

The History of Middleton Quernhow

Middleton Quernhow is in the parish of Wath, in the ancient Wapentake of Hallikeld and baronial liberty of Richmondshire in the North Riding of Yorkshire and the diocese of Cheshire. In the Domesday Book the village is referred to as Middeltun; the spelling, like all spellings, has varied and the 'Quernhow' has sometimes been replaced with Whernhow(e) but basically the name has survived unchanged for over 900 years. Middleton is Saxon and means 'Middle farm or house'. Quernhow may refer to a quern-shaped burial mound or how^G which formed the boundary between Ainderby Quernhow and Middleton or to the fact that querns or millstones were obtained from the how.

The Chantry

Before the Reformation, there was a chantry of St Lawrence in Middleton Quernhow. Chantries were endowed by wealthy people so that priests could 'pray for the soule of the founder, and all x'pen (Christian) soules'.

The Calendar of Patent Rolls^Y records the following item on 12th September 1328 – Licence for the alienation in mortmain by Richard de Bernyngham to the abbot and convent of Jervaulx of a messuage, ten tofts and land in Middeltun Quenerowe, to find two chaplains to celebrate divine service daily, one at the altar of St Mary's in the church of St Michael, Bernyngham, the other in the chapel of St Laurence in Middeltun Quenerowe, for the souls of the said Richard, his ancestors and others. By fine of 10 marks, at the instance of Geoffrey Lescrop'.^Z



An excerpt from a 1766 map showing the location of the chantry.

Who lived here?

Some people were very important in the life of the village but often did not live there. These were the landowners, some of whom owned it as part of a much larger portfolio as it was passed down or sold through the centuries. Then there were the tenant farmers who tended to stay for several generations. Lowest in the social order were the remaining inhabitants, most of whom were agricultural labourers. Some of these families remained in the village for several generations but others came and went, still hired a year at a time by farmers. There were also the domestic servants, although they seem to have been fairly transient as well. Tradesmen were rare, living mainly in the larger villages and towns.

The Landowners

The existence of the village was recorded in 1086 as follows -

In Middeltun [are] 5 carucates to the geld, and there could be 3 ploughs. Thor had a manor there. Now Enisant has 1 plough there; and 8 villans and 2 bordars with 2 ploughs. The whole manor [is] 5 furlongs long and 3 broad. TRE worth 20s; now 15s.

From Count Alan 'the overlordship followed the descent of the honour of Richmond. Enisan was tenant under the Count. Like the other estates of Enisan, this land was afterwards held by the Constables, but there is some difficulty in the statement made by the return of 1286-7 that they held under the Abbot of Jervaulx. Robert, son of Harsculph granted the homage and service of Ranulph son of William de Middleton to the abbot before 1228, but nothing further is known of this mesne lordship'^N.

The Calendar of Patent Rolls^Y contains records linking Richard Lescrop with Middleton Quernhow and a petition from Margaret Scrope, widow of Roger, requests the House of Commons to allow her to enter into all the manors, lands and tenements assigned to her as dower from her late husband

including some at Middleton Quernhow. The Scropes owned the manor until it was sold to Henry Best in the early 17th century.

Richard Best died in 1582 and was buried at Wath. He was at least the third generation to live in the area.

Richard's will includes a fascinating detailed inventory of everything he owned, owed and was owed at his death, room by room and through the outbuildings^Q. The manor house of which a little still stands was not built at this time, but the inventory probably refers to an earlier building.

Richard's fifth son Richard appears to have remained in Middleton Quernhow. He died in 1620, was buried at Wath and left his land to his brother Henry who sold it to Sir Thomas Herbert in 1661.

Thomas Herbert was from a Yorkshire family. He was born in York in 1606 and died there in 1682. He was a great world traveller and was at one time ambassador to Persia. His eldest son, Henry, who was born in 1640 married Anne, the daughter of Sir George Vane. Sir Thomas settled all his real estate on his son including the mansion and estate at Middleton Quernhow. Henry is buried at Wath. His second son, Humphrey became the third baronet when still a mere boy. He died in 1701 burdened with debts and left instructions for his friends Lyonell Vane and Robert Mitford to sell all he owned in Middleton to pay off his debts. This they did to Charles Turner, the father of Cholmley Turner. After Cholmley's death the estate passed to his son, Charles.

