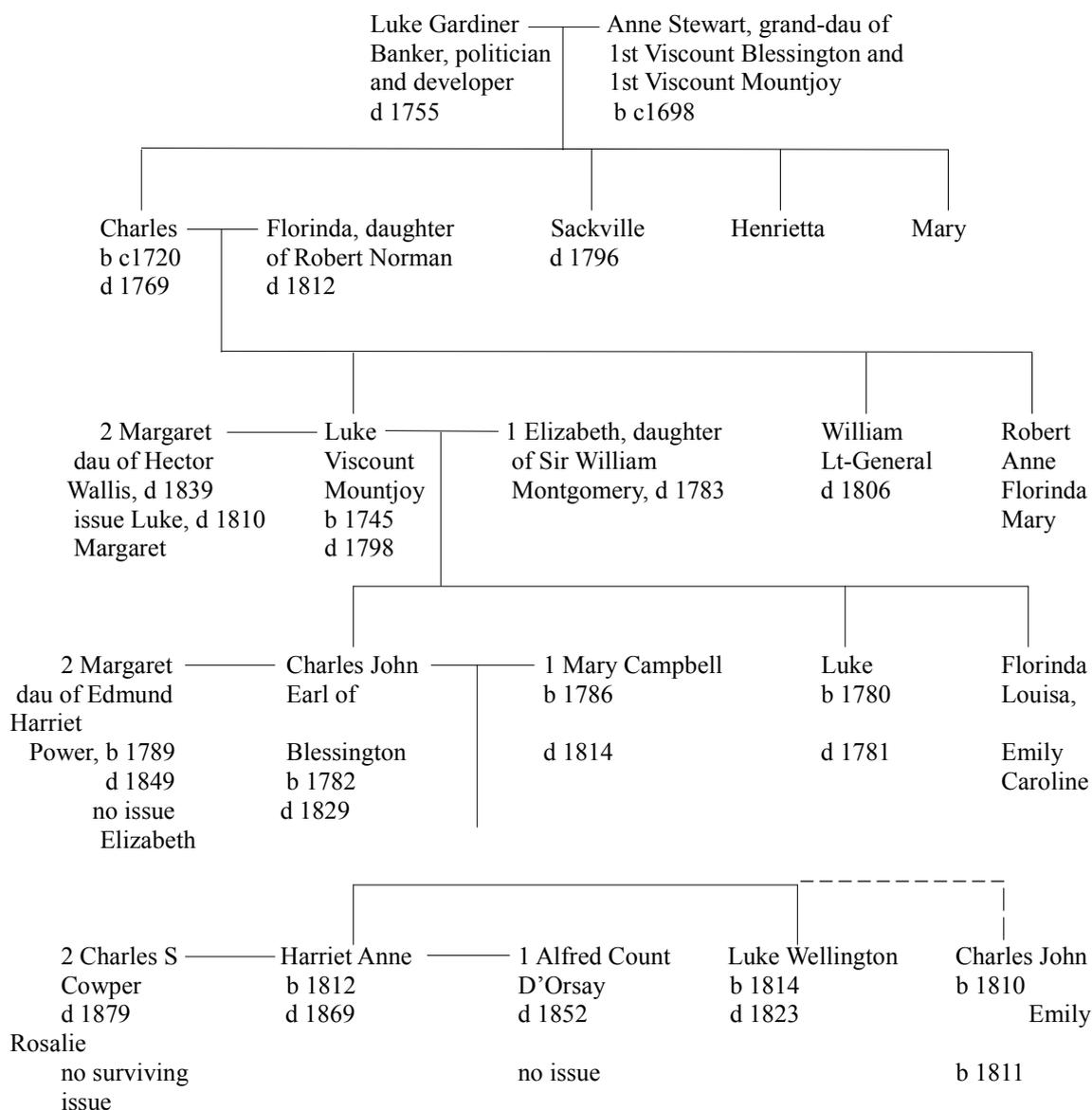
39 Sadleir, *Blessington-D'Orsay*, pages 351, 364.

40 Quit Rent Office Set of Incumbered Estates Court Rentals, Volume 1, Numbers 5 and 6, NAI.

41 *Return of Owners of Land in Ireland*, Dublin 1876, page 277.

42 Landed Estates Court, Copy Conveyance of Estate of Trustees of Blessington Estate to Charles Spencer Cowper, 27 March 1877, NLI MS 3,194; some sources state that Cowper acquired the estate in 1874.

***Appendix: Gardiner Pedigree***



**Sources:** NLI GO MS 112, pages 50-51; *Debrett's Peerage*, 2, London 1825, pages 983-85; Madden, *Countess of Blessington*, 1; *Complete Peerage*, 2, pages 192-93, 9, pages 352-53; Sadleir, *Blessington-D'Orsay*.