

LAUGHTON - THE BEGINNINGS

Do All Roads Lead to Laughton? During the course of our research, small though it may be, it certainly appears that way. We have been contacted by people from all over the world whose ancestors lived in this area. All of them have been happy to share their research, and through their efforts we have managed to build a fairly substantial picture of life in Laughton over the last couple of centuries. Our predecessors lives, surprisingly, do not seem dissimilar to ours. There were the same quarrels, tragedies and happiness. We can share in some small way in their joy at a new birth and follow the child to adulthood, marriage, parenthood and finally burial, mostly in Laughton Churchyard.

First though, we must go back through the mists of time. Way back, before enclosures and town and country planning and examine the evidence already catalogued of our forebears in this green and pleasant land.

HARDWICKE HILL

In December 1934, Messrs D N Riley and J H Walshaw established the existence of an important prehistoric site in a sandy field on the north side of the Scotton-Laughton road. Here, during many visits, they obtained a large number of implements which are no in the Scunthorpe Museum. The finds include microlithic forms, Mesolithic scrapers, angle-burins, etc. and many excellent artefacts of Neolithic and Bronze Age types, including leaf-shaped and barbed-and-tanged arrowheads and plano-convex knives. The flint dagger and bi-facially polished discoidal knife are represented by fragments.

Mr A Leslie Armstrong recorded in 1939 that at Hardwick Hill, an eminence standing near the S.W. end of Scotton Common and overlooking East Ferry on the river Trent he found many implements of Middle and Late Aurignacian type, including many exhibiting evidence of attrition such as would result from wave action on a beach.

In a small pamphlet published at Christmas 1930 the late Dr T.B.F. Eminson of Scotter, recorded a small Roman site on the Hardwick Hill. In 1909 his attention was drawn to the south side of the hill spur, just within Laughton Parish, by Charles May who lived in the 1860's in one of the five gate houses on Scotton Common, this house next Laughton Wood having being built by his father Robert May and afterwards at Laughton Lodge. He was familiar with the rare bird and animal life of this great common and wandered at will, searching the land and noting his finds which included coins, glass beads and much broken pottery. This material, together with objects found later, comprises:

An ingot of crude bronze weighing three ounces.
Part of a bronze brooch.
A whetstone 3 in. long, bored for suspension.

8 glass beads of varying colours and forms.
A broken bronze ring, very fragile, 'possibly a soldiers ear-ring'.
Potsherds, slag and fired cobbles.

Fragmentary pottery identified by the British Museum was mostly of the third and fourth centuries, with a small quantity dating from the first and second centuries.

The following coins were found on the site or in the vicinity of Hardwick Hill:-

Gallienus, (AD.253-268)
Licinius (AD.308-324)

Claudius II (AD.268-270)
Magentius (AD.350-353)

Tetricus (AD.270-273) - A barbarous copy.

Dr Eminson records that many stones from the boulder clay appeared to have been used in the building of impromptu furnaces, and suggests that the heavy slag, black in colour, which occurred with these boulders indicated the existence of a metal-working industry on the site.

In 1883, workmen cutting a drain midway between Hardwick Hill and the bend of the Trent at Jenny Hurn found Roman pottery, said to be 'a row of slanting cinerary urns' broken in pieces. The most perfect specimens passed into the possession of Mr George Roadley of Laughton Hall, but have been lost.

A Forestry Commission report states:

Hardwick Hill forms the terminal spur of a low Keuper ridge running from Gainsborough and Thonock through Blyton and Laughton to this point in Scotton Parish; the parallel Axholme ridge across the Trent being also Keuper, a formation which extends through Sherwood Forest as far as Lancashire. The hill is only 132 feet above sea, yet is a prominent landmark through this part of the Trent valley which lies below the level of high tides, as we know it did in 1329 when this side of the valley was inundated for many miles between 'Gaynesburgh and Burton Stather' and we may believe that this condition was even more marked in earlier times, for no Roman road was built through this half submerged valley, and there is good evidence that the foot of Hardwick Hill was washed by the Trent tides.