In September 1766 Charles Turner sold to Revd Cuthbert Allanson the Manor of Middleton Quernhow with its capital messuage or mansion house, farm and lands.

On 3rd June 1780 Cuthbert died aged 54. In the chancel of Wath church there is a memorial to him; he had been Rector for 23 years. It records that they had seven children: six girls and one boy. George, the son inherited.

Land tax returns give us some information on the landowners at this time and also tell us who occupied the land. For the period 1781-5 George Allanson remains the largest landowner paying £19 4s 6d, (£1,755 in 1998 terms); the College and School and Poor of Wath & Bedale (£2 6s 4½d); William Raper and Richard Pickersgill (both under 7s). By 1793 John Ianson was the owner of the land that had belonged to William Raper; apart from this there seems to have been no change in land ownership over that period.

George married Anne Elizabeth Whitehall Davies in 1794 and died in 1826. Their son, George appears to have been a 'lunatic'. His younger sister, Dorothy, (1802-1881) inherited the estate. She married Sir Digby Cayley 7th bart in 1830 and they went to live at the Cayley family residence, High Hall, in Brompton by Sawdon¹⁵.

They had two sons, George Allanson Cayley whose eldest son was George Everard Cayley, and Digby William Cayley.

On the tithe apportionment & map in 1838 George Allanson Esq, a lunatic, and the Dorothy Cayley Committee owned the estate. In 1840 the Lord of the Manor was Sir Digby Cayley; 7th baronet of Brompton (near Scarborough)^C.

In 1874 the estate was sold to William Moore Wood of Oulton. This sale marks the transfer of 'the manor' from 'old money' in the form of hereditary baronets to 'new money', for William Wood was a colliery proprietor. He died at the end of 1910 aged 52. On his father's death, the estate passed to William Ainsworth Wood who sold it in 1920s to the Poad Brothers, Isaac, Japheth and John. In 1925 Charles and John Bird bought what is now Coldstone Farm from the Poads, and in 1927 Francis Foster bought what is now Manor Farm from them.

The Old Hall

The most interesting building in the village is the Old Hall which is thought to date from around 1640. If this is the case it must have been built for Henry Best. No record of its construction has yet been found. The term used for what we would now term loosely a 'manor house' was *capital messuage*

which was the main property within a manor. The first mention of a capital message in documents found so far is the will of George Best who died in 1638/9.

All that remains of it now is part of the front and side of the south wing with the large chimney stack, a fireplace about 1 yard high and 2 yards wide and above it a smaller hearth, and the two mullioned windows, the lower one blocked up with stone.

Originally the house was two stories high with attics and cellars and had three transomed windows. There was a fish pond at the back. We have an undated photograph of it from the early 20th century showing the remains of the northern wing also still standing. Shortly after this photo was taken it seems likely that this wing was demolished and the stone used for building work by the Poads. The Harrogate District Landscape Character Assessment states that the Hall has fine earthworks of a Mediaeval village or possibly gardens dating from the early 17th century^H.

White's Directory of 1840 states that there was in the village 'part of an ancient and once extensive Hall'. A map from 1858 indicates the location of the 'Old Hall'. In the *History and Topography of the City of York and the North Riding of Yorkshire (T Whellan & Co, 1857-9)* the village is described as 'small but neat and in a secluded situation. Part of an ancient and once extensive hall is standing in it and is inhabited by a cottager'. In 1890 Bulmer's History and Directory of North Yorkshire recounted that 'the old hall, or rather a portion of it, is still standing in the village, but is in a very dilapidated condition.' So the disintegration began early in the 19th century. Prisoners of war were housed in the cellars during the 1st World War³.

Pevsner mentions it in his series on buildings in the North Riding of Yorkshire, first published in 1966 but written earlier – *Little remains of what must once have been quite a substantial and dignified house – namely the east end of the south wing. It looks 1630-40. There are three-light transomed windows on the ground floor and first floor, and they have pediments, a triangular one below, an open segmental one above. Of the centre of the house only the lower courses stand with those of the jambs of the doorway.*

This is how the Hall is described in the Victoria History –

The old hall was habitable within living memory, but is now a roofless and picturesque ruin. In front is a walled garden with brick gate piers having enriched cappings in stone. The house itself fronts east and consists of a central block with two slightly projecting side wings dating from about 1640. The central portion included the great hall with a large larder behind it, the kitchen occupied the north wing and the



An undated photograph of the Hall – probably early 20th century.

