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*HOWLEY HALL*

*HOWLEY HALL BY SIR JOHN SAVILE*

*SIR JOHN SAVILE*

*PART 2*

Royalists.—“The injuries inflicted by the former,” says the Doctor, “occasioned the Earl’s memorial;” but that the violence of the King’s party occasioned it, needs no illustration.

It does not appear by what means, or whether with the privity and consent of the Earl of Sussex or not Sir John Savile, of Lupset, took possession of Howley Hall.\* It is sufficient for my purpose that it was held by Sir John, under Fairfax, and, of course, for the Parliament, both before the Royalist army stormed and plundered it, and afterwards; for, “when the attack upon Wakefield was resolved on by Sir Thomas, an order was issued by him for a party of a thousand foot, three companies of dragoons, and eight troops of horse, to march from the garrisons of Leeds, Bradford, Halifax and Howley.”\* It seems, in fact, to have fallen into the hands of both parties, but that it was ever invested, or formally besieged and plundered by the Parliamentarians there is no evidence. In the instance before us, Lord Savile’s remonstrance tells us that the Marquis of Newcastle’s army assaulted and plundered this mansion. His Lordship, it must be recollected, was at this time in the Royalist train at Oxford—was still among the “life and fortune men” at

\* Lord Fairfax, in a letter dated May 31st, 1643, states, that on the preceeding Saturday, he had “caused to be drawn out of the garrisons in Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, and Howley, some horse, foot, and dragoniers, in all about 1,500, and had sent them under his son’s command against Wakefield.” From this it should seem that Lord Sussex had no concern with the occupation of Howley by Sir John. See Drake’s York, p. 155.

York, and had but the year before been flattered for his obsequiousness with the cheap gewgaw of an empty title. Against whom, therefore, was his remonstrance made? and from whom too, was a compensation sought? Not, certainly, against the Parliamentarians, for that would have been ridiculous indeed!—Not, surely, from the party he stood opposed to, for that would have been absurd indeed! No! no! It was from the “high-spirited” Loyalists who visited his noble house on their march to Bradford, or rather from their royal master, that this “indignant” Noble, this “life and fortune” man of the seventeenth century demanded satisfaction and restitution.

But Sussex was rewarded, in this instance, as every man deserves to be who will not act up to the illumination of the age, and the spirit of the times in which he lives, according to the dictates of his conscience, and the voice of his country. In lieu of recompence, he received a hollow, sarcastic, jesuitical reply, containing in it far more of reproach and mockery than of conciliation and pity—an answer, in short, quite in character with the principles and spirit of those cavalier people to whom he had lent himself—a tool.

I shall not trespass upon the reader's patience, in the consideration of a case in which it was so difficult to ascertain whether the goods of a Royalist, redeemed from “robbers and rebels,” (as the Parliament of England and their illustrious Generals were called,) could possibly be known

are upon record, and the sequel is known. Howley, however, was held for the Parliament, but battered with cannon balls, stormed and plundered by "indignant and high-spirited loyalty."

This attack upon Howley Hall was occasioned as follows:—The Marquis of Newcastle, whose head-quarters were at Pontefract, hearing that Lord Fairfax, with a very inferior force, was at Bradford, resolved to attack him; and on his way, it seems, he halted before the house, either for refreshing his troops, or for fear of been annoyed by the garrison and country people upon his rear; for, it is a matter of notoriety, that the latter generally detested the Royalists\* in these parts, and did them all the injury imaginable on their marches. Whatever Newcastle's motive was, it induced him to deviate apparently from the main road, and the shortest to Bradford, and he probably went by Alverthorpe, Kirkhamgate, and the skirts of Soothill Wood. There were at that period, doubtless, few fences beyond the park, so that, in June, he would have no difficulty in bringing up his two cannons, "Gog" and "Magog" (as they were called) before the East and South East sides of the Hall. These, I presume, were what is called eight pounders, from a cast iron ball in my possession which weights

\* Slingsby even, the "Loyalist," complains of their coming among his soldiers and snatching their swords from their sides, and hats from their heads, in the vicinity of Knaresborough. What a shame it is to attempt disguising the general feeling of the people of England, as many

eight pounds two ounces, and was found some years ago, deep in the hill below the ruins.