In the 19th century the whole of the hill was covered by a blanket of blown sand, and this explains why the hamlet name was not in local use, for the hamlet was then reduced to two houses, Hardwick Warren House (now demolished) and a cottage on a sand dune called 'Pin Hill' and also explains why the Roman history of this hill was unsuspected.

In 1532 we find the hamlet called Harwike and in the next century Harswicke and Hardwicke. The local pronunciation though out the 19th century was 'Haddick Hill' - surprisingly the name coming from the original Hardewic - "The settlement near the haven creek".

Fired quartz stones or cobble stones occur on the hill top and large boulders may still be seen along neighbouring highways such as that at Laughton Smithy bearing the date 1766. Mr Eric Smithson, one of Laughton's older residents, recalls being told by the late Mr Hudson that this stone was once on the Green and that it took a dray and several men to drag it to the Smithy. There is one large boulder stone marking the factory site, 74 feet above sea, but most of those found vary in size from a small to a large turnip. The slag occurring with these stones is black in colour, evidently from charcoal incorporated with it, and two pieces are specially instructive. One triangular piece is homogeneous and almost coal black in colour. Its base has an impression or cast, showing a pattern with longitudinal and transverse lines and ridges representing the substance it rested upon in settling. The fuel represent bark, wood or charcoal.

A large jug handle of the late third or early fourth century recalls examples from Roman sites at Wroxeter, Corbridge and a late Roman Signal Station at Huntcliffe on the Yorkshire coast. No digging has been done, hence much early pottery and other evidence of Roman occupation and factory work may still remain buried in the sand, now bound together by mosses, grasses and Corsican pine seedlings.

Silver Street is that part of the south-western slope of the hill linking Ferry Flash and descending to Ferry Road and the most probable site of the Roman haven in below Robin Hood's Well. There is still a rill running from this medicinal well-pool and in former times this spring probably fed the haven creed.

Hardwick Hill was an inland site commanding the Trent, with about 55 miles of rough tidal water between it and the sea at Spurn Head. The hill stood a mile from the river defended by surrounding swamps, in which cattle were sometimes engulfed even as late as the 19th century. On the danger side, northwards, was the Eau delta with the great "Manlake" swamp averaging about four miles wide on the eastern side of the Trent. The Roman factory was hidden away on the south side of the hill, 60 foot below the summit, lest its smoke should warn raiding vessels.

Roman soldiers were often skilled mechanics, especially in bridge building, ship carpentry and iron work, and the factory remains suggest that the men of this post could also work in bronze. There was need for iron and woodwork for the most urgent duty on the river was to meet raiders coming up the stream with the tides, hence both galley and oars would sometimes be damaged, even though the crew may escape death. In 1903, during operations for warping the lowest part of the Common, including Ferry Flash a bridge to carry the Trent side road across the warping drain head had to be built. In digging the foundations workmen found a dug-out boat eighteen or more feet below the Trent bank. Description of March 6th 1912 - "It is the stern end of a dug out boat, probably oak and measures four feet by two feet. The under part, two feet long, is scooped like the half of an arch and passes into a rounded breast where the boat displaced the water. The upper part is somewhat convex and there is a trace of the boat side". It was then much decayed having lain nine years exposed to rain and frost.

Imagine the sight - a clear day on Hardwick Hill, looking down on the twisting river, when suddenly a raiding boat is spotted, lifted up on the bore. The shout goes up, the sunlight glancing off the soldiers bronze jewellery as they struggle to drag their boat to the Ferry bend. The sound of wood and metal as the oars are wielded, shafting through the clear waters in a race to ambush their foe, the combat, the screams of pain as the river turns red with Roman blood, and the return, singing their songs of victory, home to safety, to this little corner of Lincolnshire. How many undiscovered boats still lie, jealously guarding their secrets in the muddy flats? What happened to these soldiers, and their families? Do they sleep forever more on Hardwick Hill?

