

SOME FAMILIES
COMMEMORATED BY
MEMORIAL TABLETS
IN THE CHURCH

GARNETT

STRICKLAND CONSTABLE

BARR

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In the chancel of Sigglesythorne parish church are two reminders of the old practice of burying the more important parishioners inside the church. Set in the floor underneath the altar table are two black stones tablets, each less than a foot square, and possibly few people will know of their existence because they are concealed by the altar hangings.

One tablet is inscribed to the memory of Mary Foxley, wife of William Foxley, late of Kingston upon Hull, who died in 1660 aged 75.

A William Foxley was mayor of Hull in 1657 and there was a William Foxley mayor again in 1676. Perhaps these were the same man; and perhaps both or either has a connection with the Mary Foxley who was buried at Sigglesythorne. Foxley is not a name to be found in parish records, so why was Mary buried in the church? The parish register offers no explanation. This is one little puzzle from the past.

The other tablet commemorates John Garnett, who was rector of Sigglesythorne in the eighteenth century.

Garnett is named again on a more elaborate monument at the east end of the north aisle. It is in two sections and carries an inscription in Latin. A bishop's mitre, with the date 1759, is carved in relief at the foot of the memorial and it is likely that this was the date of the first section. Formerly it was on the north wall of the chancel and it may have been moved to its present position when the organ was built in 1880.

The whole of Garnett's family is commemorated on the tablet - John and his wife and their seven children, four of whom were still alive in 1759. They are said to be buried below but that would mean below the chancel floor, not in the aisle.

The upper portion of the memorial tablet was placed in the church by the second son, John, soon after his consecration as a bishop. With his older brother already dead, John would be regarded as the head of the family; and, as far as the parish were concerned, he was very much the local boy who made good, even though he spent the whole of his adult life far away from the parish in which he was brought up.

This is the inscription of the upper portion of the memorial.

D.O.M.
IOANNI GARNETT A.M.
Ecclesiam de SIGGLESTHORNE & de BARMSTON
Plusquam XX Annos Rectori
E stirpe NORTHUMBRIENSIS antiquissima
Viro pietate doctrina fide
Eximio
Cui sanctissimi suavissimique mores
Singularis in Pastoralis officio diligentia
Prompta in egenos targitas
Egregiam apud suos meritamque
Virtutis commendationem peperere
Vixit annos LXIII obiit MDCCXXXV
Conjugi FRANCISCAE integrum vix annum
Et quidem ultra Votum Superstes
CUI etiam
E domo BARNARDORUM de HESLERTON oriundae
Foeminae ornatissimae
Matri VII liberorum amantissimae amatissimaeque
(Quorum FRANCISCA HENRICUS A.M.
Et GUILMUS infra conduntur
Supersunt hodie IONNES MARIA RACHEL
Et BARNARD S.T.P. Canonicus Elientis)
IOANNES EPISCOPUS apud HIBERNOS CLOCHERENSIS
Parentibus bene merentibus
POSUIT
Et Sibi

Of the Garnett children, William died in infancy and Frances died in adolescence. Henry, the eldest son, was born in 1708 before his father came to Sigglesworth; was a scholar of St John's college, Cambridge; and became the curate of Little Haughton in Bedfordshire in 1730, in which year also he succeeded his father as chaplain to the duke of Devonshire. He died in 1732 when he was about to be collated to a prebend of Lincoln.

The lower portion of the memorial was added at a later date, certainly not earlier than 1794 when the last of the Garnett children died.

Celsiora par natus ornassee subsellia
Valetudine heu! impar simul et Indole
Decessit Canonicus Eliensis
17 Jan: MDCCLXVIII
BARNARD GARNETT S.T.P.
Vixit annos 54
Sepultus infra
MARIA, et RACHEL GARNETT, infra etiam sepultae,
Quarum, MARIA, 26 Jul. A.D. 1776 aetat 66
RACHEL, 10 Octob. 1794 aetat 82
Et Vita recesserunt
IOANNES EPISCOPUS CLOCHERENCES,
Eblanae mortuus, et sepultus
Ob. 1 Mart. 1782 aetat 73

The three Garnett boys were educated at the grammar school at Beverley before going in turn to Cambridge. Barnard became a fellow of Sidney Sussex college in 1738. Later he became rector of Snailwell near Newmarket and a canon of Ely, where he died in 1768.

John was admitted to St John's college but later moved to Sidney Sussex, where he became a fellow in 1732. He became a doctor of divinity in 1752. After a period as chaplain to the duke of Dorset, lord lieutenant of Ireland, he was consecrated bishop of Ferns and Leighlin and in 1758 was translated to the see of Clogher.

A contemporary wrote of him --

The bishop was a pleasant, cheerful companion, yet had a very apostolic manner; he was a friend to literature and learning and a prelate of great

humility. Though he possessed only one eye, he could discover men of merit better than most people who had two.

