



10 FROM THE ARCHIVES

There is evidence of a flax spinning and weaving industry dating back to at least 1710 ...

In May 1831, William Jowett, living in the south of England, was on holiday in Ilkley and had decided to visit Little Stainforth where his mother had been born and brought up. He took a gig to Skipton, coach to Settle, and then walked to Little Stainforth and later wrote back to his sister, Elizabeth, describing his visit:

As I came near, having Mary Atkinson's sketch in my hand, I could easily discern the venerable old house where our mother was born, 83 whole years ago.

On entering the hamlet which has but six houses, I happened on one John Battye, a man of 63 years old, driving his cows to water at that well that is at the corner of the house next above ours and also at a pond under the tree on the opposite side of the road. As he is the oldest man in the place, I asked him if he remembered Mr and Mrs Bankes. 'Right weel' he answered. His sister, now deceased, had lived in as their servant. Ten minutes later he joined me again and showed me into the old house. It is, as you may suppose, very much dilapidated. It is occupied by a marble-cutter who hews black marble out of the quarries near Penigent, one of those three great hills of Yorkshire, at the head of this vale. I went over all the premises and the garden at the east end of the house and the paddocks behind it. John Battye mourned over the untidy state of some parts of the house and pathway and said how it was all 'fettled' and clean and smooth as a bowling-green in the days of the Bankes.

I went down that hill where I have heard my mother often describe how airily she used to run, or rather fly, when she was a lass. It is through a field called Kilscroft, and then you cross a stile and you are in the road that leads from Little to Great Stainforth, cross the road at another stile and you are at Stainforth Force. In all my life I never saw so dark and horrid a place and piece of water as the river forms here. After tumbling over some precipices, it falls into a large gulf formed by the adjoining perpendicular cliffs. You pass over the bridge, wind to the left a little way and then to the right, round a knoll which hides Great Stainforth from view until you are just at it.

Great Stainforth is a very beautiful village with several good houses only rather modernised. Little Stainforth has a very simple, original and to me, somewhat melancholy air with two or three groves of oaks and fir in it. Some way behind, is a remarkable conical mountain called Smeerset and further to the right, in the distant background, is the giant Penigent. Through Great Stainforth, I went on to Langcliffe.

Here is some first-hand history stretching back to 1748 when William and Elizabeth's mother, Betty, was born, and we can imagine the young girl skipping down to the river through the field opposite what is now the caravan site at Knight Stainforth Hall and years later reminiscing to her children about her own happy childhood. The Bankes family owned land in the area, and it is thought that Robert and Margaret, William's grandparents, lived in Knight Stainforth from the time of their marriage in 1733. The troughs at the well are still there at Little Stainforth, in the corner of the green, though cattle are not watered there any more, and the pond opposite has long since disappeared. Knight Stainforth Farmhouse at the time of his visit was home to one of the Morphet family, who quarried the flags ('the black marble') at Helwith Bridge for many years. John Batty farmed about 220 acres at Knight Stainforth High Hall; sadly, he and his two sons, both unmarried, died within eight years of each other, and the family grave can be seen by the side entrance to the churchyard.

In 1831, the population of Great and Little Stainforth was 263; from 203 in 1801 it had risen to 282 in 1811; and it was to decrease again to around the 200 mark towards the end of the century, although swelling to 390 in 1871 during the building of the railway. So when William Jowett walked over the pack-horse bridge and up Dog Hill Brow towards Great Stainforth there was no railway to cross, no school built yet beside the Horton road (the then school stood opposite Townhead Cottage on Goat Lane). Where the Parish Church now stands were three cottages, probably 17th century; where there are now bungalows, the car park and bypass, meadows stretched beside the beck down to the banks of the Ribble. On the other side of the road, where now stand The Hollies and Hollies Cottages, there were green fields and the formal gardens of the then newly-built Hollies House (demolished in 1925). The other large houses in the centre of the village would have been much as one sees them today, although Stainforth House was to be further extended and altered later in the 19th century, as also was the Vicarage. But what was day-to-day life like? What was everyone doing?



Hard at work

Farming has always been by far the most important industry and occupation—other businesses came and went. The 17th century date stones on the

substantial farms and houses in the area mark the period of rebuilding and renewed confidence after the Restoration, and many of the names on the Hearth Tax List of 1672 were familiar long before that date and for two hundred years after, but it is not until the mid-19th century, with census information, tithe map, directories, and the earliest surviving Town Book, that we know in any detail what was happening here.

