

## **FORTUNATUS AUGUSTINE DAVIS SCUDAMORE (1846-1904), PLAYWRIGHT.**

**By Warren Skidmore**

One of the minor mysteries about the Scudamore family has been the parentage of Fortunatus Augustine Scudamore and his relationship to the actress Margaret Scudamore. She was the mother of Sir Michael Scudamore Redgrave, and the founder of this well-known theatrical family. Let us start with what was commonly believed, and repeated when the Redgraves were the subject of a long cover story headed “Birds of a *Father* [Sir Michael]” in 1967 for *Time* magazine.<sup>1</sup> The author begins:

Once there was an Englishman named Fortunatus Augustus [*sic*] Scudamore. He wrote atrocious Victorian melodramas, and it served him quite right when in 1907 his daughter Margaret married an actor chap named Roy Redgrave. The marriage was a bad show, but before it closed in Australia three years later, Roy and Margaret had inadvertently established a s simply smashing theatrical dynasty. It has flourished in England for three decades, but within the last year the Redgraves have been recognized on both sides of the Atlantic as the first family of stage and screen, the nearest thing to the Barrymores that the era has produced.<sup>2</sup>

After a long an interesting account of the state of the theater in the West End of London and on Broadway in New York in the mid-1960s the article ends,

They [Lynne and Vanessa Redgrave] are both inspired actresses - - birds of a father - - who seem sure to enjoy quite a flutter in the next few years. Some time this spring Lynn will fly to London to make a movie with Rita Tushingham. Some time this summer, with Camelot in the can, Vanessa will fly to Turkey to make *The Charge of the Light Brigade* with Director Richardson - - they agree that their divorce, which by then will probably be final, will not affect their relationship. The girls have everything going for them, including the rumbustious new scene in cinema. The way things have turned out, after all, would surely cause a silent tear of joy to course down the whiskery cheek of Fortunatus Augustus Scudamore.

Fortunatus, alas, was not born a Scudamore nor did he have a daughter Margaret.. He was Fortunatus Augustine *Davis*, and his birth was recorded just so in 1846 in the Stroud Registration

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<sup>1</sup>*Time*, 17 March 1967.

<sup>2</sup>See the article by Charles Kidd, *The Redgrave and Connected Families*, *Genealogists' Magazine*, XXVIII, no. 9 (March 2006), 396-408 for an article and tabular pedigree of the Redgrave family. It notes that Margaret Scudamore's paternity “is still disputed” which this paper does clarify.

District in Gloucestershire. Davis had married Ellen Sheridan Gillet on 9 April 1874 at Bristol, but before the birth of his first child, a son, in 1877 he had changed his surname from Davis to Scudamore which it is said that he considered more elegant<sup>3</sup>. He continued to retain the name Davis before Scudamore, and this form was followed by his wife and children. He was at various times an actor, a theatrical manager (so-called at the birth of his daughter Mary Mabel Scudamore), and finally a playwright. He wrote 22 plays, all of them long-forgotten, and only one of them is to be found on the shelves at the British Library.<sup>4</sup>

He died alone, aged 58, at 8 Castleman Mansions at Barnes in Surrey between the 1 November 1904 (when he was last seen by the boy delivering his milk) and the following Sunday (6 November) when he was found about 1:30 p.m. by Margaret Scudamore. She identified the body as that of her *uncle*, who she said she was in the habit of visiting every Sunday. His wife was away, and he had collapsed in his kitchen wearing household gloves, apparently intending to “blacklead” his stove.<sup>5</sup>

Margaret Scudamore (who was not his niece or daughter) was not remembered in his will dated 13 October 1904. His wife Ellen Sheridan Davis Scudamore was left all his household effects, and all of the acting rights and copyrights in his plays and dramatic works.<sup>6</sup> His children Mary Mabel Davis Scudamore, a spinster, and Lionel Ernest Davis Scudamore (an actor) were the residual heirs who were to share his estate equally after the death of his wife.

