

LACEY HEY, MIDGLEY

By H. W. HARWOOD

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Among three or four old buildings in Midgley village, the part once known as Midgley Town, Lacey Hey, slightly away from the main road with its interesting front facing towards Calder Valley, has often been alluded to by myself and others, but until now it has not been tackled from the historical point of view. It is an old farmstead with a farm house and two cottages. One cottage, joining the main building at the rear and at right angles to the main structure, has not been occupied in my lifetime. Inscribed stones one in front and another in the rear which is easily seen from the main road, bear date and initials, "R.W. 1672." The front facing towards Brearley, bears many evidences of the Elizabethan style though it is much later. This front, more imposing than the rear, has a fine display of mullioned windows, string coursings, and a few ornamental corner stones. The six sets of mullioned windows showing to the front are equally imposing from the inside. Unfortunately, the general symmetry of the building is spoiled by a central barn which rises higher than the main block. This is undoubtedly a later addition, as is borne out not only by the style but by a phrase in the 1862 Midgley assessment book, "the new barn." Before that was added I have no doubt that the mullioned windows were more extensive. A curious feature is that the mistal or cowshed and the barn over it, are in the centre between the farm house and the end cottage; usually these are either at one end or detached.

Entering from the rear is a wide passage which does not seem to have had a front door. Midway down this passage is an entry into the cowshed. A small kitchenette at the east end is a fairly modern addition. The walls of the housebody are nearly a yard thick. Careful study of the building both by myself and Mr. John Walker, of Brearley Hall, son of a former owner-resident, has brought the conclusion that originally what are now the mistal and barn were just another dwelling, and that from the rear dated stone to the front inscribed stone, was a through passage with a small porch in front as shown on a plan of the estate. The early documents also refer to three cottages. The plan also indicates that the farm part was originally at the top of the fold facing Towngate, now three dwellings with bay windows. On the fold side of these cottages are clear indications that at some time there was a laith door.

The rear of the building is enclosed by houses and walls forming a fold. It was from this fold on Good Friday, 1934, that Midgley schoolboys gave a performance of the street play, "The Pace-Egg," which was broadcast to the British Commonwealth, a connecting wire having been installed stretching from here to the Luddenden Foot telephone exchange. The broadcast was directed by Mr. Victor Smythe, at that time in charge of northern outside broadcasts for the B.B.C. I mention this because the occasion brought maybe two thousand people to watch something that 30 years ago was an uncommon sight. Further, it made Lacey Hey widely known. There is one other association with Lacey Hey that is worthy of mention. Midgley Methodist Sunday School began in 1817 in one of the long since removed cottages nearby, known as Pickles Row. Because there was fever in that cottage, from March to May, 1818, the school was held in this unoccupied Lacey Hey cottage before moving back to the other place.

I lived at Lacey Hey on two occasions, first for a short time in 1895, and later for several years to my marriage in 1910, the farm then being worked by my brother. From first knowing the place the inscribed initials R.W. aroused my interest, and the fact that Whitworths, Wadsworths, and Walton families were long prominent in Midgley led one to

feel that the initials were from one of these families. The documents to hand introduced a totally unexpected name, Watmough, a name not to be found in the Midgley township old account books and loose papers.

The name of the building is obviously taken from the Lacey family Lords of the Manor, and early owners of all the surrounding land. John Lacey (OJ Lacy) sold his lands and the lordship in 1586 to Henry Farrer, of Ewood though for at least another hundred years there were branches of the Lacey family in the township. Documentary references spell the name Lacey Hey, Lacey Hay, and Lassey Hey-the last being a dialect form still used in local pronunciation. For the purposes of this paper I use "Lacey," the more prevalent documentary form.