LAUGHTON VILLAGE - DOOMSDAY TO 17TH CENTURY

In Laughton Wulfgrim had 2 carucates of land and 2 bovates taxable. Land for 3 ploughs, Guy's man, Aldred, has 2 ploughs 9 Freemen on 10 bovates of this land: 8 villagers and 4 smallholders with 3 ploughs. Meadow, 17 acres; underwood 12 acres. Value before 1066, 60s. now the same. Exactions 40s.

Jurisdiction of this manor:

In Blyton 14 bovates of land taxable. Land for 2 ploughs.

In Scotton Guy has 2 bovates of land.

In the same hundred in Laughton village Guy of Craon claims jurisdiction over Sveinn's land through his predecessor Wilgrim, and the Wapentake testifies that Wilgrim himself had full jurisdiction over the same Sveinn before 1066.

Blanchard held half a carucate of land each in Laughton, Audley and Nettleham in 1086. In Laughton he had one plough, 3 villeins, who plough with 3 oxen, half a mill of 12 pence, half a fishery of 2/- and 15 acres of meadow. The value of his estates in the three villages in King Edwards time amounted to 40/-. (Doomsday Survey).

Richard Blanchard (living 1177). Guy de Vere had land of him in Osgodby and Kingerby, which he gave to Selby Abbey.

William Blanchard - heir to aforesaid Richard, confirmed to Selby Abbey the Gift. William Blanchard was in arms with Earl (afterwards King) John, when Richard 1 was in the Holy Land and forfeited his Lands. He died in 1194 when his wife Matilda (Maud) fined with King Richard to have her domin for these lands, which were afterwards regained.

William Blanchard son of William and Matilda regained the lands, 3 Knights fees and a half in Laughton and half in Nettleton and Clixby.

Richard Blanchard gave lands to the Convent of Newhus.

John Blanchard gave land to Bullington Priory with consent of Isabel his wife. (His seal a Dove close "Sigill Johaun to Blancart").

Of John and Isabel's son Gilbert we know nothing, but his son William married Alicia daughter of William de Waterton of Waterton, and their daughter Matilda married John de Alayonor d'Alenson (now Dalyson). This John d'Alyon succeeded to the Blanchard

Estates of Laughton and took the Blanchard arms. There is a hatchet in Laughton Church with the arms, incorporated now with Dalyson arms.

Deed dated 1271, settling land in Nettleton belonging to Maud Blanchard & her husband John d'Alayon of Laughton on several other persons.

Grant by John Darnell of Misterton & Thomas his brother, Chaplain to Sir Ralph Stanelay of Misterton, Chaplain, Roger son of William of That Place Sir Dengs de Elsam. Chaplain, & Thomas son of John de Bromham of all the Lands & Tenements in Laughton which the said Grantors had of the feoffment of Robert Blanchard. Sunday after St Lucy The Virgin 1375.

Release by Joan daughter of John Blanchard to Sir Thos. Darnall, Chaplain & John Darnall of Misterton of her right to Lands, Tenements in Laughton which said Sir Thos & John Darnall had of the enfeoffment of Robert son of Alexander Blanchard of Laughton. Tuesday after St Gregory The Pope 1382.

Release by John Darnall of Mister & Sir Thos. Darnall his brother, his right to Lands & Tenements in Laughton which were Robert Blanchards, Kinard Ferry. The Feast of St. Aldhelm 1383.

Release by Ralph Stanely of Misterton & Denys de Elsham Chaplains, Roger son of William de Misterton & Thomas son of John de Bromham & Sir Thos. Darnall Chaplain of rights to Lands in the Town & Fields of Laughton - last Robert Blanchard's of Laughton & which they had of the enfeoffment of the said Sir Thomas Darnall & John his brother. Haxey Palm Sunday 1384.

Grant by Thomas Darnall, Chaplain in Haxey, to William Draper of Laughton & Emma his wife of Lands & Tenements of Laughton in Lyndsee which he had of the enfeoffment of Robert Blanchard of Laughton. Monday after Palm Sunday 1384.

