

The In-laws
Ray Ion and George Robson

Although having resided in the Newcastle-upon-Tyne area in the 1880s and early 1890s, JMF spent the remainder of his life living in Durham City. However during all of this time he made forays even further north into rural Northumberland.

Rural Rides to Catcleugh in Journal 10 (2009) describes JMF's love for the extreme north-west of Northumberland where his duties as a Director of the Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company took him each year to Catcleugh reservoir where he mixed business with recreation. And from the early 1880s until 1907 he had accompanied the Noble family to their succession of retreats - Lorbottle Hall, Nunykirk Hall and Chillingham Castle, all of which have been highlighted in Society Newsletters and Journals. However, there was another venue in mid-Northumberland to which JMF occasionally travelled, a venue which is associated with his 1899 marriage.

The valley of the River Coquet in mid-Northumberland has long been recognised as an area of outstanding beauty:

*The valley assumes a most charming landscape which strikes
the eye and affords delightful subjects for the poet's fancy
and the painter's eye*

Robert Heron: A Tour Through Northern England, 1793.

Life here is very sweet brother - who would wish to die?

George Burrow: A Tour, 1854

What has become the National Trust property of Cragside is situated on a hillside overlooking the Coquet a short distance from the village of Rothbury. It had been built in 1863 by the Elswick armaments chairman Sir William (later Lord) Armstrong as a modest two-storey country retreat. It was surrounded by hundreds of acres of moorland offering opportunities to the walker, the rider and the shooter. However in the 1870s Armstrong, with a view to making this second home more imposing, set about having the house dramatically altered and extended to become an elaborate

mansion of Free Tudor Style. The designer was Richard Norman Shaw and Armstrong, together with his good friend Joseph Swan, used the waterfalls above the House to make Cragside the first building in the world to be powered by hydro-electricity. Armstrong also installed other gadgetry and wizardry of his invention. Over one million trees of various species were planted on the fells.



When Cragside was completed it became a place to entertain guests magnificently and during the years that followed Lord Armstrong hosted a succession of notable visitors many of which were prospective clients of the Elswick works. In 1884 the Prince and Princess of Wales (later King Edward V11 and Queen Alexandra) paid a visit to be followed by royalty and diplomats from Japan.

Becoming prominent in the Elswick company and soon seen as Sir William's right-hand man, Andrew Noble and his family became regular guests at Cragside from their Jesmond Dene home. They were often accompanied by JMF who was offered the position as resident tutor to two of Sir Andrew's sons, thus coming to the north-east. He then became private secretary to Sir Andrew and later still secretary to the company itself. He finally rose to be company Chairman.

Other frequent visitors to Cragside were General Sir John Miller Adye and his family. But who was Sir John Miller Adye? Adye had had a lengthy and

illustrious military career which had seen him serving with distinction during the Crimean War in which he saw action at the major battles of Alma, Balaclava, Inkerman and Sevastopol. Later he was involved in suppressing the Indian Mutiny and then quelling unrest on the North-West frontier. After this he returned home to become Director of Artillery and Stores at the War Office and then, in 1875, Adye became Governor of the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. Promoted to Major-General by 1880, Adye rose even further to become Surveyor-General of Ordnance at the instigation of Prime Minister Gladstone. But the culmination of his career came when in 1883 he became Governor-General of Gibraltar, a position he held until retirement in 1886.



**Li-Hung-Chang; General Adye;
and Lord Armstrong at Cragside
in 1896 (1)**

Partly through membership of London's Athenaeum Club but more particularly through his prominence at the War Office, John Adye had by the early 1870s been brought into contact with William Armstrong and Elswick's major share-holder brothers George and Stuart Rendel. These friendships as well as business dealings brought the Adyes to the north-east and to both Elswick and Cragside. So through business at Elswick and socially at Cragside the Adye family, Lord and Lady Armstrong, the Noble family and JMF developed what were to become lasting friendships. They occasionally met at the Adye London home of 92, St. George's Square S.W. but also at Cragside.