The deeds to hand, found in a bundle obtained by Mr. G. W Almond from a solicitor's office, were wrapped together and labelled "Lacey Hey." These were numbered, and the first, though marked No.1 also bears the figure 23. It could be that there were older ones. The document, creased to near illegibility in parts, named a "deed of feoffment," is dated May 11, 1699, or 27 years later than the date on the building. This sets forth that Robert Watmough, yeoman, of Midgley, for £350 sold to Edward Baskerville, of Midgley, yeoman (though later alluded to as a clothier), "all that messuage or tenement" in Midgley, now in the tenure or occupation of Robert Watmough, "one barn, one stable, two folds, one garden and little croft, and six closes of land, meadow and pasture. four of which closes are usually called the High Lees; and the two other closes usually called the new close and the croft. Along with the transfer went "all the four forms, seats and stalls within the church or chappell of Luddingden in Midgley." These lands were to be holden of the Chief Lord or Lords of the fee or fees thereof of right accustomed, in fee simple. Witnessing the deed were John Lockwood, Jeremiah Holden his mark (the appended name is difficult to read) and Henry Nayler.

For a long time I hesitated to tackle the story of Lacey Hey because the bulk of the deeds alluded to Stocks or Stocks Farm. The first deed gives no name at all except of four fields at High Lees Today, equally distant from the stone shafts of the village stocks, are Lacey Hey and Stocks Farm. The latter, undated, was built at least a hundred years after Lacey Hey, and it was not until the middle of the 1700s, maybe about the time the present Stocks Farm was built, that the building we are studying came to be documented "Lacey Hey or Stocks Farm." There is, however, in the description of the property two folds, and the present Stocks Farm has no such enclosure, nor for that matter has High Lees. So, judging by the written evidence it seems that Robert Watmough not only lived at Lacey Hey, but had the use of fields at High Lees a quarter of a mile away to the north-east. The two closes the New Croft and the Croft, were in all probability the two Lacey Hey fields which subsequent documents tell were made into five, and named the croft, the little field, the well ing, the well field, and the long ing, those today of Lacey Hey, and so named on a plan of about 1766. I am dwelling on these points to clear any doubt that where Stocks Farm is mentioned in the oldest of these papers, Lacey Hey was the place concerned.

But to return to the narrative. Under date September 15, 1699, is a puzzling "mortgage of demise," from which one gathers that the first Watmough transaction was really a mortgage taken by Baskerville on behalf of Watmough. The mortgage of demise says that Watmough had repaid £200 to Baskerville, and that Watmough had the use of "two parlours and one turf house." Watmough had to pay Baskerville annually "one peppercorn if demanded." It could be that these two families occupied the same building. This condition seems to have been first agreed upon on May 11 the same year according to a short document which was witnessed by Timothy Wadsworth and Henry Nayler.

Very soon Edward Baskerville disappears from the scene, but before doing so, on October 6, 1699, he made provision for an annuity of £5 to be paid to his grandmother, Mary

Reynor, of Frizinghall, Bradford, widow of John Reynor. It is recorded that Baskerville, of Midgley, clothier, younger of the two grandsons of John Reynor, late of Adwalton and Drighlington, yeoman, granted the annuity out of the sale of two crofts in Midgley and out of land named Great Juge at Adwalton. He made this provision because of "my indebtedness to her in many ways and especially in babyhood." On December 7, 1701, she sold her rights in the Midgley property to Thomas Siddall, of Sowerby, yeoman, for £5. As Baskerville's provision for his grandmother was to come out of the sale of his properties, he made a transference of his Midgley holdings somewhere about 1701 (a note on the deed says "No. 6 missing") to Thomas Siddall of Sowerby, yeoman. The Midgley property was said to be in the tenure or occupation of Edward Baskerville, Robert Watmough and Abraham Sunderland. What Thomas Siddall paid is not stated (probably the facts are in the missing deed), but in December, 1701, he paid Mrs. Reynor £5 to clear her interest under the Baskerville provision.

We next hear of Thomas Siddall in a deed of May 14, 1742, when he borrowed on the security of Lacey Hey (still called Stocks Farm) £400 from Henry Ramsbottom wool stapler, of North Bridge, Northowram. The description of the property includes seven fields, the two extra to the five previously given being "the little field above the lane, and the little field at Hattors"(or Hattons) which I cannot identify. As these two cease to be included in subsequent transactions I can only assume they were extra fields to extend the comparatively small farm of Lacey Hey, a practice often followed by farmers, and actually done while I lived there.

