

Bygone Marsden



Bygone Marsden

by

LEWIS BUCKLEY WHITEHEAD

Printed by

PERCY BROTHERS LTD.,
The Hotspur Press,
Manchester.

Introduction

In compiling the following chapters of Marsden History, the author has tried to make each section in itself complete, and this has sometimes necessitated the repetition of details common to two or more sections.

Starting originally as a paper read at a Mutual Improvement Society in the village, the volume of matter accumulated in many directions, not only from reading local books and newspaper articles pertaining to the subject, but from many interesting conversations with old Marsden worthies who have long been gathered to their fathers.

To give a complete picture of local history is not my aim or intention. The chapters follow no arranged plan or dates, but pick up here and there items of interest which contribute some definite value to the story.

Tribute must be paid first to the many old Marsden men whom the author interviewed and from whom in some cases he received much valuable aid and advice. Notable amongst these was Joshua Bamforth, of Gatehead, but others whose reminiscences were of great value and interest were : Dan Pogson, Clough Lee ; Matthew Flint, Great Clough ; John Hall, Lane Head, Binn ; John Schofield, Inghead ; Samuel Holroyd, Longfall ; Charles Beighton, Church Lane ; Alison Garside, Dean ; George Marsden, Towngate ; William Fell, Towngate ; Robert Bower, Dirker ; James Armitage, The Wood ; Henry Bamforth, Longlands (Slaithwaite) ; William Holroyd, Smithy Holme ; Thomas Fielding, Booth Farm ; George Carter, Clough Lee ; George Dyson, Springfield ; and John T. Whitehead, The Grove.

Introduction, contd.

Of the books consulted and quoted from, the principal are : Canon Hulbert's "Annals of Almondbury" ; the Rev. Robert Meek's Diary ; the Rev. Joseph Hughes's "History of Meltham" ; Canon Hulbert's "Annals of Slaithwaite Church" ; Mayhall's "Annals of Yorkshire" ; Granger's "Longevity in Yorkshire" ; John Nelson's "Journal" ; the Rev. J. M. Maxfield's "Farewell Sermon" ; John Sykes's "Account of the Manor of Marsden" ; J. B. Robinson's "Memorials of the First Town School" ; Frank Peel's "History of the Luddites" ; John Sykes's "Life of William Schofield" ; the Rev. Luke Beaumont's "History of the Congregational Church in Marsden" ; and the Rev. A. R. Barrett's "Ye Chapell of Marsden."

Tribute must also be paid to the Editor of *The Colne Valley Guardian* for kindly allowing me to use much of the subject matter which I originally contributed to that journal in a series of special articles many years ago.

In addition to those who have helped me in the compilation of this book, I tender my thanks especially to Mr. S. J. Knowles, of Messrs. Percy Brothers, Ltd., Manchester, whose suggestions in regard to the preparation of the book have been of great value.

Acknowledgment must also be paid to Mr. Fred Russell, of Marsden, for his help in the verification of dates, and for his kind permission to reproduce the excellent photographs copyrighted by him. I also express my indebtedness to Dr. Grainger, of the Tolson Memorial Museum, Ravensknowle, Huddersfield, for courteously loaning me the blocks illustrating Ottiwells Mill and the Urns found on Pule Hill.

L. B. WHITEHEAD.

Huddersfield, 1942.

CONTENTS.

Bygone Marsden	13
Seventeenth Century	14
Eighteenth Century	24
Marsden Manor	32
The Lords of the Manor	33
Topical Life in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries	35
The Stocks	42
Curates and Incumbents of the Parish Church ...	45
The Church Day School	46
The Old Roads	47
The Packhorse Road Over Clowes Moor	52
Old Inns—Associations and Traditions	57
The Bridges	61
The Standedge Tunnels	66
The Reservoirs—Their Situation and Surroundings ...	70
The Mechanics' Hall	76
The Old Mills	82
Old Friendly Societies	91
The Iron Foundry and Its Story	94
Why is Marsden Called Bellas Town?	100
An Old Marsden Parson	105
The Wesleyan Chapel	110
An Early Baptist Communion	112
The Congregational Church	115
The Council School—An Historical Summary ...	117
The Park	118
Some Notable Personalities	120
Marsden Charities	124
The Musical Life of Marsden	126
Marsden's Most Famous Soldier—Major James Grime	131
Double Murder Committed on the Moors,	
September 9th, 1903	134
Marsden as Hero-Worshipper	136
Marsden and the Cuckoo Fable	140
Peacocks and Eagles in Marsden	142
Our Dialect	145
Royal Visits	146
Items of Interest	147

