

# AYNSOME: A LIFE OF CONSTANT CHANGE

## P. Anthony Varley



### Introduction

When I came to Cartmel the word “Aynsome” had little meaning for me. It was only after I had read an article from “The Lonsdale Magazine” of 1821 that the history of the house began to fascinate me.

The house, described as “a gentleman’s residence” lies approximately 2/3 mile due north of The Priory. It is built on an outcrop of Bannisdale slate and separated from The Priory by an area of wet meadow, previously Lake Cartmel in post-glacial times.

I would like to mention some unique features of the house, the owners, their influence on the community and some tales associated with Aynsome.

### First the house .....

I shall start with the dining room which is fully oak-panelled. The plaster ceiling is picked out in a tongue and ball moulding with acanthus leaves. The window is framed by Ionic columns, a popular theme in the time of George IV. This

room was built as an extension in 1842 by the owner, The Reverend Thomas Remington, Vicar of Cartmel, so that he could reciprocate the hospitality of his friend the Duke of Devonshire in appropriate style.



If we move upstairs, the first floor was furnished for the family and the second floor was allocated to staff (of which there were many). The room at the end of the corridor is known as “The Wig Room” where wigs were dressed with talcum powder. When the floorboards were lifted to accommodate new central heating pipes neat lines of talcum powder were evident.

Downstairs you will find spacious cellars as our predecessors provided well for our needs. The barrel roof and stone wine bins provide excellent cooling facilities. To this we must add a stone-flagged floor which bridges a stream running under the house. In the outer cellar the stone “stillions” (a double stone bed for storing beer barrels) still exist, for in those days the house had its own brewery 200 yards down the road at Aynsome Mill Farm. The old boiling coppers and fermentation vessels were removed in 1915. Incidentally, the coachman of the house was the brewer and brewed twice a year in April and October.

On the other side of The Mill Farm there was a corn-mill, driven by the local beck where the inhabitants of the Parish would grind their corn and, if it followed the tradition of other parishes in the area, this would have been a perogative mill where the Church extracted a due for services rendered. After the Dissolution, the mills fell into private hands and eventually that of Aynsome.

### **So much for the house.**

### **I shall now move onto the residents .....**

There is evidence that Aynsome was a farm in the sixteenth century. It was owned by the Marshal family until 1745 when there was no male heir and it was sold to the Machell family.

John Machell was an iron master from Hollow Oak, Backbarrow; a wealthy man who had a family of three sons and four daughters. He left Aynsome to his son, Thomas, whose portrait hangs in the dining room.

Thomas married Ellen Michaelson of Greenbank and they had five daughters and four sons. His son, Thomas Michaelson Machell, then inherited the family home.

He married Margaret Postlethwaite (daughter of the Mayor of Lancaster) but they died without issue so he left the house to the son of his favourite sister, Kitty who had married into the Remington family at Crow Trees, Melling in Lunesdale.

The new owner, The Reverend Thomas Remington, had a distinguished career at Trinity College, Cambridge before he was presented to the Parish of Cartmel by the Duke of Devonshire (now we can understand about the dining room !). He did valuable work but died a bachelor, aged 54, from small-pox. He had been offered the Bishopric of Chester but declined, preferring to stay at Aynsome.

The house now passed on to his brother, Henry Remington, a “county solicitor” (as described in “A Peep into the Past”, 1935, by John Stewart Remington) who is reported to have been a handsome man and who married Mary Ashburner, (“The Rose of Furness”), a local beauty. He was very successful and owned Aynsome, Longlands, Crow Trees, Greenbank, a house in Ulverston and 300 acres of land – as quoted in Burke’s “Landed Gentry”.

Aynsome was later inherited by his son, The Reverend Thomas Machell Remington of Trinity College, Cambridge who had married Alice Binyon of Merlewood. He was the Vicar of Arkholme but retired to Aynsome. He suffered poor health but took an active part in local affairs.