### HOWLEY IN ITS GLORY.

Before we proceed further, it may be as well here just to give an idea of this interesting spot in 1643—which, as near as I can describe it, was as follows:—On the west side of the hall was a fine bowling-green—on the North, and, probably, North East, was the parlour garden. On the Woodchurch side there was a cherry orchard, and many of the trees were there eighty years ago. The kitchen garden—strange to tell! was on the South, and still more singular it is that the kitchens even were on this most pleasant side of the mansion. And here, by the way, I would remark that horticulture was in a low state in this age. There were gooseberry trees growing near the ruins formerly, but quite exhausted—of these I took cuttings and cultivated the trees well some years ago, but the fruit was miserable.

The only notion of the edifice now to be gathered, is from engravings presented by the late Earl of Cardigan to a few of his principal tenants, and taken, it is said, from an ancient painting in the family collection.\* From this imperfect view even, it appears to have been a fine ancient Hall constructed with a strict regard to proportion and regularity, with a projecting centre on the South side, ornamented with columns, capitals, and mouldings. The whole seems crowned with

\* Re-published by J. Fearnside & Sons, Printers, etc.,  
 the accompanying view in its past splendour,  
 from one

battlements, and the cupolas, surmounted by weathercocks rise among the chimneys with Eastern grandeur. One cannot indeed behold even this poor sketch, and the beautiful wrought stone now dispersed through Morley, Birstal, Batley and all the neighbouring hamlets, without a feeling of melancholy, mingled with indignation, at the villany and apathy which has deprived us of an object most interesting to posterity, from a large association of ideas.

#### BESIEGED BY THE ROYALISTS.

Such was Howley Hall\* when it was besieged and battered for several days together by the Royalists, who being, however, bad engineers, did it far less injury than they designed. Some of their balls, however, as tradition reports, destroyed part of the tracery of the windows, and drove in the mullions. One of them, especially, passed through the gallery, breaking the branch of a pear tree, and narrowly missing some of the family. Had the guns been more elevated than they were, generally, the mischief would have been great; but happily, almost all the shot were afterwards found in the hill below.

The resistance made by Sir John Savile against a large army provided with everything, while he with a trifling force, wanted both cannon and provisions, was brave indeed. The greater number

\* Howley Hall was sixty yards square—had two gateways on the West side, and a Square Court, nearly in the centre, which gave light to the cellars.—From this were passages to its three entrances on the North, West and

of his men, I believe, were raw soldiers, menial servants, and volunteers out of this clothing district, who generously stepped forth to protect a mansion, the scene of old English hospitality, during two generations of the Saviles at least. Many of the poorest families in Morley, Batley, Havercroft, &c., were supplied with broken victuals by their bounty,\* and each village had its turn here. In fact, as industry and merit were encouraged by this family, there were many who owed it a debt of gratitude, and all were interested in their behalf. The resistance may, therefore, be well supposed to have been of the most determined kind, and it is proved to have been so by the irritation of the Marquis of Newcastle, and his orders as given in the succeeding extract.

“On the storming of Howley House,” says Dr. Whitaker, “an officer had given quarter to the Governor, contrary to the Earl of Newcastle’s orders, and having been rebuked by him for his humanity, he undertook to execute his orders *ex post facto*; but Newcastle said it was ungenerous to kill a man in cold blood.”

There is, here, again, a mixture of truth and error in this tradition. That Newcastle issued these orders, I doubt; but that he durst have

\* Archbishop Parker’s mode of keeping hospitality may be seen in Allan’s History of Lambeth, p. 224; or Gentlemen’s Magazine, vol. 97, part I, p. 527.

The same usage appears to have been kept up at Nostel by the Wynn family, so lately as the early part of last century.—Memoirs of Mrs. Catherine Cape.—Also, at Skeffington, in Leicestershire. See Note 10 in Nichols’s 3rd

seen them executed, I have *no* doubt, for Cromwell was, at this period, comparatively little known. Had that been otherwise, so atrocious a purpose would never have crossed his mind, for had the hair of an Englishman been hurt in this way, but a few years afterwards, and his Earlship had fled to the outside of the globe, the "Protector" would have found him.\* One man, however was killed in cold blood on opening the gates of Howley House, and he was the porter of the lodge—one William Smith—and from his great-grandson, once living at Lee-Fair, my account comes. It appears, therefore, that it was for killing, and not intending to kill, that the officer was reproved: and we have here an instance how greatly a matter of fact may become distorted in the course of a century, without any bad design on the part of the relaters.