John Adye's wife Mary Cordelia (née Stopford) bore six children who themselves became familiar with Cragside, so much so that one of the

daughters, Winifreda, in 1889 married Lord Armstrong's great-nephew and heir William Watson who at the time of this marriage changed his surname to Watson-Armstrong by royal license. The youngest of the Adye children was Evelyn Violet. (2) In 1899 she married John Meade Falkner and they settled at The Divinity House, Palace Green, Durham City which JMF had acquired only months before. This had been the Durham Grammar School and the Headmaster's house and was so spectacularly placed within twenty-five yards of the Cathedral that this was to remain the Falkners' home until JMF's death in 1932.

No.	Name	Date and Duration	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence at the time of Marriage	Minister's Name and Signature	Date of Publication of Banns
385	William Watson	1899	41	Bachelor	Secretary to a Public Firm	No. 10, Riverside, Durham	John Meade Falkner	1899
	Evelyn Violet Adye	1899	30	Spinster	None	92, St. George's Lane, Durham	John Meade Falkner	1899

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by _____ or other Person by us _____

This Marriage was solemnized before us _____

The Registrar _____

The Falkners' Marriage Certificate

On the death of Lord Armstrong in December 1900 his great nephew William Watson-Armstrong inherited both Craggside and Bamburgh Castle. William's father John Watson, Lord Armstrong's nephew and nearest relative, was still alive but being in his seventies and a severe depressive he was passed over as regards inheritance. Shortly to be ennobled as Lord and Lady Armstrong of Bamburgh and Craggside (Watson was not included in the baronetcy's title) they used Craggside as their principal residence. With Sir John Adye having died suddenly on a visit to Craggside in August 1900, only four months before Lord Armstrong himself, Winifreda's widowed mother took up almost permanent residence at Craggside to live alongside her daughter and son-in-law. Lady Adye threw herself into good works in the local community and was deeply mourned in Rothbury and its surrounds when she died in 1912.

The Adyes' affection for Craggside and Northumberland was demonstrated when both Sir John and Lady Adye chose Rothbury parish church as their burial site. In time they were to be followed by other members of their family. The parish church of All Saints in the centre of Rothbury has adjacent to its churchyard extension a secluded private area, known as 'the lower churchyard', overhanging the River Coquet and which Lord

Armstrong had chosen as his wife's then his own final resting place. Close by Lord Armstrong's headstone General Sir John Adye, his wife, his daughter his son-in-law and grand-daughter are buried. All were JMF's in-laws. Sadly in recent years there has been desecration of all but one of the Adye headstones but the bases remain with their inscriptions still legible. The upkeep of this private section of the lower graveyard is not the responsibility of the parish but has for many years been undertaken by a retired local.

The Adyes left their stamp on both Cragside and Rothbury, some of which is of interest to our Society: In October 1892 Winifreda Watson-Armstrong gave birth to a son and heir (3) and there survives a letter her sister Evelyn, JMF's future wife, wrote to her brother-in-law at Cragside expressing her congratulations. It is a rare example of Evelyn's handwriting, but much more important is what the letter betrays in revealing Evelyn's warm nature. It is worth setting out the letter in full:



Winifreda Jane Watson-Armstrong (née Adye)

**John Meade Falkner's
sister-in-law**

Monday evening
October 10th '92

92, St. George's Square
London S.W.

My dearest Willy,

I must write and tell you how very very pleased we were to get your telegram and how relieved we are that it has all gone off so well. We are all so glad it is a boy. I don't know when I have ever felt so pleased about anything in my life as when we got the news tonight; and how relieved you must be and how proud you must feel of it. Give dear Winny my very very best love, and tell her how very glad I am. My hand is shaking so from excitement that I can hardly write, and we are all in the same state. Mamma will have arrived by this time. All day long we have been on the lookout for a telegram and you can imagine when it did come how excited we were. The whole house shook and echoed with our shrieks of joy and we all felt we must all write to you. Mind you write and tell us just what the baby is like, and give it a very nice kiss from me and dear Winny too. I am going to write to her too when she is stronger; mind you take great care of her and the baby. I am sure it is a dear little thing, and I long to see it, and I am also sure if it is like you and Winny it will be one of the nicest babies in the world.