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

A General View of Present-day Marsden	...	<i>Frontispiece</i>
“Planks”	... ..	Facing page 29
Church Lane and the Stocks	... ..	„ 43
Old Witnesses, Packhorse Road Trial, April, 1908	... ..	„ 53
Marsden “Old Brig,” connecting the Waterside with Towngate	... ..	„ 65
The Old Church, Infants’ School, and Union Bridge	... ..	„ 73
Ottiwells Mill, better known as Kinder’s Mill	... ..	„ 87
Towngate	... ..	„ 105
Urns Found on Pule Hill	... ..	„ 123
Marsden old Co-operative Stores, “Th’ Paddock”	... ..	„ 137

BYGONE MARSDEN

IT is always a pleasure to peep into the past and to pry here and there into the times, conditions and accomplishments of a bygone age. Whether our attention be drawn to folk-lore, archæology, or the study of historical events, we invariably find matters of deep and abiding interest. The charm of retrospect appeals in many ways to the reflective mind. Out of a dim and distant past it delights in discovering the small links that bind generation to generation in material growth and well-being. It is right that age and antiquity should call for appreciation and consideration, for therein lies the secret of development.

This review of old Marsden history must of necessity be more or less discursive. Dates are essential, but when incidents can be introduced in association with dates and buildings I intend to use them.

In the first place, I may say that Marsden is supposed to have derived its name from two words, "Marsh"—a swampy place—and "Dean"—a valley. In an Inquisition made during the reign of Edward III, we find that Marsden was a hunting ground for the lord of Pontefract, and that it is therein described as a forest two and a half miles long and two miles broad, in which there were six places called "booths" with ox-stalls, a grange (barn) and other buildings.

The herbage of the forest, with pasturage for six bulls and 26 cows, was valued at £13 6s. 8d., besides underwood, pannage, and other proceeds which are reckoned. Pannage consisted of the acorns which fell from the trees in the forest, on which the swine were fed. We therefore have proof from unimpeachable evidence that up to the reign of Edward III the valley of "Marshdean" (Marsden) was covered with trees. To fix an approximate date for this forest period we may say that Edward's reign concluded in 1377.

In an old map of South-West Yorkshire, published by Speed and Blow, we find that Marsden Chapel, which was built in 1462, during the reign of Edward IV, is referred to as "Mercheden Chapel." This way of spelling Marsden is certainly unique, and would incline one to accept the above derivative of "Marshdean" as being correct. Again, we have March hill, towering up above March Haigh, which no doubt will bear out the suggestion that originally it was called "Marsh Haigh" or "Marsh-hill." The meaning of "Haigh" is more obscure.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

I purpose now to confine the reader's attention to seventeenth-century Marsden. Before that period, so far as I know, there is not a single building or date-stone left—all have vanished. The only record of a sixteenth-century date that I have heard of was a mutilated specimen bearing the figures 1575, which for many years was built into the inner wall of an old barn at "White's" Farm, Wessenden Road. This building, along with the dwelling-house, was demolished during the construction of the Butterley reservoir in 1891, and that souvenir, if it existed, was irretrievably lost. I may say that the only evidence for the validity of the stone was the word of an old Marsden worthy, long since departed. We know that dwelling-houses existed in Marsden prior to the building of the first Chapel of Ease in 1462, but of their location and history we have no definite record. The buildings of this period and of subsequent erections for a hundred years or more consisted mainly of small farm holdings, dotted at intervals along the hill-sides, with the nucleus of a village at the confluence of the Colne and Wessenden Rivers.

The most reliable records we have of Marsden as a village community are to be found first in an old document belonging to the Public Records Office and bearing the date 1666—the year of the great fire of London. In the second and third records we have lists of copyhold tenants in the Manor of Marsden for the

years 1691 and 1710, to which I will refer later. In the first-named we have the roll of the "Hearth Tax," taken in 1666 during the reign of Charles II, for the Wapentakes of Morley and Agbrigg. In the latter division comes the township of Marsden. The tax was raised on the number of hearths or chimneys possessed by the householder, and amounted to 2s. per hearth. On the official list we find that Marsden contained 82 houses, of which 59 had one hearth or fireplace, 16 houses 2 hearths, 4 houses 3 hearths, and one house 4 hearths. The tax on the remaining hearths was "omitted by reason of poverty."

