



4 SALE OF MANORIAL RIGHTS

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and have noe other liveynge to go unto ...*

The turbulence of the post-dissolution years, which had seen the lands and possessions of Sawley Abbey pass to Sir Arthur Darcy in 1537 coinciding with the transference of power in the parish from the Percys to the Cliffords, may have made the inhabitants of Stainforth feel confused and vulnerable. Certainly, by the time of Sir Arthur's death in 1561, he had shown himself to be no more than a land speculator with plans to make a quick profit from monastic properties bought at very little cost—although he cannot have been such a smart speculator because most of the properties remained unsold as the country became swamped with ex-monastic properties up for sale.

So when, in 1579, the Manor of Stainforth passed to his third son, Sir Edward Darcy, a resident of Kent, it would be obvious that buyers were still being sought. The inhabitants by now must have been fearful for their future. These were not the recipients of assistance from a benevolent State, they formed no more than part of a package which came with each piece of land and had no control over their, and their family's, futures. If they were surplus to requirements, they had fewer rights than those of servants, no more rights than those of slaves. However, they must have had spirit as a letter that they sent to the Earl of Cumberland, their Clifford over-lord, reveals¹:

*To the Ryght Honourable George Erle of Cu'berland,
In most humble manner compleaning, sheweth,
Your poore Supplyants of the towne of Freer Staynforth.*

That whereas we and our auncestors have att all tymes heretofore bene under the rule of your honor's auncestors in the tyme of S^vice of the Kinge or Queene's Majestie—and forasmuch as wee are nowe tenants to one Edward Darcy, Esquyer, attending at the courte, who offereth to sell us, but houldeth yt at soe unreasonable a price as we are never able to pay—and for that wee are in choyce to purchase yt ourselves or to cheuse our landlords. Soe yt is, right hon'ble, that wee of one our generall assente are most hartilie desyrous that yt would please yr honor to by and purchase us, so as we myght be wholly und'r yr honor's rule—and wee will wilingly give unto you towards the purchase all the goods that wee

have, moveable and immoveable, for goodwill and the good reporte wee heare of y^r honor.

Fore trewth is, Right Hon'ble, wee have offered to geve unto our master for l-eases of XXI yeares XX yeares fyne, or for the purchase threescore yeares fyne; or otherwyse all the goods we have; and none of theis wyll satisfy hym—and nowe he taketh syte upon us and meanethe to expulse us. And wee are in numbre seven score people and above; and have noe other livynge to go unto. Soe as with't yo^r Hon^r's goodness we knowe no waye what to do.

*Yr Honor's poor supplyants.
The Inhabitants of Freer Staynforthe.*

Clearly these people, after generations of holding the lands and houses at the Abbot's pleasure without legal title, had approached the new landlord for favour without success. There is no record of any reply from the Elizabethan admiral. But no other purchaser appeared and in 1595 Sir Edward Darcy sold the manor to Henry Laikland, John Cockett, Christopher Husband and William Tatham, probably acting as trustees for the occupiers. Previously, in 1583, Richard Horsfall had bought one portion of the district then known as Neals Ing and at the same time Thomas Frankland had bought the remaining portion that included Sannat Hall. The Sherwood House property seems to have been bought by its tenants, for it continued to be the residence of the Twistleton family.

The sale of the manorial rights formed a lease for 500 years and those landholders not able at once to purchase their shares paid *quit rents*² to *feoffees*³, or those who bought from them.

So whilst the complicated politics of the Clifford family continued for many years, the inhabitants of Stainforth were at least secure once again to pursue their livelihoods, grow their crops and tend their sheep.

¹This letter appears in *The Ancient Parish of Giggleswick*, from which most of this information has been taken and is accredited to Dr Whittaker as having quoted in full.

²*Quit rent*: a rent paid in cash instead of undertaking service of a practical nature, such as farm work.

³*Feoffee*: a person who has been granted a fief, i.e. land held in fee.