

**THE REGISTERS OF THE PARISH
OF ASKHAM IN THE COUNTY
OF WESTMORELAND, FROM
1566 TO 1812**

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MARY E. NOBLE

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OF THE
PARISH OF ASKHAM





ASKRAM CHURCH, SHOWING SANDFORD CHAPEL.

THE REGISTERS
OF THE
PARISH OF ASKHAM

In the County of Westmoreland
from 1566 to 1812.

EDITED BY

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ASKHAM.

THE Parish of Askham is situated in that district of North Westmoreland which formed part of the ancient kingdom of Cumbria, and was therefore subject to the incursions of the Scotch, on whose claim to this part of the country a new light seems to be thrown by the recent discovery at Lowther, by the Rev. F. W. Ragg, of an interesting deed or charter, from Gospatrick, the probable ruler of the district in the reign of William the Conqueror. Whether the county did, or did not, belong to the kingdom of Scotland, it is certain the Scotch vigorously maintained their claim to it, which was as vigorously resisted, leading to much unrest and continual fighting in the disputed territory, in which Askham doubtless participated, as in the time of Edward III. the country south of Penrith suffered very considerably for two or three years from an incursion of the Scotch, before they were again driven back across the Solway ; and a reference to the Alien Rolls shows many "Scots" settled in the district.

The Parish apparently contained two manors, Askham, and Helton Flechane or Fleckett. The latter belonged to Robert de Morville in the reign of Edward I., and seems to have been divided between his daughters and co-heiresses, Margaret, who married a Wessington, and Idonea, the younger, who married Robert English lord of the manor of Little Ashby. The Wessington moiety was held by them in the reign of Edward III. On March 18th, 1523, one half was granted by the Prior and Convent of Mount-Grace in Yorkshire, to Sir John Lowther, and amongst the monks of Mount-Grace who were pensioned at the dissolution are two local names, Henry Ayreye and Geoffry Hodgeson.

On March 1st, 1526, the other half was exchanged by Sir John Mallory, for lands at Sedbergh, with Sir John Lowther.

The English family held the other moiety till the marriage of the heiress of the family, Idonea, with Edmund de Sandford of Warcop, in the reign of Edward III.

In 1340, Thomas English obtained a grant of free warren at Helton Flechane, with licence to impark the wood of Satron, on the south side of which, much of the old park wall is still standing.

S. H. m.

In the reign of Henry III. the manor of Askham was given to Sir Thomas de Holbeck.

In the reign of Edward II. it was held by the Swinburn family.

In the latter part of the reign of Edward III., Robert de Swynburn conveyed it to William de Sandford, senior clerk ; William de Sandford, junior clerk ; Thomas Bannay ; and Edmund de Sandford, who all joined in a conveyance two years later to William Collynson, and the following year William Collynson reconveyed the same to Edmund de Sandford, who appears to have taken up his residence at Askham Hall about this period.

A few years later, William de Hoton in Foresta and William de Bolton, quit claim to Sir William de Sandford, knight, of all their right in the manor of Askham, with the mill there and other lands elsewhere. (Burn and Nicholson.)

In 1523, a certain Hugh Cleburn, son of Thomas and Johanna (née Sandford, of Askham Hall), with his brethren and kinsmen, made a night attack on Askham Hall and carried off Grace (née Crackenthorpe), the wife of Thomas Sandford his cousin, an heiress,* a family feud apparently amicably settled.

A daughter of the last Sandford of Askham Hall also appears to have married a Crackenthorpe.

The Sandfords continued to hold the manor of Askham, and half Helton Flechane, with the tithes and advowson which they had bought at the dissolution, till 1654, when the manor and tithes were sold to Richard Lowther, Esq. They were the senior branch of the Sandfords of Howgill, and were at one time amongst the most important families in the county, carrying with them to battle a following of 80 horse and 20 foot. Three families only had a larger following : Strickland of Kendall, 200 horse ; Sir John Lowther, 100 horse and 40 foot ; and Blenkinsop of Hilbeck, 120 horse.