### NEVISON'S STONE.

About one hundred yards from the farm house at Howley, on the West Side, and near the foot-path to Morley, lies a small stone of cylindrical shape, bearing this inscription.—"Here Nevison killed Fletcher, 1684." This stone has certainly been here above seventy years, but how much longer is unknown. It was cut and engraved by John Jackson, the school master of Lee-Fair, commonly called "Old Trash." Dr. Whitaker has quite overlooked this stone, and I cannot give as good an account as might be wished of the circumstance to which it relates. However, I can perhaps, give a better than any person now living.



After the death of Lord James Savile, in 1671, or, at least, after the marriage of Lady Frances, Howley as I have before stated, was little frequented by its great owners. The house was occupied by three families—Ayres, Ray or Kaye,\* and Procter, I believe were their names. I write one of their names Ray or Wray, because this is the name transmitted by tradition, but Kaye appears more likely to be right. But waving trifles, one Janson occupied the lodge, while one Fletcher kept an alehouse where the chief tenant now lives.

About the latter end of Charles the 2nd's reign, the robberies of Nevison had become so frequent and daring, and the danger of apprehending him was considered so great that, as in the case of Turpin, in 1737,† few persons were willing to attempt it; and the Government was obliged to offer a considerable reward, (£20) for securing him. Allured by the offer, this Fletcher calling to his aid a brother who lived where Cross Hall now stands, resolved to entrap the robber on his next visit. It was not long ere the opportunity offered, for Nevison was drawn hitherward by many motives. Here was a lonely spot, near a large wood, many fairs of different kinds, many cross roads, at a convenient distance from Pontefract (the place of his nativity), and

\* One Mrs. Kaye, daughter of Batt, of Oak-well-Hall, and second wife of Mr. John Kaye, of Gomersal, died at Howley Hall, in 1730, leaving a son Robert and a daughter Martha, who, in 1766, was in her 105th year. These were all of Howley. See Watson's Halifax, p. 489.

of his father's abode. But Nevison was attracted by another influence, the most powerful of any in the human bosom. Like the formidable Samson, he had at Dunningley, his "Delilah,"—a married woman, I believe, whose offspring and descendents (whether improperly or otherwise I "wot" not,) were long honoured with his name. Certain, however, it is, that Nevison was often travelling to Dunningley and Howley. Soon after his last visit, however, the Fletchers contrived to overcome him, and locking up in their stable the wonderful animal on which he rode, they fastened her master in one of the upper rooms of the outshot or porch, (before described) in the farm-yard.

But Nevison soon forced his way through the window, and, making a spring, he alighted upon a heap of manure which was just under it, and took his course towards Morley. An alarm however, was soon given, and one of the Fletchers, (Darcy) pursued him closely on foot. Being a remarkably athletic man—relying upon his strength, and probably fancying he had disarmed his visitor he called upon him to surrender himself. Nevison on the other hand, attempted to argue and reproach the other with his treachery and ingratitude; but the great reward was predominant in the mind of Fletcher, so that he grappled with his customer, and in the struggle which ensued the robber fell undermost. Finding himself again overcome by force, Nevison had recourse to a "bosom friend,"—a short pistol, which firing at the heart of Fletcher he rolled from his body



STONE WHERE NIVISON KILLED FLETCHER.

(See page 27.)