The above family pedigree is reproduced by kind permission of the Blanchard family, 150 of whom are coming to visit Laughton in 2000. Much family research was undertaken by G. Arthur Blanshard of Edinburgh in 1937.

Sir Roger D'Allison founded Laughton School, by royal charter of Elizabeth 1, in 1566. Or rather, Roger set up the trust fund and instructed his brother William to establish a 'Free Grammar School' and 'suffer my house at the stile to be forever more the school'. On his death his brother William carried out his wishes and the school was founded in 1568.

Sir Roger, younger son of the family of D'Allison, was precentor of Lincoln Cathedral and educated at St John's College, Cambridge, where he became a fellow in 1523. He died on

24 July 1566 and is buried in the Chanter's Aisle of Lincoln Cathedral. His lands passed to his brother Sir William D'Allison, whose son Sir Roger Dallison was Lieutenant of the Ordnance in the Tower of London, and was created a Baronet 2nd June 1611. The D'Allison family had a long running feud with the Meres family of Scotton, both families

claiming ownership of common land between Scotton and Laughton. There are records, but no true documentation, of a great manor in Laughton called Ladygarth.

When King James was on the throne, Sir Roger Dallison (the younger) fell into arrears with his accounts. Indications are that Sir Roger was a victim of the notorious intrigues for which the court of King James was famous. Sir Thomas Meres claimed Sir Roger had 'wronged the King of 9000 li' and as a result Sir Roger D'Allison was thrown into Clerkenwell prison where he died a dishonourable death in 1620 and was buried on May 13th in Clerkenwell.

In 1620 Dame Anne Dallison, widow of Sir Roger, petitioned the King for speedy hearing of the claims made against their estate. In 1621/22 Sir Roger and Dame Anne's son Sir Thomas Dallison sold the Scotton estates to Lord Cranfield. Lord Cranfield's part in this matter is suspect. In 1623 he assured Sir Edward Conway, Secretary of State, that he had taken pains to secure the benefit of Dallison's 'great debts and outlawies' to the king's profit. However he was later questioned in the Lords about his purchase of Dallison property and he fell from office, accused of corruption in the administration of the Court of Wards.

Sir Thomas Dallison was Colonel of Horse under Prince Rupert and was killed under the royal standard at Naseby in 1645 leaving no issue and the title became extinct. Sir Thomas was a committed Royalist and Catholic. There is record of him riding to Caistor during the Risings where he met outside the town with Lord Burgh (owner of all the lands in Gainsborough), Sir Robert Tyrwhitt, Thomas Portington, Sir William Ayscough and many more landed gentry.

SIR THOMAS' LADY

1. Two Fair Maids was walking along the Trent side
The one drest i' silks and the other i' grey;
These fair maids was walkin along the Trent side
An both had same sweetheart as I hev herd say
2. O one she had rings all of gowd on her han's
Bud a dagger was hidden'd benean her fine cloase
The other had nowt bud her hair i' two ban's
An on her fair boasum she wore a white roase
3. The Lady she talked to the poor maid that morn
Wi' words at was bitter wi' anger an' scorn
Bud the poor maid sed nowt bud 'Lord Thomas luvs me
The more is the pity for thee and for me'
4. They used to luv like as sisters afore
But noo that prood Lady luvs Susan non more
O sorely this day she will ivermore rue
On which she did walk by Trent side wi' poor Sue
5. The reeds they grew long i' the warp by the bank
And the dockins an mandrakes an' humlocks soa rank
An the eller tree blossoms like snaw was besprent
On the land ends at ligs by the side o' the Trent
6. Noo this cruil prood Lady the dagger she took
Soa detarmined wear she 'at her hand niver shook
In the heart o' poor Susan the blade it did sink
And her life blook the dry mon'ds did speedily drink
7. Frae Wildsworth to Ferry was heerd a loud scream
A groan an a splash i' the river broad stream
The Aegre roll'd up wi' poor Susan below
Bud the white roase upon its broad boasom did goa
8. As the years of the Lady wore weary away
Her heart ne'er wear easy by neet nor by day
This cruil prood Lady set in a great room
The pictur' o' misery, pride, an' o' gloom
9. Through the gran piantid winders the sunlect did stream
O'er panil, o'er tapistry, roof tree an beam
This loadly hard woman set moodily there
10. One day com her bairn wi' a poasy soa gay
An' thus to her mother she sweetly did say
'I knaw whear the fairest o' flowers does groa