A perusal of the names on this "Hearth Tax Roll" will no doubt be of great interest. What first impresses one is the fact that so many surnames are alike, though they are spelt differently. This, I presume, was to differentiate them for the convenience of the collector. To begin with, out of the 79 surnames mentioned, we note that over one half are distributed between three families: the Haighs 15, Shaws 13, and Marsdens 13. Another interesting item reveals itself—namely, that of the 71 male Christian names recorded no fewer than 30 were John. Hence the necessity for nicknames and place names for common identification. In respect to the four householders who possessed three chimneys, probably one, if not more, kept a public inn. Only one person had four hearths to his credit, and no doubt would be the principal man of the village.

We herewith give a list of the names as they appear on the Hearth Tax Roll (the spellings are exactly as in the original):—

1666—Marsden

Henry Pogson	...	...	1	John Kay, senr.	...	...	1
Michael Carter	...	...	1	John Kay, junr.	...	...	2
James Haigh	...	...	1	John Haigh	...	...	1
Henry Marsden	...	...	1	John Haigh	...	...	1
Edward Haigh	...	...	1	Thomas Gleadall	...	...	1
Henry Firth	...	...	1	Thomas Marsden	...	...	2

Joseph Campinet	...	...	1	John Gleadall	...	...	1
Joseph Aynley	...	...	1	Henry Marsden	...	...	1
John Hague	...	...	1	Thomas Haigh	...	...	2
Richard Waterhouse	...	...	1	Widdowe Gleadall	...	...	1
Thomas Hague	...	...	2	John Marsden	...	...	1
Widdowe Marsden	...	...	2	Luke Marsden	...	...	1
John Senyor	...	...	2	Thomas Eastwood	...	...	1
Parson off Marsden	...	...	1	John Hague	...	...	2
John Marsden	...	...	1	John Mellor	...	...	1
Edmond Mellor	...	...	1	John Firth ...	...	...	1
Widdowe Marsden	...	...	1	John Shaw	...	...	1
Thomas Shawe	...	...	1	John Shawe	...	...	1
John Shawe	...	...	1	William Shawe	...	...	1
Giles Shawe	...	...	2	Michael Shawe	...	...	1
John Marsden	...	...	2	Andrew Shaw	...	...	1
James Marsden	...	...	1	Robert Wood	...	...	1
James Marsden	...	...	1	Widdow Shawe	...	...	1
Samuel Haigh	...	...	4	John Woodhead	...	...	3
William Aneley	...	...	3	Widdow Shawe	...	...	2
Thomas Haigh	...	...	3	John Shewe	...	...	1
Widdowe Haigh	...	...	3	Luke Shewe	...	...	1
Luke Firth ...	...	...	2	Michael Shawe	...	...	1
John Mellor	...	...	1	John Firth ...	...	...	1
Thomas Mellor	...	...	1	John Marsden	...	...	1
Widow Berry	...	...	1	John Haigh	...	...	1
Edward Firth	...	...	1	John Mellor	...	...	1
John Woodhead	...	...	1	John Haigh	...	...	1
William Firth	...	...	1	Widdow Haigh	...	...	2
John Mellor	...	...	1	James France	...	...	1
James France	...	...	2	Luke Firth ...	...	...	1
John Shawcross	...	...	1	James Garside	...	...	1
James Carter	...	...	2	John Woodhead	...	...	2
John Mellor	...	...	1	John Marsden	...	...	2
Jerem Haigh	...	...	1	Omitted by reason of			
Robert Mellor	...	...	1	poverty	...	...	2

The foregoing totals up to 109 hearths. It has been computed that the population of Marsden at this date amounted to about 550, taking as a basis five persons to a house.

Perhaps the oldest building of note in the neighbourhood was Slaithwaite Hall. Although not in the township of Marsden it is sufficiently near to come within the scope of this work. Portions of the outer wall, we believe, are still standing, although the original building has long since passed away. These old parts are now dovetailed into a cottage wall. The Hall crowned the steep hill that still bears its name. According to tradition, it was a fine old building with high gables and picturesque aspect, and possessed a considerable amount of stained glass for its many windows. In Canon Hulbert's "Annals of Slaithwaite" it is said that this hall was probably the residence of the principal family of the district at the time of the first endowment of Marsden Chapel. He surmised that the family name was Tyas, and that they were ancestors of the Kaye family who built the Manor House in Slaithwaite. It is interesting to know that Canon Hulbert possessed a "claymore"—a large two-edged sword formerly used by the Scottish Highlanders—taken in the neighbourhood of Slaithwaite Hall from one of the Scottish rebels who in 1745 followed the "Young Pretender," Prince Charles Edward, on his famous march south. The probability would be that the rebel was making the best of his way home again by unbeaten tracks after the collapse of the Pretender's cause at Derby.