The 1841 census, ten years after William's visit, lists occupations for 109 of the 261 inhabitants: 11 farmers; 49 described either as agricultural labourers or farm servants; 14 papermakers and a stationer; five cotton workers and two dyers; two school teachers; three masons; four shoemakers; and a baker, butcher, blacksmith, carpenter, and cooper; together with seven servants and nine inhabitants of 'independent' means. The 1851 census shows that, at that date, only the stationer, Stephen Wildman, was occupied in the paper business, the 14 former papermakers having either left the village or found other jobs labouring or in domestic service. So, the varying fortunes of Langcliffe Paper Mill were also felt in Stainforth.

The Dye House, shown on the 1841 Tithe Map as standing on the west bank of the beck below the stepping stones, was in operation from before 1820 until the 1850s, when the land was sold and—judging from old place names such as Dyer Lane, Dyer Field, and Tentercroft (a 'tenter' is a frame used for stretching cloth to dry in shape)—it is likely that the dyeing business dates back much further.

Before mechanisation of textile production, many farming households would supplement their incomes by spinning and weaving cloth at home, and that certainly was the case in Stainforth, with several resident clothiers to organise the marketing. There is evidence of a flax spinning and weaving industry dating back at least to 1710, probably partly home-based, but in 1728 Thomas Pearson's Will refers to his 'Stainforth Cloth Mill and Workhouse with Chamber above with Convenient Room for Tenters Standing' and, as the yearly profits of this were intended to support his widow in the event of his death, we can presume that it was a going and profitable concern at that time.

For a period of some 50 years there were several men described as 'linen weavers' living in the village, who were able to buy and sell land and witness documents and marriages, so they were men of some substance and literate to some degree. We must assume that there were more workers whose names have been lost. At that time, among more general uses, farmers and miners and other workers wore coats or overalls made of coarse linen fabric, and there was probably a good local market for the linen or mixed yarn cloth before the expansion of the cotton industry later in the 18th century. It is in 1710 that we also first learn of a school in Stainforth, where William Bentham was schoolteacher for 40 years or so, busy witnessing signatures and seemingly acting as friend and confidant to the gentry.

Stainforth mills

So far, the sites of three water mills have been located: one above Townhead House on the east bank of the beck; one on the west bank below the stepping stones; and the one on the west bank of the Ribble at Knight Stainforth, above the bridge. There is still a lot to learn about Stainforth's mills—dates of operation, what each produced, etc. Where, for instance, is the site of the 'fulling' mill, where cloth was cleansed and thickened, that was still here in the 18th century? Perhaps it is now obscured by the railway or bypass.

The village's industrial past has left few traces on the ground, but the picture is gradually becoming clearer. There is mention of a corn mill converted to cotton spinning in 1793 and operated by Redmayne & Armistead 'who were also spinning cotton at Giggleswick about the same time', but that is all we know of the business. There is a partnership agreement dated 1792 for a separate venture, the conversion of the Water Corn Mill at Knight Stainforth, to the 'business of Carding, Roving and Spinning and manufacturing Cotton there'. This was the corn mill on which Samuel Watson of Knight Stainforth Hall was expected to pay, as noted on the Hearth Tax list of 1672.

Many small rural water corn mills were being converted and extended in this way at the time, but it is not clear whether the five partners, led by John Riley of Knight Stainforth, ever got the enterprise off the ground and, if so, what success it had. Of the five partners, he and Jeremiah Smith described themselves as cotton manufacturers, and they had joined forces with a blacksmith, a carpenter, and a widow, so it sounds to have been a practical scheme. From the tithe map, the Knight Stainforth mill was a ruin by 1841, and it can be assumed that it was in ruins much earlier as William Jowett would have passed within a few yards of it on his walk on that May day in 1831. We can guess he might have commented on it in his letter (see above) had it been in operation!

Interestingly, the field Jowett refers to as 'Kilscroft' had by 1841 become 'Hillcroft' on the tithe map. This is an example of how field names and the clues they give us can change and disappear over time: earlier it was named 'Kiln Croft' because it was where the drying kiln for the corn mill stood.

With the River Ribble and Stainforth Beck running through the township, water-power must have played an important part in the village economy. Earlier, in Tudor times, good use had been made of another natural resource as two windmills were noted then in the vicinity of the village, a comparatively unusual situation in this area it seems. None are recorded in Langcliffe, Horton, Settle or Arncliffe, nor in Skipton or Gargrave, but there were two windmills in Malham and one each at Giggleswick and Long Preston dating back to the 17th century.