An' her prood sould bent niather to smile nor to prayer

An' to gether for you this white roase I did goa

11. O mother dear, tek it for Rosamun' sake
To see you so sad, O it meks my heart ache
They say the tree com' frae a fur distant land
Whear the rivers is crysal an' gowden their sand

12. Then that cruil prood Lady she get a wild shriek
She struggled an choaked but noa wod did she speak
The struggle wear so't an unshriken she died
While th' bairn all a tem'lin stooode by her side

13. Her body they lapp'd i' a lily white sheet
Au' the tapers they glimmer'd by head an by feet
In the Quere wear her grave an' the death peal wear rung
An the Insense clouds roase an the Masses was sun

14. But nothing wear done for poor Susan 'at died
By the reeds an' the eller trees on the Trent side
Her boanes I the warp bed ligs sleepin' full still
Her soul it mun wanter wheariver God will

Ralf Skirlaugh.

There are many local legends which could be attributed to this old song. Various unwary drivers have come to grief on the road next to the Trent, when they have described seeing a 'spirit' wandering along. Is it poor Susan? There is a bust of a lady in Laughton Church, whose origin is unknown. One story claims it to be Sir Thomas' lover, whose body he secretly had brought to the Churchyard. There are claims that a white rose grows forever where she lays. We will probably never know the truth, but when next you enter Laughton Church, spare a thought for the 'cruil prood lady' and poor Susan.

Lord Cranfield sold his estates to Sir Arthur Ingram, also a Royalist whose son Sir Arthur the younger inherited. During the Commonwealth he suffered confiscation of property and died at Temple Newsam in 1655.

The Lordship of Laughton came to the possession of the Ingram family, later Viscounts Irvine. The first in the family of eminence was Hugh Ingram, a wealthy merchant of London who died in 1612. His eldest son Sir William Ingram was secretary to the Council of the North. William's son Arthur, was Sheriff of Yorkshire in 1621 and later represented York in Parliament.

The Meynell-Ingram family came into possession via the Hon Frederick Meynell in 1904, through the death of his sister, Mrs Hugo Meynell-Ingram. Frederick assumed the name Meynell by Royal Licence in February 1905. Frederick was the 4th son of Viscount Halifax and the family descent is as follows:

William Dalison of Laughton, *ob* 1546 = ? dau of George Wastneys, of Hadden, Nottinghamshire

..

George Dalison, *ob* 1549 = ? dau of Robert Hopkinson of Kirmington

...

William Dalison, living 1549 = Anne, dau of Robert Dighton of Sturton

....

Sir Roger Dalison, created Baronet of Laughton 29 June 1611 = ²Elizabeth Tyrwhitt*

.....

Sir Thomas Dalison, killed at the battle of Naseby June 14 1645 when the baronetcy became extinct

Sir Roger's second wife was a descendent of Sir Robert Tyrwhit who was required to lend King Henry VI one hundred pounds to help to pay for his defence of the realm against the Scots and the Welsh.

The great lands of Laughton have been sold this century to private landowners. The Common still belongs to the Meynell Estate but is leased to the Forestry Commission.

In 1606 when Robertum Bull, Vicar of Laughton, completed an Inprimis for the Visitation of William Lord Bishop of Lincoln he described his residence as being
 'A Mansion House adjoining upon the Churchyard, standing North and South and builded upon Timber and thicketed with thatch. One hall and parlour, one lyle parlour upon ye East syde of ye house with one Chicklying and one Hey house joining upon ye West part of ye said Hall with one Orchard Gard lying East and West before ye Dore and also three hemplands lying upon ye backsyde of ye Vicarag, East and West, containing by estimation half acer wyth.'