Such was the account, which in my boyish days I received from people seventy or eighty years old, and such was the account of their forefathers. It was, for the most part, confirmed to me about fourteen years ago, by the narration of old Thomas Robertshaw, of Soothill Wood-side, whose ancestors were park and gamekeepers\* to the Saviles, with only a disagreement as to the weapon wherewith the murder was committed. The sturdy veteran relying upon the accuracy of his grandfather, who knew Nevison, would have it that the instrument was a short dagger, "shaped (as he expressed himself) like a cobbler's "elsin" or "bodkin" and this was also told me as the tradition, by the people at Sandal and at Wakefield. "Just at the top of the park," said old Robertshaw, "my grandfather told me that Nevison thrust the elsin all covered with blood, into the straw thatch of a cottage which stood there, and where it was found afterwards," However this may be, it is certain that by the key of the stable in Fletcher's pocket or otherwise, he regained his mare,† and rode to York at a rate so incredibly swift, that upon his trial afterwards. he established an alibi by proving himself to have been upon the Bowling Green there at an early hour of the same day. This, certainly, will appear

\* See also, the deposition touching the "Farnley Wood Plot," in Whitaker's Leeds, from which it appears they were park-keepers.

† See the account of Nevison's leap, near Ferrybridge Gentleman's Magazine, 1820, p. 420. His mare had but one eye, and was of a dusky brown colour. My very respectable aged friend, Mrs. Hardy, of Birksgate, Kirkburton, has given me several remarkable and well-authenticated particulars of Nevison. which are committed to writing.

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more wonderful when the then state of the roads is considered.

All the accounts published of this very celebrated highwayman, are mere "Grub-Street" fabrications. There is no truth even as to the place where, or the person by whom he was apprehended at last. That person, instead of a Captain Hardcastle, was a valiant tailor, who finding him asleep on the bench of a house, the sign of the Magpie, at Sandal, and one of the then three Inns called "Sandal Three Houses," pinioned his arms and procured assistance. Most other particulars are about as uncertain and improbable as the adventures of Robin Hood, although centuries have rolled away in the interval between them.

There is one very remarkable circumstance which causes me to doubt whether the stone before mentioned has not got misplaced, although there is no tradition of its ever having laid elsewhere. There is a lane leading to Dewsbury, exactly between what was the house of Fletcher, of Cross Hall, and Howley Hall, which is called "Scotchman Lane," from the circumstance of a Scotchman having been there murdered. This is so notorious that thousands of people have, for generations, been fearful of travelling it after dark, on account of the spirit of this murdered man being supposed to walk there. Whether or not the killing of Fletcher by Nevison, has given to the lane its name, must be left to conjecture—certainly the name Fletcher sounds Scottish.\*

\* Yet it originally came from a business, viz. ;—that of feathering arrows, which was by the Fletchers, who completed the work of the arrow-smith, while the bowyers and

It is very remarkable that we should have no certain accounts of men so celebrated in their way as Nevison and Turpin, although, truly, there is nothing very edifying in such lives. However, as they both kept the kingdom in a state of alarm many years, and achieved extraordinary feats; and as their history was, professedly, written by one Captain Johnstone, scarce fifty years after the death of the former, and very soon after the death of the latter, one might have expected to have known something. How formidable they were considered appears from their irons in York Castle, and the little that may be depended upon concerning them, presents us with a curious picture\* of the times.

Among the Record of Executions preserved at York Castle is the following :—

*May 4th*, A.D. 1684, in the reign of King James II., William Nevison, aged 43, was executed at the Tyburn Gallows, without Mickle-gate Bar, for robbery. He was a notorious highwayman, and the story of Turpin's ride from London to York (so beautifully and graphically described by Mr. Harrison Ainsworth in his "Rookwood") on his mare "Black Bess," is all fabulous, no such account appearing in his life, but is taken from the circumstance of Nevison's escape from the gallows on one occasion, a fact authenticated in the "History of York," in which there is the following account :—“In this year was tried William Nevison, a notorious highwayman, who had committed a robbery in London,

\* See, especially, the Gentleman's Magazine for 1737.

about sunrise, and, finding he was known, fled to York, which place he reached by sunset the same evening, on one mare (Charles II. called him "Swift Nick"). On his trial he proved himself to have been at the Bowling-green at York the same evening the robbery was committed. A number of witnesses swore positively to him, but neither judge nor jury would believe them, and consequently he was acquitted.

"He was afterwards arrested near Wakefield (probably at an old road-side inn at Sandal Magna, which he used to frequent, called the "Sandal Three Houses," on the road from Barnsley to Wakefield), for a series of crimes, and hung as above.

