

ART. XVII.—*The Askews of Marsh Grange*. By J. BROWNBILL, M.A., with a Note by HARPER GAYTHORPE, F.S.A.Scot.

*Read at Barrow-in-Furness, September 9th, 1909.*

IN the introduction to *Furness: Past and Present*, by J. Richardson, published in 1880, it is stated that West's *Antiquities of Furness*, published in 1774, and the one by Close in 1805 were very incomplete, they having allowed their prejudices to control them so far as to suppress all mention of Judge Fell, George Fox, and the Askew family, who played so prominent a part in this district. The publisher of *Furness: Past and Present* therefore decided to rescue their names from oblivion, and do them the justice they were entitled to.

Every historical book is of necessity incomplete, but the charge made in this passage that Fr. West, as a Jesuit priest, allowed his "prejudices" to control him in the way described, is one that ought never to have been made. As to Close, it may be passed over, for he was merely republishing West's book in a form he thought more convenient, with some additions from his own observations.\* But as to West's "prejudices," one may very well ask how his book could have been written at all had he allowed religious differences to influence him. If he was careful to commemorate the Sawreys of Plumpton and Broughton-in-Furness, we may be sure that it was not religious or political differences which led him to omit Judge Fell. A proof of his moderation is his treatment of the Prestons of Furness and Holker. It is well known

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\* And from a *Relation of Margaret Fell*, printed by J. Sowle in 1710. See Close's West, pp. 401-405.

that Sir Thomas Preston, after providing for his daughters, went abroad to join the Jesuits, and gave Furness Abbey to that Order as a suitable place for training the novices. It must often have grieved Fr. West, living in the neighbourhood of the beautiful remains of the abbey, that his Order had been ousted from the possession of them by the old laws proscribing the Catholic religion. These laws were made use of by another Thomas Preston, if indeed he did not himself cause them to be set in motion, not for securing the estate to the end his more generous relative desired, nor for augmenting the daughters' portion, but solely, so far as can be judged, for his own selfish profit, so that Furness Abbey was joined on to the Holker estates. Yet not a word of praise of Sir Thomas Preston, nor of censure of his distant cousin, is to be found in Fr. West's book.

It is, however, quite true that Judge Fell ought to have been mentioned in the "Antiquities," for he acquired part of the manor of Ulverston. If religious prejudice cannot be attributed to West, there is an obvious explanation of the omission—viz., that the documents to which the author had access were incomplete, and thus his account of the descent of that manor is imperfect. The Fells were conformists. The omission to give an account of George Fox is due to the general plan of West's work, which excluded modern religious conditions as being a matter on which his readers and he could not be expected to agree, and not from any hostility to Fox or the Quakers in particular. Thomas Pennant, who visited Furness about the same time that West was writing his book, takes occasion to mention Fox, whom he regarded as a melancholy fanatic.

The Askews of Marsh Grange require more particular attention. Estates like Marsh Grange and Swarthmoor were not of the rank to which West devoted himself, and it may at once be stated that these Askews were an absolutely obscure family, which West could not have touched.

upon, unless he had determined to give the histories of all the yeoman families of Furness—a task, it may be said, beyond the powers of any single writer. West's work is so valuable, as far as it goes, that its defence against unjust aspersions ought to be welcomed by all interested in local history in Furness.

The Askews of Marsh Grange were of unknown origin, and this obscurity has prompted some imaginative pedigree-maker to connect them with a gentle or knightly stock—the Askews of Lincolnshire. Who it was I do not know, but the fable has been adopted by Mrs. Maria Webb in her *Fells of Swarthmoor Hall*, Richardson in the work in which he desired to do them justice, and by the late Canon Bardsley in his *Chronicles of Ulverston*.

The story goes that a Sir Hugh Askew was related to the contemporary Sir William Askew of Kelsey in Lincolnshire, who was father of the Anne Askew (or rather Kyme), burnt to death for heresy by Henry VIII. in 1546. Though professing ignorance of the exact kinship of the two knights, Sir Hugh and Sir William, the legend makes Sir Hugh bequeath Marsh Grange, of which he had obtained a grant from Henry VIII., to his "nephew" William Askew, who is said to have been a son of Anne Askew. Anne Askew thus becomes the great-grandmother of Margaret Fell,\* and the object of the pedigree-maker is accomplished.