From this we deduct that most of the village would be thatched, with low sloping roofs, the outlines of which can still be seen on some of the older refurbished properties. Timber framed with traditional wattle and daub for insulation. Because of the original open field system, farmhouses were always built in the village, generally comprising of just one room for sleeping and eating. As the nuclear village was already established when properties were enlarged there generally wasn't enough frontage for the 'modern' longhouse farms, so these had their gable ends to the road. The longhouse had a large room for eating and sleeping with an adjoining byre for the animals. Sometimes entrance was through just one door, with a sort of hall, roughly partitioned, with an entrance to the room and one to the byre. Some houses had two floors, although bedrooms were unheard of. The top floor was for living, whilst underneath was either storage or, usually further North, for keeping the animals. During the following decades, particularly in the early to middle 1600's, house building was enjoying a boom period. Most cottages or farms endured a period of renovation and many of the older properties in Laughton bear testament to the many changes they have undergone by the number of doorways, windows, etc., which have been 'filled in' but whose outlines are still visible. Most of the 'guaranteed' only 100 years old houses have been built on much much older properties. If the tithe map is viewed, where there is a property the chances are there always was and, probably is still one, to this day.

Lay Subsidy - Laughton & Wildsworth:

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| John Dalazon | 1s |
| Joan de Lungetoff | 8s4d |
| Nicholas Dalazoun | 3s |
| Walter Wacelyn | 1s8d |
| Walter <i>Bercarius</i> | 1s (toothpuller or drink maker) |
| William Gerard | 2s |
| William Mody | 2s6d |
| Margar' Swyft | 1s10d |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------|---|
| William Swaynson | 1s8d | |
| John Waryn | | 1s6d |
| Ralph <i>Molendinarius</i> | 8d | (molecatcher?) |
| William Blaunchar | 2s6d | |
| John Gerard | | 1s6d |
| Ranul <i>Bercarius</i> | 1s | (toothpuller?) |
| William <i>filius Petri</i> | 1s | (son of the dish maker) |
| Robert <i>Nepos vicarii</i> | 8d | (grandson or nephew of the vicar) |
| Roger Porter | | 2s6d |
| Robert Bleuet | | 1s0d |
| Richard <i>Cissor</i> | | 1s (metalworker using cutting instrument) |
| Robert de Housom | 8d | |
| John Theker | | 1s |
| Robert Gerard | | 2s6d |
| Thomas Rede | | 8d |
| Acilia <i>filia Hugonis</i> | 2s6d | (daughter of the teacher) |
| Matilda Nichol | | 10d |
| John de Merston | 2s6d | |
| Laurence Brouwn | 1s | |
| Roger Lang' | | 2s |
| John de Melton' | 1s6d | |
| Walter <i>filius Petrie</i> | 2s | (son of the dish maker) |
| John Ingram | | 10d |
| William <i>filius Gilberti</i> | 2s | (son of water pot maker?) |
| Robert de Tunstall | 1s | |
| Roger de Sixhill' | 2s | |
| Roger Euerard | | 2s |
| Hugh Faunell' | | 1s6d |
| Walter <i>filius Agnetis</i> | 2s2d | (son of silver worker) |
| Robert <i>Carpentarius</i> | 8d | (Carpenter) |
| Robert de Sheffield' | 1s6d | |
| John Mody | | 1s |
| Thomas Gerard | 2s | |
| John Glong' | | 10d |
| Robert de Wylesworth | 1s | |
| John Baldrik' | | 1s |
| | | Total £4.5s.6d. |

Although there is no enclosure award for Laughton, the mention of three hemplands and further into the Terrier of the following:

'one lande between ye Garths of Thomas Everit on ye East and on ye Hyeway on ye West containing by estimation one half acer; and five lands lying above W Dalyson's house in ye East, containing by estimation halfe one acer with heather'

we can conclude that there was a very clearly defined field system. The earliest known map of East Ferry dated 1606 suggests that much of the land had already been enclosed. Meres of Scotton continued his feud with the Dallisons claiming "they inclosed Leasehold and ffreehold altogether so that the boundaries cannot be distinguish'd or prov'd" and categorically stated that it was done in contradiction of the terms of the Great Lease and that they 'confounded all marks and boundarYES pull'd down the Manor house and some ffarmes and cottages and confounded the rest.'

