

A Short History of Bubnell Hall



1. Introduction

For centuries Bubnell Hall has been the largest and prestigious house in both Bubnell and Baslow. This article gives the story of the house and the people who lived in it. The centre of Bubnell is about one kilometre upstream from the bridge over the river Derwent. The Hall is halfway up the hill from the bridge.

2. The Families

To understand the story and its connections within the village it is helpful to know a little about the families of those involved

The Broomheads

The Broomheads were a long established family who can be traced back to the 1500s: they lived in Bubnell House, one of the larger houses in the hamlet (not to be confused with Bubnell Hall) with 3 hearths in the tax of 1670. It may have been the original manor house. John (1602 to 1690) was "smelter to the Duke of Rutland". Lead mining at the time was doing well and he must have profited from it. His eldest son moved into Bubnell Hall about 1670, while his other son Robert stayed on in Bubnell House. John had no children, and after his death, Robert had only one daughter Elizabeth living in Bubnell.

The Whites

They were neighbours of the Broomheads, in a similar house and with a similar long history in the hamlet.

The Jacksons

There are several records of the Jackson family in Baslow and Bubnell in the 1600s, mainly about the ownership of property.

The Gardoms

Christopher Gardom came to Baslow in the early 1600s. He must have been a man of substance, as he took over a farm at Far End that extended over most of the Barbrook valley: it included several quarries making millstones. His status was such that his eldest son went to Peterhouse (Cambridge university) in 1651. Gardoms farmed the area from the same house until the early 1900s

Christopher had two grandsons who were prominent in the village. The elder John (1664-1713) lived in the family farm but was also was a skilled blacksmith. He was employed by the first Duke of Devonshire in the rebuilding of Chatsworth House. His name appears in a plaque at the top of the west stairs (now closed to the public). Also he probably helped fashion the "Golden" Gates now at the Baslow entrance to Chatsworth Park. He married Anna Greensmith of Edensor. Two years after his death his widow Anna married Richard Oddy.

The Oddies

Richard Oddy (1753 to 1679) is commemorated by a plaque in Baslow church where he is described as a "Gatesmith". He was a skilled blacksmith who originally worked in London but was head hunted by the First Duke of Devonshire to work with John Gardom. When John died he married his widow Anna, and probably sometime later, moved into Bubnell House, then vacated by the Broomheads.

Tomlinsons and the Smedleys

The Tomlinsons were farmers and butchers at Bridgefoot, the farm facing the Baslow Bridge. William (1804-1881) came to Bubnell in the 1820s. His only son died early, leaving his eldest grandson William Smith Tomlinson (1858-1945) to manage the farm, helped by his brother Arthur J Tomlinson (1865-?). His daughter Molly married Cyril Smedley

Cyril Smedley, new to the village, was the tenant farmer at Bubnell Cliff Farm during the war. He married Molly Millington Tomlinson from Bridgefoot farm. In 1947 the family were given the tenancy of Bubnell Hall Farm until its sale in 1960.

3. Ownership

The ownership of the manor of Bubnell can be traced with some imprecision to the Norman conquest. Much of Bubnell came into the possession of the Manners family – subsequently the Duke of Rutland – with the marriage of Dorothy Vernon to John Manners in 1563. The Copwood family may have been a co-owner, and the Eyre family also seems to have had interests. By the Enclosure award of 1824 the entire hamlet including Bubnell Hall had become the property of the Duke of Rutland. Before that date the occupants of the Hall were probably tenants of Rutland, but they may have been owners or tenants of some other person

In 1870 the Duke of Devonshire bought Bubnell (or exchanged it for lands elsewhere). He became the Lord of the Manor, owning every house wood and field. He immediately started to build a new model farm at the top of the village. Initially an existing farm and a few cottages were demolished, but otherwise there was no immediate change.

4. The Hall

The Hall today is a large building with an imposing front and a jumble of additions at the rear. The oldest part, "The Hall", close to the road, is relatively small and makes about a third of the frontage. The other two thirds of the front, which includes the main entrance, was built later and was subsequently known as "The Farmhouse". Later extensions and buildings are scattered behind it.

Early history

There is no definite evidence about the early history of Bubnell Hall. It is situated (today) in an open field with no immediate neighbours, and is about half a kilometre from the centre of the hamlet, so it is not likely to have been the early manor house.

