

The Parkers of Browsholme.

The Parkers of Browsholme are descended from Peter de Alcantotes, who held the Manor of Alkincoats in Colne in the mid-13th century. The succession went from his son Adam, living at Alkincoats in 1311, to Adam's younger son Richard le Parker of Trawden, to Richard's son Edmund Parker, park-keeper of Radholme Laund, near Browsholme, one of the two great deer parks in the Forest of Bowland. In 1393 his sons Richard and John were deputy parkers of Radholme, but from 1380 they had a lease of the vaccary, or cow pasture, of Browsholme, which was renewed in 1400.

Richard, who probably built the original house on the present site at Nether Browsholme (there was formerly an Over Browsholme to the north), received a pension in 1411 and was succeeded by his son Edmund Parker of Foulscates and Nether Browsholme. He was followed by his son Giles Parker of Horrocksford, tenant of Nether Browsholme in 1482, who is buried in Waddington Church. His second son Edmund Parker obtained a new lease of Nether Browsholme in 1507: it was he who built the present house and is commemorated in the cushion in the Hall, produced for Dugdale's Visitation in 1665. He died in 1547: his wife had been the heiress of John Redmayne, and through her mother co-heiress of her husband's great-uncle Robert, appointed Parker of Radholme in 1434.

Edmund's son Robert Parker, Bowbearer of the Forest of Bowland, married in 1554 Elizabeth Chadderton, whose brother William was successively Bishop of Chester (1579-1595) and Lincoln (1595-1608). Robert Parker's younger son Roger was Dean of Lincoln from 1613-1629; his youngest son William was Archdeacon of Cornwall. Robert Parker was succeeded by his second son Thomas, his eldest son Edmund having been drowned at Cambridge. Thomas Parker, Bowbearer of the Forest of Bowland, purchased the freehold of Browsholme from the Crown in 1603 and proceeded to embellish the house, which had already been enlarged by his father. Thomas's wife Bridget was a Tempest, and it was presumably through her that he was able to buy the advowson of Waddington Church from the Tempests in 1630 in which year he was fined £25 for not attending Charles I's coronation to receive a knighthood. He died in 1634.

Thomas was succeeded by his third son, Edward Parker (1602-1667), who married in 1629 Mary Sunderland, grand-daughter of Sir Richard Saltonshall, Lord Mayor of London. In 1643 Edward Parker received letters of protection from Generals Fairfax and Lambert and in 1644 from Richard Shuttleworth of Gawthorpe, all Parliament men. In 1648 he received another from General Thomas Tyldesley, a Royalist. In 1660 he records among other losses suffered during the Civil War that his son Edward, then aged seven, was in 1643 taken prisoner and carried to the garrison at Thornton. His brother-in-law Captain Thomas Whittingham was killed at the battle of Newbury in 1644. As a justice of the peace he was ordered in 1660 to find and seize arms belonging to 'Quakers, Anabaptists and Fifth Monarchic Men'.

Edward was succeeded by his eldest son Thomas Parker (1631-1695) a firm Royalist, appointed a Captain of Foot in 1660, an appointment renewed by the Duke of Buckingham in 1661. Thomas married Margaret, a daughter of Radcliffe Assheton of Cuerdale. In 1674 he had beautified Browsholme with 'rare perspectives', according to a letter from his uncle William, Archdeacon of Cornwall, which presumably alludes to the formal garden recorded in a drawing of 1719. Thomas's brother Robert (1633-1719) was not only the founder of Waddington Hospital but also a noted antiquary and numismatist.

Thomas was succeeded by his eldest son Edward Parker (1658-1721) who first married Catherine, heiress of Henri Bouch of Ingleton Hall, and secondly Jane, daughter of John Parker of Extwistle. He built the small east wing, begun in 1711. Thomas was followed by his eldest son, Thomas Parker (1689-1728) who left the estate to his half-brother and heir, John Parker (1695-1754), Bowbearer of the Forest of Bowland, who married Elizabeth daughter of Henry Southouse of Manaden in Essex. John replanned the front garden and built the new stables. His only daughter Elizabeth married her second cousin, Robert Parker of Alkincoats (1720-1758).

John was succeeded by his only son Edward Parker (1730-1794), Bowbearer of the Forest of Bowland, who in 1750 married Barbara Fleming, daughter and co-heiress of Sir William Fleming of Rydal Hall, Westmorland. In 1755 her sister Catherine married Sir Peter Leicester of Tabley Hall, Cheshire. In 1771 Edward Parker was buying silver from Parker and Wakelin, the London goldsmiths: his son and successor John Parker (1755-1797), Bowbearer of the Forest of Bowland, was also a customer from 1773 to 1780. John accompanied William Gilpin, the celebrated discoverer of the picturesque in landscape, on his travels. In 1778 he married Beatrice Lister of Gisburne Park, sister of the first Lord Ribblesdale. In 1780 he was returned as one of the two MPs for Clitheroe, a rotten borough dominated by the Curzon and Lister families. John's election followed a quarrel between the two factions, but in 1782, never having spoken in Parliament, he resigned his seat, thus effecting a reconciliation.