Hemp would have been grown around Stainforth (along with other arable

crops) and the village had a roper, Gilbert Fairbridge, working in the 1720s. Up at Sherwood House, on the Horton road, the Twisleton family, who may have farmed there from the time of the Dissolution right through to about 1780, were also tanners and cattle dealers and, logically enough, also had an interest in tallow production and candle making. Not surprisingly, with all this hard work going on, much refreshment would have been required, and in Stainforth under Bargh there was a malt kiln operating through most of the 18th century, with several prosperous-sounding maltsters in the brewing business. By 1828, the property (which cannot yet be located exactly) is described as the 'Old Malt House and Kiln', and ale was presumably coming from elsewhere.

A village community

Although still part of Giggleswick parish in the 1830s, Stainforth Township operated to some degree as an independent administrative unit, responsible for levying its own rates on property, organising some poor relief, keeping law and order and maintaining the highways (all 11 miles and 114 yards of them!) within its own boundaries. Guardians, overseers and constables were appointed, money carefully dispensed (or not) to the needy, and careful accounts kept for scrutiny by the local magistrates. Meetings were held regularly 'according to public notice', usually in the school, and villagers in special need attended to ask for aid. In November 1834, it was decided to pay Alice Baynes 'a pension' of one shilling (5p) a week; Richard Baldwin was allowed £1, but the meeting declined to pay his rent; and Richard Brayshaw was allowed 10 shillings (50p) and enough cotton for two shirts. There are many similar entries and, usually just after Christmas each year, there would be a more general (if not generous) distribution to individuals 'according to custom'. However, the law was changing at this time, and soon responsibility for Poor Relief would be centred on the Settle Union.

In July 1835, a meeting was called to discuss the case of Ann Childs, 'the wife of Charles Childs who had left her and five children without any means of sustenance to being gone in search of work as a paper maker.' So that the deserted family did not become a burden on the township, the overseer was instructed to take her to Gargrave to make a sworn statement in front of a magistrate as to the present whereabouts of her husband, and she named a parish near Northampton, which would then have been held responsible for their support.

There were other dramas too: in December, a special meeting was called to 'enquire particulars respecting a most dreadful outrage committed upon the person of Richard Taylor carpenter on Sunday Evening last in Stainforth'. There were five witnesses to the assault, and a physician had been called to attend to the victim and Settle solicitors were directed 'to take measures to bring the parties to punishment'. All to no avail though, as the

four suspects (three of whom were living in the village) were acquitted through lack of evidence and the township left with a legal and medical bill for £52.12s.1d (£52.60), a considerable amount of money at that time. Interestingly, this money was not paid from township funds; instead, seven village property owners took responsibility and each contributed £7.10s.3¹/₂d (£7.52) to pay off the debt. Central London had a police force of sorts at this date, but in Stainforth, as elsewhere, the community had to sort out most problems for itself.

It is sad that the earlier village records have not survived to tell us what use was made of the stocks (located at the corner of Goat Lane and the roadway to Stockhill House): by the 1830s they were probably not being used.

Extra income

The township also employed local people mending roads and cutting snow, which must have been a useful source of subsistence in hard times or bad weather. In January and February of 1842, there must have been very heavy snowfalls as many villagers lent a hand at a rate of one shilling (5p) a day. Even Nanny Twistleton, a widow 56 years old, living at what is now Fountain House and farming about 34 acres, was probably glad to earn 9d (4p), and her daughter Isabella must have struggled through the snow to get to Langcliffe Mill where she worked as a papermaker. When the thaw came at the end of February and the water swept down the hill, the sum of three shillings (15p) had to be spent on making a drain in front of John Hardacre's cottage on the Green. Some things do not change!

Higher rates were paid for work done on the roads in summer time, one shilling and 6d (8p) or even two shillings (10p) per day. A man with a horse and cart would get double. Christopher Metcalfe, who was farming then at Neal's Ing, was paid seven shillings (35p) per day for providing two men with two horses and carts. In 1838, the professional services of two local valuers were required to prepare a new valuation of land in the township so that the rates could be fixed, and for this work their charge was a guinea (105p) a day; for eight days, making a total of £16.16s. (£16.80).