There is no truth in this legend. The Askews of Lincolnshire derived themselves from a Yorkshire stock, and had no connexion with the Furness district. The surname was known in Furness long before the Reformation, but pedigrees of yeoman families can scarcely ever be compiled before the institution of parish registers, and practically nothing is known of the descent of the Askews of Marsh Grange. Sir Hugh Askew, according to the

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\* Margaret was daughter of John Askew, who is supposed to be a son of William Askew, but this is not quite certain.

pedigree put forward in such works as Burke's *Commoners* and Foster's *Lancashire Pedigrees*, came of a Cumberland family living near Muncaster, and did not pretend that he had any connexion with the Lincolnshire Askews.\* He was one of the adventurers who sought fortune at the court of Henry VIII. in a time of vast changes, and in 1542 he obtained a grant of the site of Seaton priory in Cumberland with some of its lands, and also land in Knaresbrough which had belonged to St. Robert's Priory there. Nothing is there or elsewhere recorded of any grant of Marsh Grange to Sir Hugh or anyone else.

Pleadings of the time of Elizabeth give some details as to Marsh Grange. In 1586 Leonard Rawlinson stated that one William Askew of Marsh Grange, husbandman, held the estate "according to the laudable custom of tenant right used in the Queen's manor of Furness . . . . parcel of the possessions of the late dissolved monastery of Furness." In 1580 the said William conveyed to Rawlinson a moiety of the tenement in which his mother Jenet Askew, widow, was then living. In the following year William Askew conveyed the other moiety to Rawlinson. This was the plaintiff's case.

On the other side Roger Askew, brother of William, alleged that a certain Richard Askew had formerly held the estate. He made his will in 1551, desiring that his wife Jenet should have the whole, if she remained a widow, for ten years, when it was to be divided between his two eldest sons, William and John. John died without issue, and Roger then claimed his moiety as brother, in accordance with their father's will.

Rawlinson in reply alleged that before Richard Askew had any right in Marsh Grange it was held by John Richardson and Richard Chambers according to the custom of tenant right, and they conveyed the same to

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\* The late Joseph Foster discovered Sir Hugh's parentage, and connected him with the Askews of Lacra (see his edition of the Visitation of Cumberland by St. George).

William Askew. Further, by the custom of the manor of Low Furness, tenant right land was not devisable by will from the son and heir to any other person (D.L. Plead., 140/R7, 4).

Whatever may have been the truth of these allegations, it is plain that before 1551 Marsh Grange was held by a Richard Askew, that he had a wife Jenet, and sons William, John, and Roger, who succeeded in whole or in part. William Askew's parentage is thus completely ascertained, and the fictions of inheritance by bequest from Hugh Askew, and of descent from Anne Askew, are quite brushed away.

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NOTE BY HARPER GAYTHORPE.

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I have been at some pains in tracing the origin of the statement that Fr. West, author of *The Antiquities of Furness*, was prejudiced against Judge Fell and the Askew family of Furness; and also in tracing the earliest reference to the connection of Anne Askew the martyr with the founder of the family of the Askews of Graymains, Muncaster, Cumberland.

I.—As to the former statement, Miss Emma C. Abraham of Liverpool, a descendant of Margaret Fell of Marsh Grange and of Swarthmoor Hall, has furnished me with information which shows clearly that the statement about Fr. West's prejudices (*The Fells of Swarthmoor Hall*, p. 425, ed. 1865; p. 373, ed. 1867) as priest and a Jacobite was originally made by Robert Abraham, great-grandson of John Abraham, son of Daniel and Rachel Abraham of Swarthmoor Hall. Robert Abraham was born in 1804 at Carlisle, and gave up his practice there as a qualified medical man to edit the *Whitehaven Gazette*. He afterwards emigrated to Montreal, where he died in 1854. Since this charge against Fr. West appeared in *The Fells of Swarthmoor Hall* in 1865, 2nd ed. 1867, it was reprinted by J. Richardson in *Furness: Past and Present* in 1880, and by Canon Bardsley in his *Chronicles of Ulverston*, 1885, p. 66. The charge has been further spread in America, for in 1896 *The Fells of Swarthmoor Hall* was reprinted in Philadelphia by Henry Longstreth, and in 1906 Joshua L. Baily, a "Friend" of Philadelphia, bought up Longstreth's sheet stock, bore the cost of printing an index to the book, which, at his request, was prepared by the Library Department of

the Friends' Historical Society, London. This index was bound up with the sheets, and a large number of the books distributed gratuitously by J. L. Baily. The title page remains the same, and no date 1906 appears anywhere,

