

Forebears - to trace or not to trace.

It all started with a family story that we came from somewhere above Elslack, and later a prayerbook – *The Gift of the Broughton and Elslack Sunday School to Jeremiah Tattersall Elslack Moor 3rd.Nov.1861*, together with a school copybook inscribed *Jeremiah Tattersall, Hallfield School*.

And there it remained for years until we became members of that supposedly ancestral church when our younger daughter was married there in 1992, and the first entry in the Marriage Register was the wedding of Anne Tattersall to Francis Smith both of Elslack on 18th.September 1837, -fathers' names – Thomas Tattersall,David Smith,- witnesses – Anthony Swire, Elizabeth Tattersall.

So the old family story appeared to be factual, the search started and threatened to become an obsession.

Discussions with a member of the congregation whose wife was interested in village history produced a copy of the Census Records for Elslack and there they were - starting in 1841 (the earliest census) through to 1871 (the latest then published).

1841

Cockershill – Francis (25) and Anne (25) Smith.

Mount Pleasant – Thomas (50) and Margaret (50) Tattersall, farmers, with –
Christopher (20) , Jane (10) , Margaret (3) , Elizabeth Fletcher (90) independent .
(note) –Swires lived next door).

1851

Moorside House (48 acres) – Thomas (62) and Margaret (58) – farmers – both born Carleton.
James (23) unmarried son, also born Carleton. (– Swires at Park House.)

Watson House – Christopher (29) platelayer – born Carleton, and Elizabeth (28) Tattersall – wife – worsted weaver of Elslack , and daughter Sarah (5) scholar of Elslack.

Cockershill – Francis (35) farmer and Anne (35) Smith.

1861

Close House (49 acres) – Thomas Tattersall (71) widower – farmer.
James Tattersall (33) unmarried son.
Christopher Tattersall (40) widower – boarder – railway labourer.
Sarah Tattersall (16) granddaughter – unmarried servant.

Park House (31 acres) – John Swire (73) widower – farmer.
Anthony Swire (48) son – shoemaker, married to Hannah (50) – shoebinder.
Sarah Swire (34) unmarried daughter – housekeeper.
Jeremiah Tattersall (6) grandson – scholar of Elslack.

1871

Moorside House (57 acres) – James Tattersall (43) unmarried – farmer.
Sarah Swire (44) unmarried – housekeeper.
Frank Smith (12) nephew – visitor.

At this point the copies of the census records ceased and I had to refer to the records in Skipton Reference

Library to verify them and to search the two census records published subsequently.

1881

Moorside Farm – James Tattersall (53) – farmer.
Sarah Swire (54) – housekeeper.

1891

Moorside – James Tattersall (62) – farmer.
Sarah Tattersall (55) wife – born Cowling.
Mary Hargreaves (33) visitor.
Watson Hargreaves (8) visitor – scholar.
Susannah Emmott (12) visitor.

So here are the basic facts of the family history but it is important to remember that the census records give only a snapshot of a family at ten year intervals and can pose more questions than they answer :-

- where did the family originate? – obviously Carleton would be the first place to look.
- where was Mount Pleasant? – older maps show this to be the original name for The Mount before the posh house was built about the end of the century.
- age discrepancies? – later research showed Thomas to be 62 in 1851 so his age is wrong in 1841 but minor errors like this are not unusual.
- where was James in 1841? – further research required.
- by 1851 Christopher is married with a daughter and lives at Watson House which is not named on the OS map – I am told it used to stand by the roadside near the barn where the Roman road crosses Church Lane.
- by 1861 both Thomas and Christopher are widowers with James still unmarried and are farming at Close House with Christopher's daughter as housekeeper, but Close House is not shown on the OS map – my guess is that it is another name for Moorside House or an error by the census taker.
- in 1861 Jeremiah appears for the first and last time but at Park House as grandson of John Swire – reading between the lines it would appear that Jeremiah is the son of James Tattersall and Sarah Swire without the blessing of the Church! – later disproved -he was the son of Christopher and his wife, Sarah's sister, who died shortly after his birth.
- in 1861 Frances and Anne Smith have disappeared from the record as has Cockershill – it appears that the holding has been abandoned and its holders have left the district.
- by 1871 Thomas has apparently died and James is at Moorside House with Sarah Swire as 'housekeeper' and a visiting nephew – Frank Smith – is Frank the son of Francis and Anne? – is Jeremiah now living with Francis and Anne, wherever they might be?
- by 1891 James is still at Moorside House but with a wife named Sarah born in Cowling – has he finally married the woman he has known since childhood? – but a closer look shows an age discrepancy of ten years so what has happened?

