

## **Lords of the Manor**

**Taken from A local history study by Peter Robson**

Up until 1670 Kirkby and Fleetham were separate manors following different lines of descent. It was in 1670 that Fleetham was conveyed by **William Darcy** and his wife and **George Darcy** to **Richard Smelt**, a younger brother of the lord of Kirkby (probably Mathew), with which it united under the name of 'The Manor of Kirkby Fleetham'.

### **Manors Kirkby**

#### **11<sup>th</sup> Century**

In the time of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066) were held by **Eldred**, a Saxon, who retained them under **Count Alan** in 1086. This is interesting, **Gomall** (Gamel) and **Uhtred** (Uetred) both lost their manors at Fleetham. Did the two Danes resist the conquest and were later punished? Did Eldred the Saxon side with the Normans? All we know is that Eldred had a son **Gospatric**, whose daughter **Godareda** succeeded to his lands, it is not clear as to who was her heir.

#### **13<sup>th</sup> Century**

At the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century **William Giffard** held a mesne lordship here. This meant he held the land direct from the Crown and was above other lords.

#### **13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> Century**

The tenants in demesne were the family of **Stapelton** of Stapelton. **Roger de Stapelton** was buried at Fountains Abbey. Roger had an estate at Kirkby, held of the fee of Richmond. Among the Charters of Marris Abbey, a grant of 'a toft and croft in vill of Fletham', is witnessed by **Dns Rogus de Stapelton**, **Dns Franiois** (or Franceys, lord of Fencotes, next Fletham), **Adam de Kirkby** and others. From this it would appear that Roger was already lord of the manor and demesne at Kirkby the same as his successors had, holding under William Giffard a tenant of the Earl of Richmond. The name of Adam de Kirkby fixes the date about the early part of Henry III's reign (1216-72).

The Stapeltons were a very influential family at the time, which Kirkby followed in descent until **Sir Miles Stapelton** died in 1373. His son **Thomas Stapelton** had livery of his estate however, he also died that same year aged only 23 and so was never summoned to parliament. Thomas was only recently married and left no children. The estate then passed to his sister **Elizabeth**, wife of **Sir Thomas de Metham**, there being no limitation to heirs male.

The manor followed this line until 1514, when another Sir Thomas Metham let the manor with all his lands in Fleetham for 41 years to **William** and **Elizabeth Conyers**, shortly afterwards granting it by another lease to **William Belforth**. William Belforth in 1529 complained that Elizabeth Conyers, 'accompanied by twelve other evil-disposed persons', made an unlawful assembly at this manor of Kirkby, drove him out, and occupied the manor. Elizabeth, now a widow, replied that Kirkby had been leased to her and her husband for forty one years, but

on the death of William Conyers, William Belforth, 'intending to compel Elizabeth to marry him, caused Thomas Metham to grant him lease of the said manor'.

### 17<sup>th</sup> Century

The heir of Thomas Metham was his son, another **Thomas**, who with his son, sold the manor to **Leonard Smelt** in 1600. Leonard died in or about 1627 and was succeeded by his son **Mathew**. Mathew had a son **Leonard**, who was living in 1665 and died in 1690, his son **Leonard Smelt, MP for Northallerton**, was described as 'of Kirkby Fleetham' on his death in 1740.

### 18<sup>th</sup> Century

In 1752 the manor was in the possession of **John Aislabie**, who had been Chancellor of the Exchequer and MP for Ripon. In 1720 he was disqualified from public office for life, he even spent some time in the Tower of London. John devoted the rest of his life designing and building the beautiful gardens at Studley Royal and Fountains Abbey.

The grounds surrounding Kirkby Hall were also landscaped by the Aislabies during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. This landscaping finally removed what was left of the village of Kirkby. Aislabie's lands were inherited by his son **William**, also MP for Ripon, and then his daughter **Ann-Sophia**, wife of **William Lawrence**.

### 19<sup>th</sup> Century

The manor remained in the possession of the Lawrence family until 1845, when a **Miss Elizabeth Sophia Lawrence** died, leaving it to **H E Waller**. He sold it in 1889 to **Edward Courage**, a relative of the brewing family, from whom it passed to **Mr E H Courage**, the last owner (*for some time*) to use the hall as a private residence.

### 20<sup>th</sup> / 21<sup>st</sup> Century

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century much of the estate has been sold off. Since the Courages left it, the hall has been used as a hotel and a 'get away from it all' haven. It is currently in private ownership with a portion let as apartments.

### Manors Fleetham

#### 11<sup>th</sup> Century

The two manors at Fleetham held before the conquest by **Gamel** and **Uctred** respectively were both in 1086 held of **Count Alan** by **Odo** the Chamberlain, and afterwards formed part of the chamberlain's fee.

#### 13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> Century

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century Fleetham was divided and before 1301 **John Coleman** had sold his share to **Henry le Scrope** of Bolton. It followed in the descent of the manor of Castle Bolton. The **Stapeltons** had a manor of Fleetham, which is first mentioned in 1304, and followed the descent of their manor of Kirkby. This may represent the third share of the chamberlain's fee which in 1283 was held by William Giffard. The share of the **Fitz Henrys** is occasionally mentioned until the reign of Henry VII (1485-1509), when it consisted of six messuages and two carucates. No further record of it has been found.

#### 17<sup>th</sup> Century

In 1628 it was held by **Emmanuel Lord Scrope** Earl of Sunderland, who conveyed it to **Thomas Lord Fauconberg**. In 1670 it was conveyed by **William Darcy** and his wife and **George Darcy** to **Richard Smelt**, a younger brother of the lord of Kirkby, with which it united under the name of the manor of Kirkby Fleetham.