Margaret Scudamore was born at Portsmouth on 13 November 1884 (as *Daisy Bertha Mary*) and the daughter of William George Scudamore, a shipwright, and his wife Clara Linington. The young Daisy went up to London hoping for a career on the stage. She talked to an agent in Maiden Lane who suggested that she go and see the playwright who seems, coincidentally, to have taken her true family’s surname. The agent gave her the address in Barnes of Fortunatus, the actor-playwright-manager, who was described as “most cheerful” man. When he found Daisy on his doorstep he was clearly in an extravagant mood for he threw his arms about her neck, and cried “If you are not my [Scudamore] daughter, then I don’t know whose daughter you may be!” She was welcomed into the household and lived with his wife and children for a time, apparently until Fortunatus did find work for her as an actress in London..

At the time of her first marriage to George Ellsworthy (“Roy”) Redgrave he was living at 2 Birnam Terrace, Govan, while his bride *Daisy B. M. Scudamore* was living at 63 Galletly Street in Dundee, Scotland. They were married on 23 September 1907 at 4 Minerva Street, Glasgow in the presence of William James Butler, an actor, and Mary Heath, an entertainer. Their marriage was later dissolved about four years after the birth of Sir Michael, and Daisy Redgrave was known thereafter by her stage name Margaret Scudamore.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The birth of *Lionel Ernest Davis Scudamore* was recorded in the Barton Registration District.

<sup>4</sup>*The White Blind. A realistic and sensational story.* (Bristol, J. W. Armstrong, 1889).

<sup>5</sup>*Lloyds Weekly News*, 13 November 1904.

<sup>6</sup>On 7 May 1906 Mrs E. S. D. Scudamore signed an agreement assigning eight of plays of her late husband to the management of Walter and Frederick Melville.

<sup>7</sup>Margaret Scudamore married secondly James P. Anderson, formerly employed by the Ceylon and Eastern Agency, in 1922 at London.

The earliest member of Margaret's family to be certainly identified is a Thomas Scudamore of Woolwich, Kent, her great-great-grandfather, who was born about 1747.<sup>8</sup> He was apprenticed in 1762 to Thomas Roberts, a quartermaster of Deptford. St. Paul, London. He married Elizabeth Diaper on 22 October 1774 at East Greenwich and took his family from Woolwich to Hampshire about 1780. He was employed as a shipwright at Whippingham on the Isle of Wight, where he was buried on 25 November 1800, aged 53. They had (as known) three children,

- i. Thomas, born 3 November 1775, of whom further.
- ii. Elizabeth, born 6 March (baptized on 25 March at St. Mary Magdalene, Woolwich on 25 March) 1778. She was buried, an infant, on 8 October 1778.
- iii. Sarah, baptized at St. Mary Portsea, Hampshire, on 7 October 1781.

The only son, Thomas Scudamore, was born on 3 November (baptized on 18 November at St. Mary Magdalene, Woolwich) 1775. He married Mary Rimer (1779-1850) on 19 January 1800 at Whippingham. He was a journeyman shipwright, and was buried at East Cowes on 14 August 1864, aged 87. They had 14 children, all christened at Whippingham,

- i. Elizabeth, born 25 April (baptized 4 May) 1800. She was born deaf and dumb and died unmarried at Whippingham on 5 April 1873.
- ii. William, born 30 July (baptized 9 August) 1801, of whom further.
- iii. Thomas, of Hamble-le-Rice, Hampshire, born 12 December (baptized 26 December) 1802. He married Hannah (who died in 1867), the daughter of Henry Ethridge and previously the widow of \_\_\_\_\_ Mason. He was a shipwright at East Cowes where he was buried on 9 June 1861. They had no children.
- iv. John, born 6 January (baptized 3 February) 1805. He died an infant and was buried at Whippingham on 20 September 1807.
- v. Sarah, born 8 November (baptized 7 December) 1806. She died an infant the same year.
- vi. Mary Ann, born 6 November (baptized 11 December) 1808. She married Charles Heffer on 21 June 1842 at Christ Church, St. Marylebone, London.
- vii. Jane, born 3 February (baptized 28 February) 1810. She was buried, unmarried, at Whippingham on 18 November 1830.
- viii. Eliza, born 5 April (baptized 3 May) 1812.
- ix. Matilda, born 27 October (baptized 20 November) 1814. She married Thomas Hyder on 18 December 1842 at Christ Church, St. Marylebone, London.
- x. George, born 25 October (baptized 24 November) 1816. He never married and was buried at East Cowes on 17 August 1842.
- xi. Martha, baptized 9 May 1819. She married James Attrill in 1844.
- xii. Emma, born 6 November (baptized 8 December) 1822. She died in childhood, and was buried at Whippingham on 28 February 1832.