II.—As to the history of the Askew family and their supposed connection with Anne Askew the martyr, the matter is first referred to by the Rev. John Hodgson in his valuable history of Westmorland (*Beauties of England and Wales*, vol. xv., pp. 234-5), where he states that “the Askew family derive their descent from Thurston de Bosco, who lived in John’s reign at Aikskeugh [or Oakwood], near Millom, and afterwards at Graymains, near Muncaster in Cumberland. Anne Askew, whose name stands so eminently on the pages of martyrology, was one of his descendants. The proprietor of this estate traces his descent from Sir Hugh Askew, yeoman of the cellar to Queen Catherine. Henry VIII. gave him the lands of the nunnery of Seaton in Cumberland.”

What authority the Rev. J. Hodgson had for this statement about Anne Askew is not given, nor is it mentioned by Nicolson and Burn (vol. i., p. 256), who quote John Denton of Cardew’s “Accompt” (c. 1610), or by Hutchinson. It is, however, quoted by Jefferson (*Allerdale Ward above Derwent*, 1842, p. 139), and in the various editions of *The Fells of Swarthmoor Hall* before referred to; also by nearly every writer of local history in Furness since 1865,\* and in Foster’s *Pedigrees of Lancashire families* in 1873.

Miss Abraham informs me that before *The Fells of Swarthmoor Hall* was published, Mr. William Benson (born 1814, died 1849), a solicitor in Manchester, editor of the *British Friend*, proposed to publish a history of Furness Friends, and in conjunction with Robert Abraham, before referred to, compiled some interesting matter relating to Friends, but it was never published, as Soulbly of Ulverston would not take the risk. The MSS. with others were subsequently lent to Mrs. Maria Webb, and were used by her in compiling *The Fells of Swarthmoor Hall*. The pedigree of the Askew family, printed on p. 6 in that work, is, according to Miss Abraham, a mixture of fact and fiction due to Mrs. Maria Webb, and the statement that Margaret Fell was granddaughter to Anne Askew the martyr she has always believed to be erroneous. No idea of a lineal descent of Margaret Askew from Anne Askew was ever suggested by William Benson or heard of in their family until John

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\* *Furness: Past and Present*, 1880, vol. ii., p. 152; Roper’s *Churches, Castles, &c., of North Lancashire*, 1880, vol. i., p. 116; Bardsley’s *Chronicles of Ulverston*, 1885, p. 66; Barber’s *Furness and Cartmel Notes*, 1894, p. 223; *North Lonsdale Magazine*, vol. i., 1896, pp. 166-209.

Abraham, her father, became personally acquainted with his kinsfolk, the Shackletons of Ballytore in Ireland. To his surprise he found that this belief existed. Mrs. Maria Webb got the theory from the Shackletons, and then set to work trying to fit facts to theory.

Before Mrs. Maria Webb's death, Miss Abraham wrote to her asking where she found the evidence on which the pedigree was based, but she was not able at that time to give any information. Miss Abraham further states that there was no relationship between the two knights—Sir Hugh Askew of Bootle, Cumberland, and Sir William Askew, the father of Anne Askew, of South Kelsey, Lincolnshire, for in a pedigree of the former compiled by the late Joseph Foster he shows that Sir Hugh was the fourth son of Christopher Askew, younger son of John Askew of Lacra, near Millom in Cumberland, with two previous generations seated at Lacra. There is no common ancestor recorded in this pedigree, and that of Sir William of South Kelsey, and if these pedigrees had been printed before Mrs. Maria Webb wrote we should never have been told that "Margaret Fell was great-granddaughter of Anne Askew the Martyr."

