

Christopher Gardom in Baslow

Christopher Gardom (or Gurden etc) arrived in Baslow in the early 1600s, certainly before 1633 when his first son was baptised in Baslow Church. Using parish records his family line can be traced for eight generations to Thomas W Gardom who was born in 1852 and died in 1916. The latter had only one daughter and the family name died out locally soon after.

There is only one other early record of Christopher Gardom: Jim Rieuwerts (Peak District Mining bulleting Vol 19 No 4 2015) found agreements dated 1642 for John Woodhouse and Christopher Guerdham for coal pit rents. These mention wood for props and drainage soughs, i.e. for mining with shafts rather than simple bell pits. The site of this mining was only a few hundred metres from the eastern edge of Yeld Farm in the vicinity of Moorside Farm.

The Early Gardom Family

It was an illustrious family. Christopher's eldest son John went to Peterhouse College Cambridge in 1651: not surprisingly he disappeared from the Baslow scene leaving his younger brother Thomas (b1636) to take over the family concern.

Thomas had two sons of note. The eldest John (b1664) was a farmer, and also a blacksmith. His skills were appreciated by the first Duke of Devonshire, who employed him in the rebuilding of Chatsworth House and in the restoration of the gardens in the late 1600s. His name is still commemorated in the house by a plaque at the top of the west staircase. It is certainly possible that he also helped forge the railings and gates which today stand as The Golden Gates at the entrance to the drive to Chatsworth.

Thomas (b1677) a younger son did well by marrying the heiress to Bubnell Hall, Elizabeth Broomhead. He and his family prospered becoming if not gentry at least nouveau riche. His son built Calver Cotton Mill, and his grandson moved into Cliff House, which was later bequeathed to the Methodists to become Cliff College.

NB There was a Gurdon family in Assington, Suffolk in the 1500s. Philip from this family went to Emmanuel College in 1650

Yeld Farm

The 1848 Tithe Award places the family at Yeld Farm, just east of Baslow village. At the time they were tenant farmers renting 208 acres. Much was very poor ground but it did include 25 acres of wheat & oats, and 40 acres of meadow & pasture. The land extended up the valley of the Barbrook as far as Cupola, reaching from the present main road (A621) to the foot of Gardoms Edge. Before this road was built in 1818 the lower boundary may well have been the brook. Significantly the farm included a narrow strip of land half a kilometre long above the edge and bordering the moor. Yeld Farm today is virtually the same today as it was in 1848

The strip of land is still there bounded by a well built wall which separates it from the moor beyond. On the edge below the strip there are a series of ancient quarries littered with abandoned millstones. The size of the screes of abandoned stone point to their extensive use in the past. Leading up to the south end of the strip is an old trackway from the valley deeply carved into the edge. The millstone industry was active in the 1600s but declined over the next 100 years. There has been no further

use for the area, so the quarries remain as they were when they were abandoned possibly 300 years ago.

The Gardoms were definitely in Yeld farm 1848. It is certainly possible that Christopher Gardom was given the tenancy of the house and the land when he arrived in Baslow in the early 1600s.

Who was Christopher Gardom?

He must have come from a family of some substance for him to even think of sending his eldest son for a university education – not a common occurrence amongst Derbyshire yeoman farmers at the time. The social standing of the family must have been maintained for his grandson to marry into the Bubnell Hall family.

He was given tenure of a large farm (my assumption) suggesting some earlier family connection with the Lord of the Manor, the Duke of Rutland or his agent.

The inclusion of active millstone quarries within the boundaries of his tenure suggests that he had responsibilities in running them. His venture into coal mining implies initiative and financial resources with or without earlier experience of the industry

And why “Gardoms’s Edge”

The name must come from the Gardom family, but merely farming in the valley would not seem enough to warrant this. I suggest that quarries, when they were still active, belonged to the Gardoms and the name was short for “Gardom’s quarries on the edge”.

There were similar quarries on Dobb Edge. Robert Dobb and his son John lived in Bubnell Cliff Farm between 1660 to 1730, confirmed by their gravestone in Baslow Churchyard close to the vicarage.

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Nov 2016