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<sup>8</sup>This account of the family at Woolwich, Kent and at Whippingham is almost entirely the work in 1992 of the late John Hunt of Potton, Bedfordshire. However I later suggested that this Thomas may have been kin of a John Scudamore, a *shipwright*, from Presteigne, Radnorshire who went up to the city of London. He was called of \_\_\_\_\_ in Surrey when his will was proved on 17 January 1742 at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. His wife Elinor survived him (as did a sister Margaret back at Presteigne), but no children are mentioned in his will. The Scudamores at Presteigne were a branch of the principal family at Kentchurch Court in Herefordshire.

- xiii. Henry, born 23 April (baptized 23 May) 1824. He died in infancy and was buried at Whippingham, on 10 October 1824.
- xiv. Joseph, of Hamble-le-Rice, baptized 13 November 1825. He married firstly Elizabeth Ratty (1831-1874), and secondly Ann Ratty (1821-1905), a spinster aged 47, on 25 October 1874 at Southampton. He was a shipwright and died at Hamble in 1907 having had six children by his first wife.

The eldest son, William Scudamore, of Whippingham and East Cowes, was born on 30 July (baptized at Whippingham on 9 August) 1801. He married firstly Mary Ridgely (1807-1834) who died at Whippingham on 3 July 1834, by whom he had,

- i. Mary Jane, born 19 January (baptized at Whippingham on 24 October) 1830. She married William Dell on 25 April 1853 at Whippingham.
- ii. Harriett, born 14 April (baptized 15 May) 1831. She married John Sargent, a policeman of 22 King Street) on 23 January 1863 at St. George's, Hanover Square, London.
- iii. William, of London (and Chatham and Gillingham, Kent). He was baptized at East Cowes on 22 1833. He married firstly on 9 December 1858 at Lee in Lewisham, London, Rebecca Chapple (1835-1966). They had no children. He married secondly at St. Mary's, Rotherhithe, Sarah Ann Smith. He was a shipwright at the Clapham and Gilliam Dockyards. He died on 7 July 1889 leaving seven children by his second wife.

William Scudamore married secondly Mary Bascombe (1813-1906) in 1837 at Whippingham. He was a shipwright at East Cowes, and was buried at Whippingham on 17 November 1839 leaving three young children. His widow supported her family as postmistress at Whippingham after his death. They had,

- iv. Henry, born 1837. He was an apprentice shipwright at Whippingham in 1851.
- v. Eliza, baptized at Whippingham on 23 September 1838. She married Edward Harvey in 1863.
- vi. William George (posthumous), born 5 May (baptized at East Cowes on 31 May) 1840, of whom further.

His youngest son, William George Scudamore, a posthumous child, was born at Whippingham on 5 May 1840. He married Clara Linington (1839-1925) in 1869 at Marylebone, London. A shipwright, he died at Portsmouth in 1916, leaving five children born at Portsea. His widow Clara Scudamore died at Portsmouth in 1925.<sup>9</sup> They had five children,

- i. William George, born 1870. He died an infant in 1871.
- ii. Clara Annie, baptized at St. Mary's, Portsea on 29 December 1872. She married Ernest John Stevens Blanchard on 27 October 1894 at Portsea.
- iii. Alice May, born 1876. She married William Frederick Knowler on 24 September 1903 at Portsmouth.
- iv. Beatrice Rose, born 1877. She married Arthur Norman Creyke on 27 November

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<sup>9</sup>Rachel Kempson (Lady Redgrave) sold all of her husband's papers to The Theatre Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2000. They are housed at Blythe House, near Olympia, in London. There are five surviving letters there from her mother to Margaret Scudamore dated from 190-? to 1925.

1909 at Portsmouth.

- v. Daisy Bertha Mary, born 1880. She became the actress, Margaret Scudamore. Her long stage career is best noticed in *The Times* obituary of 8 October 1958 which repeated the error that F. A. Scudamore was her father. It may be taken as certain that Fortunatus Augustine Davis Scudamore acted in *loco parentis* to Margaret, and that undoubtedly she returned the kindness of his family to her with affection.

**Daisy as actress, Margaret Scudamore**