Returning to our subject, we still come across a few old houses, or portions of houses, where dates have fortunately been preserved. This custom of hewing the owner's initials and date of erection on buildings was quite common in those days, and has done much towards fixing the age of the village. In some cases the original structures have vanished, but the date stones have been rebuilt in subsequent erections.

Perhaps the oldest house still existing in Marsden is the quondam White Hart Inn, situated in Towngate. The date of this building

is lost in the mists of antiquity, but from many remarkable features about its appearance and contiguity to the old church and stocks, it may plausibly be assumed that its history is largely contemporary with that of the original "Chapel of Ease," which was demolished about the year 1756 or 1757.

In the past, old inns invariably got as near to old churches as possible, and Marsden was no exception to the rule.

I now give a rough chronological list of the old buildings still standing in Marsden that possess dates or tablets. The earliest, to my knowledge, is to be found at Higher Green Owlers Farm, Dean, inscribed as follows :—

I.A.S.—1610.

The next in order of date is the Manor House at Highgate, which was completed in the year 1616. Only one part of the original house now remains. It is, however, of great interest, and well repays a close inspection. The windows particularly, with their quaint design and decoration, and the old external Jacobean chimney, charm the lover of the past. Across the road, on the south-west side of the Manor House, and doing duty as a gate-post, is still to be seen an ancient upright stone with the letters W.A. and the date 1671 rudely inscribed thereon. There is no doubt that this is one of the old "waystones" set up at intervals over wild tracts of moorland. A similar stone post is to be found on the ridge of the old road above Mount, and at the foot of Pule Hill. The curious will there find figure marks which are not very easy to make out.

I might here record, apropos of the Manor House, an historic incident. On February 21st, 1746, John Wesley, on his way from a preaching campaign in Lancashire, stayed the night there. Seven years later the founder of Wesleyan Methodism again visited Marsden, and preached at a cottage adjoining Badger Gate in the township of Lingards, occupied for a long time by a family of the name of Hoyle. This cottage remained in ruins for many years,

being ultimately demolished. Perhaps it would be of interest to quote a couple of entries from John Wesley's "Journal" to show what manner of people lived in this neighbourhood. In June, 1757, he writes :—

“I rode over the mountains to Huddersfield and a wilder people I never saw in all England. The men, women and children filled the streets as we rode along and appeared just ready to devour us. They were, however, tolerably quiet while I preached ; only a few pieces of dirt were thrown. The bellman came in the middle of the sermon, but was stopped by a gentleman of the town. I had almost done when they began to wring the bells, so that it did us small dis-service.”

Again, in 1759, two years later, we find the following entry :—

“I preached near Huddersfield to the wildest congregation I have seen in Yorkshire, yet they were restrained by an unseen hand.”

The homes of our forefathers were of simple construction and anything but hygienic. They generally selected a sloping bank for the site of their houses, so that one side of the structure would have the protection of higher ground. The cottages crept together for mutual protection and company.

I have previously referred to Slaithwaite Hall ; the White Hart Inn, Towngate ; Higher Green Owlers, Dean, 1610 ; and the Manor House, 1616. The dates of the first two are problematical, but of their great antiquity there is no doubt, and one might go so far as to say that the building known once as the White Hart Inn, and before that as the Hare and Hounds, is probably the oldest house in Marsden.

Our attention must now be turned to the few remaining houses, dates, and tablets we possess connected with the seventeenth century.