Bishop Garnett was well liked in Ireland and was publicly thanked on one occasion for the friendly footing he maintained in his relations with the clergy. A fuller account of him is to be found in the dictionary of national biography.

John Garnett, the father, has been mentioned at some length in my notes on the rectors of Sigglesthorne. It may suffice to say here that he came from a clerical background - his father had been vicar of Kilham - and died in 1735 after a quarter of a century in the parish.

On the south wall of the chancel is a memorial of Thomas Constable, who was archdeacon of the East Riding in the last year of his life. The younger son of the owner of the Wassand estate, he was rector of Sigglesthorne for twenty years and died in 1786 at the age of 47.

In the small extension of the south aisle, where the family have their seat and which is known popularly as the Constable chapel, there are two wall tablets commemorating members of the family.

One tablet refers to Lucy, the wife of Charles Constable. She was born Lucy Acklom, the daughter of Jonathon Acklom of Wiseton in Nottinghamshire, and she married her cousin, Charles, in 1796. She died in 1839.

The other tablet records the deaths of the wife and five of the seven children of Thomas Constable. His wife was Sarah, the daughter of Christopher Goulton who had an estate at Walcott in Lincolnshire. The youngest of the children was Frances, who married William Bentinck and who is further remembered by the east window, which was filled with stained glass in her memory by her husband; she died in 1862 aged 80.

The only other monument to the Constables in the church is a small copper plate on the organ console stating that the organ was restored in 1976 and that a large part of the cost was met by the widow of Henry Marmaduke Strickland-Constable, who had died in the previous year at the age of 75.

Considering the importance of the Constables in the parish during more than four hundred years, it might be thought surprising that so few family memorials are in the church. It cannot be denied that they were always interested in the church and that later generations of the family were generous in their financial support, perhaps without it being made public knowledge. Nor can it be denied that they were closely involved in the day-to-day affairs of the parish, particularly in Seaton.

The reason must be that the Constables had many interests away from the parish of Sigglesthorne.

During the sixteenth century Goxhill was joined to the Wassand estate and some of the family were buried in the church there, among them Philip Constable, who was killed in a duel in 1618.

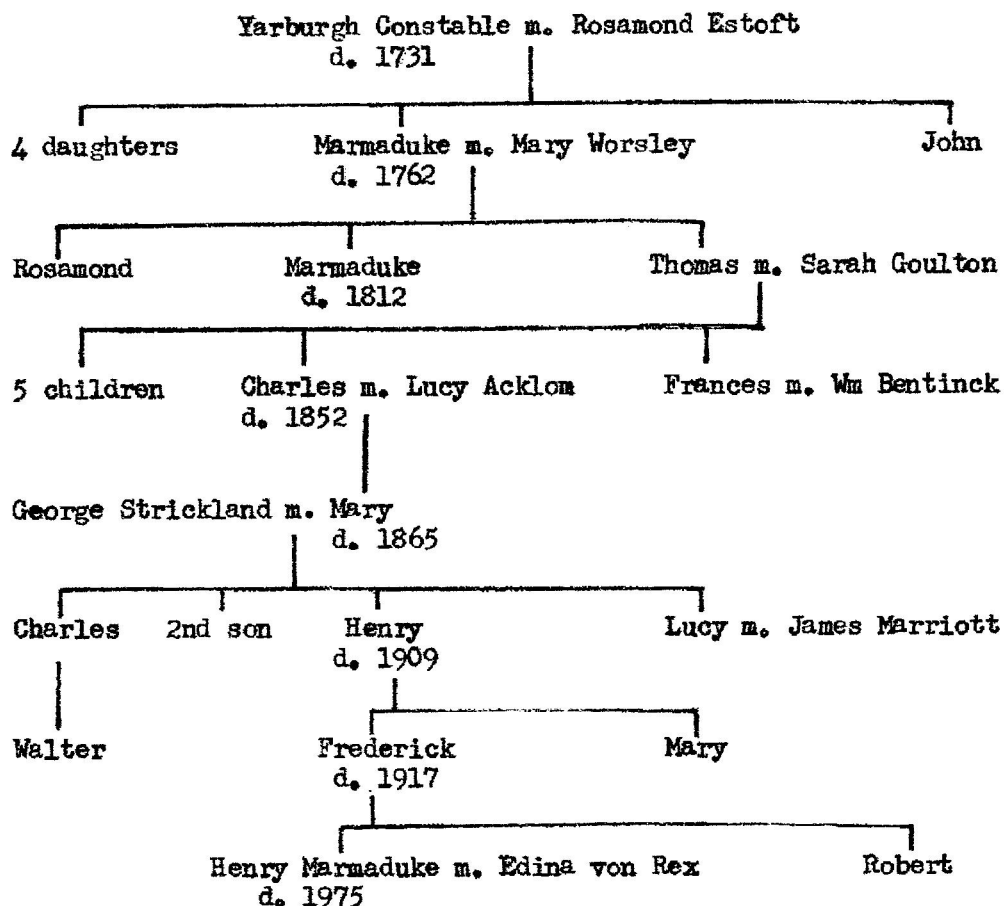
There were some Constable burials at Lockington and there are two memorial tablets in the south transept of Beverley minster, the family having property in that parish from the eighteenth century. Three successive generations of Constables have been commemorated at Beverley - Yarburgh Constable, who died in 1731, his wife and some of his children; Marmaduke Constable, who died in 1762, his wife and two of his children, one of whom was another Marmaduke, who died in 1812 at the age of 76.