'Calm was the day, the face of nature bright,
When thou, sweet babe! didst first behold the light,
Be this auspicious of a placid life
And soul unruffled with internal strife'.

So began a set of verses by the Rev. Thomas Wilson (1747-1813), Master of Clitheroe Grammar School, to commemorate the birth of John's eldest son and successor, Thomas Lister Parker (1779-1858), Bowbearer of the Forest of Bowland. They proved sadly unprophetic. Brought up at Marshfield, a house in Settle, T. L. Parker was a promising youth who already in 1797, when at Christ's College, Cambridge, his father's old college, cultivated learned society, including the Rev. Richard Buck, the collector, and Thomas Kerrick, the antiquary. At Browsholme his circle included Wilson, his old master, Thomas Dunham Whitaker, and Charles Towneley.

He first patronised Turner in 1798 and probably introduced the painter to his cousin Sir John Leicester of Tabley and to his close friend Walter Fawkes of Farnley, two of Turner's great patrons. He also patronised Romney, Northcote, Callcott and Buckler, the latter assisting him in his alterations to Browsholme, part of which were designed by Jeffry Wyatt in 1805 and 1807. Landscape gardening and forestry were other interests, and he planted thirty-four acres of Bashall Moor from 1807 to 1813. After a grand tour to Russia, Italy and France in 1801 to 1802, T. L. Parker began to spend time amid the highest society in London, attending Royal Academy dinners and being noticed by the Prince Regent and the Duke of Clarence.

From about 1804 to 1806 his admiration for the young actor, Master William Betty, led him to commission portraits from Northcote and Opie and to follow his idol from town to town with lavish presents. From 1813 to 1817 he had an elegant London house at 10 South Audley Street, of which Buckler did drawings in 1813. In 1824, having over-spent, T. L. Parker was obliged to sell Browsholme, its contents and estate, to his heir Thomas Parker of Alkincoats and Newton at once, his second and fourth cousin.

In 1827 T. L. Parker was appointed Sergeant Trumpeter to the King, a sinecure which produced little income. Even after Thomas Parker died in 1832 and Browsholme was inherited by his nephew, Thomas Goulbourne Parker (1818-1879) T. L. Parker continued to take the most affectionate interest in his old home. From 1824 until his death he seems to have lived a nomadic existence, staying in the great houses of his friends, including Knowsley, Tabley and Stourhead, and befriending young architects, landscape gardeners and artists such as Salvin, Nesfield and Lear. His status as a great pioneer in antiquarian scholarship was recognised by the dedication to him of Shaw's *Specimens of Ancient Furniture* (1836), the first serious work on this subject. In 1857 he was carried round the great Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, still full of knowledge and enthusiasm. The inventory of possessions taken after his death at the Star Inn, Deansgate, Manchester, is pitiful, but at Browsholme his antiquarian re-creation of a stately home survives remarkably intact.

T. L. Parker's successor but one, Thomas Goulbourne Parker, held Browsholme for forty-seven years. In 1845 he married Mary Ann Carr, co-heiress of the estates of John Carr (1723-1807), the great Yorkshire architect. T. G. Parker was friendly with Abraham Kirkman, a distinguished antiquary who had known T. L. Parker, and in 1865 Kirkman bequeathed his collection of armour and pottery to Browsholme. T. G. Parker also restored the house, using Mr. Shaw of Saddleworth as his architect. He was succeeded by his eldest son Edward Parker (1846-1894) a keen sportsman who died without issue.

The estate then passed to Edward's brother, John William Robinson Parker (1857-1938) whose wife Beatrice Burn-Murdoch was his first cousin, and also a descendant of John Carr. On his return from the Boer War his carriage was pulled up the drive under a series of triumphal arches by tenants from Browsholme, Alkincoats and Carr Lodge. Among his many interests Colonel Parker was a keen antiquary, President of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, the Yorkshire Parish Register Society, the Chetham Society, the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society and the Harleian Society. He published several volumes of medieval records.

Colonel Parker was succeeded by his only son Robert Goulbome Parker (1900-1975). He was a distinguished soldier who repaired Browsholme in 1958 with the aid of the Historic Buildings Council, and from 1957 onwards opened the house to the public, personally guiding visitors. He left Browsholme to the present owner, his cousin and godson, Robert Redmayne Parker, a Chartered Surveyor, who is a descendant of John Parker, uncle of the Thomas Parker who bought Browsholme from Thomas Lister Parker in 1824. The branch of the Parkers of Browsholme now in residence is most remarkable for having produced distinguished judges in three successive generations, Robert John Parker, Baron Parker of Waddington (1857-1918), a Lord of Appeal, Hubert Lister Parker, Baron Parker of Waddington (1900-1972), Lord Chief Justice of England, and Roger Jocelyn Parker, Lord Justice Parker, who conducted the Windscale Enquiry in 1978. Edmund Christopher Parker, the father of the present owner still lives at Browsholme with his wife and can be credited with the restoration of the Hall to a family home.

The present owner Robert Parker lives at Browsholme with his wife Amanda, children Eleanor and, Roland and continues the work of his father to administer and restore the estate.

Browsholme Hall - www.browsholme.com