#### LADY ANNE'S WELL AND FIELDKIRK FAIR.

While writing upon remarkable things near Howley ruins, I must not forget one of the greatest note, I mean "Lady Anne's Well,"\* situate on the South East side and in Soothill Wood. To this well, annually, on Palm Sunday, the surrounding villagers have, for ages, been wont to resort to drink its waters on account of their supposed preternatural efficacy; for, at six o'clock on that morning, it was believed that they assume different colours. It is uncertain from whence the well has taken its name, but being a matter of much curiosity, I shall offer a few thoughts upon it.

\* This Well being considerably below the level of Howley Hall, has probably only supplied it partially with





LADY ANNE'S WELL.

(See page 34.)

The common opinion, I know is, that this was a favourite well with Lady Sussex, whose name being Anne or Anna, makes it plausible ; but I am persuaded it has still been a place of annual resort for ages.

It is well known that in the darkest times of superstition, if a well was situate in a peculiarly solitary spot, had clear water, and grass flourishing near its edge, a medicinal or salubrious quality was soon attached to it\*—it was dedicated to some tutelary Saint and honoured with his name.† We thus hear of St. John's, St. Winifred's, St. Mary's, or St. Anne's Wells. Imitating in this, as in other instances, the custom of their Pagan forefathers, the early Christians of this land were wont to decorate their wells on Ascension day in the Spring, with flowers—a ceremony which was accompanied with some religious rite, or considered so in itself. In the time of the Romans, the birth-day of the Goddess Flora had been honoured by the erection of altars and institution of games at this very season ; and during the Floralia, the grossest impurities were practised. Nor have the devotees of our sainted Ladies been much behind them in amorous warmth, as the name of the field in question may perhaps declare.

Remnants of well-worship have subsisted in Craven, according to Whitaker, within half a

\* Pilgrimages were made to wells. In some instances their imputed efficacy was of a moral kind ; but the visits to them were generally for worldly purposes.

† Whitaker's Craven, 430. Lyson's M. B., vol. 5, p. 242. Gentleman's Mag. for 1791, p. 991 ; ditto. for 1804, p. 718 ; ditto. for 1794, p. 226. Clarkson's Richmond, p. 220.

century. At Tissington, in Derbyshire, according to Lyson, it is still practised.

But I have another, and to my mind, a much more satisfactory hypothesis to lay before the reader, touching these assemblages; and, perhaps, this is the case because the discovery is my own.

It appears that, according to the Saxon laws, the ranks of the ecclesiastical structures were as follows:—First, there was the Minister or Mother Church. Secondly, the Church having a place of burial. Thirdly, the Fieldkirk\* or Chapel without cemetery, having neither right of sepulture or administration of sacraments.

Now, there can be no doubt, that in Saxon and early Norman times, as before-mentioned, the Church was at Morley, and afterwards at Batley. What then was the place of worship at Batley† aforetimes? or what was that of which we have some vestiges‡ at Howley? Methinks it was a mere parochial Chapel, called in those days, a "Fieldkirk." It was, however, considerable enough, in all probability, to give rise to a village wake or fair, which would naturally be called "*Fieldkirk Fair.*"

\* See a Fieldkirk—St. Kenelm's Chapel, County of Salop. Gentleman's Magazine for 1802, p. 1177.

† It appears from Domesday, that there was a Church or Chapel at Batley, and a Presbyter, in Saxon times.

‡ To celebrate Wells there were often places of worship annexed in ancient times. See L...

Fairs were anciently held in Church-yards, on the day of the dedication of their respective Churches, or on the Sunday following. Mr. Baker says, "the origin of Fairs has been sought for in the annual resort to some Holy Well, or to the Festival of the Saint to whom the Church was dedicated; and hence the most ancient Fairs will be found to correspond with the dedication\* of the Church."

Here then, in the vicinity of Howley Hall, we have two religious edifices in early times—the Kirk of Batley, and the Chapel or Fieldkirk, at Howley or Southwell, and we have also a "Holy Well." Can any one doubt then, that there was here in former days a Fair?—Now then let us apply our knowledge of the premises as every antiquary ought to do.