The township also collected, 'subject to the Old Law of Bastardy', from putative fathers resident in Stainforth (there were three in 1835) for the support of their illegitimate children in other parishes. Payment seems to have been made to the mother's father, and in 1839 one Henry Whittam flatly refused to pay any more for his daughter living then in Cray. Perhaps he had been refused visiting rights.

Reading through the records available for this short period in the 1830s, two figures stand out for the part they played in village life: Thomas Redmayne and William Metcalfe (or Medcalf). Thomas Redmayne was the landowner who built Taitlands and, at this period, was acting as guardian, churchwarden, or chairman at most of the meetings. William Metcalfe

rented the public house from James Foster (his name is in the accounts for the building of the church as supplier of dinners to the workmen). He, too, must have been a very busy man, appearing at almost every meeting in one role or another, and writing up the minutes in his rather erratic sloping hand. As well as keeping the inn, William worked as a shoemaker and a farmer and, with Hannah his wife, brought up at least six children. It was he who, when he was surveyor in 1836, meticulously measured the township roads, leaving us some useful information in the process and also the earliest mention, so far, of the Stepping Stones, known to our predecessors as the 'Hipping' Stones

Indenture between Edmond Sanders and Craven Bacon in 1710

Set out below is a translation of the original document:

This indenture made the 21st day of May in the ninth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Anne Queen of Great Britain and France and Ireland, defender of the faith etc., anno domini 1710, witnesseth that Craven Bacon, son of Jane Bacon of Threshfield in the parish of Linton and County of York, widow, by and



The original document of the indenture between Edmund Sanders and Craven Bacon 1710 - photo by Bryan Beattie from original document courtesy David S Johnson

with the consent of his mother and also by and with the consent of his sister Margret Tempest of Stainforth under Bargh in the parish of Giggleswick and County of York, spinster, and also by and with the consent of all other his friends and relations, hath put himself apprentice to Edmond Sanders of Stainforth under Bargh in the parish of Giggleswick and County aforesaid, linen weaver, the trade which he now useth to be taught. And with him the said Edmond Sanders, after the manner of an apprentice, to dwell and serve from the 16th day of April last past unto the full end and term of seven years from thence next ensuing, and fully to be completed, finished and ended, by all which said term of seven years the said Craven Bacon, the said Edmond Sanders his master well and with faithfulness shall serve his secrets, shall keep close his Commandments, lawful and honest he shall always do and observe, hurt to his said Master he shall not do, nor suffer to be done during the said term if he can the same prevent. The goods of his said Master he shall not inordinately waste nor them to anybody lend. At cards, dice or any other unlawful games he shall not play, whereby his said Master may incur any hurt or damage. Fornication he shall not commit, nor matrimony contract. Taverns or ale houses he shall not frequent (during the term aforesaid) without the special licence and leave of his said Master. He shall not absent or prolong himself by day nor by night from the service of his said Master but in all things as a good and faithful apprentice shall bear and behave himself towards his said Master and dame. And the said Edmond Sanders to his said apprentice the mystery or trade of a linen weaver which he now useth, in all things shall well and truly teach, instruct and inform or cause to be taught, instructed and informed. And in due manner to correct and chastise him, and the best way that he can or may, shall teach him or cause him to be taught as much as to the said trade or science of a linen weaver belongeth or in any ways appertaineth. And also shall find unto his said apprentice during all the said term aforesaid sufficient meat, drink, washing and lodging and shirts—meet and convenient for an apprentice of his degree, and all other things to him necessary or belonging to be found at the cost and charge of Jane Bacon aforesaid, mother to the said apprentice. And for the true performance of all and singular, the covenant and agreement aforesaid, which are and ought to be performed, fulfilled and kept on the part and behalf of the said apprentice, the above mentioned Margret Tempest, sister to the said apprentice, bindeth herself, her heirs and executors, administrators and assignees unto the said Edmond Sanders in the penal sum of ten pounds of good and lawful money of Great Britain. And for the true performance of all and singular, the covenants and agreements aforesaid which are and ought to be performed, fulfilled and kept on the part and behalf of the said Master, the said Edmond Sanders bindeth himself, his heirs, executors, administrators and assignees unto the aforesaid Margret Tempest in the penal sum of ten pounds of good and lawful money of Great Britain. In witness whereof the parties abovesaid to this Indenture have set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

*Scaled and delivered, the same
(being first stamped according
to law) in the sight and presence
of us.*

*Anthony Paley
James Foster
William Bentham*

AD 1710

Sources

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