

More Forebears –

Readers may remember how I almost unknowingly became involved in researching my family history and more by good luck than hard work was able to trace my ancestry back through the 19th century as farmers on Elslack moorside, beginning with the marriage of my great-great-grandfather Thomas to Margaret Aldersley in 1812 at Carleton Church.

At that point the trail went cold due to my lack of knowledge or research sources although the census records indicated Coniston as Thomas' birthplace – but which Coniston? Again luck came to the rescue in the form of the 1803 Craven Muster Roll listing by parish men of potential military age for the Napoleonic War. This showed no Tattersalls in Coniston-with-Kilnsey but gave a Christopher Tattersall, farmer in Coniston Cold – and off we went again.

Enquiries at Coniston Hall revealed a lack of old estate records and that Coniston Cold Church dated back only to the mid- 1850's so no help there, and although the church was now part of Kirkby Malham parish, it used to be part of the ancient parish of Gargrave and any information would be found in the old registers now lodged at Northallerton. Some experience of the old parish registers of Thornton-in-Craven and the prospect of a long drive to Northallerton proved rather too daunting so the project ground to a halt again.

However a chance remark during a visit to Skipton Reference Library revealed that the Gargrave Parish registers had been published many years ago and that a copy was available on the shelves, and even better – it was fully indexed!

So then the hard work began with nearly a hundred Tattersall entries to be transcribed first onto paper and then copied into a database on my PC - a lengthy business in view of my very limited computer skills. Still, it was eventually complete and a single appropriate click rearranged the entries into date order from 1578 to 1812 and it became possible to start the construction of a family tree.

A link was quickly established with the earlier work through Christopher (listed in the Craven Muster Roll of 1803) now of Bonbers Farm having son Thomas born at Coniston Cold in 1789 corresponding to the Thomas who married Margaret Aldersley at Carleton in 1812 and who died at Elslack in 1871 aged 82 years.

Further evidence of the link appears in the marriage of Christopher to Susanna Fletcher in 1788 at Gargrave Church, and later the 1841 census record for Moorside House which lists in the household of Thomas, Elizabeth Fletcher aged 90 years – Susanna's sister and Thomas' aunt?

From these registers it is apparent that Thomas was the first of three sons born to Christopher and Susanna, the third son dying within a week of his christening, while Christopher was the first of two sons and seven daughters born to James Tattersall who married Elizabeth Robinson in 1752 at Gargrave Church, and there the trail goes cold again.

There are many other Tattersall entries in these registers going back to Gilbert Tattersall of Kelber, just over the Coniston township boundary in Bank Newton, who died in 1578. This line at Kelber appears to die out in the early 1700's with the birth of four daughters and a son who died in his teens.

Another line starts in Bank Newton in the 1750's with a Stephen Tattersall who then moved to Flasby in about 1770 and who died in 1776 "burnt to death when his house was burnt." He had eleven children but no obvious links with the Tattersall families at Kelber or Bonber although there are Christian names which are common to all the families.

Other Tattersall families appear briefly in Eshton, Winterburn and "Brownmore" but again there are no obvious links.

There are many difficulties with the registers due to a number of gaps between the 1560's and 1670's which cannot be filled from the Bishop's Transcripts due to even more gaps, so while links may have existed they cannot be proved from the available records.

At this point a remarkable coincidence occurred. While searching through the IGI (International Genealogical Index) for any clues to great-grandfather Jeremiah who disappeared from Elslack in the 1860's. I chanced upon a section covering family societies/groups and requests for information which included a request from someone in the USA seeking information on the forebears of James Tattersall who married Elizabeth Robinson at Gargrave on 11th February 1752!! However knowing that the copy of the IGI I was using was over 20 years old and that the chances of a contact after this length of time were slim, I grasped the nettle and dashed off an airmail letter to the name and address indicated and forgot about it.

Imagine my surprise a few weeks later when an airmail letter arrived from my 93 year old cousin (4th/5th/6th?) in St. George, Utah, containing family records tracing his ancestry back to Jane, the 7th child of James and Elizabeth Tattersall, who married on 3rd December 1786 a Thomas Cottam of Waddington Yorkshire, whose grandson – another Thomas – emigrated to the USA in the mid- 19th century.

Unfortunately he was unable to throw any light on the ancestors of James and Elizabeth of Coniston. Since cousin Howard is a member of the Mormon Church with access to all its records and the publisher of four volumes on his various family branches it seemed unlikely that a rank amateur like myself would be able to succeed where he had failed.

However, Cousin Howard's records show the original James' birthplace possibly as Otley from his Temple records – so back to the published parish records again. The Otley Parish Registers do indeed show the marriage of a James Tattersall in 1737 and the birth of a son in 1738 to a James Tattersall of Esholt, serge weaver and that is all. So unless this James was widowed (no record) and moved to Gargrave where he remarried it seems likely that this was another James of a different Tattersall family altogether.

Then a thought struck me – at a time when most girls married a man from the same parish or even an adjoining one, how did Jane meet and marry a man from some fifteen miles and several parishes away in the next valley? – Unless there was a family connection between the two villages; - so back to the parish registers again.

Sure enough, there were Tattersalls in the Waddington Parish Registers and the full marriage entry:-

“Thomas Cottam and Jane Tattersall **both of this chapelry** married by licence from

Mr Armistead 3 December 1786 by Robt. Smith Minister.

Thomas Cottam, Jane X Tattersall – witnesses Thos. Taylor, James allstan. (sic)”

So, Thomas and Jane were apparently resident in the chapelry of Waddington but no member of the Tattersall family witnessed the marriage nor is there a Tattersall entry in the registers in the 60 years before the date of the wedding, a gap of two generations! Curiouser and curiouser !

However if we move a few miles up the Ribble valley to the parish of Bolton by Bowland and in particular the village of Sawley we find several mentions of the family name eg. In 1782 a John Tattersall witnessing the marriage of Richard Taylor (a relative of Thos. Taylor who witnessed the marriage of Jane and Thos. Cottam?) and in 1791 a William Tattersall of Waddington witnessed the marriage of a John Tattersall and Mary Barlow in the monastery of Sawley.

Here we have quite an interesting historical footnote – today all that remains of the ancient Sawley Abbey is a stump of masonry, reputedly part of the gateway, but only two hundred years ago there was enough of the ecclesiastical structure remaining to allow a wedding to take place – an interesting comparison with the much more complete relics of Bolton Priory.

Moving even further up the valley we arrive at the parish of Gisburn whose registers 1558 – 1812 show a total of 67 Tattersall entries covering an area from Newsholme in the north to Newfieldedge in the south almost overlooking Colne. Among these entries there are obviously several families but so far I have been unable to trace any clear links with the Tattersall families in the Parish of Gargrave, but more detailed work is required as time permits.

Regarding my missing great –great-grandfather who disappeared in the 1860's I have found a brief reference in the 1900 Craven Herald Almanac to a Jeremiah Tattersall in Earby, employed as a collector by the Earby & Thornton Gas Light and Coke Company – the wanderer appears to have returned – no doubt some of the details will be filled in when the 1901 Census returns are published in 2002, and in the meantime, if I get bored, there is always my wife's family history to start on!