Askham Hall, where they lived, was one of the largest of the old border towers. Its precise date seems unknown, but in 1574 it was enlarged at the back, and probably altered by Thomas Sandford, who recorded the event in a quaint inscription over the gate in the courtyard. The family of the Sandfords of Askham Hall, became extinct in the male line in 1730, after which the Tathams held the Hall for a time, and later it was

* Rev. W. F. Ragg, from " State Papers. "

the residence of the Boltens and of the Kings, and was finally bought by William Earl of Lonsdale in 1815. It is now the residence of the rector of Lowther.

The Myddeltons are another family mentioned in the register, who apparently resided in Askham and were connected with the Sandfords, and so also is a branch of the Threlkeld family.

It is interesting to note how many of the old names mentioned in 1566 are still to be found, or were until recently, for the last fifty years have left more blanks amongst the old yeoman families than centuries before.

We find no entry connecting the Laws of Askham with the Laws of Bampton, from which family the Bishop was descended, but that there was such a connection there can be little doubt.

The church stands close to the river Lowther, and was enumerated by Grose amongst the most remarkable edifices in Westmoreland, a distinction not now apparent. It is said to be dedicated to St. Peter, but in a document at the Record Office it is spoken of as the church of "St. Kentigern of Askham," in connection with the Priory of Wartre in Yorkshire, to the canons of which Priory it was granted by Pope Innocent II. in the 2nd year of his pontificate, and they also held half a carucate of land in the parish.

Two of the priors of Wartre were called Holme—Henry de Holme in 1380, and William Holme the last prior before the dissolution. What makes this noteworthy is, that in 1375 Henry de Holme, a canon of Wartre, was vicar of Askham, and that there is a family of Holme living in Heltondale, running through the earlier register in which both these names are usual.

The church is thus described by Bishop Nicholson in 1704:—

"The Church yard, wherein there are no Monuments, is but ill fenced; and the entrance into the Southern Door of the Church (seldom used but when they bring in a Corpse, or by some prescribers of Helton) is almost grown up. The walls are very low and crazy. In the quire the Communion Table is well rail'd in, and very decent. Both ye Lady Lonsdale (in whose hand the Impropriation is at present) and Mr. Sandford, who sold the Tithes to the late Lord, have Seats here. Before the latter of these, in the Entrance into the Chancell, lyes a large gravestone (under which was lately discovered a great Lead Coffin) thus inscribed: HOHS DE CLAYWORTH.*

* Hodgson says, John de Claworth.

✓ "The Women's Seats in the Body of the Church (which wants whitening) are without Backs; but those for the men well enough.

"They have two pretty good Bells, and a convenient Font.

"Mr. Sandford has a large Isle in the South, which wants beautifying as much as any other part. No other use has been made of it (in appearance, since the Impropriation came first into the hands of that family) save for ye Burial of their Dead. The present Patron's former Wife lyes here interred; and over her Grave, on a Black Marble Monument in a Table of White is this Epitaph . . ." (The Inscription is florid and lengthy).

"Underneath an arch in the same aisle is an old monument, whereon is now only legible:—

WILL. S. DE SANTONE.

"B. Oley's Books, given to this Parish, are all safe in Mr. Seed's hands, having never had a Repository in ye Church.* A Commutation of Pennance assign'd this summer for the beautifying of the Body of the Church."

51 Burn and Nicholson say: "The church is a small old building with two little bells. Upon the timber in the body of the church are the letters E. D. T. S. 1593; for Edmund Dudley and Thomas Sandford, who probably gave timber for the repair thereof. And upon one of the coupling beams are the letters J. B., supposed to mark the timber contributed by John Bradley of Knipe."

An entry in the Lowther register records the marriage of an Anthonie Braydley and Agnes Sandfurth in 1544, and may thus explain the connection of the Braydleys with Askham.

The following account of the rebuilding of the church, chiefly at the cost of the Earl of Lonsdale, was lately sent from Australia by the late Mr. J. Noble Wilson, and was written by his father:—

✓ "Memorandum made June, 1832. The Parish Church of Askham falling into decay, was, with the consent of William, Earl of Lonsdale the Patron, Pearcy, Lord Bishop of Carlisle, and churchwardens at the time, Kirkbride, Helton, and Bowman, Askham, and the mayor part of the Inhabitants of Askham Parish, did take down and rebuild on the same site, greatly improving the exterior, but particularly the Interior, by

* Bishop Oley's gift of books, the rules, and a list of Books, with the churches to which they were assigned, is to be found on page 7 of Bishop Nicholson's Visitation.