Laughton Protestation Returns 6th March 1641

Mr John Columbello: Mr Thomas Columbello: Thomas Waterhouse; Henry Symon; Matthew Chambers: William Stuttin: William Blackburne: William Youle: Robert Howorth: Marmaduke Burton: Edward Howorth: John Turgoose: Thomas Headman: Robert Drury:

Marmaduke Johnson: Hugh Knight: Nicholas Story: William Stovin: John Thornton: Thomas Browne: Thomas Wood, sen: Thomas Wood, jun: Christopher Stovin: Richard Stovin: John Shipston: Edward Pennill: Edward Sharpe: Richard Brumby: Richard Burton: William Goy: John Goy: Robert Toulter (Churchwarden): Thomas Toulter: William Jhones: William Hodgen: John Farr: Richard Hill, jun: Hunphrey Catly, sen: Humphrey Catly, jun: John Dannatt; Thomas Thornton; Mr John Barlow; William Hall; Robert Tinker; Richard Michell: William Michell; Robert Stanton; Wilfry Browne; Henry Granger; Robert Catly; Roger Clarkson; John Clarkson; William Howorth; Edward Story; Nicholas Patten; Anchor Hattersly; William Brown, sen; Henry Browne; Hanniball Suttle; Robert Bate; Marmaduke Boot; Walter Hutchinson; Richard Hill, sen; Roger Hartly; Robert Smith; Edward Drury; William Cawquell; John Richardson; Thomas Thew; Robert Burton; Roger Story; Thomas Dring; George Baynton; John Browne; William Browne, jun; Christopher Osborne; George Tebb; Richard Hueratt; Edward Lauton; Thomas South; Thomas Wilkinson; John Wilkinson; William Richardson; Thomas Chapman; Robert Cock; Robert Holden; Richard Holland; Richard Fish, jun; Mathew Whaly;

John Headman, Minister - known also as Joseph Stedman vicar of Laughton 1625-1642.
First fruits 24th November 1625 as John Hadman, signs register Jos Stedman.
Roger Toulter and Marmadue Hartly - Churchwardens
William Paul - Constable.

The names of such inhabitants as have not the tyme abovesaid entered into the said protestation: William Wells; Thomas Turr (his servant); William Burton; Thomas Richardson; Richard Fish.

In 1668 the Revd Richard Wright described

‘One Mansion House being 4 Bay of Building - adjoining upon ye Northe Side of ye Churchyard.
One Barn containing three Bay of Building
and claimed all tithes except ye Tithes of Hay, Corn, Wool and Hemp, the tithes being payable every day from ye third of May to Christmas Eve.

In 1690 Daniel Nicols, Vicar, reported

‘One Vicaridge House containing 4 or 5 Bayes of Building with a Garden and Orchard and Hempland adjoining One Barne and Stable containing 3 Bayes of Building.’

Hemp was a vital part of the agricultural year, with most households being involved in some way. Evidence of hemp growing can be seen in Laughton Woods and Scotton Common with the existence of the retting pits, where the plants were carted to be soaked in water for about three weeks to separate the fibres from the bark. It was a foul smelling process necessitating the pits to be situated away from the village.

After retting the hemp plants were dried for several weeks and then “scutched” or beaten to loosen waste from the fibres. A device called a break was also used for this purpose. Finally the fibres were pulled through a heckle or iron comb to straighten them. They were then ready for spinning. Most cottagers would be skilled in spinning and hemp could be grown in a relatively small area. Research suggests that crop rotation was not used in the growing of hemp a stone of which, in 1607, was worth two shillings, whilst two stone was valued at six shillings in 1610.