John Siddall having thus arranged matters with Henry Ramsbottom, the latter, under date February 13, 1744, sold the estate to Stephen Atkinson, of Warley, chapman (that is, a travelling salesman). Not long after, Stephen Atkinson left Magson House in Warley, for Upper Foot Farm, when he came to be described as a white kersey maker. Before this, however, Thomas Siddall had made a will on April 6, 1701, in which he bequeathed various sums, from £20 to £60, to his five daughters: Mary Siddall, spinster, Midgley; Sarah, wife of John Lancaster, Midgley, yeoman; Betty, widow of Jonas Bankcroft, late of Wadsworth yeoman; Judith, wife of Thomas Winterbottom, of Warley, yeoman; and Grace, wife of William Patchett, of Midgley, butcher. The daughters' signatures (three could only make their marks), were witnessed by John Baldwin, William Farrer, Thomas Hoyle, Stephen Atkinson, and Thomas Heron. The legacies were all paid. So that Atkinson should not have any claim made upon him by Ann, widow of Thomas Siddall, the son John Siddall arranged that other of his family's property, Braithwaite Gate, in Skircoat, should be a collateral security, from which also the daughters' legacies could be charged.

Stephen Atkinson at no time lived at Lacey Hey, remaining at Upper Foot until his death some time about 1765. The tenant for over 50 years was William Whitworth either son or brother of Francis Whitworth who lived at Cliff Hill, the 1601 farm not far away. I don't know when William Whitworth came in, but as early as 1753 he signed Midgley township accounts. For two years from 1794 he was a churchwarden, and for a year from 1797 he was overseer. His name also appears among those described in the overseers' accounts as a "principal inhabitant² from 1789 to 1812.

When Stephen Atkinson died intestate and without a son, coheirs were his nephews William Dickinson and John Senior the younger. An arrangement between them on November 10, 1765, included that Dickinson should have Upper Foot, and Senior Lacey Hey, then occupied by William Whitworth. This John Senior came to hold the Red Lion Inn, Luddenden Foot, just within the old Midgley township, an inn which was re-built in 1877 and named the General Rawdon Hotel. Senior for many years figured in township affairs being overseer and holding other offices. It may be of small interest to this story that Dickinson and Senior went to law in respect of the Midgley property, but judgment at the

Court of Westminster (6 George 3) was settled by Senior paying £60 to Dickinson. There is one thing about Lacey Hey that is found in many stories of old properties -that nearly all the owners had to raise money by mortgaging the property, and John Senior was no exception. A document of August 15, 1768, tells that he borrowed £280 on a security of the property from Timothy Topham, of Wakefield, gentleman, half to be repaid "on February 15 next." Later he borrowed another £20. When he could not pay back he had the assistance of Robert Parker, attorney-at-law, Halifax (soon to possess Brearley Hall), and of Jonas Eastwood, of Hall Bank, Sowerby, yeoman. Other Midgley property was involved in this transaction, and Eastwood having paid £73 10s. for Blue Bell cottages at the end of 1771, Senior was able to clear his mortgage, though there is no document telling just how he straightened matters with Parker.

John Senior must have fully recovered his position, as witness his will of June 5, 1807, in which he is described as innkeeper. He provided that his wife Elizabeth and his son John should continue to live together at the inn, but when she died the sons John and James Senior should share the properties including Lacey Hey, still occupied by William Whitworth. The will suggested that they should sell the Midgley properties. There was a daughter, Sarah, wife of David Eastwood Murgatroyd, to whom had been previously paid £100. A sum of £40 had been paid to a son who had died leaving two sons John and William. When all calls had been paid all the sons and daughters were to have equal shares.

At the time Parker had taken hold there was a plan, undated, showing the Lacey Hey fields and their names. On the plan is a low building at the top of the fold facing Towngate named as a barn. That must have ceased to be so used when a barn was built into Lacey Hey altering its shape.

