

The Marples Family

The earliest known member of the Marple(s) family was Robert who was in Baslow in the early 1500s: there is a suggestion that he came from Marple near Stockport about that time. Unlike most families which remained small and were based on a single house, the Marples thrived so that by the 1700s and early 1800s they were one of the two largest extended families in the village. Many were skilled craftsmen. Few remained into the 20th century.

Documents show that in 1701 Rowland Eyre sold to John Jackson land in Baslow for £190. The land 20 acres in extent was called "Marples Farm - Messuage Cottage, Farm and Tenement". Later the freehold was bought by the Marples. Subsequent occupants were described as Husbandmen or Yeoman, While there is no proof it is likely this was the family home from the 1500s. The farm was situated across the Barbrook between the Malt House and the Golden Gates.

In 1824 there were major changes in the village, The Duke of Rutland sold the south east corner of the village to the Duke of Devonshire who cleared the land for an extension to his park. Tenants had no option, they had to go. There were three freeholders in the area including the Marples who agreed to sell to the Duke. A good price helped the decision.

The following paragraphs summarise some of the more prominent individuals

George Marples 1768-1846 the last occupant of the farm was described in the census as a Skinner. He was a "Little Master" in Sheffield owning a small firm that specialised in making leather handles for cutlery. One suspects that his main home was in Sheffield so the loss of his farm was not serious especially as he also owned other property in the village (Magnolia Cottage).

Another branch of the family closely related to George were millwrights. They were based at the house now called Abney House in School Lane which they held for most of the 1800s. John b1794 was a contemporary of Joseph Paxton, the Chatsworth head gardener who lived less than a mile away. As neighbours they must have known each other. There is tradition held by descendants of John that he designed the Crystal Palace. True or not, it is likely that Chatsworth made use of his services as a local craftsman, and that he was involved one way or another in the famous Chatsworth greenhouse and the Crystal Palace itself.

Robert 1831-1921 son of John above took over the abandoned corm mill at Heathy Lea and rebuilt it completely. It was soon altered to a saw mill which remained in use well into the 1900s.

There were several Marples families at Bridge End.

- John born in the mid 1700s was a first of a long line of blacksmiths. Their forge at Church Cottage (opposite the drive to the church) moved to Calver Road when Bridge End was redeveloped in the 1820s.
- William b1761 and his son Matthew b1796 were saddlers in a dwelling now replaced by the 3 storied York House,
- William b1799 was a shoemaker and for many years sexton
- Thomas b1813 was a tailor in Church Cottage after the 1820s.

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- Isabella b1786 married John Stroyan and between them started the post office and draper store in the house opposite the Lychgate. Isabella was the named postmistress. Their son John continued the business until the early 1900s

William b1772 and John b1774, sons of John the Blacksmith, moved to Sheffield where they started a small firm making cutlery. Later it became Joseph Marples Ltd which still in business.

William b1752 became landlord of The Joiners Arms, which is immediately opposite the old bridge over the river Derwent. When he died in 1827 it closed as an Inn. The building now called Bridgefoot Farm was then taken over by the Tomlinson Family, who farmed it until the 1990s. William's son Thomas Marples b1787 was given the tenancy of a farm at the top of Bubnell. It was inherited by his son Samuel b1821 but he had to leave in 1870 when the farm and other nearby buildings were demolished to make way for the Duke of Devonshire's new "model farm".

The last family to be mentioned lived in Nether Cottage at Nether End originally known as Gaterow. Rent receipts have been kept in the family since 1723 (now lost) confirming the Robert M Marples b1672 was tenant at that date. The last Marples occupant was William 1794-1858 a Butcher. He had no sons so the house passed to his daughter Sarah and her husband Alexander Bacon. Their descendants eventually left the house, or rather the modern house they built in the garden, in the last decade

The yeomen of England is a well known phrase. The Marples, yeomen and skilled craftsmen helped build Baslow.

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