The Constables were descended, through the ancient family of Constables at Flamborough, from Robert de Lacy, who was constable of Chester in 1206 and also sheriff of Yorkshire. The surname therefore was as much an occupational name as Butcher or Taylor or Goldsmith or, to move into more exalted circles, Stuart (the royal line which descended from those who were originally only the stewards of the Scottish kings).

They came to Wassand in 159 when Jane Constable bought the estate after the death of her husband, William Constable, who was a grandson of the famous "little Sir Marmaduke" of Flamborough.

The estate was enlarged through judicious marriages. Marmaduke Constable (died 1562) married the daughter and heir of Robert Stokes and thereby acquired Goxhill. Philip Constable (died 1618 and mentioned above) married Mary, the daughter and heir of

Ralph Moore of Bewick. A section of the family table of descent is given below.



A more complete family tree may be found in Foster's Pedigrees of the County Families of England - Yorkshire North and East Ridings volume.

Constable wives have had a habit of outliving their husbands.

Mary Constable, after her husband's untimely death in 1618, was married to John Constable of Catfoss and was in turn widowed for a second time. She must have been a woman of character and energy for she built new halls at both Wassand and Catfoss.

Rosamond Constable (nee Estoft) died 25 years after her husband; and in the present century the wife of Frederick Strickland-Constable survived him for fifty years. Wassand was bought in the first place by a Constable widow; and a Constable widow controls the estate at the present date.

Marmaduke Constable (died 1812) took a great interest in local affairs. He championed the cause of the men of Seaton in a dispute with the rector over the tithes and argued their case at length in a pamphlet entitled *The Case for Seaton - Nullum tempus occurrit Ecclesiae*. In his will he left money in trust for the payment of scholars' fees and for books and maintenance of the parish school. He died a bachelor and the estate was inherited by his nephew.

Charles Constable found the old house at Wassand, almost two hundred years old, was in poor condition - not "drop dry" - and decided to demolish it and to build a new house before removing his wife and daughter from their comfortable dwelling at Beverley. The new hall was not ready for occupation until the summer of 1815.

Charles made "great improvements by the planting of forest trees and re-building cottages, thus affording neat and convenient habitations for the laborious poor" (Poulson). Examples of this estate management are - the round cottage beside the road to Hornsea, built in 1812; Sigglesthorne lodge at the west side of Wassand wood, 1815; the three cottages next to the old joiner's shop in Sigglesthorne, 1818, and the row of cottages on the opposite side of the road a year or two earlier.

As well as the Wassand estate, Charles came into possession of the Walcott estate in Lincolnshire on the death of his maternal uncle, Thomas Goulton.

Charles was in holy orders but never sought a curacy or a ^{benefice} ~~beneice~~.

Charles Constable had only one child, his daughter Mary, and when he died in 1852 the whole estate passed to her.

Mary was married in Sigglesthorne church in 1818 to George Strickland. The Stricklands were an old family which were established in Westmorland in the middle ages. William Strickland, who is said to have sailed as a young man on one of the Cabot voyages to America and to have introduced the turkey to England, established a Yorkshire line when he bought the Boynton estate in the reign of Elizabeth. A Strickland baronetcy was created in 1641.

George and Mary Strickland had four children but their marriage was not a happy one. Eventually a judicial separation was obtained and Mary returned to live at Wassand, taking with her the youngest son, Henry. Her second son was killed by Indians when travelling through the Rocky Mountains. The eldest son, Charles, stayed at Boynton with his father.

Mary Strickland retained the Wassand and Walcott estates until her death in 1865, when Henry (who by this time had changed his name to Strickland-Constable) inherited Wassand and the Walcott lands went to his sister, Lucy.

The family history of this period is a genealogist's nightmare. In 1865 George Strickland changed his name to Cholmeley on inheriting that estate from his mother's family. His eldest son, Charles, remained Strickland. His other son, as has been seen, was Strickland-Constable. His daughter, Lucy, married James Marriott, who changed his name to Goulton-Constable when his wife obtained Walcott; though their son remained Marriott and in his turn inherited that family's estate of Cotesbach in Leicestershire.