Again there is a jump in years before the deeds touch upon the property. It is stated on a paper marked "Conditions of sale" that a sale was to take place at the King's Arms, Boulderclough, Sowerby, the house of Thomas Senior on September 19, 1812. Lot one comprised the estate "known as Lasey Hey, otherwise Stocks Farm in Midgley," the first time Lacey Hey is mentioned by name. William Whitworth was still the occupant. There was some part not to be sold, mentioned as being 2exempted and staked off" and previously sold, perhaps the two fields I have touched upon earlier. A Thomas Mitchell, acting for Henry Foster, Lower Brearley Hall, malster, paid £1,100 for the lot. The new ownership was put into documentary form on February 5, 1813. This sets forth that the sellers were Thomas Senior, of Boulderclough, innkeeper; John Senior, of Luddenden Foot, innkeeper; and James Senior, of Market Weighton, innkeeper, joint executors of John Senior, late of Midgley, yeoman. The buyer, Henry Foster, is named along with Benjamin Walker, of Mytholmroyd, worsted spinner, nominated in trust for Foster. Henry Foster died about 1831, for on April 18 that year Benjamin Walker and John Edmondson, both of Mytholmroyd, and both worsted spinners, sold Lacey Hey, then occupied by James Taylor, to Richard Patchett, supported by George Patchett, rectifier of spirits, Manchester, and Thomas Patchett, spirit merchant, of Manchester. On the seller's side Benjamin Walker and John Edmondson were supported by George Whiteley and Joseph Whiteley, both of Halifax, card makers, All these signed the document along with Elizabeth Foster (her mark). In this and subsequent documents the name Stocks is omitted, There must again have been a mortgage for much later George and Richard Patchett paid to the Foster trustees £1,000.

A bill for repairs to the windows and roof of Lacey Hey, dated January 23, 1831, includes "wood for the boise sides" - boise, pronounced booise, being a dialect word for a cow stand.

Richard Patchett got into trouble in 1837. A solicitor's letter on behalf of Robert Parker, of Brearley Hall, complained of a "most unwarrented trespass upon his coal." The matter was settled by Patchett paying thirteen guineas. Again I am assuming that this had

reference to something not touched upon in all the Lacey Hey documents, yet relating to the place.

It is usually considered that the lower coal measures east of the Pennines come to an end along the slopes of Soil Hill, Ringby and Beacon Hill, but there is a still lower but very thin seam of 6in. band coal, overlying the Millstone Grit, which outcrops in a few places along the hillside between Midgley and Wadsworth where it has been worked locally in a small way at various times, (See H.A.S. Trans 1930, p. 118). In Wadsworth several piles of excavated shale above Old Town still indicate the sites of old workings, and Midgley records give accounts of small payments for "Wadsworth coal." Some 15 yards from the east wall of Lacey Hey was a distinct rise in the field, in the centre of which was a shaft covered by two huge flagstones. When I lived there one could see down a nick between the flagstones a shaft not more than ten feet deep, it had long been used for tipping ashes and rubbish. My mother told me that when she was a girl children used to drop stones down and that it seemed a long time before they heard the sound of the bottom being reached.

There is a reference to this mine shaft, the only reference I have been able to discover, in John Fawcett junior's Life of his father (page 269). Dr. Fawcett had his academy at Brearley Hall, and, says the son, a former pupil visiting the school had his request granted for the students to have a day's holiday. Dr. Fawcett made it a condition that the boys should not approach the place "where some unsuccessful attempts had been made to procure coal in the premises belonging to the seminary." His son writes: "Stimulated by curiosity and by that propensity to enjoy forbidden pleasures, a number of them stole away, and after having looked at the pit which was about ten yards in depth and thrown a few small stones in to hear the effect that would be produced," one boy lingered on and fell to the bottom, pitching his head against the stone he had thrown. Happily, the lad recovered from a fracture of the skull. That incident was about 1785.

