

Wraysholme Tower Farm

An Overview of the Timeline, a history of an ancient estate.



Wraysholme Tower Farm Nov 2020 Pat Rowland

Introduction

The published history of Wraysholme has concentrated on the Pele Tower, the ownership by the Harrington family and the tale of the killing of the last wolf in England. However, there is a large amount of information about the families who have owned and occupied the estate that has not been told. This account introduces the findings of new research about the families which will be documented in detail elsewhere on the CPLHS website.

Looking at documents held by the current owners, the Mason family, and using Parish Registers, Archive documents, local history books and digitized newspapers the following research reveals the fascinating history of this ancient, historic estate that has been sold infrequently between the twelfth and twenty-first centuries.

David Hornby a member of Cartmel Peninsula Local History Society brought to our attention that the Morris family at Wraysholme had a bundle of legal documents about Wraysholme Tower and he arranged for the loan of them so that we could copy and study them. This collection of papers has been named the Wraysholme Hoard and contains information that has enabled the history of

the ownership between the 18th and 20th century to be written after Peter Roden, another member of the Society, copied and transcribed all of the documents. See a summary of the Wraysholme Hoard written by Peter Roden. A full description of the Hoard is available on request for members.

Early History

The name Wraysholme is derived from old Norse (ON) *reysa* meaning pile of stones, a cairn or erection (Lancaster Gazette *04 October 1890*). Or ON *vra* – secluded or remote place (D Whaley A Dictionary of Lake District Place-Names 2006).

It is not known when or who built the first buildings. However the site is on a raised mound surrounded possibly by marsh which made it a good defensible position. There is a water supply from a stream flowing out from underneath the limestone to the north. It is sheltered from easterly winds by Humphrey Head and northerlies by the raised ground of Boarbank.

Access would have been by boat, on foot or horse across the sands of Morecambe Bay. It was much closer to the coastline of Morecambe Bay in past centuries and provides one of only a handful of points giving easy access from the water to the land. Beyond Humphrey Head and along the Kent Estuary the coastline was rocky and difficult to access and in the other direction and along the Leven Estuary it was low lying marshy land.

The land on which Wraysholme (Raisholme, Raysholm, Raisom, Wraisham or Wreasm) Tower was built was included in the grant of free warren to Michael Harrington of Aldingham in 1314 - 1315. When the first building that guarded the Kent Estuary and the northern shores of Morecambe Bay was constructed is unknown. The date that the current Tower was constructed is quoted as 1485 but this is an academic guess from architectural features of the building. There is a separate article describing the detailed history and description of Wraysholme Tower.

It is not known when the first dwelling was built on the site. A well worn date stone with the initials B above R A above 1674? (Robert and Ann Bare) is carved on what looks like a bit of reused tracery but there is evidence of occupation and farming on the site long before this date. See the article about the Dickinson and Bare families.



Above the farmhouse door is a date stone of 1848. At this date the Estate was owned by the Harrison family and occupied by the Storey family. See the article about the Carter and Harrison Family and a separate article on occupiers that includes information about the Storey family.



The owners

Wraysholme passed from father to son through many generations. It was forfeit because the owners supported the losing side in a period of political upheaval. The first sale appears to have occurred in the late 16th or early 17th century when a tenant purchased the Estate. It has transferred through marriage to other families. The scandal of bankruptcy in the eighteenth century forced the sale of the Estate and took it into new ownership. The 19th century ownership included bankruptcy and an inheritance dispute. The third and last sale occurred in the early 20th century on the death of the Estate owner.

List of owners...

The Harrington and Stanley Families (12th and 16th centuries)

See the article about the Harrington and Stanley Families.

The Dickinson and Bare Families (16th to 18th century)

See the article about the Dickinson and Bare Families.

The Carter, Harrison and Wilson Families (18th to 20th century)

See the article about the Carter and Harrison Families

Occupiers from 1766

Some of the owners made their home at Wraysholme and farmed the land but it has also been owned by wealthy families who have appointed tenants to farm it. Looking at Parish Registers, newspaper reports, census records and legal documents the following families have been identified as tenant farmers at Wraysholme between 1766 and 1920.

Waller – 1766 -1776

Atkinson – 1790 - 1800

Mason – 1809 - 1822

Storey – 1827 - 1849

Atkinson – 1849 - 1858

Parkinson – 1858 -1867

Bownass – 1867 - 1887

Cummings 1887 - 1913

Morris 1913 - 1920. Robert Edwin Morris was able to buy the farm following the death of his landlord, Thomas Newby Wilson.

Where possible family information has been included. The precis dates of tenancies have not been fully identified, as there do not appear to be any records of tenancy agreements. See the article about the Occupiers.

Farming

The farming history is as interesting as the ownership history and some of the farming may be gleaned from the field names. These names have been obtained from legal documents and a local taxation valuation of all the Townships in Cartmel in 1811-1812 following the Enclosure of Cartmel Commons at the beginning of the century. A map showing the location of the fields has also been created. Surprisingly there is very few newspaper articles on farming relating to this farm. See the article on Field Names

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