Henry Strickland-Constable came from long-lived stock. His father lived to be 92, his brother 90, his nephew Walter Strickland 87, his Strickland grandfather 81, his Constable grandfather 79, and he himself was in his late eighties when he died.

Though he was not in the top 30 principal landowners of the East Riding, Henry Strickland-Constable was wealthy enough. In

1875 he owned 3,293 acres in the East Riding with a rental of £4,501. And in 1879 he had altogether 6,271 acres in the East and West Ridings worth £10,500 a year.

He was devoted to horses and hunting and bred bloodstock at his stud farm at Goxhill. It might be thought appropriate that his final illness was brought about by a fall from his horse.

Frederick Strickland-Constable scarcely had an opportunity to enjoy his estate. Five years after he took up his inheritance, the country was at war with Germany and he, having held for some years a commission in the militia, was required for military service. He held the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the East Yorkshire regiment but did not see action in the trenches in France. He died in 1917.

Henry Marmaduke Strickland-Constable was a minor when he inherited the Wassand estate. He studied music as a young man but did not practise it as a profession. His was a gentle character and I fear that he did not exert the influence over his estate that he might have done. In appearance I suspect that he was more of a Strickland than a Constable - I have seen a Gainsborough portrait of an eighteenth century Strickland of Boynton and there is the very face of the twentieth century Sir Marmaduke.

Sir George Cholmeley was the 7th baronet. His son, Sir Charles Strickland, was the 8th baronet and Walter, his son, became the 9th baronet. When Sir Walter Strickland died in 1938 the title passed to his cousin and Sir Henry Marmaduke Strickland-Constable became the 10th baronet.

Sir Marmaduke died in 1975 without issue and, though his brother had children, I wonder if this can be the end of a family connection with the parish which has been maintained for well over four centuries.

Wealthy landowning families and learned clerical families, however, are not the only ones to be remembered in a country parish. One more look at the memorials in the chancel will reveal one more humble family which shall not be forgotten.

On the south wall of the chancel is a brass tablet in memory of George Henry Barr, who died in 1941 at the age of 88. Man and boy, he sang in the church choir for seventy five years. At the Easter vestry in 1929 the rector paid a tribute to him - "He still possesses a pure bass voice which would be a great asset to any choir".

The Barrs were a respected family in the parish for several generations, many of them being employed as craftsmen on the Wassand estate. For the most part they were joiners and wheelwrights, though one of them was for many years the postmaster at Sigglesthorne and a Barr daughter taught for a time at the school in Hatfield.

It was a Barr who made the churchyard fence in 1849 and it was another Barr who made its replacement in 1887. Whenever a bit of joinery was required at the church, invariably it was a Barr who was called in to do it. It was a Barr who was paid by the churchwardens in 1848/9 for "draining Church Yard etc" and the drainage plan made by him at that time has been preserved among the church papers and in fact was consulted within the last twenty years when there was a drainage problem.

Brazzock mentioned a Sigglesthorne carpenter who put fencing round the grave of his newly-buried son and kept watch at night to prevent the body being dug up by "resurrectionists". That boy was almost certainly Thomas Barr, aged 3, who was buried on 30th September, 1863.

It was a George Henry Barr who was a leading member of the Seaton cricket eleven and in 1911 took five Leven wickets with five consecutive balls.

In the present century two Barrs, father (the cricketer) and son, have been churchwardens and both spent their working lives in the service of the Wassand estate, the one as estate joiner and the other in the estate office, latterly as agent.

I knew both of them well. I recall the elder Barr once telling me how his grandfather, in the days before there was a railway line between Hornsea and Hull, used to walk with a friend to

Hull once a year to transact their annual business with their suppliers; and then walk all the way back to Sigglesthorne - but only as far as the outskirts of the village, for there the attraction of the ale-house proved stronger than the call of home.

Recently I had a letter from Sydney Barr in which he wrote nostalgically about the old days when he was a youngster in the church choir. I trust he will not be offended if I use part of his letter to indicate the long connection his family had with the church and the affectionate memories they had.

"He (his grandfather) loved eating large Spanish onions and perhaps these helped his voice, with a pint or two of beer. Isabel Barr also had a good treble voice and she always sang the solo part in any anthem.... It was quite an occasion when the Barr family congregated at Sigglesthorne. My grandfather; Daniel Barr; his son Herbert; Charlie Barr a brother who worked for Lord Derby; Tom Barr who looked after the toll bridge at Selby; joined in the choir for the particular service. Charlie Barr was so fat that no cassock would fit him and we lads used to have a good laugh at his figure wearing just a surplice. I wish I could hear their voices walking up the aisle now."

The last Barrs of the parish still live in Seaton, but there are no children. When they are gone it will mean - as with the Constables they served so long - that one more old family will have vanished from the parish.

NOEL WRIGHT

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