Ask then a villager, returning from the annual assemblage in question, where he has been? and the answer he will give you is—I have been at "*Fieldcock Fair*."† This, in fact, is the only name by which it goes. But who can doubt that it is a corruption of *Fieldkirk Fair*? No one, methinks, who considers the trifling difference there is in the sound or spelling of the words, and the vast change which some expressions are known to have undergone, even in the course of a few generations.

\* See Gentleman's Mag., vol. 8. p. 465 and 522. Lyson's Bedfordshire, p. 76, &c. Nichols's Leicestershire, vol. 2, part 1, p. 220.

† See a valuable note in

But Batley Church is, perhaps, a mile from St. Anne's Well, and the Church is dedicated to all Saints, which day is on the 1st of November, whereas, Palm Sunday is the first Sunday before Easter, which is a moveable feast. This appears an objection. But, besides that, the first Church at Batley may have been dedicated to St. Anne,\* there is nothing more variable than the time at which, in after ages, the Fairs were held. At first, no doubt, after the Clergy had officiated on those days the people went out, at the conclusion of the service to rural sports,† but in process of time the days were changed.

"Markets and fairs," says Lyson, "were formerly held at many places on Sundays, Good Fridays, and other great feasts and festivals, to the great umbrage of pious persons who often petitioned against them. In Henry III's, time, markets were changed by the King's charter to other times. In 1449 they became the subject of a petition to Parliament."‡

"In the Archives of Whalley," says Whitaker, "are letters patent of Henry IV., annulling a fair held in the Church-yard of Whalley, (a practice hardly abolished after the Reformation,) which as it gave offence, was by other letters patent

\* See Hunter's South Yorkshire, p. 84; or Gentleman's Magazine, vol. 98, part 2, p. 237; also, Speed, 790.

Woodchurch appears, from Speed, to have been dedicated to the Holy Trinity, but there is no doubt that it was antecedently dedicated to St. Mary.

† Fosbroke's Encyclopædia, vol. p. 389,

‡ See his Birkshire. History of Whalley. vol. 2. p. 267

transferred to Clitherhoe, and appointed to be held on the Eve-Day and Morrow of the Annunciation.

In Episcopal registers many licences are entered for altering the dedication of feasts of Parish Churches, and the pleas urged by the persons who solicited these indulgences were, that either the work, or the *weather* of the seasons, rendered the days originally appointed inconvenient and hazardous, or that they could not be duly observed, and with a becoming reverence, from their interfering with celebrities of another class.\*

Having said so much for the "Kirk Fair," let us once more return to the "Lady's Well."

Though Roman Catholic ceremonies were generally disused under Henry VIII., yet he declared that the bearing of palms, on Palm Sunday, was to be continued, and not cast away; and, it appears, that they were borne in England until the second† year of Edward VI, or rather later.‡

It was a Roman Catholic custom to resort to our Lady of Nants (or Ann's) Well, in Little Conan, Cornwall, with a *Cross of Paim*; and the people (after making the Priest a present) were

\* See the subject fully discussed in *Archæol.*, vol. 5, p. 253.

† Hone's *Every day Book*, vol. 1, p. 396.

‡ Speed, 848. Palms were undoubtedly borne in the reign of Mary.

allowed to throw the Cross into the Well. If it swam, the thrower was to outlive the year—if it sunk, he was not.

According to Stowe, in the week before Easter there were great shows in London, for going to the woods and fetching into the King's house a twisted tree or "withe," and the like into the house of every man of consequence. It is still customary with men and boys, even in London, to go a palming early on Palm Sunday morning, Mr. Douce, in a MS. Note cited by Mr. Ellis, says—"I have somewhere met with a proverbial saying, that he that hath not a palm in his hand on palm Sunday morning, must have his hand cut off.\*"

So much for the Howley annual assemblages with reference to the "Lady Anne's Well," which, however, from the name, must necessarily be connected with *Fieldkirk Fair*. Respecting the *Fieldkirk*, I have only to add the following remarks:—

Before the time of Henry III. a check appears to have been put to the practice of endowing New Parishes, so that foundations claiming rights of sepulture and administration of the sacraments, henceforth assumed an intermediate rank between the Churches of the second order like that at Batley, and the mere *Fieldkirk*, and were called parochial Chapels. Such, probably, was the Chapel of Morley.