Good-bye, dearest Willy
Ever your very affectionate
Sister-in-law
Evelyn Violet Adye (4)

It was to be another seven years before Evelyn was to marry JMF but clearly JMF was already becoming one of the 'inner circle' as can be seen in a letter of congratulation sent to Winifreda's husband on the birth of the heir. It is dated three weeks after Evelyn's letter:

Elswick Works
Newcastle upon Tyne
November 4th 1892

My Dear Watson-Armstrong,

When I was stopping at Craggside last I left a book called The Colleges of Oxford, I think in the library. It is a shiny dark blue cloth book. Could you tell your butler to send it to me here. It would be very kind if you would and I am sorry to bother you by leaving it about.

Please accept my best congratulations on the arrival of the 'heir'. I don't know whether it is etiquette to congratulate ladies in these matters, but if it is I wish you would present my compliments to Mrs Watson-Armstrong on the occasion. I was very pleased to hear of it on my return.

Ever Yours.

J.M. Falkner (5)

Some might think the second paragraph might have been more appropriately placed before the first and some might think the wording suggests that here is a bachelor of mature years. But let's hope JMF at the very least had his book returned!

Reforms in the tax system meant that in 1977 the burden of death duties led to the Watson-Armstrongs handing over Cragside and its contents to the National Trust. Visitors will find that not only the rooms are crammed with objects - typical of Victorian times - but the corridors too are lined with photographs, prints, paintings, stuffed animal heads and other curiosities. The photographs and prints include members of the Armstrong and Watson-Armstrong families, the Adye family and the Nobles, but there are also a number of paintings executed by John Miller Adye.



View of Gibraltar

John Adye had always been a very enthusiastic, talented and well-regarded artist. Even when in remote parts of the world and involved in campaigns he always seemed to find the opportunity to indulge in what was clearly a

passion. He occasionally painted in exposed positions seemingly oblivious to the dangers around him. There are more than twenty of his paintings at Cragside and some at other National Trust properties. There is a collection of Gibraltar scenes at the Victoria and Albert Museum and two of Adye's finest works hang in the National Army Museum. Subjects are diverse and feature places in India and Northumberland. There is one which is a general scene of Darjeeling, another is a distant view of the tomb of a Moghul king, a number show mountain scenes on the North-West frontier, two of scenes within Jesmond Dene in Newcastle (home of the Nobles), and there are many more of Cragside and the Rothbury area. John Miller Adye was a writer too, and amongst published books featuring his military experiences are *Recollections of a Military Life* (1895) and *Indian Frontier Policy* (1897).

There are records and newspaper reports that show Lady Adye, often accompanied by one or more of her daughters, involved herself in the life of the local community. One such example is seen in The Rothbury Parish Magazine for October 1895 where there is a detailed report of a Fancy Dress Bazaar in aid of the restoration of the roof of All Saints church. Both Lady Adye and the as yet unmarried Evelyn assisted in a number of ways - the mother as a judge in various competitions and Evelyn working energetically on a centre-piece stall arranged by Mrs Watson-Armstrong and which had a decorated Moorish front backed by a beautiful array of flowers and heathers from Cragside. In 1912 Lady Adye died at the family's London home and, after the coffin was transported from London by rail to Rothbury, the funeral cortege solemnly made its way from Cragside into Rothbury and to the Armstrong and Adye private burial plot at All Saints church. The church has at the west end memorials to both Sir John and his wife. Above the west door, so high up and so tarnished that it is difficult to decipher and photograph, is a brass plaque which is inscribed with:

To the Glory of God and in loving memory of General Sir John Adye G.C.B., Colonel-Commandant Royal Artillery, who was born in Sevenoaks, in the County of Kent, Nov.1st 1819, and who died at Cragside on Sunday, August 26th,1900 aged 80 years. The west window was erected by his daughter, Winifreda Watson-Armstrong, and his son-in-law, W.A. Watson-Armstrong, of Cragside, Rothbury, in the County of Northumberland, April 1901.