After puzzling over this for some time, I then did what I should have done much earlier and looked in the churchyard where I quickly found the Swire family gravestone which showed that Sarah died in 1883 aged 56 years, so James had been left alone at Moorside House and had married another Sarah. Looking a little farther, about twenty yards away I found the Tattersall family grave with the following inscription :-

In Memory of

Patience Tattersall daughter of Thomas and Margret Tattersall of Elslack,
who died February 26th.1843 in the 18th. year of her age.

also Margret daughter of the above-named Thomas and Margret Tattersall
who died February 14th.1845 in the 7th. year of her age.

also the above-named Margret wife of Thomas Tattersall
who died February 28th.1856 in the 64th. year of her age.

(cont.)

also Thomas Tattersall husband of the above Margret Tattersall
who died February 28th. 1871 aged 82 years.

also James Tattersall son of the above
who died April 18th. 1897 aged 68 years.

Neither Christopher nor his daughter Sarah, last known in the 1861 census are buried in the family grave and presumably left the district after the death of Christopher's wife. Possibly Jeremiah went with them. Also missing is daughter Jane listed in 1841 at 10 years old ; or is this a transcription error by the census taker for James who is not listed in the family in 1841 and would be about the same age at the time ? - more research needed to verify these anomalies and another warning against taking these records as totally accurate without corroboration.

One final query – where was Moorside House ? Modern maps show no sign of it but local information places its site in the woods above the reservoir which brought about its abandonment. A reprint of the original 1" OS map shows it there but with insufficient detail to locate it. Further enquiries at Skipton Reference Library produced a copy of the 1853 6" OS map which clearly showed its site while an overlay on the modern map and a short walk down the track through the woods led to all that remains of the farmstead known locally as Pinhaw Castle.

We therefore have a fairly clear picture of the family history through most of the 19th century but lacking a beginning and an end. Hearsay suggests that due to the poor state of agriculture, Jeremiah and possibly other family members left the home parish to go into textiles in the Bradford area before returning to Earby a generation later in the early years of this century, but the 1881 census name index for both Yorkshire and Lancashire shows only one Jeremiah – but born and living at Bingley ;father's name William Tattersall –obviously not our Jeremiah (although both James and Sarah appear)- where did he go? - more research required.

We are left with a moss-covered heap of stones, a prayerbook and a school copybook, not much to show for three generations of unremitting toil eight hundred feet up on a Pennine hillside.

So far, the search has been relatively easy using information readily available locally, but extending the history back in time becomes more difficult and laborious. However the mention of Carleton as birthplace of Thomas, Margaret, Christopher, and James points the way, although another source gives Thomas' birthplace as Coniston.

An opportunity arose for a brief search of the Carleton Parish Registers in which an early entry listed the marriage of Thomas Tattersall to Margaret Aldersley on December 17th.1812 at Carleton Church but further research is required to expand the details of their early years in Carleton.

The other reference to Coniston as Thomas' birthplace was puzzling – was it another error in the census? – or, if correct, which Coniston ?

Again luck intervened in the form of the 1803 Craven Muster Roll listing by parish the names of men of potentially military age during the Napoleonic Wars. There were no Tattersalls listed under Conistone-with-Kilnsey but Coniston Cold listed a Christopher Tattersall – farmer ! – not only the same surname but a family christian name.

So this is the first chapter of the family history but what of the other chapters ? Watch this space but if you are tempted to go down the same road, be warned that it can take over your life !