The earliest part, "The Hall" can be dated to the second part of the 1600s, say about 1660. This is consistent with the Hearth Tax returns, which record Mr John Jackson as having a house with 12 hearths in 1664. However the parish burial records show that Maria daughter of John Jackson of Bubnell Hall was baptised in 1635, and there is an earlier record of the Robert Eyre, Gent of Bubnell Hall" being buried in 1599. Cox in his book Churches of Derbyshire confirms a window in the church with the inscription "Robt. Eyre de Bubnell Hall" and the date 1593. Either the building is earlier than thought, or that there was an earlier building on the site, or that a building elsewhere in the hamlet was called at the time "The Hall".

The 1670 tax returns show that the occupant was Robert Broomhead. Robert died in 1698 with no children. Probably his property and certainly his tenancy was inherited by his niece Elizabeth Broomhead: she married Thomas Gardom in 1709 who joined her in the Hall. His son John (1721-88) continued in the hall marrying well, his second wife being a rich widow. By then he was an entrepreneur with money. In partnership with John Pares, a banker from Leicester he built in 1785 Calver Mill. In 1783 John's eldest son Thomas left Bubnell Hall to start married life at Cliff House, just across the valley and closer to Calver Mill.

About this time, Richard Oddy left Bubnell House to live at Bubnell Hall. The date is confirmed by parish records which show that a daughter was baptised in 1783 when he lived in Bubnell House, and his wife died in 1786 in Bubnell Hall.

One can only speculate why Richard left Bubnell House, a respectable house with land attached. Maybe he wanted to move up in the world. Maybe the Gardoms were short of cash because of financing Calver Mill and had to downsize.

This is the likely time that the "The Hall" was greatly extended to create the western part of the present structure, later called "The Farmhouse". The extension appears much larger from the front and contains the main entrance.

The Gardoms continued to live in The Hall. There are no records about when they left, but it could have been well into the 1800s. Richard Oddy was succeeded by his son Caleb in "The Farmhouse"

Richard Oddy then his son Jebson lived in The Farmhouse until 1850. It is likely, but not confirmed that the remaining Gardoms continued in The Hall, perhaps until 1832 when the last widow died.

History after 1841

More detail is available from the first full census of 1841.

The Hall

By 1841 "The Hall" was a school for girls, under the care first of Miss Ann Wilkinson (1841 & 51) then of Mrs Farrow (1861) who came with her elderly husband a retired banker. The Caines

Sisters remained from 1871 to 1898 when the school closed. The number of scholars varied from 3 to 16. Subsequently the Hall was leased out, initially to Mr Peel (1911 census) and later to the others including the Sorbys

The Farmhouse

The tenancy of Bubnell Hall Farmhouse was still in the hands of Jepson Oddy. Until his death in 1850. When it was awarded to Thomas W Gardom of Yeld Farm (not the branch of the family that lived in Bubnell Hall). He ran the farm from home at Far End in Baslow with a resident farm manager first Mr Buckley then, John Holding. For a while his sister lived there as well.

In 1870 The Duke of Devonshire bought Bubnell. Little changed at first but by 1880 his new model farm at the top of the village was progressing and the long established family farm belonging to the White family had to be demolished. Henry White (who died soon after the move) then his widow Anne, took over the Farmhouse and fields from Gardom. In 1886 her only daughter Annie married Arthur J Tomlinson, the younger brother of William Smith Tomlinson, the farmer of the next door farm at Bridgefoot. Anne herself died in 1894 and the tenancy went to William Smith Tomlinson. Arthur J remained until his wife died, when he moved out and his brother finally took up residence in The Farmhouse, where he stayed until his death in 1945

He was followed by his son Charles F Tomlinson, but he only lived for two years. His daughter Molly had earlier married Cyril Smedley, the farmer at nearby Bubnell Cliff Farm. Cyril got the tenancy and occupied "The Farmhouse" for the next 13 years.

The Sale

The whole building was empty from 1960 until the Duke of Devonshire, beset by death duties, sold it to Mr Basil Rhodes in the mid 1960s. It was in a poor state of repair needing much restoration

The outbuildings

The first major extension visible today from the front, was probably in the 1780s, done in a tasteful and orderly fashion. Since then there have been multiple extensions and new buildings to the rear and west of the hall, many to facilitate its use as a working farm. One might guess that these started with the death of Oddy and the arrival of Anne White, and continued as new facilities were needed to keep up with the changes in farming. Obviously further modifications were necessary when it once again became a private dwelling in the 1960s

5. Finally

It is astonishing to see the family connections that have determined the tenancies over the years from 1660 to 1960. Indeed the only unconnected appointment was that of Henry White, when the change was from necessity rather than death of the current holder.

And really finally, in the 1960s the Smedleys went to Yeld Farm, the ancestral home of the Gardom family

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