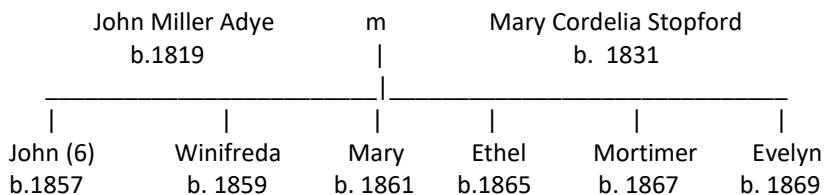


John Adye at Cragside days before his death in 1900

The north wall has wooden panelling with a brass plaque reading:

*This panelling was given by her children in memory of Mary Cordelia, Lady Adye
Born 24th July 1831. Died 14th February 1912.*

General Adye and his wife Mary had six children and the 1881 census shows the entire family to be resident at 92, St. George's Square London SW along with seven servants:





**92, St. George's Square
The Adye family home**

Winifreda married William Watson-Armstrong in 1889 and as heirs to Lord Armstrong both had high standing in the community. Within a few weeks of her marriage Winifreda was given the honour of launching a ship intended for the Australian navy at Elswick with members of her family as well as Lord Armstrong gathered around her. A photograph of this event shows Sir John, with his grey whiskers and top hat, standing in the centre behind his daughter Winifreda.

Following the death of Lord Armstrong the people of Rothbury subscribed towards an imposing memorial in the form of a cross placed in the centre of the village green. Present at its 1902 unveiling were principal members of the Watson-Armstrong and Adye families and the long-serving Cragside butler Andrew Crozier.

Following her death at the age of 54 in 1914, an obituary of Winifreda, Lady Armstrong appeared in the *Newcastle Daily Journal*. It stated: Lady Armstrong's death will be widely mourned in the North for she had a kindly, amiable disposition that won her many friends. And she was closely interested in a number of social and philanthropic organisations. Particularly in Coquetdale where she chiefly made her home will her loss be felt and there will be much sympathy with Lord Armstrong and his son in their bereavement. Her ladyship was a vice-president of the County Nursing Association and she did much in the direction of introducing handicrafts in the homes of the people in the villages of the North Country.

Her gravestone was inscribed with a quotation from Tennyson's poem *Lady Clara Vere de Vere*:

*Kind hearts are more than coronets
And simple faith than Norman blood.*

Although exactly one hundred years have passed since the stone was put into place these words still give food for thought.

Following JMF's death in 1932, Evelyn continued to live at The Divinity House, Durham, for several years before moving to London where she died at 12, Palace Gardens, Kensington, in 1940. Her ashes were laid with a memorial plaque next to those of her husband at the church of St. John the Baptist, Burford, Oxfordshire.

Other than at Rothbury and at Cragside, the Adyes have left their mark in another, unexpected, place in Northumberland. In the remote north-west of the county, not far from Catcleugh which JMF was so fond of visiting in his capacity as a director of the Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company, is a village known as Ridsdale. Here between 1836 and 1839 an ironworks was built, but by 1848 the controlling company had fallen into severe financial difficulties and was thus closed down. After standing idle until 1864 the site was acquired by Sir William G. Armstrong and Co. with two of the blast furnaces dismantled and moved to the Armstrong works at Elswick. After a period of inactivity calcinating kilns were built on the site in 1876 to process ironstone from local sources. This venture only lasted for four years and from 1880 the ironworks site again fell into disuse. But another initiative was introduced by Armstrong - the testing of Armstrong guns on the vast expanses of nearby moorland. This testing continued and in more recent times the 1,000 facility tests and proof fires ammunition up to 155mm calibre.

The village of Ridsdale was home to the Armstrong employees and, as was the case with some of the workforce housing at Elswick, the street names for this village were chosen from the Elswick directors, their families and places associated with them. Amongst them were Armstrong Street, Rendle (*sic*) Street (7), Westmacott Street (8) and St. George's Square - this latter a tribute to the Adye family home in St. George's Square, London. Ridsdale's solitary public house, The Gun Inn, is another reminder of the past. This current name is taken from the famous Armstrong Gun but from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s it had been known as The Armstrong Arms. Stretching far beyond the village and the remains of the ironworks

are the gun ranges, now overseen by BAE Systems, with gunfire regularly echoing along the Rede valley.

So in Northumberland there are echoes of the Adye family at Rothbury, echoes at Craggsdale and echoes (literally) at Ridsdale.