Most confusing statements are found in connection with Marsh Grange. Apparently it is the estate at Kirkby in the county of Lancaster, referred to by Nicolson and Burn as being "purchased by William Askew of Graymains" sometime between 1621 and 1641; while it is stated by William Benison and Robert Abraham, on the authority of a deed in possession of Edward Wakefield, Esq., of Kendal, in 1842, that Marsh Grange was granted to Sir Hugh Askew in 1542. Mr. E. W. Wakefield has kindly communicated the translation of the original grant of Seaton to Sir Hugh Askew, but it contains no reference to Marsh Grange, nor can Mr. Wakefield find any confirmation among the documents relating to Seaton and Marsh Grange, of which he is the owner, of the idea that the latter place was owned by the Askews of the former.

Marsh Grange is situated near the shore of the River Duddon at the extreme north of the parish of Dalton though close to the border of that of Kirkby. At an advanced period of his life Judge Fell (died 1658) bought the estate of his relations the Askews (*The Fells of Swarthmoor Hall*, p. 428)—*i.e.*, the two sons of John Askew, father of Margaret, afterwards wife of Judge Fell. The many branches of the Askew family both in Furness and Cumberland make it an extremely difficult task to state precisely the connection of one with the other, and an investigation of the Dalton register in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is really necessary.

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## APPENDIX.

GRANT OF SEATON, &c., TO HUGH ASCUE, 15 MARCH,  
33 HENRY VIII., 1542.

(Copy in the possession of E. W. Wakefield, Esq.)

The King . . . . To Hugh Ascue . . . . we for the sum of Ninety Six pounds eleven shillings and fourpence . . . . grant unto the said Hugh All that House and Site lately the Priory of Seiton in the County of Cumberland by the Authority of Parliament suppressed and dissolved And all Mills Houses Edifices &c Gardens and the Ground and soil situate and being as well beneath as near the Site fence boundary Circuit and precinct of the said Priory And also those our closes Lands Meadows and pastures called the Pigghele, the Church Land, Meeke [Much] Adeland, Little Adeland, Hyghfald, Bottomfald, Waynfeild, Halfeld, Innermerrydyng, Ryeclose, Overlayclays, Nedderlayclays, Horse Close, Cowlees and Langclose Also our one parcel of Land called the Flatts as also all those our parcels of Land and Ground called Malpas, Myrehouse, Ings and Adings as also all those our closes of Land and Ground called Horse Close, Overmoreriddings, Ormescroft, Dublesmeadow, Coweyetleys, Byrkbanke, the Cragge, Fermery Hill and Farleycleys with all and singular the Appurtenances all in Seyton . . . . Also our one Tenement and our one Croft of Land adjoining the same containing by estimation four Acres. Also all that our Close of Land called Haverclose containing by estimation one Acre and a half Also all that our one Close of Land called Somrose Hill containing by estimation one and a half Acres All that our Close of Land called Tornebank containing by estimation one Acre and one Rood Also all that our close of Land called the Holme containing by estimation one Acre with all their Appurtenances situate lying and being in the Hamlet of Hosgill in the parish of Whitebeck . . . . lately belonging . . . . to the said late Priory . . . . Also all that our Messuage and Tenement called Flattehouse and our twelve Acres of Arable Land to the same adjoining with the Appurtenances thereto belonging now or lately in the Tenure or occupation of Robert Fletcher and of the Widow of Nicholas Shepherd situate lying and being in the Hamlet of Hysemon [Hycemore] in the parish of Bootle . . . . lately belonging . . . . to the said late Priory . . . . Also all that our Messuage and Tenement called the Ford House and our four Acres of Land . . . . now or late in the tenure of Christopher