The third in order of date is a triangular stone built into the outer wall of a dwelling-house at The Hill, bearing the same date

as the Manor House, namely, 1616. The house was rebuilt in 1842, and bears the initial letters J.H.F., surmounted with a capital B. The next date we come to is perhaps the most remarkable one to be found anywhere in this locality. It graces the lintel of White Hall, better known as "Th'ull"—a farm that stands on the fringe of Clowes Moor. Under the inscription, "Rebuilt 1855," we find the following straggling line of initial letters roughly worked, with the original date as a prefix, and an intermediate date as a suffix, the whole completed with a Julian date. It reads as follows:—

1670. I.W.I.T.R.W.I.S.S.W.I.M.D.M. 1761.

— 5674. —

The last date is based on the Julian calendar, dating from the supposed creation of the world: 4004 years B.C. When we add to this the 1670 the latter figures are easily accounted for. By way of explanation, I might say that the old method of noting the year was regulated in 46 B.C. by Julius Cæsar—hence the Julian calendar. It was superseded in England in 1752 by the Gregorian year—or new style.

The initial letters represent two separate families; the first were named Whitehead and the second Midwood. The former were the original owners, who at an earlier period hailed from Saddleworth. The founder of the Marsden branch was a certain James Whitehead, who, according to old records, died in the Dean in the year 1660. The various branches of the Whitehead family trace their origin to this old progenitor. In old lettering I's and J's were always made alike.

Our next date is carved on the extreme ends of the long window cornice at Green Top, Pule Side, and intimates to all comers that the building was erected in 1671. This old house is still in splendid preservation. The only objection is that an annexe has recently been built of red brick, which certainly is not in keeping with the original building. However, we must not grumble in this utilitarian age, and particularly in this matter-of-fact village, when the four

walls of an old house have been allowed to stand unmolested for 271 years.

There is no doubt that Green Top was at one time a house of considerable importance. It stood a little below the ancient King's highway.

Clark Hill supplies our next date of reference, the building there situated bearing the inscription 1673. This old homestead also adjoined the same public road at Green Top, and stands but a short distance away.

To continue in chronological order, the next date that arrests our attention is a weather-worn tablet bearing the initial letters and figures—

I.H. 1679 I.H.

and is to be found on the wall of a cottage at the back of Towngate, belonging to the late Robert Bower. There is every reason to think that the original building has long since been swept away, but with praiseworthy thought the old stone record has been carefully preserved in a more recent structure, although to the passing glance it appears old enough for the original.

The next date is in the nature of a reminiscence, the old stone having completely disappeared. A comparatively modern inscription records the fact that the original house standing on the present site was built in 1683, the date being preceded by the letters R.H. and followed by the date 1860. The building originally stood in a yard abutting Church Lane, immediately behind The Hall, regrettably demolished several years ago.

We next come to our last seventeenth-century building, but by no means the least, of which we have authenticated evidence—namely, Berry Greave Farm. The stone tablet on this fine old homestead bears the legend 1685 in beautiful clean-cut figures over the entrance door, and an additional date, 1852, together with the name A. Hirst. Much of the old oak timber is still to be seen doing its ancient duty. The outer door is worth close inspection,

as in all probability it is the oldest oaken door within the township of Marsden. It would delight the heart of any antiquary, with its stout and massive proportions. Berry Greave Farmhouse was at one time famous for its Baptist services and the determination of the Baptists to plant a cause in Marsden. This laudable object was doomed to failure. The community failed to reap the value of their labours, their popularity waned, and eventually they migrated to the sister township of Slaithwaite, where they gained a firm foothold.

In the old registers at Almondbury Church we find the names of the following clergy associated with pastoral work in Marsden during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries :—

1558. Edmundus Norrham, sacrificiens de Marsden.

1575. John Handeley, minister of Marsden.

1680. Thomas Beaumont.

1696—1728. Isaac Walton.

The latter minister had charge of Marsden Chapel for the long period of 32 years. He was born in 1673, and died at the comparatively early age of 55, being buried, along with a son and daughter, inside the chapel. He added to his clerical duties that of schoolmaster, and during his incumbency he resided at Clough Lee.

I append a list of the copyhold tenants of the Manor of Marsden in the year 1691. There are approaching one hundred names on the roll, and in a general way this indicates the number of families, names, and place-names in the district. It is a most interesting document and throws a flood of light on an obscure period of Marsden history :—

Maria Kaye de Bridge End ; Joties Haigh de Lower House ; Josias Nowlson ; Joties Waterhouse ; Ricus Lee ; Joties Haigh de Lane Syke ; Henricus Haigh ; Adamus Marsden ; Thomas Marsden de Bynne House ; Thomas Haigh de Bynne ; Joties Haigh fil de Thos. Haigh de Bynne ; Joties Marsden de Hill Top ; Rogus