There are two outlets into Brearley Wood from that shaft; it is doubtful if more than myself and Mr John Walker know where they are. As a lad of about 14 I and a cousin explored one which extended maybe 25 yards before coming to fallen roof. By candle light bits here and there glistened like coal but could have been other substances. As a matter of fact that passage is so far away from the shaft, and all the way to it is solid rock, that it may have been an independent passage. There is no sign of extensive tipping. The other passage, at a level about 150 feet lower than where the shaft was, is connected with it, and it could be that the Patchett trespass was here, definitely in that part of the wood which belonged to Parker at the time. The top of the shaft cannot be seen today. In 1926 a cottage, the last to be built to date in what used to be called Midgley Town, was erected right over the shaft, the gift to his parents by James Holmes, long in South Africa.

The Patchetts, one of whom was at the time occupying Lacey Hey, were a remarkable family, long settled in Midgley and Luddenden, and then holding property all over the place. In examining large numbers of Midgley documents I have found references to them stretching from Manchester to Bradford, and most of them were in the licensing trade. Richard Patchett built the cottages next to the late Shoulder of Mutton Inn, an inscribed stone having carved upon it "R.P.E. 1831." He had a lovely style of handwriting as instanced by a letter in the collection giving notice to James Taylor to quit Lacey Hey. Another branch of the family for generations were joiners and undertakers in Luddenden. One of them in his account book tells of carrying out the funeral of Miss Patchett, of Law Hill, Southowram, where Emily Bronte taught for a time.

James Taylor, who succeeded William Whitworth at Lacey Hey as tenant, was followed by William Thomas the younger and William Ogden, both farmers of Sowerby. The details for their tenancy stipulated how the farm should be carried on, and stated that Thomas and Ogden were to have a right to one-third of the water flowing through the estate

from Town Syke. Patchett reserved the right to use a small piece of the land on the west and south sides, "also the bake house at the top of the fold." In 1834 John and William Boardall took the tenancy.

During Patchett ownership Lacey Hey was dubbed "Patchett's Place," so named in the deeds, and it was also known as Butcher's Fold. The cottage at the west end, so I was told long ago had been used as an inn under the name the Knur and Spell, and when the Delvers' Arms was built with bay windows facing the stocks, the licence was transferred to it (an inn closed on July 2, 1910). I know of no written record of an inn at Lacey Hey, but the one who told me had a wonderful memory for things which on proof was found to be reliable I was even given the name of the landlord, Henry Baume, who was certainly living in that cottage in 1860.

After Patchett ownership Lacey Hey was bought by George Bedford a brewer, who in later years had the brewery at Brearley. The Midgley rate book of 1846 describes the place as being owned by Richard Patchett, and occupied by George Bedford. Later books give Bedford as owner. It is doubtful if Bedford really lived there, for I found that the early rate books were often haphazard in stating who were owners and who were tenants. However, the assessment book of 1862 when Midgley was about to have a Local Board of Health, gives Bedford as the owner and George Whitaker as holding the place. By marriage into the Bedford family the property came into the ownership of Richard Whitaker and Sons, Halifax, brewers, who absorbed the Bedford brewery at Grove, Brearley. Lacey Hey was bought from them about 1912 by the late Mr. Admiral Walker, of Great House, Midgley, coal merchant, and was sold by his widow in 1946 to the present owner, Mr. Richard Griffiths.

The field where the pit shaft was made was in 1894 the last venue of what was called Midgley Rushbearing, or fair, when swings and the like occupied the field. This Midgley feast used to be on the first Wednesday in August, and Luddenden had one on the first Thursday. Both these like the ones at Luddenden Foot and Mytholmroyd, are now but a memory,

Interest will be added to this story if a sideline is related as a conclusion. One of the Lacey Hey fields, Well Ing, has on its west side an old stony path leading to Brearley Wood known as Well Lane - it starts exactly opposite the great well known as Town Syke. It was related to me with knowledgeable authority in 1902 that when Midgley Chartists were busy drilling secretly, one of their practices was trying to make something like bombs by filling large stone beer bottles with gunpowder which they tried out by exploding some of them down Well Lane. "A mere tale" you may be tempted to exclaim, though I had this from a reliable source. They were a determined lot of revolutionaries were these Midgley Chartists. Many weapons have been found concealed in farm rafters, and there are two recorded instances of their stealing large quantities of lead from the roof of Luddenden Church with which to make bullets!