

ART. XXVIII. *Orton Old Hall, or Petty Hall, Orton.*

By FRED BROOKSBANK GARNETT, C.B.

Read at that Place, July 3rd, 1890.

IN consequence of having formerly visited this ancient manorial residence, and made some inquiries as to its history and occupiers, I have been asked to communicate the result to the members of our society on the present occasion.

Dr. Taylor has already pointed out to you its leading architectural features, and called attention to the three shields sculptured on the lintel of the principal entrance, which bear inscriptions commemorative of the erection of the present structure by the Birkbeck family, *viz* :

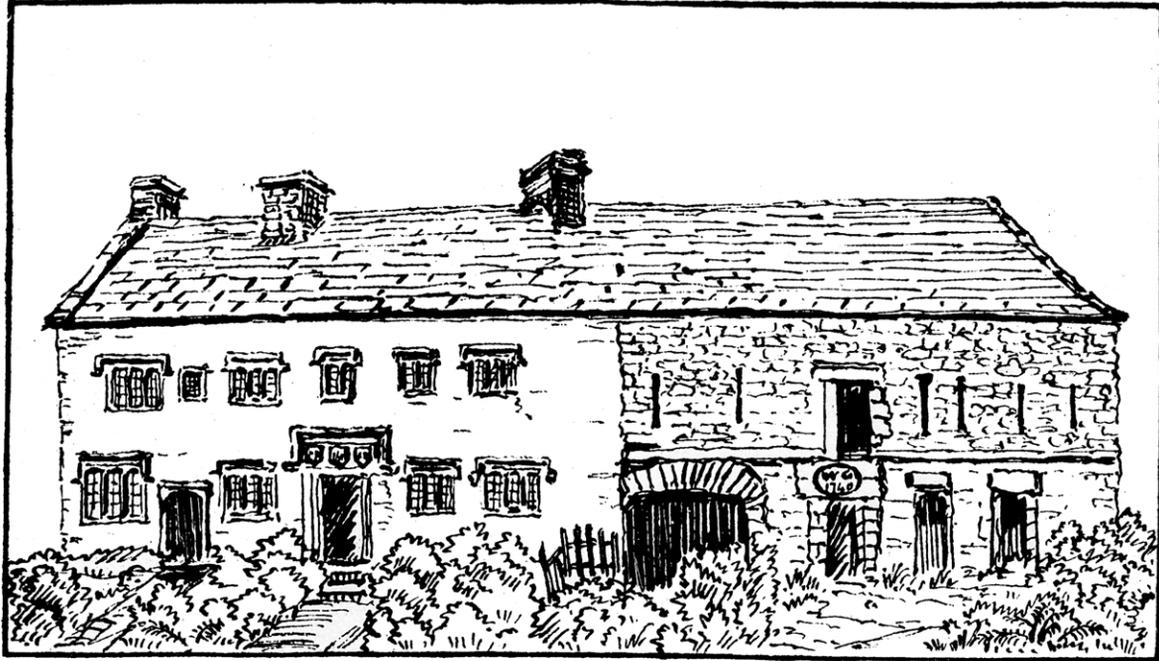


The Birkbecks were of Hornby Hall, in the parish of Brougham, and their pedigree for several generations is given in Dugdale's Visitation.

I can find no reference in Nicolson and Burn's history either to Petty Hall, or to the family from whom it is believed to have derived its appellation, although this place must have been under the immediate personal observation of Dr. Burn, who was the vicar of Orton from 1736, until his death in 1785. Mention is however made of the fact that

One share of the Musgrave moiety of the Manor of Orton, was in the hands of the Warcops of Smardale, the last of whom Thomas Warcop of Smardale, Esq., had two daughters co-heirs, who in 34 Eliz. for the sum of £400 sold their moiety (as it is called) of the Manor of Overton (Orton) to George Birkbeck and Robert Whitehead, of Orton and

THE OLD HALL



Fred. B. Garnett. del.

OR

PETTY HALL — ORTON .

and George Sharp of Scales, consisting of one moiety of Raisgill Hall Mill, and 56 Tenements of the yearly fixable arbitrary rent of £10 16 6.

It appears however earlier than this that one William Birkbeck was vicar of Orton in 1453 (33 Hen. VI), and was trustee of a marriage settlement of Thomas Blenkinsop, of Helbeck, Esq., of certain lands which the Blenkinsops had at Overton. In 1639 a caveat was entered by one Edward Newburgh, claiming to be called (to the vicarage) on the death or resignation of John Corney, and a like caveat was also entered by Thomas Barlow, M.A., Edward Birkbeck, and other parishioners claiming right of presentation.

There is an inscription in Orton churchyard as follows :—

H.S.E. Edward Birkbe(ck) Parish Clark, who dyed Decr. the (? 28) A. Dom. 1732. (Bellasis' Church Notes).

The signature of "Edward Birkbeck, Clark," appears in the terrier of glebelands, &c., belonging to Orton vicarage given in Bishop Nicolson's Visitation of 1704, (Miscellany Accounts of the Diocese of Carlile, &c., Ed. by R. S. Ferguson, 1877). We have already heard in the interesting paper read by Mr. J. H. Nicholson, M.A., that from the prominent manner in which some of the entries relating to the Birkbecks are made, they are regarded as the most influential people, and that amongst those who were "disclaimed" at the assize held at Appleby, in 1666, for not obeying the summons of Dugdale, when he made his last visitation were "Thomas Birkbeck, of Coatflat, and T. B. of Orton."