private apartments were confined to the south wing. The whole building was two stories high with attics in the roof. The front wall of the hall block has entirely fallen, but in the rear wall are two large

fireplaces, one to each floor, and a door opening into the larder behind. The fronts of the two wings are gabled and stand intact. The windows to the ground floor are of three lights mullioned and transomed, with architrave, frieze and pediment over. The first floor windows are similar, but with curved, cleft pediments, while those in the gables are of two lights without transoms and have simple moulded labels. The kitchen in the north wing is much ruined, but projecting from the north wall is a domed oven built in ashlar. The south wing is more complete, and the south front is finished with a moulded cornice at the eaves level. Against the same wall is a large chimney stack with four offsets and a chamfered plinth. Adjoining the west end on this side was another wing, now completely destroyed, and at the south-west angle of the existing building is the jamb of a doorway, seemingly of a much earlier date than the rest of the structure, with a moulded label returned on itself at the spring in diamond form. The windows of the back elevation are all of oak, with massive lintels of the same material; those to the ground floor are of four simple lights, but the windows above are transomed. The stone windows to the east front are unusual in having square mullions with panelled faces. The house is built of rubble with dressed quoins, but the barns and outbuildings, which are of early eighteenth century date, are built of red brick.^N

1570-1640 is known as the 'great rebuilding' as landowners became more prosperous. Chimneys were built, second storeys added, larger windows with glazing inserted and partitions created to separate different parts of the ground floor. The existence of a doorway of apparently much earlier date indicates that an earlier house may have existed on this site. And the fact that the rear ground floor windows were of 'four simple lights but the windows above were transomed' suggests that a later second storey may have been added to an earlier one-storey house which further supports this idea.

In an item in the Ripon Wakeman in 1933 Margaret Hunter remembers that *At one time there was a splendid oak tree which grew on the village green until it was blasted by lightning at the turn of this century.... I remember as a child that Jacobean manor house – even then showing signs of decay. There was a shoulder high stone wall in front flanked by two square stone posts on the top of which were two enormous stone balls. Through the narrow gate, the short flagged path led to a heavy nail-studded oak door, which when pushed opened into a fair-size panelled hall from which ascended the broad shallow staircase with its square newels. The room above was similar in size to the hall beneath also being panelled in oak (one had to be careful how one trod for some of the floorboards were rotten) and looking out of the lovely stone mullioned window only green fields below and beyond were to be seen, with the modern railway line threading its way between. I have no recollection of the rest of the house, which may have been boarded up. There was no garden to speak of, only the village green in front and the cowslip meadows behind. I always think if only it had been renovated in time, it would have been a delightful sized house for modern use.*

The reference to the 'modern railway line' gives us a reasonable clue as to the period she is describing which would be around the mid 1850s. Her description brings the house alive in a way that the detailed architectural descriptions do not. But why the Hall was left to disintegrate and decay no-one seems to know. Subsidence may well have been the main problem but it appears to have been a long slow process, accelerated by the use of stone from the ruin being used to enlarge the Manor Farm house across the green and the farmhouse at Coldstone by the Poads in the 1920s.

The Old House

The house at the south end of the village is known as the Old House. English Heritage describe it as mid 18th century and 19th century. There appears to have been originally a 3-bay house with a later 2-bay 2-storey extension to which was added a single-storey porch. It has been owned privately for many centuries rather than belonging with the rest of the estate. The property belonged to the Raper family and then to the l'Ansons.

In 1931 Dorothy l'Anson inherited the Old House and she lived there until she died on 30th May 1939. The property was left to her nephew John l'Anson and was rented out to a series of people. It was sold in the 1960s.

Trinity Farm

Just over 100 acres in Middleton Quernhow was bequeathed by Dr Peter Samwaies to Trinity College, Cambridge. The rent was to be used to purchase books for the college library, to Bedale for the relief of the poor and also in Wath..

The farmhouse at the north end of the village was built on wasteland towards the end of the 18th century and replaced an earlier one.

The tenants were the Walbrons, followed by the Spences and Almans, all linked by marriages. They were followed by the Scotts.

In 1949 Tom Pearson bought the land from Trinity College. He was the great-great-grandson of Francis and Margaret Alman who were tenants in the 18th and 19th centuries. He and his wife had no children, and in 1957 his wife's nephew bought the farm from him.



An aerial view of the village taken in 1963

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