The hemp pits were said to be poisonous and one local legend tells of a certain Dickie Rainsforth, whose grave is in Laughton Woods. Dickie was said to have been a fellmonger from East Ferry, making a living by skinning animal carcasses on Scotton Common. To earn a little more money, Dickie had the bright idea of giving the cattle the hemp water to make them sick - after all, you’ve can’t skin an animal till it’s dead! The farmers found out what was going on, and were not well pleased. To evade the law Dickie fled to a barn at East Ferry and rather than be captured he hung himself. As a suicide, he couldn’t be buried in consecrated ground so his body was taken to the common. A newspaper report of 1901 tells how ‘Old Rainsforth at the Crossroads has a wire fence and a drain around him, evergreen on both sides of him’. Another report from 1977 is entitled ‘Gravestone that shakes at Midnight’ and says “locals say if you stand on the gravestone at midnight it starts shaking and then Dickies ghost gets up and roams the common”. The article goes on to quote former headkeeper on the Laughton Estates Mr Frank Coates (83) who says “I know the legend from my youth. He hung himself in Read’s barn.” Mrs Winefred Needham (70) of Linden Cottage, Wildsworth was also interviewed and said that the barn was owned by the Ellis family when Dickie committed suicide. She said Mr Daniel Ellis, the farmer, cut Dicky down and kept the rope, which she remembers seeing when younger. Mrs Needham said Danny Ellis’ granddaughter threw it out, considering it unlucky.

Church registers show that Richard Rainsforth and his wife Lucy had a daughter, Ann, baptised in August 1758. In August 1752 a Richard Rainsforth and wife Ann had a son, Thomas. Were there two Richard Rainsforths or did the one remarry? In 1782 Lucy Rainsforth, spinster of Ferry, married Thomas Cutsforth and on September 25, 1765 there is the baptism of William Watson, alias Rainsforth, spurious son of Richard Rainsforth and Elizabeth Watson, widow of Ferry. They had another son, Richard, baptised August 23, 1767. Was it the same Richard who married Lucy, then Ann, then fathered children by Elizabeth? The registers show that in 1784 John Roebuck married Ann Rainsforth. Had Richard died, so allowing Ann to remarry?

We may never know for sure, but be warned, if you chance upon Old Dicky whilst walking in the woods, hope that he doesn’t mistake you for a cow!!

INHABITANTS OF LAUGHTON

Terriers, census returns, Parish registers, tithe maps and returns. All these help build a picture of what life was like for the Laughtonians of long ago. In the following pages we will endeavour to 'bring to life' some of these characters, where they lived, who they married, their children and their grand children.

Inprimis of 1822:

One tiled dwelling house, in length twenty-five feet, in breadth twelve feet within the walls. One tiled stable, in length twenty seven feet, in breadth fifteen feet.

Item: the Churchyard containing about one rood, adjoining the Lane on the South and West, the Vicarage house and garden in the North and the grounds of the Marchionefs of Hertford in the East. The Walls and Gates thereof made by the Parish.

Item: One orchard and garden, containing about half an acre adjoining to the lane on the West, the Churchyard on the South, the Crost on the East and the lands of the Marchionefs of Hertford on the North.

The terrier goes on to list Glebe land and tithes of:

1/3d for a cow; 1d for a calf till six, after six till ten, 3/6d. 2d for a foal. Tithe of potatoes, turnips pulled, turnip seed, onions eggs, pigs, poultry and gardens. 7d at every churching of women, 2/6d for every wedding by publication of banns; 5/- by licence. For every funeral (without a sermon) 1/-. For every person of age to communicate 2d yearly due at Easter. The Glebe tithes and profits are worth at their improved value, about one hundred and fifty pounds a year. A stipend of twenty pounds a year payable yearly by the Marchionefs of Hertford.

This return was made by the Revd. John Brewster who came to Laughton in 1820. He died on 17 March 1860 aged 67. Where he is buried is unknown at the present time.