Petty Hall is said to have been subsequently possessed by Sir Christopher Petty, of Skipton-in-Craven.*

Over the fire place of the front room at the left hand end of the building, now let as a separate tenement, there

* See pedigree of Birkbeck, Transactions vol. iv p. 392.

is a sculptured stone let into the wall, measuring about 2 ft. 6 in. by 2 ft. 3 in. (see sketch), inscribed with the design of three castles (two and one), similar to the arms of Newcastle-on-Tyne, with a drawing compass between the castles, the date 1689, and the initials C. M. P. It is not known whether the device is intended to be armorial, for they are not upon a shield nor is the compass charged upon a chevron as in the arms of the Freemasons. The records of Herald's College show a disclaimer by Dugdale, of a claim by Petty of Skipton-in-Craven, to bear the arms of Pettit in Cornwall, from whom they failed prove descent, but those arms were quite dissimilar.

The great Sir William Petty, M.D., who was born at Romsey, in Hants, 1623, the son of a clothier, and who as secretary to Cromwell, made a minute survey of all the forfeited and Crown lands of Ireland, and acquired a large fortune by the percentage allowed him, had a grant of arms consisting of a compass needle pointing to the Polar star, and those arms are still born by the Marquis of Lansdowne who is his lineal descendant. Pepys in his diary (July, 1663), quotes letters from Sir William Petty :

Wherein he says that his vessel which he hath built upon two keeles, a modell whereof, built for the King, he shewed me, hath this month won a wager of £50 in sailing between Dublin and Holyhead, with the pacquett-boat, the best ship or vessel the King hath there ; and he offers to lay with any vessel in the world.

The arms which he obtained were doubtless in testimony of his skill as a nautical inventor, and the drawing compass displayed in the sculpture at "Petty Hall," may possibly have been symbolical of distinction as a land surveyor.

In later days Petty Hall was acquired by a branch of the Garnett family, and became the residence of William Garnett, born at Wickerslack in the parish of Crosby Ravensworth, 1715, whose descent may be traced back
in

THE OLD HALL
OR
PETTY HALL - ORTON.



Fred.^k B. Garnett, del^t

SCULPTURE OVER FIRE PLACE.

in the registers to Anthony Garnett who married Elizabeth Parkies, 15th June, 1601. The initials of this William Garnett are inscribed on a stone over one of the doors in the right hand, or barn end of the house.

W.G., 1740.

His brother Thomas Garnett was the last of the race at Wickerslack, born 1721, and died 1803. There is a tradition that the family were of extraordinary stature, and a very tall stick called the Garnett-staff, was long preserved in the parish. Amongst the representatives of the family still living, may be mentioned the well known Mr. John Garnett, of Windermere, who claims to be the oldest post-master in the kingdom.

Another branch of the Garnetts, who were of Blasterfield, not far from Wickerslack in the parish of Crosby Ravensworth, became the founders of the family at Egglecliffe, Durham, whose right to the ancient arms of Garnett of Westmorland—Azure three gryphon's heads erased or, was recognized by the Heralds at their visitations.

Mr. John Garnett Holme, great grandson of William Garnett of Petty Hall, sold the estate to the late Thomas Gibson, Esq. M.D., of Orton, the author of "Legends and Historical Notes on places in the East and West wards, Westmorland," but he makes no allusion therein to this particular property, which is now possessed by his son Mr. Thomas Holme Gibson, of Kirkby Stephen, by whom I am informed that his father, the late owner, had a small window re-opened which had been blocked on account of the window tax; also that a quern was found on the place many years ago, but through carelessness of the tenant had been lost; a portion was afterwards found again, being turned out of some portion of the dairy wall whilst under restoration. The land when bought by Dr. Gibson was
in

in parts very swampy, and a portion known as the "Low-moor" was drained by him at considerable cost, when all sorts of curious scraps of iron, circular horse shoes, &c., were found in the swamp.

Having understood that some of the old glass remained in the windows of an upper chamber, I have examined what there is still to be seen of the old tracery, but can find no sign of stained glass there.

The extreme thickness of the outer wall, and the solid stone steps of the winding stair, by which the upper chambers are reached deserve attention, also does the primitive method of barring the outer door, by a stout oak bar pulled out from a socket in the thickness of the wall, into which it is pushed back when not in use.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.—The following is a suggestion by our Secretary, Mr. T. Wilson, which seems to solve the difficulty.

"The arms of the Freemasons prior to 1813 were a pair of compasses at an angle of 45° on a chevron between 3 towers 2 and 1.¹ These arms have sometimes been assumed by Freemasons, *e.g.* Thomas Gardner, Mayor of Lancaster, 1710, adopted the same, and it looks as if the owner of Petty Hall, not having any family arms, used the arms of the craft. The arms are still used by Freemasons but are now impaled with another shield."

Papworth's Ordinary, p. 506, gives "Sa. on a chev. betw. three towers arg. a pair of compasses extended as the first" as the arms of the Society of Free and Accepted Masons.