We now come to the last of the Remington line. The house was inherited by his son, a gentleman farmer and his namesake but someone who did not share his parents’ affinity for Aynsome. He sold and left for New Zealand in 1900.

So we have a period of 255 years with seven owners, two ministers, one solicitor, four land-owners and – if I may add a personal observation – all my researches indicate “money married money”.

In the year 1900 the house was sold to Sir Evan MacGregor, a former Permanent Secretary to The Admiralty. It emerged that his father was the 20th Chief of the Clan MacGregor whose wife was the daughter of Admiral Sir Thomas Hardy, captain of H.M.S. Victory at Trafalgar.

He died in 1926 when his daughter sold the house for it to become a commercial establishment. The house was sold with meadows, woodland, tennis and croquet lawns, ornamental lake, stables, cottages and greenhouses together with 16 acres of land. Unfortunately only the house was left when we arrived in 1982.

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**NOTES:**

1. Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy (1769 – 1839)  
(Battle of Trafalgar 21.10.1805.)
2. His daughter was Mary Charlotte Hardy (20.3.1813 – 1896) who, in 1833, married Sir John Atholl Murray MacGregor, Bt.
3. Their son: Sir Evan MacGregor, G.C.B., I.S.O., J.P. (31.3.1842 – 21.3.1926) lived at Aynsome 1901 – 1926 with Lady Annie Louise MacGregor (died 21.5.1922)
4. Their daughter: Eva Mary, unmarried, S.R.N. (died 8.4.1964)

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**Next, the influence of the residents of Aynsome on the local community .....**

The families at Aynsome provided considerable employment in the area and the Machell family lavished care and attention on the fabric of Aynsome which was continued by Henry Remington and his successors.

When The Reverend Thomas Remington arrived in 1826, The Priory was in a very poor state and he acted as superintendent of restoration, spending nearly £7,000 on work that was completed by Canon Hubbersty. He also built the Hospice on Hampsfell for public usage.

The Reverend Thomas Machell Remington was another resident notable for his local involvement - on the Board of Guardians, a school governor and patron of the fire brigade at Holker.

On the first floor of Aynsome hangs a copy of “Bubbles”, the Pears Soap advertisement, painted by Millais. The subject of the painting was his grandson who became Admiral Sir William James, Commander-in Chief, Portsmouth 1940. In 1982 I took an elderly gentleman along the corridor and he exclaimed

“Oh, Bubbles, I know him: we were cadets on H.M.S. Britannia. He was a great boxer and gave you hell if you called him ‘Bubbles’ !!”

We have a “dark attic” space in the roof where a suit of chain mail armour and headgear of the cuir-bouilli style was found concealed in 1930. These relics were made from leather hardened in boiling water and dressed with beeswax and were described by Remington as “a suit of chain armour with head-gear of the cuir-bouilli type as worn by knights about 1335”. It had lain concealed in this old part of the house for many years and it has been thought that this armour belonged to one of the early Marshals. It now resides in Lancaster Museum.

This concludes my reflections on Aynsome - as we live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but still enjoy the memories and atmosphere of years gone by.

And finally .....

### **A few further tales:**

1. I have referred to the portrait of Thomas Machell that hangs in the dining room. It has been suggested that the painting is in the style of Christopher Steele, George Romney’s master but this has never been substantiated. The other Machell family portraits hang in the Abbot Hall Art Gallery in Kendal.
2. There was great respect for their elders shown in those days. Here is an example:-

I have read a copy of a letter sent by John Machell to his father in 1787 from his boarding school in Nottingham: It starts “Dear Father, I received your letter of the 6<sup>th</sup> inst. which gave me great pleasure to hear that you got well home, with no danger from highwaymen”.

It was signed “I am honourable Father, your ever dutiful son, John Machell.

3. A further story involved Kitty, the sister of Thomas Michaelson Machell, who married her cousin, Reginald Remington in 1796. After the reception she left her home in a scarlet riding habit, riding pillion, across the Sands of Morecambe Bay to her new home at Crow Trees. Obviously she was a lady of great spirit, a characteristic that ran throughout the family.



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