1. Amongst records of illustrious visitors to Craggsdale is a photograph marking the visit in 1896 of Chinese politician and diplomat Li-Hung-Chang. This photograph shows him splendidly attired in silks and sitting alongside both Lord Armstrong and Sir John Adye. Following Li-Hung-Chang's visit to Craggsdale the Chinese navy placed a lucrative order with Armstrong's, and before his return to China he was presented by the Queen herself with the Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victoria Order.

2. It would seem Lord Armstrong had a particular affection for Evelyn for on 14th November 1893 he signed an indenture in consideration of the affection Baron Armstrong has for Evelyn Violet Adye and which put in trust the income from six hundred company shares granted to her. Further to this, in the days leading up to Evelyn's marriage to JMF, Lord Armstrong signed a deed which stated that provided JMF and Evelyn marry within a month Evelyn, should she ever be widowed, be paid two hundred and thirty pounds per annum, this sum paid to her in quarterly instalments. This deed was signed on 17th October 1899, and no time was wasted for it was the very next day, Wednesday 18th October 1899, that the marriage was solemnized at St. Saviour's Church, Pimlico, close to the Adye family home in St. George's Square

3. William John Montagu Watson-Armstrong (1892-1972) was thus the nephew of JMF. He was mentioned in dispatches whilst serving in France during the Great War and was severely wounded at the Battle of St. Julien in 1915. He inherited the baronetcy in 1941 to become the 2nd Baron Armstrong of Bamburgh and Craggsdale. He died in 1972. On the death of the third Baron in 1987 the title became extinct. Winifreda Margaret (Winny) was JMF's niece. Born in 1894 she died suddenly of meningitis in

March 1912 whilst visiting Paris, aged seventeen. So Evelyn Falkner lost her mother and a niece within a few weeks of each other.

4. Letter from Evelyn Violet Adye to William Watson-Armstrong (Ref. No. DF/A/24/1/45 Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums)

5. Letter from John Meade Falkner to William Watson-Armstrong (Ref. No. DF/A/20/15 Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums)

6. Lieutenant John Adye was the son of General John Miller Adye and therefore JMF's brother-in-law. He joined the Royal Artillery in 1870. He fought in the Afghan War in 1879, the Egyptian War in 1882 and was involved in engagements during the Nile Expedition of 1884-5 and East Sudan in the latter year. He also saw action in South Africa 1899-1902, being the Officer Commanding North West districts, Cape Colony 1900. From these campaigns he emerged with a number of 'mentioned in dispatches', the C.B. and received five clasps to other medals. He went on to command the Royal Artillery in Mauritius, acted as colonel on Malta for a period and then during a four year period as Staff officer at the War Office was promoted to major-general. He was Major-General in charge of administration, Eastern Command, from 1912-1915, then, following his appointment as Inspector-General of Communications based in Salonika, he was part of Allenby's victorious advance. In 1918 he returned to the War Office as Deputy Director and was created K.C.M.G. His career reached its zenith when 1926 he became Commander of the Royal Artillery.



Major General Sir John Adye

Sir John Adye wrote a book of reminiscences called *Soldiers and Others I have Known* (1925) and illustrated them with a selection of sketches he had made from as far back as 1879. In his declining years he tried his hand at novels, one of which - *At the House of the Priest* (1925) - holding indications that he may have been directly influenced by JMF. Sir John Adye died in October 1930 with *The Times'* obituary concluding with "No-one who came into contact with Sir John can have failed to have formed a deep affection for his kindly personality".



**John Adye also wrote this
mystery novel under the
mildly pseudonymous
'John Daye'**

7. Described by Wikipedia as a British industrialist, philanthropist and Liberal politician, Stuart Rendel (created 1st Baron Rendel of Hatchlands in the County of Surrey in 1894) was for a period manager of the London branch of Sir W.G. Armstrong and Co. and later became the company's major shareholder. His brother George also had a career at Armstrong's, holding a variety of positions which included managing the subsidiary works at Pozzuoli near Naples. He later became one of the seven partners in the company.

8. Joining W.G. Armstrong and Co. as a draughtsman in 1851, Percy Westmacott rose to become a partner in the company in 1864. In 1882 the company merged with the shipbuilding firm of Charles Mitchell to form Sir W. G. Armstrong Mitchell and Co. to which Westmacott was appointed Managing Director.