

This summary is based mainly on local sources, especially parish records gravestones and the census returns, and with contributions from Marsdens investigating their family history for which I am very grateful. There is an accompanying family tree. In view of the complexity of the family, and incomplete data be aware that there will be some mistakes and differences of opinion. I got lost with Thomas' in the early 1600s!

The Marsden family played an important part in the history of Baslow. Hugo (or Hugh) arrived in the village in 1596. For much of the 1700s and early 1800s it was one of the largest extended families in the village equalled only by the Marples. Then numbers decreased and by the year 1901 there was only family left, an unmarried mother and her 11 year old daughter.

There are references to Marsdens (earlier de Merclesden) dating back to Norman times. By the 1440s a branch had settled in the Blackburn area. In the late 1500s they were a family of wool merchants living in Livesely Hall at Tockholes a village near Blackburn. Hugo (or Hugh) Marsden 1575-1616 from this family met Alicia Brough a daughter of the Baslow Curate, perhaps in the course of his work. They married in 1596, settled in Baslow and had at least eight children, the youngest of whom was Edmund 1611-1682.

There is a tradition mentioned in the "Genealogical Memoirs of the Family of Marsden" that Hugo was in the service of Sir William Cavendish, 2nd son of Bess of Hardwick: this may be true but there is no confirmation.

The youngest son Edmund 1611-1682 made good, probably by achieving high rank in the service of the Earl of Devonshire. This must be the reason why in 1672 at the age of 61 he was given the tenancy of 100 acres of good farmland close to Chatsworth House later named as Oxclose. An indenture described the area in detail naming the previous tenant as Jerome Hackett who had been the accountant in charge of Chatsworth finances. The memoirs state that this Edmund lived at Parkgate. In fact Parish records list a dozen other occupants at Parkgate until 1726, when his grandson also Edmund (b1692) did take up residence there.

Edmund had at least four children, Robert Edmund John and Hugo.

- (1) Robert b1637 and his offspring were the main farmers at the "Higher House" with Hugo at the "Lower House". (2) Edmund's b1645 descendants became businessmen with works and offices in Sheffield and London. Some of the later children moved to start dynasties elsewhere such as Chelmorton, Yougreave etc. Others emigrated.
- Another son (3) John b1653 had a farm in Bubnell and was (in 1730) publican at The Peacock now The Cavendish Hotel. His eldest son Edmund was living at Parkgate when his eldest son was born in 1726. Parkgate, isolated on the moors above Chatsworth, was at a crossroads. Tradition knows it as The Hornes Inn.: it had a victuallers licence in 1760 so Edmund must have been a Publican. His descendants remained there until the early 1900s, becoming farmers when traffic left the moorland routes for better roads elsewhere. John had another son

(John b1696) whose descendants were the Millers at Heathy Lea Mill and may have been involved in lead smelting/mining.

- (4) Hugo was a carpenter who lived in freehold property in the village – until he had to sell up to pay his debts. His family is difficult to map, partly because of the large number called Thomas but his descendants must have swollen the number of Marsdens listed in the parish records

There was another Marsden family in Baslow, apparently unrelated to Hugo, who came from a slightly different part of Lancashire and descended from Thomas b1632. At least in the 1800s and possibly from the start they lived at Heathy Lea (downstream from the Heathy Lea Mill).

Families in a village tend to come and go. For the Marsdens this was exacerbated by the Duke of Devonshire. In the early 1800s he extended his Park up to the Baslow Parish boundary, obliterating the Oxclose Farm. A few years later the Park was extended further north and the occupants of Heathy Lea and the mill upstream were forced to leave. The farmer of Upper House was allocated a Eweclose Farm in Bakewell, the rest went elsewhere many to Liverpool. Other families in the village either died out or left the village for one reason or another leaving only the family of two in 1901

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