Wilson situate lying and being in the Hamlet of Hysemon in the said parish of Bootle . . . . and formerly part of the said Priory And also all that our Messuage and Tenement called Shaw House Also our four Acres of Land called Cow Close Also our four Acres of Arable Land called Neddermerfield Also all those our two Acres and a half of Land in the Croft called the Parrock And also our one Acre and one Rood of Land called the ffold as also our half Acre of Meadow in Seyton Myre and our three Roods of Land in the same . . . . now or late in the Tenure of Richard Singleton situate lying and being in the Hamlet of Hysemore . . . . formerly part of the said Priory Also all manner of Rents Reversions and annual profits of all and singular the Premises . . . . Also all and all manner of Woods and underwoods of in and to the Premises increasing and being Also all and all manner of Common Turbary furze Briers commodities Profits and emoluments whatsoever . . . . the site of which Priory and of the aforesaid Lands Tenements &c and all and singular other the Premises above expressed and specified with the Appurtenances only amount to the clear yearly value of four pounds eleven shillings and fourpence Sterling per Annum and no more We further give and for the consideration aforesaid by these Presents do grant unto the said Hugh Ascue All that our Wood and Land called the Sykes Copps containing by estimation fifteen Acres Also all that our Wood called Chappel Garth containing by estimation one Acre And all the Land Ground and soil of the same Woods with all the Appurtenances in the parish of Knaresborough in our said County of York lately belonging and appertaining to the Priory of Saint Robert in Knaresborough in our said County of York only lately dissolved . . . . To be holden of us our Heirs and Successors in chief by one twentieth part of one Knights fee And yielding therefore annually to us and our Successors nine Shillings and two pence sterling to be paid into our Court for the Augmentation of the Revenue of our Crown at the feast of Saint Michael the Archangel . . . . And we also will and by these presents Grant to the aforesaid Hugh Ascue that he may and shall have these our Letters Patent under our great Seal of England duly made and sealed without fine or fee great or small to us into our Hanaper Office or elsewhere to our use for the same in any manner to be yielded paid or done Therefore &c

In witness &c at Westminster

15th March

Writ for Private Seal

The above gives the essential parts of a long document.

The two following are transcribed from photographs kindly made by Mr. J. F. Curwen from the originals in possession of Mr. E. W. Wakefield, Kendal.

TO ALL Chrystiane people to whome this p'sente writinge it shall come or it shall here see or read, I Dame Brigitte Askeughe weadow doo sende greatinge in our Lord god euerlastinge. KNOW YE ththat I the said Ladie Askeughe, haue nomynated, constituted, and in my place haue putte my welbeloved freinde John Mydleton esquier, and my trustie Servante Abraham Chambers gentleman, my trew and lawfull atturnyes joyntelie and sev'allie for me and to myne use, to take deliu'ye of such writings and assurances as Walter Askeughe yonger esquier and Walter Askeughe elder gentleman or eyther of them shall make and Sealle unto me, for and concerninge the assuring unto me the said Lady Askeughe of all their righte tytles use intereste tearme of yeares or Remaynder, which they or either of them, or their heirs, or heires male, or the heires or heires male of eyther of them, haue or of righte may oughte or can have after my deathe of in and unto the Deanery and Prebendes of Aukelande within the Bussopprike of Durham, Saincte Robertes neighe Knaresbourghe and Panell in the countie of Yorke, by force and vertew of the laste will and Testamente of Sr Heughe Askeughe Knighte, deceased layte husbände of me the said Ladie Askeughe YN WYTTNES WHEREOFFE I the said Ladie Askeughe to this p'sente have sette my sealle and subscribed my name the teynthe day of Marche in the xxv<sup>th</sup> yere of the reigne of our Sovereigne Ladie Elizabeth by the grace of God Quene of England, France and Ireland defender of the faythe.

Briggett Askewe

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The seal is broken, but appears to bear a sort of bouquet or basket of flowers above a U-shaped curve, perhaps a round table.

Nouerint vniuersi & presentes me Georgium Porter de Bolton in Comitatu Cumbrie generosum teneri et firmiter obligari domine Brigitte Askew de Munkester in comitatu Cumbrie generose vidue in sexcentis libris bone et legalis monete Anglie solvendis dicte domine Brigitte Askew aut suo certo atturnato heredibus vel executoribus suis in festo Sancti Michaelis archangeli proximo futuro post data presentium. Ad quam quidem solutionem bene et fideliter faciendum obligo me heredes et executores meos per presentes Sigillo

meo sigillatas. Datum duodecimo die Maij Anno Regni Elizabethæ dei gratia Angliæ Franciæ et Yrland Regine fidei defensoris &c. decimo septimo.

George Porter

Sealed signed and deliuered in the p'sence of

Abraham Chambers	Mr G.—ell Sharpe
Wyllm ffrears	Thomas Caddy
Anthony turner	Richard branthatt
Anthonye Patrickeson	w <sup>th</sup> oth <sup>rs</sup>

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The seal is a G P in a knot made of a thin string with tassels at the ends.